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## what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

Well, we made it through another tough week. Lately it seems like all weeks are tough ones. And it's just going to be more of the same as we approach the upcoming legislative session that begins March 29.

I hope you had a chance to read the special edition of What's Up, Doc? that came out on Wednesday. We want to keep you informed about things that affect our agency, and I hope you are as pleased with the news of the proposal to create the Columbia Center for Youth as I am. The site is a very pretty ten acre property set in the piney woods near Columbia, just south of Monroe. It's at the top of a hill, with nice red brick buildings that will be perfect for four dorms that will house twelve youth each. There is a building that can be used as a school, lots of office space and a nice food service area. All we have to do to make it ready for our youth is to knock out a few walls, put up some outside lights and improve the fencing.

A moderate secure facility has been the big gap in the continuum of care that we provide our youth, and the new facility at Columbia will allow us to provide that much-needed level of care in the northern part of the state. Our thanks to State Senator Neil Riser who has welcomed this opportunity for OJJ and the community of Columbia.

Shifting gears, are y'all as sick of hearing about the marital problems of Tiger Woods as I am? I don't know about you, but I certainly think there is more news to report than the indiscretions of an athlete. Let me count – how many athletes in America are doing the same thing daily? Not to make light of a serious situation, but come on! I know there are more pressing issues that the media could spend time on besides chasing sports celebrities.

Back to more serious matters. I said it before and I want to say it one more time. I speak for the entire executive team when I say that we are all more than sorry to have lost the 54 hardworking, dedicated staff affected by the recent layoff. OJJ is like a family, and we wish each and every one of our family members the best as they work through the anguish of losing a job and the search for another, as they begin a new chapter in their lives.

Although the session is still about six weeks away, we have already been called to two budget meetings and there will be more to follow. Yes, the next fiscal year is going to be tough, but I am confident that we will meet our challenges head on, as OJJ always does, and we will come out stronger and more effective than ever. OJJ staff always does what it takes to meet the mission under whatever circumstances are thrown at us. And for that I thank each and every one of you in every office and facility for your efforts – every day and under all kinds of circumstances – to meet the mission.

Sincerely,  
"Doc"

*Dr. Mary Livers*

Mary L. Livers, MSW, PH.D, Deputy Secretary