

From the Desk of the Executive Director



Melanie Amrhein

I've always heard that you will know when the time is right, and that time for me is now. I will retire from my position as Executive Director for LOSFA effective May 31, 2013. My career has been wide and varied and retiring evokes many emotions. As with anything, there will be good memories and sad memories. Sad memories are of being with my LOSFA family as we watched the tragedies during 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. Sad memories of the decline of the FFEL industry and the loss of the loan staff who loved their work; Sad memories of the much too early deaths of coworkers who were more like family; Connie, Jeff, Susan, David, Mary Lyn and Debbie.

The best memories will be of all the people, past and present that have shaped, inspired, challenged and befriended me during these last 30 years. If you are reading this, you are one of those people. I've always worked with the mantra "Take your work seriously, but take yourself lightly." The work we all do is more than a job; it is a mission and a passion. I know that the success of this office and its mission do not depend solely on me, but on an amazing team of individuals that come to work every day with the desire to help students. I would not, could

not, leave if I did not believe that this mission would be continued and grow stronger under new leadership.

I do hope our paths cross again and sorry I couldn't say good bye in person to everyone. Just know that even if we did not always agree, my actions were always to do the right thing for the students. My tenure at LOSFA has been extremely fulfilling and I am happy to have had the opportunity to serve.

People ask "what will you do?" and I say "whatever I feel like doing when I wake up in the morning." I am blessed to be able to retire while I'm young enough to enjoy it! I really don't have any plans other than growing flowers and finally keeping a clean house! Not very lofty goals, but they will do for a little while.

So long!

- Melanie

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Events planned to Celebrate 5-29 Day

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) will observe national '5-29 Day' at night with its inaugural "5-29 Day Call-In Night" on Wednesday, May 29 (5-29), from 6-9 p.m.

The "5-29" in "5-29 Day" refers to section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code which authorizes states to offer college saving plans that include substantial federal and state tax exemptions and other beneficial incentives to save.

Louisiana's 529 plan is called the Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START) saving program.

During these special nighttime hours, callers may contact LOSFA with questions about the START program or to request more information, including enrollment packets. LOSFA public information and START Saving representatives will provide on-the-spot answers and assistance for callers.

LOSFA will also conduct an online START Saving Plan Facebook chat during the same hours. Facebook users may participate by "liking" [LOSFA](#) and submitting questions on the LOSFA page. LOSFA staff will be online to answer all Facebook submitted questions as they are posted.

Callers from outside the Baton Rouge area may use LOSFA's toll-free number, 1-800-259-5626. Callers within the Baton Rouge area may use the local number, 225-219-1012.

LOSFA's normal call-in hours for information and assistance are 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The "5-29 Day

Call-In Night" is designed to assist callers who are unable to call during regular business hours.



In celebration of 5-29 Day, the College Savings Plans Network (CSPN) is holding a 5-29 Day Facebook Giveaway.

CSPN will give away ten \$529 awards to be deposited in newly established or already existing 529 plan accounts.

To enter the contest you must be 19 years old, a legal resident of the United States who has a social security number or a U.S. taxpayer identification number and an address that is not a P.O. Box.

Selected winners will designate an individual under the age of 18 with a social security number or U.S. taxpayer identification number as the recipient of the award.

Entering the contest is easy, just "Like" [CSPN on Facebook](#) to be eligible to win! All Entries must be received by 10:59 p.m. CST on May 28, 2013.

LOSFA Representatives Attend Education Excellence Summit

Members of LOSFA's staff attended the Second Annual Louisiana Education Summit on Wednesday, April 17 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Baton Rouge.



LOSFA's Scholarships and Grants Director Deborah Paul attended the Education Excellence Summit.



Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal and Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice discuss education reform during a panel moderated by Campbell Brown at the 2013 Education Excellence Summit in Baton Rouge, La. (Photo courtesy of Louisiana Association of Business and Industry)

LOSFA Prepares for 20th Anniversary Trailblazer Camp

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) will hold its 20th annual Trailblazer camps this summer. The first camp will be held at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches on July 14-16. The second camp will be at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux on July 21-23.

Trailblazer camps are comprehensive, three-day training workshops conducted by financial aid

schools throughout Louisiana were invited to attend the pilot edition of the camps. Fifty-one students attended the camp at NSU from July 31 – August 2 while 63 students became Trailblazers at LSU from August 14-16.

Over the three day period, students attended presentations by representatives from LOSFA and the Universities' staffs on topics such as "Financial Aid 101," "The Application Process: Completing the FAFSA," "Loan Program Types and the role of LOSFA," "Admission Process," "Career Placement," and more.

The camps were not all business. Students were treated to nightly entertainment, including a dance and karaoke event and visits to the campus recreation centers for basketball, volleyball, and swimming.



Group photo from the inaugural Trailblazer camp at Northwestern State University.

professionals for the purpose of educating selected high school students about the college admissions process and about how to obtain financial assistance for postsecondary education. After attending camp, Trailblazers return to their high schools and, under the supervision of their professional school counselor, share their knowledge of financial aid procedures with their peers.

As the 20th anniversary camps rapidly approach, we take a look back to where it all began.

The inaugural Trailblazer camps were held in 1994 at Louisiana State University (LSU) and Northwestern State University (NSU). Students from 100 high

The students enjoyed themselves and learned a lot about financial aid and college admissions process. When he was asked about the success of the first year's camps, Gil Gilson, NSU's Financial Aid Director at the time, said, "I was very pleased with the way the program was received, the quality of the students and their interests."

After the resounding success of the first Trailblazer camps, the program was expanded to include all Louisiana high schools. In the past 19 years, 3,261 students have gone through the program to become Trailblazers. LOSFA is hoping to draw a record number of students at this year's camps.

Story Continued on page 6...

2013 FLY Tour

Members of LOSFA’s Public Information & Communications staff hit the road in April to bring the third annual Financial Literacy for You (FLY) Tour to seven high schools across Louisiana. Two of the performances were parish-wide events as juniors and seniors from every school in Sabine and Avoyelles Parishes were bused to Many and Avoyelles high schools for the program.

The tour, which consisted of poems, skits and songs written and performed by LOSFA’s Kendra Woods, Britt

Kelly, Justin Marshall and Ebony Holmes, dealt with everything from credit and money management to financial aid for college.

The production also highlighted Louisiana Connect and a number of the college access, scholarship, and grant programs administered by LOSFA.

Performances reached more than 2,300 juniors and seniors throughout the state.



l to r: LOSFA’s Ebony Holmes, Justin Marshall, Kendra Woods, and Britt Kelly wrote and performed the 2013 edition of the Financial Literacy for You (FLY) Tour.



l to r: Justin Marshall, Kendra Woods, and Britt Kelly perform a song during the 2013 FLY Tour.



l to r: Kendra Woods and Ebony Holmes perform a skit during the 2013 FLY Tour.

Louisiana Resident Timenee Thomas to Participate in the GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy

Timenee Thomas has been selected to participate in the inaugural GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy (GUALA), a 12-month leadership development program for alumni of the federal GEAR UP program. The selected Alumni Leaders will travel to Washington, DC, in June 2013 to receive training on grassroots and social media advocacy, as well as leadership skills during a week-long retreat. The Alumni Leaders will then return home to work toward creating positive change in education policy for their younger peers. Thomas was selected from a nationwide pool of candidates for the inaugural class of 30 Alumni Leaders.

GEAR UP, or Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, is a federally funded college access and success program serving approximately 700,000 low-income students across 43 states and 3 territories. GEAR UP programs serve students starting in 7th grade, and follow the students through high school graduation or first year of postsecondary studies. GEAR UP programs are designed to meet local educational needs. Services often include academic tutoring, financial literacy, FAFSA completion, college tours, parent engagement programs, and more.

