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# what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everybody:

Most of you are probably aware that the big news this week is the Governor's Conference on Juvenile Justice held in New Orleans. I got to meet with Dr. Ed Latessa from the University of Cincinnati, who works with us on program evaluation. Chief of Operations Ellyn Peterson and I met with Dr. Latessa to pick his brain. Then we attended his conference session - his presentations are not only educational but always entertaining. We had questions for him specific to CsoC and we wanted to check out his thoughts regarding efficient mentorship programs. Then I attended a workshop along with other OJJ leadership staff on Jefferson Parish's analysis of their probation system. DAS Carolyn Lewis and I met briefly after that session with some folks to discuss the possibility of additional technical assistance from the MacArthur Foundation.

I have seen OJJ staff from all over the state here at the conference. I am told some 500 juvenile justice professionals attended, not just our employees, but employees from other juvenile justice agencies, judges, district attorneys, and providers. It's really good to see everyone learning together. These kinds of opportunities are rare, where we get a chance to visit. For instance, I spoke with Alexandria PPO Lori Johnson, who told me she is enjoying the conference, but the place is way too big for her. She's ready to go back to the quiet life of horse farming in Saline. I learned that there is a real problem right now because a lot of people cannot afford to take care of their horses due to the high cost of feed. Some horses have been abandoned along public lands. That is really heartbreaking, especially to those of us (me) who love horses. Perhaps one day we'll get that horse rescue program going that we have been discussing for some time. We have a vision that one day we can combine rescue of needy horses with an equine management as a vocational program.

On a happier note, on Thursday OJJ literally took center stage at the conference with Chef Ron Sonnier's Culinary Arts students showing off their skills by bringing dessert for 500 to the conference, and a special performance by OJJ's choirs - that's right, plural - a combined choir consisting of youth and staff from both Bridge City and Jetson. Group Leader Frances Bailey from Jetson and JJS5 Seletar Gosa from Bridge City are the respective choir mistresses, and worked their magic to have the two become one to give a rousing performance at the keynote luncheon. And that was topped off with Chef Sonnier's famous lemon squares and cookies, cookies, cookies. Oh, and another OJJ annual event at the conference is the silent auction of artwork by youth at all three facilities. Bidding is always brisk as conference participants vie for their favorite item. Proceeds of the auction are deposited into the youth's accounts so they can purchase items at the canteen at their facility. Thanks to Admin Assts. Wanda Murray, Gwen Brinkley and Shaeki Shanklin for handling the entire auction project. Our kids impressed everyone with their talent and their excellent manners. Congratulations to our secure care staff for modeling future the way and helping our kids to become young gentlemen and productive citizens. Most of the OJJ staff who attended met up for dinner at Drago's restaurant, and after that, no one is telling!

I hope everyone who is in the role of "administrative professional" received a nice recognition this week. You keep all of us supported in so many ways. Thanks for all you do.

A special thanks to Swanson Director Carolyn Atkins and her staff for what they did to "weather the storm" in Monroe. As you know by now, they had terrible storms that caused a power outage and a fire in one of the schools buildings. Our hats off to SCY staff for their safe and professional response to this emergency.

The terrible storms and loss of life remind us how unpredictable events can change or lives forever. Reach out to an old friend, tell your family you love them. Please keep the victims of these storms in your thoughts and prayers.

Well, that's about it for this week. For all of you who went to New Orleans, and those of you who stayed behind to keep operations running smoothly, my thanks to you in every site throughout our world, for all you do, every day, to meet the mission.

Sincerely,

"Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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