



LOSFA LOOP

February 2009 Edition

Volume 2-2

From the Desk of the Executive Director

February – Financial Aid Awareness Month

Financial Aid Awareness is a critical foundation for this agency and has become our primary mission over the past few years. LOSFA’s proud vision statement is “To be Louisiana’s First Choice for College Access”. That vision has materialized through increased outreach to middle school and workforce populations, value-added services to schools, administering College Goal Sunday and now a fully comprehensive array of programs that includes, but is not limited to, Louisiana’s START Saving Program, Early Start, TOPS, Go Grant, LEAP/SLEAP and FFELP. LOSFA is busier than ever, but still keeping administrative costs to a minimum. All state funds received for the new programs that were added in 2007-08 were utilized for awards and no administrative costs were included. As a comprehensive agency, LOSFA can utilize the revenues we earn from guaranteeing student loans to offset the cost of administering the state programs. That is why every loan LOSFA guarantees is crucial. Last year, LOSFA’s loan volume grew by 38%! That growth was a result of the state’s payment of the Federal Default Fee for LOSFA borrowers and the good work our staff has done to provide services for you and your students. I am happy to report that both of those will continue! While the state’s future appropriation for the Federal Default Fee is unknown at this time, we have a reserve that will allow for payment of the fee through the 2009-10 academic year on all loan types.

We are all facing daunting challenges with state budget deficits, more regulations, and fewer resources. Under the ECASLA legislation, the guaranty agencies

stand to lose millions of dollars in revenues if lenders sell their loans to the Department of Education. We need each other during these difficult times, and LOSFA needs you more than ever. As you decide who will guarantee your loans for the upcoming academic year, please consider guaranteeing all NEW loans with LOSFA. The return on this investment to you will be seen through our high level of service and support of state programs that will bring new technologies and innovations to make your jobs easier.

During Financial Aid Awareness Month we also pay tribute to the Financial Aid Officers and staff who counsel, advise, direct, inform and process students so that their dreams will one day be fulfilled. We salute you!

--Melanie

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LOSFA Outreach

DON'T FORGET! CALL-IN NIGHT SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 9, 2009

LOSFA will conduct its seventh annual "Financial Aid Call-In Night" on Monday, February 9, 2009 from 6-9 p.m.

During these special nighttime hours, callers may contact LOSFA with questions about all forms of state and federal student financial assistance, including the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), need based grants, student loans, and the Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START) program – Louisiana's 529 college saving plan.

LOSFA's public information representatives will also provide on-the-spot advice and assistance for completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid – also known as the FAFSA – which is the convenient

single application for most state and federal student aid programs.

Callers from outside the Baton Rouge area may use LOSFA's toll-free number, 1-800-259-5626, Ext. 1012. Callers within the Baton Rouge area may use the local number, (225) 922-1012.

LOSFA's normal call-in hours for student financial assistance information are 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The annual "Financial Aid Call-In Night" is designed to assist callers who are unable to call during regular business hours. The event is always held during the month of February, as part of National Financial Aid Awareness Month.

Places we've been. . .

▶ Single Mother's Conference at O'Brien House in Baton Rouge. Thirty-one mothers learned how to save for their children's education via the START program.

▶ Interfaith Job Fair at the BREC Center in Baton Rouge attracted 65 people who learned about the state's college financial aid programs.

▶ Financial Aid Awareness Day at Ponchatoula High brought out 300 parents and students to learn about TOPS and other programs.

. . .and places we'll be.

▶ Feb. 3 -- St. Tammany Parish College Quest, Slidell City Auditorium, 6-8 p.m. Information for junior high students.

▶ Feb. 15 -- Across the state, 2-4 p.m., College Goal Sunday. College information for low-income and first generation college students.



PIC representative Kate Herke was one of the financial aid specialists who manned the phones at last year's Call-In Night.



College Goal Sunday

MMM... A Money Sundae?

Louisiana College Goal SundaySM is an event that will help you melt away the tedious process of filling out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) in order to obtain financial aid. Free on-site assistance from area college financial aid professionals will be provided.

For more information, including what you need to bring, visit us at our website.

www.osfa.la.gov and click on **College Goal Sunday**

Louisiana College Goal SundaySM Locations 2009 February 15th, 2009 2 - 4 P.M.

Lake Charles

SOWELA Community and Technical College

Natchitoches

Northwestern State University

Reserve

East St. John High School

Houma

L.E. Fletcher Technical Community College

Hammond

Southeastern Louisiana University

Ruston

Louisiana Tech University

Louisiana Technical College

Baton Rouge

Baton Rouge Community College

Southern University

New Orleans

Dillard University

Southern University

Bossier City

Bossier Parish Community College

Lafayette

University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Alexandria

Louisiana State University - Alexandria

Monroe

Louisiana Delta Community College

Grambling

Grambling State University

Check our website for additional site locations and specific room locations at each site.

