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# what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everybody:

I was just looking back at my calendar for this week and noticed that I was supposed to be in D.C attending a conference (BTW, funded by the feds) of the National Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. I was supposed to leave Saturday and return Wednesday, but I did not think it would be wise of me to be out of state while there is so much movement at the Capitol with HB1. I really hated to miss the conference, because I like to know what the current thinking is across the nation. But as it turned out, I stayed here, and made several trips to the Capitol, as did Undersecretary Connie Percell, Asst. Secretary Girard Melancon and DASs Karen Stubbs and Carolyn Lewis. We did our best to get our message out, as to what additional cuts would do to OJJ. However, HB 1 was passed with the amendment that would cut us further. We will be working hard to convey that OJJ will be severely impacted if we have to take more cuts.

On Wednesday, I was able to go to Swanson and met with the local daily newspaper, The News Star, and with KTVE/KARD TV on Thursday. The purpose of the visit was to help spread the word about the positive changes at Swanson, and to let the citizens of the northern part of the state know how important the facility and the planned opening of the Columbia facility are to the area, with regard to providing effective and constitutional services to the youth of that region. Two of our kids were interviewed for the television story, and they spoke their minds! They volunteered to speak, we did not choose them ahead of time, and we were pleased and a little awed to hear them both say that they are well treated at Swanson, and they know that the staff really cares about them and is helping them to become successful young men. They talked about the changes they have made since coming to Swanson, learning anger management, healthy masculinity, regularly attending school (which they did not do at home), earning a GED and taking vocational education courses to learn to earn a living, and looking forward to attending college. Both boys talked about the importance of family involvement – one gets weekly visits from family, who attend church with him on campus (note to Chaplain Ricky James: outstanding!), and the other youth spoke about earning the privilege of having escorted leave so he can visit with family away from the facility. They were asked if they would like to move to Columbia when it opens, and both boys said that would be alright only if the programming and treatment are the same as at Swanson.

Yesterday was a beautiful day in north Louisiana, the weather was cool and there was no humidity! It was a fine day to be at Swanson, to experience the very positive environment. Our visit to the dorm was very uplifting - just what I needed. Director Carolyn Atkins and her staff are doing a great job and are to be commended. As she always says - WHO YOU ARE MAKES A DIFFERENCE! Director Atkins makes a difference, and it shows in the positive attitudes of the youth - and the staff - at Swanson.

As you know, Monday is Memorial Day, and although it's a state holiday, Connie Percell and I will be at the Capitol once again, in budget hearings. Many staff will be off on Monday for the holiday – while many others will be taking care of our youth. Memorial Day is a national day of remembrance to honor the service of our military veterans and those who have died in our nation's service. The tradition goes back to 1868, when soldiers buried at Arlington National Cemetery were honored. Congress passed the "[National Moment of Remembrance](#)" resolution in 2000 (click the link for a press release signed by then-President Bill Clinton) which asks that all Americans "voluntarily and informally observe in their own way a moment of remembrance and respect, pausing from whatever they are doing for a moment of silence or listening to Taps."

Please take a moment to tell any veterans you know that you appreciate their service and the sacrifices they made for the rest of us. As ever, a special shout-out to the fighting men of the 487<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing, 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, and WWII veteran George Livers! Thanks, Dad, for your sacrifice for us and for our country. (My Mom and Dad keep up with what I am doing just like you do – from What's Up, Doc?)

And further, my thanks to each of you for the sacrifices that you make and the work you do every day to meet the mission.

Sincerely,

“Doc” *Dr. Mary Livers*

Mary L. Livers, MSW, PH.D, Deputy Secretary