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# what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

So this is Sweden, Part Two. I said last week that this week I'd talk about the differences between our culture and Sweden's. I have several observations about their culture, which appears to value efficiency, cautiousness and privacy. Let me clarify. First, efficiency. Sweden appears to be very precise and orderly. They support orderliness in timelines and simplicity in quality, reflected in the way they manage their time and resources. There does not appear to be a lot of ostentation – they are very practical and pragmatic, and not into a lot of excess.

Second, I actually asked one of our Swedish hosts what they thought about their own culture and she told me Swedes are very cautious in making decisions and policy changes, unlike other cultures that are more into risk-taking. Swedes do things more deliberately and are slower to come up with new ways of doing things. They are not as reactionary as some other cultures and appear to be slower to change in response to environmental matters.

The third area I noticed is privacy – Swedes are extremely protective of their privacy. In regard to protecting their own privacy, they are very closed. They are a warm and welcoming people, but very private in terms of their own identity. I observed that is a very strong value. They don't like to draw attention to the individual, because their society is so much more socialistic, or more collective, than ours. They don't like for an individual to stand either above or below others. That translates into how it impacts operations in prisons. Obviously they do not address PREA issues as we have. In many of the facilities that we toured, the doors to cells were out of view of the staff for hours. Doors could be covered so the staff could not see the inmate for hours at a time, and no one seemed uncomfortable with that. Many times staff had to open the doors to see into the cells, or rooms, and that is a big difference in operations. They told us that the inmates would probably not talk with the guests, and that the inmates didn't want to be around us, because there is a strong sense of shame at being there. Again, I felt that strong value toward privacy. The big difference that I saw is that the privacy issue is so big that it even overrode the need for security, which is very different from our system. Also, they have very homogeneous staffing in Sweden, as the inmate population has started to become more diverse. Up until now, the prison system housed mostly Swedish people, but the population is becoming more diverse, and in response to that issue, they are starting to hire people of more diverse backgrounds.

While people in other states were off on Monday and the banks and federal offices were closed to observe Columbus Day, here in Louisiana we were hard at work. Well, we'll make up for that holiday on Mardi Gras when everyone else will be working. One of the things we did Monday after the regular directors' meeting was tour the Prison Enterprises office in Baton Rouge to see the many products they offer to government agencies. We have long obtained most of our bed frames and mattresses for the secure care facilities from Prison Enterprises, but I think we will be able to expand the range of items we can purchase from them, as their offerings have become more varied.

As most of you know, a heavy weather system stormed across northeast Louisiana Tuesday and really devastated the Monroe/West Monroe area. The power was out for a while at our Monroe office, and there was heavy damage not far away, but thankfully, Swanson did not suffer the same inconvenience. The entire region was hard hit and the weather service has confirmed at least one strong tornado went through the area. We are back to normal work-wise, but a lot of people in northeast Louisiana suffered catastrophic property damage. Our thoughts and prayers go out to our neighbors in the area.

Thursday was Bosses' Day, and I certainly hope that OJJ's supervisors were all treated as well as the ones at central office. The Morale Committee went whole hog and served a magnificent full breakfast to all staff, not just the "bosses." What would bosses be, anyway, without the staff they supervise? We are only as good as our staff members, and I am always so proud to say that OJJ staff are the best anywhere. You have continued to perform so well despite numerous challenges over the years. It's a pleasure to work with such a dedicated and competent group of people.

We have been keeping an eye on spread of the Ebola virus for several weeks now, and the news has not gotten any better. Two more cases have been reported in Dallas, involving healthcare professionals who helped care for the first victim, who, sadly, has since died from the disease. As discussed earlier, there is no need to panic BUT we should all be observant of illness in anyone who has travelled to areas where the disease has been reported (several African countries and Spain) – and that includes the Dallas area. Our new Director of Health Services, Denise Dandridge, has conducted a tabletop exercise with CCS staff in the secure care facilities, on protocols to be followed. Let's all stay calm, be aware and observant, and keep our nation and the world in our thoughts and prayers as this terrible disease is battled wherever it appears worldwide.

On a lighter note, a gorgeous fall weekend is predicted, and I hope that every member of the OJJ team will be able to enjoy it, as ever with my sincere thanks for all you do, every day and wherever you serve, to meet the mission.

Sincerely,

"Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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