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# LOSFA LOOP

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August 2011 Edition

Volume 4-8

## From the Desk of the Executive Director

Remember when “Back to School” meant the end of summer?? Not anymore! With schools beginning as early as next week, it seems the students’ summers are over as soon as they get started. What does “Back to School” mean to you? I hope it means new faces, new beginnings and new opportunities. That is exactly what it will mean to LOSFA. The launch of the Louisiana Connect portal coming this fall is a new and exciting initiative with many new partners that will bring opportunities for our students and those working with them on their path to success. I hope you are receiving the Louisiana Connect Newsletter. If not, let us know.

LOSFA has been invited to present at this month’s LASFAA Upper Management Meeting in Lafayette and we will be bringing information on Louisiana Connect in addition to our many other programs. Sujuan Boutte will be joining many of you for that presentation, along with Theresa Hay with the Board of Regents so I know it will be full of good and valuable information.

Another new opportunity is one recently presented to agencies like LOSFA that have guaranteed loans under the Federal Family Education Loan Program for more than 40 years. On May 31 of this year, the US Department of Education issued a Federal Register requesting Guaranty Agencies to propose consortium or team concepts for providing services to borrowers in an effective, efficient and cost savings manner. LOSFA is participating and has submitted proposals as part of two consortia. I am excited about this initiative and see it as the mechanism that will allow LOSFA to continue building on its mission to be Louisiana’s First Choice in College Access.

Speaking of College Access, I am so proud to announce that LOSFA just completed its 18th summer of Trailblazer camps. The staff does a monumental job of preparing these students to provide financial aid information as peer counselors during their senior year and both camps this year were very successful. In fact, Trailblazers will be the featured cover story in the BR Business Report’s statewide publication of NEXT Magazine in October. You can read more about this year’s camps in this issue.

I hope your “Back to School” is a good one!

-- Melanie

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### *In this edition. . .*

<b>LOSFA Outreach</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Trailblazer Camp 2001</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Family Connections at Trailblazer Camp</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Mapping Your Future</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Award System Assistance</b>	<b>9</b>

## LOSFA Outreach

### LOSFA partners with Big Buddy for financial literacy sessions



LOSFA is once more teaming up with Big Buddy to provide financial literacy training to students around Baton Rouge.

LOSFA's Financial Literacy and Development representatives spent a good deal of July meeting with small groups of high school students at the Belair Recreation Center (left) in Baton Rouge in multi-day sessions.

For an hour-and-a-half each day, the students underwent training in Money Management, Debt, Budgeting, Banking, Credit and Credit Cards.

LOSFA's Scott Burke (right) took part in an LA GearUp camp at Grambling University last month. He spoke about general financial aid, TOPS and how to choose a career. Students also watched a video clip from the FLY Tour and discussed the issues it raised.



(Left) LOSFA's Lynda Whittington, McNeese's Taina Savoit and UNO's Denise Spellman attended the July LASFAC Advisory Committee meeting. Meeting attendees heard Award System updates, a legislation update, plans for a Louisiana Connect portal Webinar and a review of the new Louisiana Award System Assistance form.

# Trailblazer Camp 2011

Another year of Trailblazer Camps has passed, with 179 students from across Louisiana gathering at Northwestern State University and at Nicholls State University to learn about college access and financial assistance. Two of those campers walked away with \$1,000 scholarships and five were chosen for the cover of a statewide magazine. Everyone walked away with a deeper knowledge of what it takes to pay for higher education. The following four pages feature photographs and stories about this year's campers. Additionally, videos made by the campers will be available on LOSFA's YouTube page in the next few weeks and additional photographs will be available on our Flickr site.



