
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

As part of the PREA grant that we applied for and received, we agreed to host a multi-state leadership summit on organizational culture and PREA. So, this week we hosted a two and half day leadership summit for the top leadership in the juvenile justice agencies of Georgia, Kentucky, Texas, and of course, Louisiana. The meeting was presented by consultants with The Moss Group, who are considered national experts in PREA matters. We had the opportunity to hear three guest presenters, whose information was extremely valuable to all the participants. The speakers were Dr. Joyce Conley, a consultant with an extensive background in corrections; Tim Decker, Director of the Missouri Division of Youth Services and Fariborz Pakseresht, Director of the Oregon Youth Authority. Something that is always extremely valuable when we have multi-state participation, and particularly a concentrated group of leaders from other states, is the amount of information that is exchanged. We all left with the sense that we have all struggled with the same kinds of issues and same challenges. I'm sure there will be a lot of continued networking among those who participated in the summit that will serve to help each other out as we go on. The exchange of work products between the states will help all of us, as there is no point in reinventing the wheel. If other states have developed programs that can help us, we will use them, and we will share our programs with them. The summit ended on Wednesday at noon, and some of the participants' flights did not leave until later in the day. So, we were able to take several of the summit participants from all three states on an unannounced tour of Bridge City. Asst. Secretary Sean Hamilton and Regional Director Susan Miller escorted the group. The feedback we received was very positive. It's always good to be able to show folks around and show off one of our facilities. Thanks to Director Namon Reid and his staff for stepping up and putting our best face forward on no notice.

Another great event this week was a field trip for 12 Bridge City Culinary Arts students to world-famous Chef Paul Prudhomme's huge plant where he produces his Magic Seasoning Blends. The plant is in Harahan, not far from Bridge City. Our Chef Ron Sonnier arranged the visit, and Chef Paul and his staff were happy to host our culinary arts students and show them how the seasonings are formulated. He said that years ago, his restaurant in French Quarter received so many requests for his seasoning secrets, that he created his own line of herbs and spices that are popular with home cooks and professional chefs. The seasonings are distributed to all 50 states and a number of foreign countries. Chef Paul was so gracious to youth and staff – he told them his personal story of growing up in modest circumstances, the youngest of 13 kids in his family, and how he became successful, with a worldwide business, through hard work and determination. Chef Paul personally autographed one of his cookbooks for each student and member of the staff who attended. Many thanks to Chef Paul Prudhomme and his staff for spending time with our youth and teaching them that culinary arts go beyond just cooking good food. There is a wealth of career opportunities at many levels for people who are trained culinarians.

I am very happy to note that next week we will have the grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony for Swanson Center for Youth at Columbia. We have been working on renovating this facility for some time and we are very excited that the big day is almost here. Stay tuned next week!

It looks like a pleasant weekend ahead, although I'm hearing we may have a few storms from that system that went through parts of Texas yesterday with devastating tornadoes. Please keep our neighbors in Texas in your thoughts and prayers as they dig out from the destruction from those storms. With that, I'll close for this week, with my thanks to each and every member of the OJJ family, in every office and facility, for all you do every day to meet the mission.

Sincerely, "Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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