This region is served by Louisiana GEAR UP, which is based in Baton Rouge, LA, and currently serves 10th and 11th graders in 12 parishes across the state. Louisiana GEAR UP serves over 7,000 10th and 11th graders in 30 high schools across Louisiana by providing scholarships, summer programming, school-based club programming (Explorers' Clubs), writing contests, and grant funding for school improvement.

GUALA is a new program to engage alumni in a national effort to educate lawmakers and the public about the value of investing in targeted college access and success services. Using personal stories, Alumni Leaders will articulate the impact GEAR UP had on their success in postsecondary education.

After graduating from Bunkie High School, a GEAR UP school in the 2002-2008 Louisiana GEAR UP grant cycle,

Ms. Thomas went on to graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Health and Physical Education from Louisiana Tech University. Thomas believes that Louisiana GEAR UP played a major role in determining her career path and motivated her to work with low-income schools and students in an effort to help them become more successful.



Timenee Thomas

GUALA is a program of the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCEEP), the national training and technical assistance provider for the federal GEAR UP program. The Kresge Foundation provided funding to support the program.

"We welcome the inaugural class of the GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy," said Nathan Monell, NCEEP President and CEO. "These students exemplify the spirit of GEAR UP, and illustrate how the federal investment in the GEAR UP program is having a direct effect on these students' success in postsecondary education. We look forward to sharing their powerful stories with the community."

In response to the news, Assistant Director for Louisiana GEAR UP, Shannon J. Domingue said, "We are thrilled that Ms. Thomas has been selected to participate in the GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy and know that she will represent her community, our state, and Louisiana GEAR UP exceptionally well."

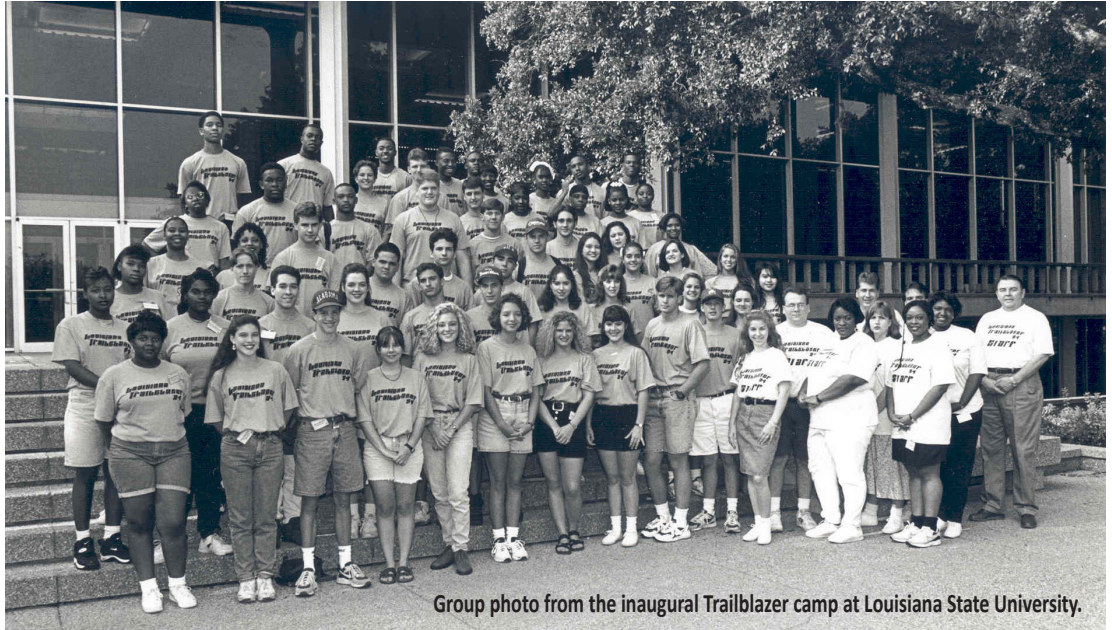
For more information about Louisiana GEAR UP, please contact Delreese Hector at 225-219-0921 or visit www.lagearup.com. To learn more about the GEAR UP Alumni Leadership Academy, please contact Judy Martinez at the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships at 202-530-1135 x 104 or www.edpartnerships.org.

