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# LOSFA LOOP

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November 2011 Edition

Volume 4-11

## **From the Desk of the Executive Director**

In November, we set aside a day to honor our military veterans and also celebrate Thanksgiving. The fact that our veterans have sacrificed to make this country one of the most prosperous countries in the world, coupled with the fact that Thanksgiving Day celebrations are traditionally observed with the gathering of family enjoying a large meal, make it ironic that November is also National Homeless Youth Awareness Month. Although LOSFA can't totally eliminate the phenomenon of homeless youth in Louisiana, we do work to address the issue and help to provide college access to homeless youth.

First of all, by administering the Chafee Educational Training Voucher Program for youth who have been in the foster care system we actually prevent some youth from becoming homeless in the first place. Foster care studies show that 25 percent of "aged-out" foster children must earn a living without a high school diploma or GED. At least 20 percent of them have been homeless and fewer than 20 percent are able to support themselves. Nearly a quarter of former foster care children are incarcerated within two years of their emancipation. Because they lack the support systems most young adults take for granted, aged-out foster care teens are at high risk for substance abuse, domestic violence, and poverty. The Chafee Educational Training Voucher Program is one resource that helps to curb these outcomes.

We also work closely with the Louisiana Department of Education to receive updates from the Louisiana Statewide Homeless Coordinator and post information for homeless youth on our Web site such as FAFSA tips for unaccompanied youth without stable housing, contact information for homeless student liaisons at public and charter schools, as well as information on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. We encourage you to use these resources as well to assist foster youth you may encounter.

Because we administer the Chafee Educational Training Voucher Program and keep our homeless student information updated throughout the year, we feel that it is appropriate to emphasize the issue of college access for homeless youth during National Homeless Youth Awareness Month. It's very important that we continue to be the First Choice for College Access for ALL Louisiana residents and with all our partners on-board, together we can make the dreams of a better future for Louisiana's foster youth a reality.

-- Melanie

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# LOSFA Outreach

## Catch up with us

November 1  
Nicholls State University Benefit's Fair - 10 AM to 4 PM

November 8  
Mamou Recreational Center – Mamou – 8:30am-12pm  
Parish-wide Browse session for Evangeline Parish students

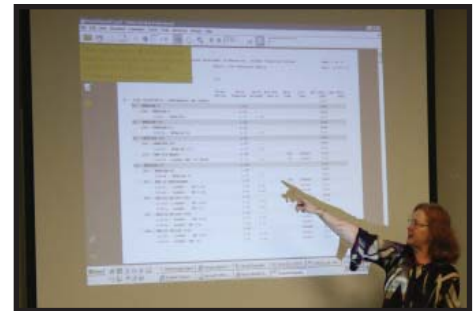
November 9  
Park Forest Middle School – Baton Rouge – 1pm  
College Access 4 U

November 12  
Baby Grand - Woman's Hospital in Baton Rouge - 8 AM to 1 PM

November 16  
SWASFAA Conference – Tulsa, OK

November 17  
SWASFAA Conference – Tulsa, OK

November 18  
SWASFAA Conference – Tulsa, OK



### Making a Difference

*LOSFA's Britt Kelly, right, reads to children at Mason's Academy in Baton Rouge on Make A Difference Day. Make A Difference Day is a national program dedicated to volunteerism.*



### Financial Planning Session

LOSFA's Sigmund Morel, Financial Literacy and Development Supervisor, attended the Financial Planning Session program hosted by Roland Doubleday, President of the Financial Planning Association of Greater New Orleans. It was held at the Jefferson Parish Library in Metairie. There were about 30 students and parents in attendance who received information about TOPS, START and the Jefferson Dollars for Scholars program, as well as browsed general financial aid information.

## Professional School Counselor Workshops 2011

LOSFA wrapped up another successful year of Professional School Counselor Workshops in October, with 910 representatives from 389 high schools and 103 middle schools attending -- the second highest attendance since the workshops began. The Baton Rouge workshop saw 245 attendees, making it the largest LOSFA workshop on record.

