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# what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

Well, Thanksgiving has come and gone and the countdown has started for Christmas. With a (wonderful) short week last week, we had a lot of catching up to do this week, which as ever, just flew by. It seems like we just got back into our offices Monday and now we are getting ready for the weekend once again. But all in all it was a good week.

Any week where Mark Steward from the Missouri Youth Services Institute visits is a good week. Mark started off in New Orleans with a meeting at the New Orleans office (thanks for hosting us, **RM Kelly Clement** and staff), then paid visits to Bridge City and Jetson (thanks to **Director Namon Reid** and **Acting Director Angela Sutton**, respectively). His final appearance was to testify about OJJ's progress to JJIC on Thursday. You can always count on Mark to tell it like it is, good, bad or indifferent. And he told it like it is to JJIC – Mark told the commissioners that OJJ is on track, moving in the right direction, the two facilities he visited are doing well – and that the Jetson and Swanson facilities are both in need of being replaced. He praised our staff and youth, but said, despite our best efforts, the buildings are run down and dilapidated, not in keeping with the therapeutic model. In my remarks to JJIC, I provided a status report on the state of our facilities. The commissioners asked good questions and seemed generally pleased with the direction that we are going.

We went right from the JJIC meeting into a session with the Joint Legislative Budget Committee. They are conducting the usual preliminary hearings and receiving reports and testimony ahead of the legislative session that starts in early April 2013. This year it will be a fiscal session, and every agency can expect to be carefully examined and grilled. There is another huge budget shortfall looming and OJJ will do what we have always done – we will take what we get and make the best use of it to meet our mission.

How about that sinkhole in Assumption Parish? It's getting bigger and deeper by the day, trees have fallen in, and natural gas is being flared off. Now it's "burped" up a bunch of vegetation. I'd much rather it burp than the other option – I hope it doesn't expel gas! Seriously, it's really sad that people are suffering after being evacuated from their homes indefinitely, and such a beautiful part of the ecosystem is now spoiled. I hear some residents have stayed in the area, which is amazing, and I hope they will be safe.

Don't you just love Louisiana weather? We had a couple of really cold days, and now it's practically balmy again, just in time for the weekend. On that note, I'll close for now, with my hope that you can get out and enjoy the gorgeous fall weather this weekend, because next week more storms are predicted. My thanks to you all, for all you do, every day, whatever the weather, whatever the OJJ location, to meet the mission.

Sincerely,

"Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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

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