Trailblazers story continued from page 3...

by visiting <https://www.osfa.la.gov/outreach/faces/jsf/trblazer/tbnReg1.jspx>.

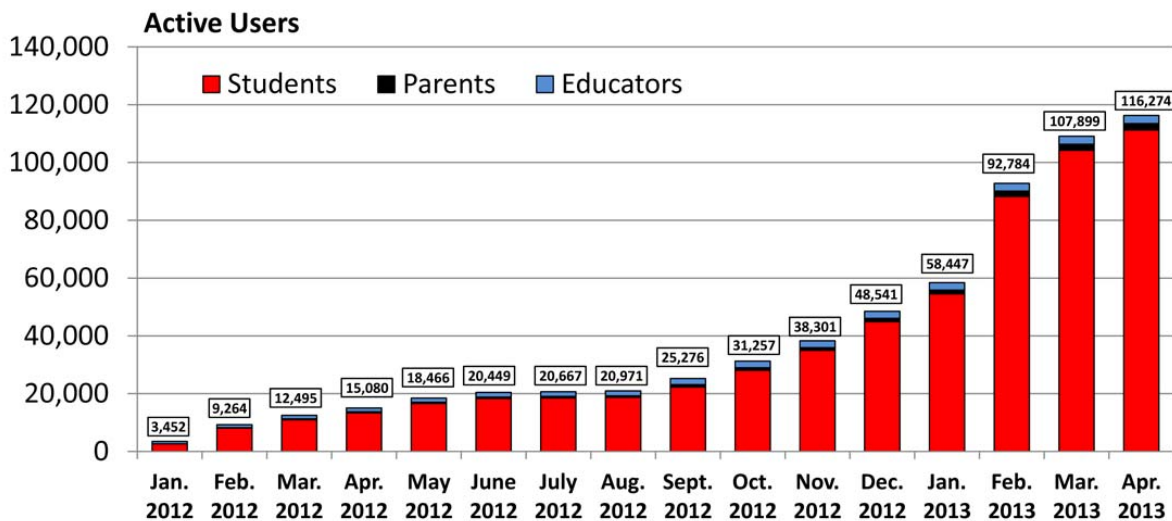
To participate, a high school must nominate a qualified current junior who is enthusiastic about the opportunity of being a Trailblazer. To be considered, students must be college bound, academically outstanding, effective public speakers and leaders among their peers. The success of the program depends solely upon the students' initiative in disseminating the information they have learned.

For more information on the Trailblazer Program, please contact Jerri Mack at jerri.mack@la.gov.



Group photo from the inaugural Trailblazer camp at Louisiana State University.

Professional school counselors who would like to nominate a student may still do so



April data as of 4/24/2013.

The current total of 116,274 Louisiana Connect users is comprised of 111,257 Students, 1,439 Community Administrators, 523 Professional School Counselors, 2,197 Parents, 841 Teachers, and 17 Scholarship Managers.

LOSFA's Social Media Sites



<http://www.facebook.com/LOSFA>



<http://www.twitter.com/LOSFA>



<http://www.youtube.com/LOSFA1000>



www.Flickr.com/LOSFA



For more information, contact the
Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance:

By Phone: 800-259-5626

By E-mail: custserv@la.gov

By Mail: P.O. Box 91202, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-9202

Web Address: www.osfa.la.gov

For submissions, opinions, or comments for LOSFA LOOP, please
contact Gus Wales at Gus.Wales@la.gov.