The College Goal Sunday program was created by the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc, and with supplemental support from Lumina Foundation for Education.

Louisiana College Goal SundaySM is sponsored by the Louisiana Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) and the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) with funding from a Lumina Foundation for Education grant.

NEW FACES

Jason Orgeron -- Coordinator of the College Access Center at BRCC



A Louisiana native and LSU grad, Orgeron spent the last three years as a lender with Sallie Mae. He started his new job on Jan. 5, reaching out to low-income, college eligible students and first generation college students. His position is sponsored by the ECMC Foundation, with LOSFA having oversight.

Orgeron will be working with schools, churches and civic organizations to bring educational materials and training to underserved populations. Although the state has a population of 3.5 million, less than half a million residents have college degrees, he said -- making for a large population of first generation college students.

"Hopefully, I can start partnerships and get stuff off the ground," he said. He sees his job as a partnership with LOSFA. Many of the schools he'll be calling on are schools where LOSFA already has contacts.

"I expect it to go really well. Everybody here has been amazingly helpful," he said.

Rikki David -- Human Resources Supervisor

Rikki David has worked for the state of Louisiana for seven years, at such various agencies as Civil Service, the Department of Revenue, the Department of Administration and Economic Development. She began working at LOSFA on December 1, 2008.

She will be responsible for recruiting and placing new employees, performance evaluations, employee administration and supervising payroll and benefits.

The decision to come to LOSFA was easy, she said. "I've learned that I enjoy working at smaller agencies," she said. Add in the fact that she's worked with her boss, Jason McCann, before and that her husband is a former LOSFA employee and the decision practically made itself.

"I like the mission of the agency," she said. "Education is extremely important." A former TOPS recipient herself, she knows how much the scholarship means. "I know how important it is here, how that serves people for the rest of their lives."

David said she maintains an open door policy. "I'm here to assist the employees," she said. Anyone in the agency should feel free to discuss any issues with her and she will do her best to resolve them.



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LOSFA Deputy Director on hand to witness historic inauguration

When Barack Obama took the presidential oath of office on January 20, LOSFA's Deputy Director Sujuan Boutte was among the crowd gathered to witness the historic event.

"The atmosphere was electric," she said. "It was awe inspiring."

Tens of thousands of people converged on the Capitol in Washington D.C., a record setting crowd for an inauguration. "I was proud to be an American in a pivotal moment when we demonstrated as a country we were in one accord," Boutte said.

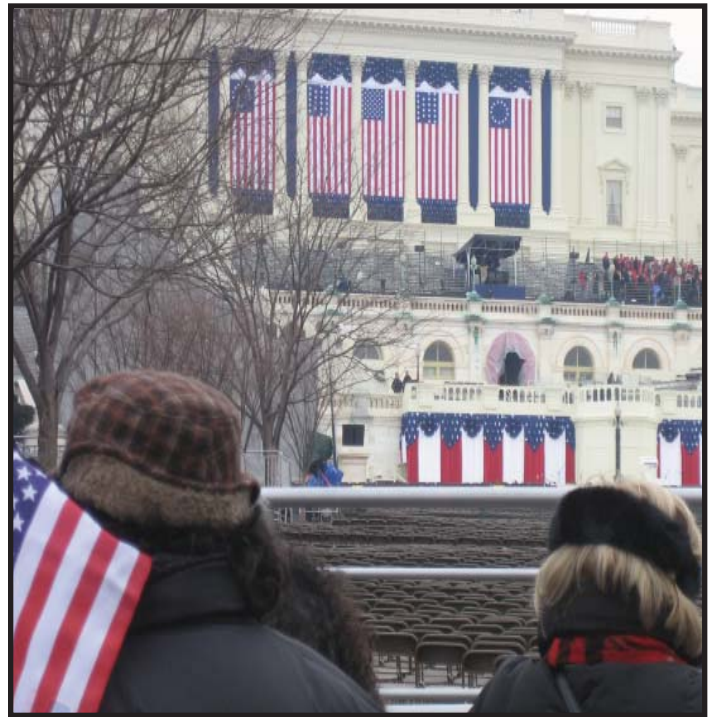
She was in the infamous Purple Tunnel for five hours before finally exiting to find herself faced with an even larger crowd. Although she didn't get particularly close to Obama, Boutte said that wasn't the point.

"It was a phenomenal event. No matter if you got to be close or in the crowd, to experience that many people in one accord."

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This photograph, taken by a friend of Sujuan Boutte, shows the crowd gathered to witness the inauguration of Pres. Barack Obama.

