
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

I am writing from the road. Asst. Sec. Girard Melancon and I left Baton Rouge Wednesday afternoon headed to Monroe. We met for dinner at the Warehouse Restaurant with Dep. Asst. Sec. Philippe Magloire, Colonel Louis Hyatt and SCY Director Carolyn Atkins. Nice view of the river, lots of good stories and food. Col. Hyatt has more stories than I do. Ask him about armadillos and mailboxes sometime. Thursday, we went to the Monroe Field Office and met with RM Patty Newman and Tallulah RM Ruth Stephens and their staffs. I enjoyed visiting with everyone and sharing information. Thanks to the Monroe and Tallulah staff for their good work. We moved on to Swanson for a Town Hall Meeting. We spent a lot of time talking about an important subject: the code of silence. We will never be able to address our issues unless we can name them and talk about them. Thanks to all of the staff for the good discussion! Today, we started our day at the Shreveport office meeting with RM Kristi Martin and Bishop Michael Duca of the Catholic Diocese. We discussed the possibility of partnering to provide services to our youth and their families. We also met with Juvenile Judges David Matlock, Paul Young and Shonda Stone, as well as Juvenile Judicial Administrator Ted Cox. It was all good. Thanks to the staff in the Shreveport office.

There is a topic I want to keep current - furthering education. I have been talking about the importance of our staff going to college. I want to make sure everybody understands that we must reach for the stars. I hope that one day all of the staff we hire have a college degree and get paid accordingly. I know we won't get there overnight, but that is a goal. If you don't have a degree, I'm encouraging you to start on it now. By the time that is a requirement, you will be well positioned for a promotion! And, it sets a good example for pursuing education for our youth. I realize that a degree doesn't make us geniuses, and our agency has many capable people who perform well without a degree. But we are evolving, and this is an aspect of our growth that will help our agency overall, over time.

If you have never worked on a degree, there is a good way to get started. OJJ is offering a small financial incentive for certain staff who attain a One-Year Certificate of Technical Studies in Juvenile Justice offered by the Louisiana Community and Technical College System. We want to reward people who take the initiative to better themselves and pursue an education that will help make them more effective professionals. We hope that once you get "hooked" on education, you will continue to get your associate degree, then a four year degree, on your own. We already have some staff who are making this move. Staff Development Director Fran Martin reports that 9 Jetson staff members have just completed two classes, Ethics and Technical Reporting, through LTC-Florida Parishes. Swanson has 13 staff who recently completed the classes at Delta Community College. Bridge City staff are also encouraged to attend Delgado Community College, which offers the classes, and the LTCTS classes on-line are available to any staff. Regional office staff are also eligible to take the classes. We are planning to offer courses in Crisis Intervention and Maladaptive Behavior this summer.

Shifting gears, the **Get Caught Reading program** in the facilities is bearing fruit. Two Jetson youth had this to say about the first book, *A View from the Roof*, by Dr. Calvin Mackie. Troy M. said, "I learned a lot from this book. He was like us. He was not trying to get an education, but his father insisted. All he wanted to do was to skip school and hang with his friends. Now I am trying to get an education and go to college. I want to make my family proud because nobody is going to do anything for me."

Justin S. wrote, "I learned some good life lessons...we should never set limits for ourselves because anything is possible if you put your mind to it. The chapter, "There Always Will be Hard Times: Prepare" got my attention. I know what you're about to say, "How does this kid know about hard times?" I am only 17 years old but I watched my mother suffer physical abuse for eight years...this book has opened my eyes to learn that God puts us through trials and tribulations for a reason. It is up to me to learn from my pain and suffering so I can better myself. Now that I have read this book it really does give me a different look on life."

Wisdom from our children...it is so rewarding to watch our kids grow and learn. Thanks to everyone for all you do every day to meet the mission.

Sincerely, "Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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