"We are extremely thankful for the dedicated counselors who attend our workshops annually," Gus Wales, Public Information and Communications Director, said. "It is truly a pleasure to work with them throughout the year to provide their students with the most accurate and up-to-date college/career access and financial aid information available. The students of Louisiana are fortunate to have such a committed group of counselors in their corner."

Attendees were able to preview the new Louisiana Connect Portal, and 78 counselors took advantage of additional training on its use from representatives of ConnectEDU. There were also updates on all LOSFA programs, including TOPS, the Louisiana Go Grant and the Early Start program along with announcement of dates for upcoming LOSFA events and outreach activities.









# Louisiana Connect Portal launched

The Louisiana Connect web portal ([www.LouisianaConnect.org](http://www.LouisianaConnect.org)) launched on October 24th, following in-person “preview” demonstrations offered at each of LOSFA’s Professional School Counselor Workshops conducted across the state. The turnout was strong at each workshop location and participants consistently asked engaging questions about the web portal, as well as implementation best practices.

The launch is following a phased approach to best meet the needs of individual high schools. In the first phase, Louisiana Connect is being made available exclusively to Guidance Counselors. In the second phase, students and parents will be able to activate their accounts.

## **Phase 1: Guidance Counselors are Welcomed to Louisiana Connect!**

Phase 1 is all about Guidance Counselors. On October 24th, “lead” Guidance Counselors, as identified by LOSFA, began receiving automated emails from Louisiana Connect inviting them to activate their accounts in the portal. Known as the “Community Administrator” role in Louisiana Connect, the lead counselor is able to create counselor and teacher logins for members of their staff, manage school-specific web portal settings, and much more.

To build on the web portal preview offered at the workshops, ConnectEDU is providing seven (7) live, web-based “Getting Started” trainings offered through November 16th. These trainings cover in-depth web portal functionality and best practices for high school implementation. All school staff members are welcome to join. Additionally, Guidance Counselors can access Louisiana Connect’s “Support Portal”, which provides:

- On-demand training sessions, compiled from live webinars conducted through mid-November
- Comprehensive Training Guides
- Best-practice materials for parent engagement in the web portal
- FAQs

## **Phase 2: Students and Parents Activate Accounts in Louisiana Connect**

Student and Parent account activation follows Phase 1. As discussed at the guidance counselor workshops, Student Transcript System (STS) and Student Information System (SIS) data is being loaded into Louisiana Connect directly from the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE). In addition to driving Louisiana Connect’s comprehensive planning tools, this data enables students and parents to create accounts in the web portal by simply “validating” their identity (a process that requires confirmation of Name, State Student ID and High School Name).

As this data is made available by LDOE over the next 3-4 weeks, the Louisiana Connect team will complete initial quality assurance on a high school-by-high school basis. Guidance counselors will be notified that Students and Parents are ready to activate their accounts in the web portal when this process is completed for their school.



# LASFAA Conference 2011

The Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Fall 2011 Conference was held the last week of October in Baton Rouge. This year's theme was "The Evolution of Financial Aid: Past, Present and Future 'Are We There Yet?'"

In addition to updates on LOSFA programs, the conference featured updates from the U.S. Department of Education on federal programs and presentations on how to Get the Word Out on available programs.



*LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein delivers an agency update as part of the LASFAA Fall 2011 conference. Included were updates on the agency's plans to enter into Voluntary Flexible Arrangements to work with the United States Department of Education, funding agency programs and the Louisiana Connect Portal.*



*Left, Financial Literacy and Development's Sigmund Morel and Jennifer Guhman exhibit at the LASFAA Conference*



*Former Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission member Bruce Busada and LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein at the LASFAA Fall Conference.*



After working for LOSFA for 19 years, Loan Administration's Nell Rivet retired on October 28. "The first Monday after October 28, I plan to set my alarm for 7 a.m. so that I can semi-wake up and decide if I would like to get out of bed or not and revel in the fact that I do not have to get up at 5 a.m.," she said. A farewell party was held for her on her last day, complete with flowers and gifts.



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