
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

I hope everybody had a wonderful Fourth of July and got all the things done that you wanted to. I ended being able to play golf after all – it didn't rain but it was really hot and humid. I was determined that I was going to play golf no matter how hot and sticky it was outside.

The American Probation and Parole Association (an affiliate of ACA) has declared July National Probation Supervision month. The week of July 18-28 is Probation, Parole and Community Supervision Week, and the regional offices are planning lots of events to recognize and honor our PPOs.

This week Mark Steward of the Missouri Youth Services Institute and I visited the Shreveport Times Editorial Board. We had a good hour-and-a half meeting, with a positive discussion on issues facing our agency and the state. Editorial board members are community leaders in their own right and we appreciate the opportunity for a sit-down with them.

After the meeting in Shreveport, Mark and I drove to Monroe for a visit to Swanson. We were there until about 8 p.m., visiting most of the dorms where we were able to talk with the staff and the youth. Mark was particularly impressed with the youth in the Holly dorms, which have long been some of our most challenging youth. They are older kids and the physical environment in the Hollies has a little more hardened appearance. The kids were out playing basketball and they were very friendly, so we engaged in conversation with them. You can really feel the difference in the environment at Swanson, and my hats off to the staff and the youth for their hard work.

The next day Mark, Swanson director Carolyn Atkins and I met with the editorial board of the Monroe News Star. That board too includes a number of community leaders, who were very encouraging, and they were interested in what is going on with Swanson and OJJ.

We then went to the Columbia site for a meeting with area community leaders, to provide an update on our plans for the new Columbia Center for Youth now that we have accepted legal responsibility for the facility. We are very pleased that the Governor and the legislature provided the funding for the Columbia facility. It will be an important component in our systemic reform effort.

Today we have a large group meeting here at central office for an after-action review of the recent escape at Bridge City and the successful effort to regain custody of those two youth. There is a lot of excellent discussion around the event, and from this meeting, we will have a number of recommendations to better address this type of situation in the future. We, of course, don't want to get good at this. We hope our youth will make better decisions about how to leave a facility.

As ever, thanks to each of you in every facility and office, for your work every day to meet the mission.
You *are* OJJ.

Sincerely,

“Doc” *Dr. Mary Livers*

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