
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

As most of you know, the big news this week is the grand opening, at long last, of Swanson Center for Youth at Columbia. We had a memorable ribbon-cutting and program today, where a lot of local citizens and dignitaries joined us to visit the new facility and wish the youth and staff well as we begin operations. The campus looked gorgeous and the weather was beautiful – we could not have asked for a better day. The program began with the Swanson Color Guard presenting the colors – always a solemn display of patriotism that makes me proud. All the regional managers attended to show support, and the choir comprised of youth from Swanson, Bridge City and Jetson traveled all the way to Columbia to give a rousing performance – OJJ is on fire! I am just so pleased, and there are so many people throughout OJJ to recognize and thank. Central office engineer Curtis Badon has worked on this project tirelessly since we began and deserves a round of applause. Working alongside have been SCY Director Vickie Shoecraft and Deputy Director Kim Rushing, who will be the administrator responsible for daily operations, and staff from every area at SCY who pulled out all the stops to make the facility ready to accept youth and dress it up for our guests. Food Service Director Zelma Jones has spent many days working with the food service staff to ready the kitchen and cafeteria to feed the kids, and she rolled up her sleeves to help prepare a delicious lunch to serve our guests today. Asst. Sec. Sean Hamilton, RD Carolyn Lewis, Monroe RM Patty Newman and all of their staff have been instrumental in the successful opening. I also want to thank Gov. Bobby Jindal and state Sen. Neil Riser for their support. We had a media event Thursday where local news media toured the facility and visited with youth and staff. A youth who was interviewed talked about how much he likes Columbia after only a week in residence – he likes the small campus, smaller number of youth and the food! (Note to Zelma and the food service team: good job!) We had some good, positive press, and we feel OJJ is being welcomed as a member of the community. Columbia is making OJJ history, as we open our first small, regional facility. My thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make this a reality.

Another nice thing to anticipate is a welcome three-day weekend as we celebrate Memorial Day Monday. A lot of staff will be off Monday for the holiday, while secure care staff will be taking care of our youth. Memorial Day is the national holiday set aside to remember the sacrifices of members of the military and to honor the service of our veterans and those who died in our nation's service. Memorial Day began in 1868 to honor soldiers buried at Arlington National Cemetery. In 2000 Congress passed the [National Moment of Remembrance](#) resolution (click the link for a press release signed by President Bill Clinton) asking Americans to pause for a moment to "voluntarily and informally observe in their own way a moment of remembrance and respect." Please remember any veterans you know, and let them know you appreciate their service and sacrifice. As ever, I'd like to recognize the fighting men of the 487th Air Expeditionary Wing, 8th Air Force, and WWII veteran George Livers – my Dad. Thanks, Dad, and your comrades-in-arms, for your service to our country.

Memorial Day is the unofficial beginning of summer and summer brings...hurricane season. The National Weather Service just announced they expect a very active hurricane season (sounds familiar every year). Just in time, this weekend is also the annual state tax-free holiday for certain supplies needed to endure hurricanes and the aftermath. We can save the four percent state sales tax, and that can add up. For complete information, go to <http://revenue.louisiana.gov/>.

I'll close with my thanks to each and every member of the OJJ family, for all you do every day, make OJJ the best agency in state government, to make us all proud, and to meet the mission.

Sincerely, "Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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