
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Where y'at, Y'all?

That's a proper New Orleans greeting, right? I could be considered a commuter this week, since I've been in New Orleans every day but one this week. And I'm going back for a meeting next Monday. Do you think this Shreveport girl could have honorary New Orleans citizenship?

One of the wonderful things we did this week was to launch a new and innovative initiative in our secure facilities. "Get Caught Reading" was introduced at Bridge City and Jetson this week and Swanson will come on board a little later this month. Reading is a basic life skill that we all need. It's such a basic skill that we cannot succeed without being good readers and it's a skill that many of our kids don't possess. At one of our Parent Listening Meetings, a mother commented that "if you can read you can go anywhere." That is so true. "Get Caught Reading" will encourage our kids to read, not only to enhance their academic performance, but also to provide a forum for youth to participate in dialog about issues and concerns that are relevant to them. Emphasis on reading is not just a flash in the pan. We need to weave it into our discussions with our youth. Whenever I visit a facility I ask our young men if they are reading a book, and if so, what is the book about? What if everyone did that?

I'd like to challenge our PPOs in every region to ask their kids about their reading and study skills. I'm not saying you should teach kids to read – we have teachers for that – but we should be an inspiration to them. What's missing for a lot of our kids is motivation and good role models. Many of our kids come from homes that have no books in them. If we can motivate our kids and be good role models for them, we can do something really special for them in the short period of time that they are with us.

Changing gears, I was able to attend the luncheon meeting of the Governor's Conference on Juvenile Justice held at the Marriott-Convention Center Hotel in New Orleans. I was asked to make some comments and update everyone about what's going on with OJJ, and also to introduce the Bridge City Praise Team, all over the clinking of silverware and the sounds of conversation. The choir sang their hearts out although I was told that no one could hear them in the back of the banquet hall. That's too bad, because the kids sounded great, and they really enjoyed themselves.

During the conference I also had a chance to visit with some of the Lafayette PPOs, Kevin Broussard and Cassandra Brown. They were very enthusiastic about being at the conference, and they not only knew the mission, but it's obvious that they also live by it.

I went out to eat last night in New Orleans with Monroe Regional Manager Patty Newman and some of her staff including Willie Hunter, Gary Hunter, (yes, uncle and nephew) Larry Tolbird, and Gail Wilson, and three staff members from the Monroe detention center, Gay Moncries, Mahogany Gates and Valerie Tisdale. We went to Deanie's Seafood Restaurant in the French Quarter and enjoyed a great meal. I thought I was going to blend in, but Patty announced to everyone that they should all have fun but be careful, because I was the big boss, so they should not say anything embarrassing. Nobody at the table said anything unfortunate, and a good time was had by all. I was sitting between Gary and Willie, who both ordered barbecue shrimp, and they were careful not to squirt me with sauce, so that was a good thing too.

I had to go to a different hotel for another meeting, and found myself at the Roosevelt Hotel to meet with the LA Association of District Attorneys to provide an update on our plans for the coming year, and answer some of their questions. The Roosevelt is an interesting hotel with a long history - it was one of Huey Long's favorite hangouts – and it's been beautifully restored. But I was deprived of my morning coffee this morning because the hotel wanted to charge me \$15.00 for a pot of coffee. That's right, fifteen dollars. I looked around for a small coffee pot in my room, but I guess the nice and historic Roosevelt Hotel is too nice for that. So I cheated out and went without my coffee. All I wanted was a cup of coffee, not shares in the company.

Well that about does it for this week. Let's enjoy tomorrow's predicted sunshine, between the rains we just endured and more predicted for next week. And, thanks to everyone in every office and facility, for meeting the mission every day, rain or shine.

Sincerely, "Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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