
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everybody:

WOW! WHAT A WEEK! The week started early with a call at midnight Sunday that two youth had left the building at Bridge City. The team came together quickly – thanks to DAS Sean Hamilton, Chief of Operations Elyn Peterson and Acting Chief of Investigative Services Chad Wells for hitting the road at midnight and working together with Bridge City staff and the New Orleans Probation and Parole office to apprehend the two youth. Shortly after I arrived at the facility, the youth were back in custody, a little after 9 a.m. Monday. Good job, Team! I was able to spend the rest of the day with Bridge City staff to survey their emergency operation plans and the Mississippi River levee just outside the front door.

On Tuesday I had several meetings before hitting the road with Sean Hamilton to spend some time at Swanson. We were able to have some quality time with Director Carolyn Atkins. On Wednesday, we covered a lot of territory at Swanson – we visited the Holly units and Cypress dorm, which we are looking forward to closing as soon as we successfully move into Columbia Center for Youth. We also toured the Yellow Brick School building that was recently damaged by fire. We observed that a lot of hard work is going on to clean up the building. We also visited Central Control to assess the need for changes to key control procedures.

Then we were off to Columbia. We walked around the Columbia site, where we could see that much progress toward renovations has been made. However, because of all the red tape and details of contracts and bids and specifications, (the devil is always in the details), it looks like we may not be able to get Columbia open until Spring 2012.

Just as we were leaving Columbia, we received notification that one of our youth had escaped from Swanson. As we were heading back to Swanson, we spotted him at an intersection. Luckily for us, a Columbia police officer was right on top of things and apprehended the 16 year old youth, who was back in custody within 30 minutes of leaving the facility, and no one was hurt. Unfortunately, as with most cases like this, in both cases staff error created opportunities for youth to make poor decisions. Those issues are currently being addressed and hopefully, incidents like these will be prevented.

Well, on Thursday I thought I would spend the entire day on emergency planning for the flood situation. In fact, part of the day was spent that way. Hopefully, by now you have all seen the news bulletin on our preparations for the Flood of 2011. The staff is busily preparing for the worst case scenario in the event that an unexpected disaster may occur. While some of the preparations are similar to hurricane readiness, this is a little different challenge. I know that many of you are on standby status in case you are needed, and I appreciate all the teamwork.

Speaking of teamwork, I was treated to a real display of teamwork yesterday when I was surprised by a celebration in my honor, called “Doc’s Appreciation” – with printed programs, beautiful decorations, wonderful food, speeches and camaraderie. What an amazing surprise! Now, I always knew that I am the last to know what’s going on and this was proof positive. This was planned for over three weeks right under my big nose and I thought that nothing ever gets past me. Talk about rumor control – I did not hear one peep, I did not stumble upon any information or discover the plan. Hmmm, I guess I’m losing my edge... ☺

But, I am truly so humbled that I don’t know what to say. I am literally in shock. Words are inadequate to describe my true appreciation for this show of support and the thoughtfulness of this event. My heartfelt thanks to each and every person that had something to do with this uplifting celebration on my behalf. Your display of love and support is overwhelming!

My thanks to all of the employees of this agency, who get the job done every day, for the betterment of Louisiana. You meet the mission, and, YOU ROCK!

Sincerely,

“Doc” *Dr. Mary Livers*

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