

what's up doc?

by Dr. Mary Livers, PH.D, MSW, Deputy Secretary

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Hello, Everyone:

Did you miss me? The past 3 weeks What's Up, Doc has had a guest writer while I was on walkabout. I would like to thank my guest writers on a job well done. I had the opportunity to travel internationally in my role as president of ACA to the International Corrections and Prison Association in Melbourne, Australia. Let me tell you it is a long way over there mates! (And even longer coming back) Coming home was murder. I was either in the air, or in an airport-sitting somewhere for about 34 hours. Whoa. But, I did see all the things you expect to see while in Australia-koalas, iguanas, lots of colorful birds, wallabies and of course, kangaroos. BTW, I ate kangaroo and it is delicious. It is the one strange thing you eat, that isn't described as "tastes like chicken." It actually tastes like the very best sirloin steak. I was really impressed. Australia is known for its beef and sheep ranches. The beef and lamb were excellent. Have any of you been to Australia? Let me know what your experiences were in the land down under.

One thing I have learned from my travels is that most countries are dealing with many of the same problems we have here in the United States. In some ways, we are more progressive, and in other ways, other countries are more advanced. Australian juvenile services are dealing with issues of changing the punitive, correctional type culture to a more therapeutic environment. Sound familiar? So, we have a lot in common with some of our international partners.

I am back in Louisiana and more excited than ever to be back in the saddle at OJJ. It was a good educational experience, but I am so glad to be home! I realized quickly that I was not going to be eased back into work. I started my week with an early morning meeting in New Orleans on Monday and rushed back to the office to get briefed by the executive team.

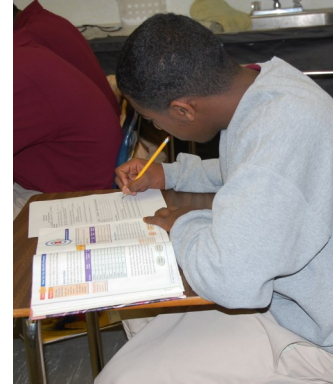
There is a lot going on in Baton Rouge and the rest of the state since the primary election a couple of weeks ago. Everyone is preparing for a new governor and a few new legislators and sheriffs. There will also be lots of opportunities for us to educate new and returning leaders on the work that we do at OJJ. I visited Representative Pat Smith on Tuesday to keep her up to date on how we meet our mission, and I will likely be on the road (and the phone) quite a bit in the next two months. As I am sure that you have heard, the state is once again facing a budget crisis, so it is vitally important that we keep people informed of what OJJ does and the resources that we need to accomplish it in a safe, effective manner.

On Thursday afternoon, a group of us spent some time with the architects working on the design for new Jetson and Swanson facilities. The capital outlay and construction process is a long, slow one -- Acadiana Center for Youth has been in the works for over 7 years. When I think about the benefits of having an environment built on a treatment model, rather than antiquated buildings built on a correctional model, I am excited about the possibilities for the future. We are already doing amazing work with the young people in our care, just think what we can do in new facilities where we can treat kids in a safe, effective manner.

I'll close with my sincere thanks to every member of the OJJ team, wherever you serve, for all you do every day to meet the mission.

Sincerely, "Doc" *Dr. Mary Livers*

PS: GEARX MGRS! BEAT BAMA!



Comments?
Send them to
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