*Smile for the camera -- five Trailblazers were chosen for the cover of the 2011 edition of Next magazine. Joseph Spears of Beldaire High School (Baton Rouge), Michael Tran of Belle Chase High School, Aritney Ross of Bossier High School, Kasey Nance of Rayville High School and Julio Contreras of Terrebonne High School posed for a photographer and answered questions for Next's Special Projects Editor Jerry Martin. Next magazine focuses on the college experience, focusing on topics such as career pathways, interesting degrees and financial aid options. The magazine is free and is delivered to every junior and senior in Louisiana. Trailblazer Camp will be the subject of an article in the 2011 edition.*

## In their own words: Trailblazers tell what they learned at camp

"Some of the most important information that I learned about is to apply for your FAFSA early enough to be able to qualify for certain scholarships and other financial aid. You should renew your FAFSA annually to keep all your possibilities in line." -- Kasey Nance

"TOPS only pays for college tuition. All other expenses are funded through grants, scholarships and loans. The most important thing to do each year is fill out your FAFSA." -- Michael Tran

"I learned a ton about financial aid. It taught me to get ready for college now and not to delay. I know about many programs and how to get money. Most important, I learned not to borrow any unnecessary money." --Aritney Ross

"It's a lot of information, but I'd say what's most important is applying for scholarships. You don't have to be an "A" student to get a scholarship." -- Joseph Spears

"Trailblazer Camp opened my eyes to all the financial aid opportunities in Louisiana. I learned valuable information about TOPS and other state scholarships, as well as loans, military service and private aid. I realized that there are many chances for everyone to earn money for college." -- Julio Contreras



*They didn't go to camp expecting to leave \$1,000 richer, but that's what happened!*

*At each Trailblazer Camp, a drawing was held for a \$1,000 scholarship provided by LELA (Louisiana Education Loan Authority). Alliyah Sims (left), a student at Jewel M. Summer High School, was the winner at the Nicholls camp. Nick Collins (right), who attends Byrd High School, was the winner at the Northwestern camp. Pictured with both winners is Ann Carmichael of LELA.*





## Family connections at Trailblazer Camp

Sometimes being a Trailblazer is a family affair. Just ask Mo Carter and his sister LaShawn. In 2003, Mo was a Trailblazer. This year, LaShawn was.

“The experience was great,” Mo said. “By the time I left NSU I knew a whole lot more. I knew how to fill out a FAFSA and the first week of school, I got called in by my guidance counselor. I shared the binder of info [acquired at camp] and for one of our Senior Information Nights I helped our guidance counselors talk about financial aid.”

When his sister had the option of attending the camp, he didn’t hesitate to encourage her to attend.

“She called me in May, wanted to know what Trailblazer Camp was. With her senior year coming up, a lot is going to be busy for her,” he said. He told LaShawn the camp would help her prepare for college and give her an advantage when filling out financial aid applications. “I talked to her last night; she said she had so much fun. She learned a lot. She had a blast and said she didn’t want to leave.”

The Carters weren’t the only attendees to this year’s camps with a family connection.

Andrew Granger, a senior at Broadmoor High School in Baton Rouge, is the son of LOSFA’s Ronette Granger.

“It was weird at first,” he said, “but I had a blast altogether.”

He went to learn more about financial aid, because he didn’t know much, he said. Now he knows a lot – including how to fill out the FAFSA and how to apply for scholarships.

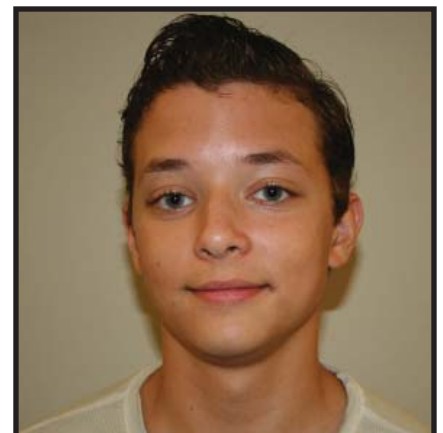
One of the highlights of the camp was the video he and his teammates made. The short films, promoting LOSFA’s programs, will be available on LOSFA’s social media sites soon.

Granger said he isn’t certain where he’ll go to college next year. He’s considering either LSU, Southeastern or McNeese, and he’s leaning toward a major in a computer-related field or chemical engineering.

