

# what's up doc?

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

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Hello, Everyone:

I'm sure you all know that we celebrated Mardi Gras this week. I'm also sure that some of us celebrated more than others! Since it was very cold and I've seen my share of parades and revelry, I took it easy and got some things done at home. As cold as it was, nothing compares with the icicles we had last year when we experienced heavy rain along with the deep freeze. At least the sun was shining this year. Either way, warm sunshine or freezing rain, I have never, ever heard of a Mardi Gras celebration where no one showed up. Whether you brave the weather or watch the fun on television, it's still fun to eat king cake for several weeks and decorate with a bit of purple, green and gold.

Of course, Ash Wednesday follows Mardi Gras (properly known as Shrove Tuesday), as the first day of Lent. Lent is a period of spiritual discipline intended to be a time to contemplate about how we can improve ourselves spiritually and forsaking certain activities and habits. Pope Francis had a great suggestion for fasting when he said this week that even more than things like sweets or alcohol, we should fast from indifference towards others. He said fasting from indifference gives us the opportunity to learn to love others once again. Whether or not we engage in religious practices, there's nothing wrong with contemplation and thinking about how we can become better people, personally and professionally, and how we can become more loving toward the people around us, and those we don't even know. (Although, truth be told, Team OJJ folks are the most concerned, generous, kind-hearted, and yes, loving, people ever.)

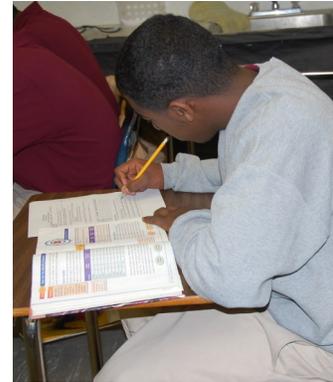
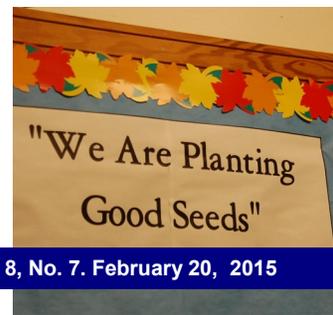
Asst. Sec. Sean Hamilton and I had the opportunity to attend a leadership town hall meeting at Swanson-Monroe this week. Staff from Columbia also attended, and we had very good participation from everyone. At the meeting, Director Vickie Shoecraft discussed ways to maintain a positive, healthy work culture within the facilities and throughout the agency, and ways that those in leadership roles model healthy work habits for their staff. Each of the Deputy Directors also added to the discussion—Kim Rushing, Eric Washington and Basil Richards. They all “encouraged the heart” by talking about the need for teamwork and working as a community, with each of us being accountable to one another and taking responsibility for our part in maintaining a healthy workplace. Working together as a community we will continue to move forward as an agency. OJJ leaders “inspire a shared vision” by demonstrating positive habits and behaviors, and their staffs share in the pride we take in our work, teamwork and dedication to meeting the mission every day — which “enables others to act” by keeping everyone moving in the same direction. Many thanks to Director Shoecraft and her staff for hosting the town hall meeting and being dedicated to “modeling the way.”

I was able to attend the Institute for Public Health and Justice's (IPHJ) regional consensus meeting in Ruston today, along with Asst. Sec. Sean Hamilton, Monroe RM Patty Newman, Shreveport RD Kristi Nelson and Tallulah RM Ruth Stephens. Meetings were also held in Lafayette, Baton Rouge and New Orleans. I was very pleased to see that stakeholders who attended the meeting included district attorneys, judges, law enforcement and others with an interest in juvenile justice, who gathered for an objective discussion about systemic reform in front end diversion, community intervention, placement and policy and procedure.

I'll close with my wish for you all to enjoy a great weekend, with my sincere thanks to every member of the OJJ family, in every office and facility, for all you do, every day and everywhere, to meet the mission.

Sincerely,

“Doc” *Dr. Mary Livers*



Comments?  
Send them to  
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