
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

Vol. 6, No. 1, August 16, 2013

Hello, Everybody:

OJJ 1 has landed! Yes, I'm back from the ACA Congress of Corrections in Washington, DC. There were some 4,000 people from all over the U.S., representing all disciplines of corrections, including jails and detention centers, community-based services, etc. By all accounts, it was a very successful gathering. Of course, the highlights for us were the final accreditation of Bridge City, and our acceptance of the Golden Eagle Award for having all of our units accredited. It was a very proud moment for Louisiana OJJ – we are now one of only three juvenile state systems to have everything accredited. (The other two states are Ohio and Kentucky.) To quote our Duck Dynasty friends, “we are happy, happy, happy!”

Accreditation itself is hard to achieve, and I think sometimes people confuse accreditation with perfection. Accreditation, to me, means that we have the policies, procedures and practices in place to give us the best chance to achieve our mission. Even as we are accredited, we are still responsible for making good decisions. It doesn't mean we're perfect, only that we're striving for perfection. Being accredited provides us with the tools and directions to maintain safe and healthy environments for youth and staff. And, thanks to all of our staff who are dedicated to this process. This is something we should all feel very proud about, but we cannot rest on our laurels. Jetson, Swanson and Community-Based Services - you're up next! You were all re-accredited in 2009 and it's good for three years. Next year, you are all up for another audit and re-accreditation.

Another important milestone we achieved this week was holding the first informational meeting on our proposed Second Chances Rescue program for retired racehorses, to be built at Jetson. Our youth will care for the horses while taking learning marketable skills and taking vocational training that will allow them to earn a national industry certification in equine care and grooming. We have so much unused acreage at Jetson that we can use a small part of it to create an equine retirement/retraining facility. At the meeting, our staff and representatives of the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation's (TRF) Second Chances program met with interested people from the community to discuss how the program will work, and TRF's fund-raising plans to buy the materials necessary to build proper fencing for the Jetson tract, a 10-stall teaching barn and other supplies necessary to make a horse (and people) safe environment. The labor to build the facility will be provided by OJJ and adult Corrections. TRF will then send 15-20 retired racehorses to the new facility and provide funds for their maintenance. Louisiana-bred horses and horses that have raced in Louisiana will be the first to be sent to the facility. This will be an important program for both the horses and the kids. When they are no longer able to race, retired racehorses are often abandoned to starve or sold for slaughter for human consumption in the European and Japanese markets. TRF operates several successful programs in adult prisons, and ours will be the first one in a juvenile facility.

We are keeping an eye on the tropical weather system right now – there's nothing really going on, but a “system” is out in the Gulf that could become a depression that could become a tropical storm...you get the idea. There's nothing to be concerned about right now, but we're taking note of any developments. We're just about to the prime time for tropical disturbances, so it's a good idea to keep an eye out.

Who Dat? Who Dat Nation is back on the airwaves tonight at 7 p.m. Da Saints will play the Oakland Raiders in a pre-season battle at the Superdome. It's not too late to wash your jersey and lay in a supply of goodies – chips and dips, drinks and yummy hot wings. Lots of wings! Even though it's really still high summer, I'll take the fall feel of a good football game whenever it comes.

Well, I hope you all have great plans for the weekend. Looks like it may stay dry so we can get outside and enjoy mowing grass in the killer heat. Or stay inside in the cool to escape the killer heat. Either way, I hope you will enjoy your weekend, with my thanks to each and every one of you, in every OJJ office and facility, for all you do in every season (football, basketball, baseball and track) to meet the mission.

Sincerely, “Doc” *Dr. Mary Livers*

P.S. Notice the volume change on this week's WUD. We've just started our 6th year of weekly conversations.

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