
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

Once again I am writing to you while stuck in an airport. My flight was supposed to leave at 2:30 but due to mechanical problems we are looking at a 6:15 p.m. takeoff. Maybe. With a little bit of luck I will be in Chicago by midnight, for my one-day meeting, and then turn around and get back on a plane, and get back to Louisiana about midnight. I was talking to someone on the phone just now, from my seat here at the airport, and my friend on the other end was confused...asked if I was stuck at the zoo...and somehow I feel like I AM at a zoo, with a guy sitting near me making bird noises. A grown man, no less. I'm headed to Chicago for a meeting with the MacArthur Foundation to discuss FINS and explore other ways that families and kids in crisis can receive appropriate services without coming into contact with the juvenile justice system.

The early part of the week was typical with regular Monday meetings and the close of the legislative session. Yea! There were no major changes to our budget, and we are all set to move forward with the Columbia site. We are really excited about that, and plan to hit the ground running. We want to see how much we can get done this year, before we have to look at next year's budget.

The Gulf oil spill continues to be a major concern for all of us, and I again thank our state leaders for their diligence in dealing with all the issues involved in the relief efforts. If you know anyone who is directly involved with the day-to-day oil spill operations, please give them our thanks. I can only imagine how demanding this has been with the situation going on for so long, and I know it's been exhausting. Now with the impending hurricane season on everyone's mind, there's that added level of concern.

My observation is that people without Ph.Ds think it's easy to get that degree, you just have to do it. I want to say this – it's not as easy as it looks. Whether your degree is in chemistry or higher education, it's a long, hard process. 75 percent of all the people who enter a Ph.D program finish their coursework, have their oral exams, and never finish. They never get that dissertation completed. So, congratulations and hats off to **Assistant Secretary Girard Melancon**, our newest Ph.D. He successfully defended his dissertation this week and now we get to call him "Doctor G." It takes an extreme amount of dedication and discipline to complete a Ph.D, and I have to tell you that Girard did it the hard way. It took him five years to complete the degree. During the past five years, Girard has worked fulltime, and in the middle of all this he became the father of twins, he moved his family from Lafayette to Baton Rouge, and renovated their home. Can anyone have had more on their plate? Girard won't know what to do with all his extra time, he's going to feel like he's on vacation. I guess I will have to find some extra work to keep him busy. Just kidding, Doctor G., we are so very proud of you.

You see the most interesting people in airports. A guy just walked by who looks a lot like Joran Van Der Sloot, but he did not have a police escort, so it was probably not him. I guess he's still in Peru and not wandering around the airport.

Well, I'll sign off now, with my thanks to each of you, in every OJJ location, for all you do every day to meet the mission. You probably don't want me to go on with my observations for another two hours. Have a wonderful weekend.

Sincerely,

"Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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