



LOSFA LOOP

October 2009 Edition

Volume 2-10

From the Desk of the Executive Director

I have always loved October! It signals somewhat of a respite from the heat of summer and the intense processing that our cyclical calendar in financial aid mandates. Students are in school, most of the aid is in place, FISAPs are filed and we can concentrate on the upcoming year when it all starts over again.

That was then...this is now. What is our future? Will there be a Perkins Loan Program? Will we be processing FFEL or Direct Loans or something new? Will I be able to access resources from lenders and guarantors that I have depended on for years? No one knows for sure. At the schools, I know you are grappling with these decisions and I wish I had answers for all of you, but I don't. Congress is still wading through legislation that will determine our future lives and here we are, at the end of the 2009 Federal Fiscal Year, and still we wait, and wait, and wait. However, I remain optimistic, because whatever the outcome, the financial aid professionals in Louisiana are strong, resilient, flexible, and resourceful.

My commitment to you is that we (LOSFA) will be prepared to offer whatever services necessary to help. My staff has already begun taking the necessary steps to transform, adapt and create services and programs to benefit the schools and students of Louisiana. One such service that I will brag on today is our FLY- Financial Literacy for You - Team.

At LOSFA, we have always been productive in singularly administering our financial aid programs and outreach efforts, but we're so much more effective when we all work together as a team. It is for this

reason that we decided to form the FLY Team. The team is comprised of staff members from our Public Information and Communications Division, School and Lender Services, Default Prevention and Default Recoveries Sections. The focus of the team is to collaborate in order to develop creative techniques for delivering the message of the importance of financial literacy to parents, college students, high school and middle school students.

After weeks of meetings, the FLY team chose the month of September, which was designated as Louisiana's College Savings Month, to conduct their pilot presentations at Plaquemine High School, Broadmoor Middle School and several campuses of Delgado Community College. Now that the pilot presentations are complete, the FLY Team is in the process of assessing the effectiveness of their different resources for the various audiences. I am excited to see what their next steps will be in this process and will keep LOSFA LOOP readers abreast of the progress.

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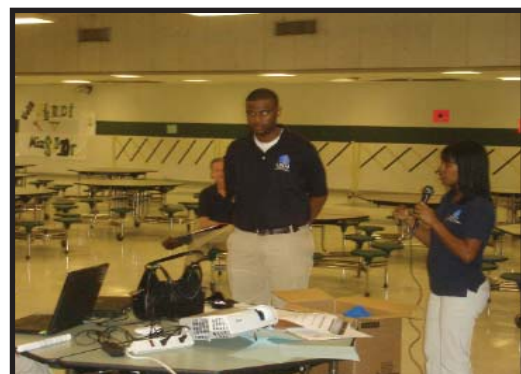
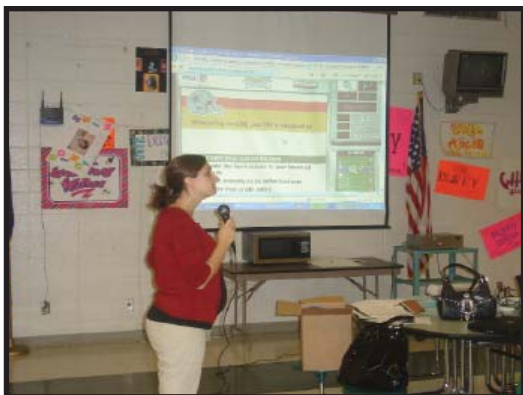
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LOSFA Outreach

FLY Team reaches out to students

In July 2009, LOSFA assembled staff from School and Lender Services (SLS), Public Information and Communication (PIC), Default Prevention and Default Recoveries to create the FLY (Financial Literacy for You) Team. The purpose of the FLY Team is to develop creative avenues to disseminate financial literacy information to different audiences (college students, high school students, middle school students and parents). April Matessino, SLS representative, below, and PIC representatives Justin Marshall and Kendra Woods, right, gave a FLY presentation to the senior class at Plaquemine High School.



LOSFA Advisory Committee

Lynette Viskozki, Centenary College, and Deanna Cooper, LSU Health Sciences Center-Shreveport, were in attendance at the LOSFA Advisory Committee meeting on Sept. 11th. The committee meet to discuss expanding the TOPS Academic Year definition to include Spring Intersession. It also received updates on the Early Start Program, College Goal Sunday, possible legislative changes to FFELP and LOSFA's Outreach and Re-Branding Initiative.



Melanie Amrhein elected to the Mapping Your Future Board of Directors

LOSFA's Executive Director Melanie Amrhein has been elected to the Mapping Your Future Board of Directors.

"I look forward to the serving on the Board of Directors, and working with the other members to ensure that Mapping Your Future continues meeting the needs of students, schools, and the financial aid community," said Amrhein.

Based in Round Rock, Texas, Mapping Your Future is a public-service organization of the financial aid industry—bringing together the expertise of the industry to provide services online. Mapping Your Future provides information and services in a neutral and non-commercial format for the ultimate benefit of students and families. Since 1996, Mapping Your Future has received a number of awards, including recognition for its excellence in content and innovation in technology services.