Both he and Carter agree that Trailblazer Camp was a worthwhile experience and encourage anyone who has the opportunity to attend.



*Mo and LaShawn Carter*



*Andrew Granger*



## LOSFA, Mapping Your Future providing free services for students and schools

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) continues to sponsor Mapping Your Future in their effort to reach the students of Louisiana with information from student loan borrowing to career planning and money management. LOSFA is continuing to pay for these services making them FREE for Louisiana postsecondary schools for the 2011-12 academic year.

Benefits offered by Mapping Your Future to your school include:

- \* 21 types of student counseling sessions with more sessions to be added soon
- \* School portal for data retrieval, management, and reporting
- \* Storage of archived records
- \* ExitExpress and SchoolExpress (automated retrieval)
- \* Default Prevention Tools
- \* Ability to enable website integration of counseling
- \* Ability to enable website integration of calculators
- \* Retrieval of updated student data (from counseling)
- \* Customized counseling (adding some school-specific content, determine questions, HEOA required information)
- \* Access to new features and services now under planning and development.
- \* Wide variety of counseling sessions and other default prevention tools available

Mapping Your Future offers many counseling types, so schools don't have to use multiple counseling providers including Direct Loan entrance and exit counseling in Spanish, making it easier for Spanish-speaking students to understand their rights and responsibilities. Currently, the counseling sessions offered by Mapping Your Future include:

- Entrance counseling
- Direct Loan entrance
- Spanish Direct Loan entrance
- Perkins entrance
- Direct Loan and Perkins combined entrance
- Nursing entrance
- Health Professions entrance
- Direct PLUS entrance
- Direct Loan and Direct PLUS combined entrance
- Exit counseling
- Direct Loan exit
- Spanish Direct Loan exit
- Perkins exit
- Direct Loan and Perkins combined exit
- Nursing exit
- Health Professions exit
- Direct PLUS exit
- Direct Loan and Direct PLUS combined exit
- TEACH Grant exit
- Other counseling

*continued from Page 7*

- Financial Literacy
- Grace Period and Repayment
- Loan Management
- Private Loan

Online Counseling can be used for, or in addition to, in-person counseling interviews. Financial aid professionals can provide verbal and/or audio information about student loan borrowing in a computer lab or classroom setting, and then walk students through the counseling session.

Online Counseling also more easily enables schools to collect and retain required data from students. Mapping Your Future offers a number of other services that schools and students will find beneficial including career planning, money management, default prevention, and others.

Mapping Your Future is a public service nonprofit organization that has been providing this counseling service to schools, students, and families for more than 15 years.

The newsroom, located at <http://mappingyourfuture.org/Newsroom/index.cfm>, will provide additional information.

## Additional LOSFA Social Media sites to check out



### LOSFA's Social Media



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



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



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



[www.Flickr.com/LOSFA](http://www.Flickr.com/LOSFA)



## Award System Assistance form now available for schools

Postsecondary schools needing help navigating LOSFA's new Award System now have a new tool to get the assistance they need. Schools can use the Award System Assistance form located on their access page under the Help button.

The form was designed to allow schools to report any problems or issues they are having with the system and get a fast response, Scholarships and Grants Director Deborah Paul, said.

Help requests are emailed to a point person, then distributed to the appropriate section for resolution. Any issue can be handled this way, Paul said. So far, there have been requests for assistance navigating the new Award System. However, issues that require additional programming may also be reported this way.

A series of Webinars is planned over the upcoming months, including those on TOPS payment issues and on grade reporting.

Paul said she expects more help requests to come in as schools prepare for the Fall term.

Schools can expect a fairly immediate response to their questions, provided additional programming is not required, she said.



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](mailto:custserv@osfa.la.gov)

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

Web Address: [www.osfa.la.gov](http://www.osfa.la.gov)

For submissions, opinions or comments for LOSFA LOOP, please  
contact David Roberts at [droberts@osfa.la.gov](mailto:droberts@osfa.la.gov).