
what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

Well, there is certainly no shortage of things to talk about with you this week. We have not stopped since Monday.

I started out the week in New Orleans with a few staff members at the 39th Annual American Probation and Parole (APPA) Training Institute. The annual meeting is an opportunity for folks in community based services to come together and learn about what is going on in other parts of the country. We were proud to be a part of the event with a group of youth and staff from Bridge City presenting on LAMOD and demonstrating its key components – check ins, circle ups and group. As usual, they made me proud.

New Orleans was the place to be this week. I was also able to pop into the Louisiana Restaurant Association's Food Service and Hospitality Expo with the Bridge City Culinary Arts students and staff. Hundreds of companies participate in the expo, showing off their products to restaurants and hotels. It was an opportunity for the students to peek into the supply side of the business and sample some of the new products (and to get out of the hot kitchen for a bit).

After a regroup in Baton Rouge on Wednesday, I headed up to Bunkie on Thursday for an event that I have been anticipating for quite a while – the ground breaking for the Acadiana Center for Youth. Yep, construction has officially begun! As I pulled into Bunkie yesterday, I was greeted by multiple signs that Bunkie is ready for OJJ. The citizens of Bunkie and their local organizations really pulled out all of the stops to welcome us to their community.

At the construction site, with a beautiful blue sky as our backdrop, we gathered a few people instrumental to the project and did the ceremonial turning of the dirt and picture taking. We then rushed back to the Haas Auditorium to get out of the August heat. We were joined by over 200 guests to celebrate the event. It seemed like most of Bunkie was in attendance; and a few familiar faces from our facilities and regional offices. I believe RD Johnny Qualls may have been worried that we would not have enough refreshments for our guests. But as usual, the Culinary Arts students and staff did an excellent job of making sure that everyone was taken care of. We also had a couple of SCY youth help us out with the pledge of allegiance and closing prayer. A special thanks to RD Qualls, Sharon Graham, SCY youth, and the BCCY Culinary Arts students and staff for another successful event.

As I said yesterday to the crowd gathered, the significance of this facility is enormous and far reaching. The construction of the state of the art Acadiana Center for Youth marks the first time that a Louisiana secure care facility will have been designed and built tailored to therapeutic needs rather than based on a correctional model. It will stand as a national model in our field, and I know that once it is open, people will come from around the country to observe the good work that will go on within its walls.

I'll close for now, with a familiar saying here. There are only two seasons in Louisiana: football season and NOT football season. While many football purists do not consider preseason games as "real," I am looking forward to the Saints/Rams game tonight. Have a wonderful weekend, and thanks to every member of the OJJ family for all you do to meet the mission.

Sincerely,

"Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

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