Mapping Your Future (www.MappingYourFuture.org) provides step-by-step instructions on career,

college planning and financial aid. In addition, the site offers Online Student Loan Counseling, money management information and tools and online customer service for schools and their students.

"Ms. Amrhein brings a wide range of experience in the financial aid industry and higher education, including leadership roles with several financial aid industry organizations and Louisiana State University," said Julie Kubisiak, chair of the Mapping Your Future board and executive director of Student Loans of North Dakota. "This experience and knowledge will be essential in helping guide the organization through the next several years, as the financial aid industry faces many changes with impending legislation."

Other board members include Steven Brooks, executive director of North Carolina State Education Student Loan Authority; Bruce Marks, director of Montana Guaranteed Student Loan Program; and William H. Hurry, Jr., executive director at Rhode Island Higher Education Assistance Authority.

TOPS Academic Year expanded to include Spring Intersession

The Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission/Louisiana Tuition Trust Authority (LASFAC/LATTA) Executive Committee approved changes to the TOPS Academic Year at its September meeting. Retroactive to the 2008-2009 academic year, hours earned during the Spring Intersession can be used toward the 24 hours required for TOPS retention. All hours earned between the beginning of the Fall Semester or Term and the beginning of the Summer Semester or Term can be used toward the 24 hour annual requirement. This includes all intersessions, "mini-mesters". etc. held within that time frame. In order to count, the class must be completed before the beginning of the school's Summer Semester.

Changes for students in the military

Also, students who enter the armed forces on active duty within one year of high school graduation must now enroll as full time students in an eligible institution no later than the semester or term immediately after the one year anniversary of their separation from active duty to be eligible for a TOPS award. This becomes effective for the 2009-2010 (current) academic year.

Changes to START approved

The Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission/Louisiana Tuition Trust Authority (LASFAC/LATTA) Executive Committee approved rule changes to allow START account owners to leave their existing investments in total equities, while selecting a new option for new investments. This has the effect of allowing the account owner to have multiple options in the START program.

Also approved was a special exception to the program prohibition of partial refunds from accounts. Any withdrawal from an account that is not used to pay Qualified Higher Education Expenses is considered a refund. Currently, an account owner can close an account and withdraw the total value of the

account. In such a case, the earnings are subject to both state and federal income taxes and a federal penalty if the funds are not rolled over to another 529 program. The account owner also forfeits any Earnings Enhancements and the interest thereon.

The rule change will allow account owners greater flexibility in managing their accounts by allowing account owners to make partial withdrawals for the sole purpose of rolling the funds over to another START account which is owned by the same owner, so long as the beneficiary of the second account is a member of the family of the beneficiary of the first account.

2009 LOSFA Professional School Counselor Workshops scheduled

LOSFA's annual Professional School Counselor Workshops have been scheduled and any school counselor who has not yet registered is encouraged to do so.

Counselors may register at <http://www.osfa.la.gov/workshops>.

Counselors may register late after October 2, but those who do so will not receive an updated information binder on the day of the workshop. Binders will be mailed afterward to anyone who registers late.

This year, LOSFA is combining the Middle School and High School workshops. The workshops will be focused on program updates. Attendees will also receive updates on LOSFA's College Knowledge and Financial Literacy for You (FLY) programs.

Dates and Locations

Registration: 8 a.m.

Workshop: 8:30 a.m. - noon

October 26, 2009

Lafayette, Chenier Auditorium

October 27, 2009

Lake Charles, McNeese State University
Para Ballroom

October 28, 2009

Bossier City, Bossier City Parish Community College
Building D, Room 215

October 29, 2009

Monroe, University of Louisiana at Monroe
University Conference Center

October 30, 2009

Alexandria, Louisiana State University at Alexandria
Fitness Center

November 4, 2009

Thibodaux, Nicholls State University
Student Union Ballroom

November 5, 2009

Metairie, Celebration Church, 2701 Transcontinental

November 6, 2009

Mandeville, Castine Center at Pelican Park

November 9, 2009

Baton Rouge, Southern University
Student Union Ballroom

LOSFA'S NEW FACES

Twelve new hires in the last three months

LOSFA staff may have noticed some unfamiliar faces roaming the halls recently. That's because the agency has hired twelve new people in the last 3 months! Some of those people have things to say about their experiences, so here's a new Who's Who to help keep all the new names and faces straight.

Amanda Kirkwood
Student Financial Aid Specialist
Default Prevention



"I wanted a job that was willing to train me, close to home, had a family-like atmosphere, and that I could grow with. I thought a state job would also provide good benefits. I came to my interview and immediately felt that the people here would be a pleasure to work for and with. I was right; everyone here treats you like family. It is a wonderful place to start out in and I hope I can continue here for many years."



