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# what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

It's been a productive week with lots of meetings, some more fun than others. One of the more enjoyable meetings took place Tuesday when we hosted several legislators and district attorneys on a tour of Bridge City. They observed group processes and had the opportunity to engage with youth, ask tough questions, and receive honest answers. Our visitors were very impressed with what they saw, heard and learned from the youth and staff. Way to go Bridge City!

One of the visitors asked a youth what had changed him during his time at BCCY. The youth impressed our visitors when he said he has "learned there is no right way to do wrong." I have to admit, I was pretty impressed myself. We ended the tour with a visit to Chef Ron Sonnier's Culinary Arts class where the inviting smell of freshly baked cookies wafted through the building. The students' cookies have become legendary, and we love to end our tours of the facility by showing off the Culinary Arts program.

The focus on Vocational Education in the facilities is to connect the youth in our programs with real, live work in the community once they have received training while in our care. Chef Sonnier has been successful in placing some of his students in New Orleans restaurants, and Swanson's carpentry program has been so successful that the Monroe Habitat for Humanity program has hired some of our kids. When our kids return to their communities with a GED and substantial career education that can help them land a good paying job, we have the satisfaction of knowing that we are meeting the mission in a meaningful and concrete way.

Mark Steward of MYSI joined me for a productive meeting with the Times Picayune, the New Orleans newspaper. Unfortunately, Chief Justice Kitty Kimball was unable to join us for that meeting, but the news is that she is recuperating at home after her stroke in January. We wish her the best as she continues to recover. I wish Justice Kimball had been able to tour BCCY – she would have been delighted to visit with the kids, and to see the progress we have made there.

We are continuing to work with architects on renovations to the buildings outside Swanson that are going to be used to house moderate residential care and treatment alternatives for both boys and girls. We are looking forward to taking another step toward providing a much needed level in our continuum of care.

DAS Carolyn Lewis, my assistant Nita Franklin-Shanklin and Program Specialist Jacqueline Page attended the Michael Baisden One Million Mentors Campaign at the Baton Rouge River Center last night. Staff from Jetson including Major James Spears, Program Manager Belinda Thomas, Sgt. Melvin Carter and Mst. Sgt. Kelly Johnson, brought several Jetson youth as well. National radio personality Michael Baisden has created a campaign to encourage a million Americans to serve as mentors for at-risk kids. The One Million Mentors Campaign to Save Our Kids is visiting 72 cities and hosting forums in partnership with local organizations. Nita is so enthusiastic that she is practically bubbling over, and has already starting signing up people at her church as mentors for at-risk kids, to keep them from becoming **our** kids.

Our leaders gathered today to learn more about the SAVRY from our partners in local jurisdictions. It was a good day and very productive. It's always good to see everyone chipping away together and getting better at what we do. Continuous improvement – that's what we are always striving for.

Stay tuned for our "Get Caught Reading" campaign, just around the corner. I'm signing off for now, looking forward to talking with you again next week.

Til then, thanks to each of you in every office and facility for all you do daily to meet the mission.

Sincerely,  
"Doc"

*Dr. Mary Livers*

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