
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

Vol. 4, No. 30, April 13, 2012

Hello, Everyone:

I hope you all had a wonderful Easter weekend, and you enjoyed either your crawfish or ham. Hey, that sounds like a good name for a book, "Crawfish and Ham," a Dr. Suess-type classic of southern Louisiana. Hopefully you didn't have an Easter like what happened in a couple of places. Two newsworthy incidents took place over Easter: a man dressed up like the Easter bunny fell and his head came off. As the headless bunny searched for his head, the kids were all shrieking. Wish I could have been there to see that. Another headline: Easter egg hunt turns violent. The story said that a man was hit with a claw hammer at an Easter egg hunt because he accused a woman of helping too much to find the golden egg. The golden egg, of course contained money - all of \$7.00. Oh, the drive to get ahead in the world.

You probably have heard by now that Swanson has now joined the other two facilities in having an escape from custody. Fortunately the youth who fled from custody in the community was quickly apprehended. Thanks to all the staff from Swanson, Monroe Probation and Parole and central office, who came together and successfully apprehended the youth not far from where he absconded. We must always be on our toes, we must always follow procedures and always be prepared for the chance that a youth will make poor decisions, whether inside or outside the facility. That is what our training tells us. The truth of the matter is that most escapes can be prevented if staff follow the principle of "eyes and ears supervision" at all times, and take the necessary precautions to minimize opportunities for youth to make poor decisions. While we have been very successful in the apprehension of youth in these circumstances, it is not our goal to be good at this – our goal is to prevent opportunities for bad decisions, and to encourage youth to make good decisions.

We are busy at central office getting ready for our three-year reaccreditation audit. We had a very good training session this week, which all central office staff attended. Not only was it educational, but it was also entertaining. The audit is in approximately 28 days and everyone is busy tidying up, cleaning up and studying their policies. I anticipate that we will be successful, then it will be Bridge City's turn. We look forward to the time when we are all totally ACA accredited. That will be time for bragging rights.

We had a quarterly PREA meeting here this week as well. Our PREA committee continues to be focused on all things PREA. Their next physical plant audit will be this summer at Ware. We appreciate this committee keeping us focused on sexual safety wherever we have youth, in residential care and in community supervision. As a reminder, we have received a \$750,000 grant from the U.S. DOJ/BJA for PREA-related projects, and we are anxious to get moving in that direction. Additionally, BJS, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, is currently in Louisiana, doing their second on-site surveys at all of our facilities. Those results, as well as results from facilities across the nation, will be released in 2013.

Today we say goodbye and good luck to **Asst. Secretary Dr. Girard Melancon**. We scraped up enough donations for cake and ice cream and a nice plaque for him to display in his new office at the Baton Rouge Community College. We wish him well and want to say "Thanks, Girard, we made it to another Friday at OJJ."

But thankfully, the rest of the OJJ family remains, and I also thank each and every one of you, in every office and facility, for all that you do, every day, to meet the mission.

Sincerely,

"Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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

Office of Juvenile Justice • PO Box 66458 • Baton Rouge, LA 70896 • e: Whatsupdoc?OJJ@la.gov • www.ojd.louisiana.gov