Lydia Woods
Student Worker
Admin Services



Taylor French
Student Worker
Fiscal



Bobby Courtney
Admin Technician
Admin Services



Kayla Williams
Admin Coordinator
Admin Services



Amanda Roquemore
Student Worker
Claims

Valerie Boston
Student Financial Aid Specialist
Default Recoveries



Ja'Kourtnei Montgomery
Student Worker
Scholarships and Grants

"I decided to come work for LOSFA, because I always wanted to have the experience of doing office work. So far, my experience here has been great. The people are wonderful and friendly. I really enjoy the section I work in, not only because of the people, but I've learned a lot about TOPS and other programs. I'm really grateful that I applied and was accepted into the LOSFA family!"



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Scholarships and Grants welcome new personnel

The Scholarships and Grants (SG) division has two new faces -- although they're pretty familiar faces.

Linda Gooch and Erica Hughes have moved into the division from START. Hughes, who begins her new job on Oct. 5, will work in the Special Programs division and Gooch, who began on Sept. 8, is in Awards and Renewals.

Hughes has been with LOSFA since October 2008. "Since I've been here I have become acquainted with several people that have truly become my friends and even mentors," she said. "Making the decision to move to SG was hard. I do have a soft spot in my heart for START." Still, she decided to accept the new position in hopes that "one day (the move) will open doors for better opportunities within LOSFA."

Gooch has been a LOSFA employee for many years. She has worked for the agency for 10 years, although not consecutively.

"The move to SG was to give me a look at a division of the agency (TOPS) that I had never worked with on a day to day basis," she said. "I was exposed to TOPS, START and loans in the 5-and-a-half years that I worked in Public Information and Communications, but never had a hands-on experience in the SG/TOPS division."



Linda Gooch is the newest member of the Awards and Renewals team. She transferred from START.



Erica Hughes joins Special Projects on Oct. 5th.

College Goal Sunday committee holds first meeting for 2010 event



The Louisiana College Goal Sunday Task Force met for its first 2010 planning meeting on Sept. 17th. The committee discussed ways to build upon last year's success, while focusing on ways to raise funds for the scholarships awarded to students at each College Goal Sunday site.

College Goal Sunday is scheduled for Feb. 21, 2010, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

College Goal Sunday sites

Alexandria

Louisiana State University-Alexandria

Baton Rouge

Baton Rouge Community College

Southern University

Bossier City

Bossier Parish Community College

Grambling

Grambling State University

Hammond

Southeastern Louisiana University

Houma

Fletcher Community and Technical College

Lafayette

University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Lake Charles

SOWELA Community and Technical College

Monroe

Louisiana Delta Community College

Natchitoches

Northwestern State University

New Orleans

Delgado Community College - West Bank Campus

Dillard University

Southern University - New Orleans

Ruston

Louisiana Tech University

St. James

St. James High School

LOSFA Gives

LOSFA surpasses the goal



In September, LOSFA participated in a fundraising drive for the United Way.

The agency set a goal of \$6,500 and surpassed that goal on Sept. 23. By the drive's end, the agency had raised \$7,313.

Left, Scholarships and Grants Director Deborah Paul browses a selection of items offered for sale by former LOSFA employee Christy Marchand. Marchand donated \$235, 20 percent of her sales, to LOSFA's fundraiser.

Donating Life

Loan Administration's Nell Rivet, below, displays the t-shirt she received after donating blood during LOSFA's second Blood Drive of 2009.

The agency holds a Blood Drive each year, but added an additional drive this year due to the blood shortage.

College Goal Sunday Recognition dinner

During the upcoming Fall LASFAA Conference in New Orleans, LOSFA will host a College Goal Sunday Recognition and Debriefing light dinner on Wednesday, October 21st at 5:00 pm in Grand Ballroom A of the Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel.

Everyone who participated in Louisiana's 2009 College Goal Sunday Event as a site coordinator, task force member or volunteer is invited to attend.

Please come in order to be recognized for your contribution and to briefly discuss our upcoming 2010 College Goal Sunday Event.



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Recognition of the importance of financial literacy is more prevalent in today's society than it has ever been. So I can't make conveying that message the sole responsibility of the FLY Team. I have to lead by example and that's why I sought election to the Mapping Your Future Board of Directors (Page 3). Mapping Your Future provides instructions on career, college planning and financial aid, concepts to which I have dedicated my career so I look forward to serving on the board.

This is a newsworthy edition of the LOOP, so read on to find out about changes in TOPS (Page 3) that will help students as well as changes to the START

Saving Program that will benefit account owners and beneficiaries (Page 4).

Finally, I can't say enough about the compassion of this agency. In this time of economic uncertainty, they donated over \$7,000.00 to the Capital Area United Way and conducted our second successful blood drive (Page 7). LOSFA may be Louisiana's First Choice for College Access, but it appears that a deep concern for Louisiana is LOSFA's first choice.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the conference – another reason to still love October!

-- Melanie

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Christin Sherwood
Student Financial Aid
Specialist
START



Karondia Harold
Student Financial Aid Specialist
Default Revcoveries



Tamekia Mars
Student Worker
Default Prevention



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

By Phone: 800-259-5626, Ext. 1012

By E-mail: custserv@osfa.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
David Roberts at droberts@osfa.la.gov.