Chris Boutte, daughter of LOSFA's Deputy Executive Director Sujuan Boutte, took this photograph of preparations the day before Barack Obama's inauguration as President of the United State of America.



Employee Spotlight

More than a haircut Loss inspires donation



Jerri Mack, before getting her hair cut for Locks of Love. She grew her hair for a year before having almost 12 inches cut and donated.

And...CUT! Jerri Mack closes her eyes as the final cut is made. Her hair will be donated to Locks of Love, which makes wigs for children suffering hair loss due to medical conditions.



Jerri Mack shows off her prize -- nearly 12 inches of hair going to a good cause -- and her new short haircut.



Jerri Mack does not know who will benefit from her donation to Locks of Love, but she does know that the 12 inches of hair she contributed will have a profound effect on the life of a young child.

Locks of Love provides prosthetic hair pieces, generally free of charge, to children under age 18 suffering from hair loss caused by a variety of medical conditions, including cancer.

Mack, a LOSFA employee for the last nine years, made the decision to contribute to Locks of Love in honor of a close friend who had cancer. That friend was going to go with her when she had her hair cut, but passed away last September. So, Mack decided to have her hair cut on her friend's birthday, January 12, as a tribute.

"I had been growing my hair for nearly a year in honor of Kathy. Her strength and spirit during her chemotherapy treatments were an inspiration to me. In some small way, I wanted to help," Mack said.

Anyone can donate to Locks of Love. Their guidelines are simple. Hair must be 10 inches or longer, in a ponytail or braid and must be clean and dry.

Colored or permed hair is acceptable, so is gray hair. Curly hair may be pulled straight to measure out to 10 inches.

The organization cannot use bleached hair -- and hair that is highlighted is usually bleached -- because of a chemical reaction that occurs during the wig-making process. It also cannot use dreadlocks, hair extensions or other synthetic hair.

Donated hair can be cut at any salon, so long as it meets the length requirements and is bundled in a ponytail. Once the hair is cut, it needs to be packaged into a resealable plastic bag, tucked into a padded envelope and mailed to:

234 Southern Blvd.
West Palm Beach, FL 33405

It takes six to 10 ponytails to make one hairpiece, so the organization is always in need of donations. The organization also needs financial donations and all such donations are tax deductible.

More information can be found at www.locksoflove.org. The Web site also posts photographs of some of the children who have benefited from the program, both before and after they have received their hairpieces.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS

Jason McCann named Human Resources Director



LOSFA's new Human Resources Director is a familiar face. Jason McCann assumed his new role this month, after four years of service in LOSFA's Human Resources Division.

"It's an honor to be Human Resources Director for LOSFA," he said. "I'm going to do the best I can to make sure LOSFA runs smoothly from a Human Resources perspective."

Before coming to LOSFA, McCann worked in Human Resources for the Department of Civil Service and the Department of Environmental Quality.

His transition to director has been relatively easy, McCann said. He has no plans to make major changes to the Human Resources Division, although he and his staff will be meeting with division directors to discuss various HR policies with an aim to "tweaking programs for efficiency."

"We're here to serve the employees of this agency," McCann said. "Our door is always open and suggestions are always welcome."

Default Recoveries posts record recovery rates

The Default Recoveries section posted records for two separate recovery types in December. The section received and posted \$735,413.61 in the month of December. Administrative Wage Garnishment recoveries had previously exceeded \$600,000.00 in only 4 prior months. Also in the month of December, the Rehabilitation sale exceeded \$800K for the first time with \$805,140.95 received for accounts rehabilitated during the month. We anticipate the January Rehabilitation sale to exceed \$1 million dollars for the first time ever.

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Garnishment payments during the month of December. AWG recoveries had previously exceeded \$600,000.00 in only 4 prior months. AWG is an extremely important collection tool, which is utilized only when borrowers refuse to make voluntary payments toward their defaulted student loan. 15% of their disposable income is garnished by their employer and sent to this office. Borrowers who have their wages garnished can still take the opportunity to make voluntary payments, end the garnishment and take advantage of the Rehabilitation Program. Sadly, many borrowers wait until AWG occurs before choosing to make voluntary payments.

In every issue of LOSFA LOOP, we will highlight a specific division within the agency. This issue we highlight:

Public Information and Communications

The Public Information and Communications Division is often the public face of LOSFA, going out into the state to educate students, parents and education personnel about the financial aid opportunities offered by the state.

PIC does so by responding to telephone inquiries and traveling to sites across the state to conduct a variety of outreach activities.

PIC employees staff the agency's public information line. PIC representatives are well-versed in all the agency's programs and each week, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., someone is available to answer questions from students, parents and other concerned citizens.

When not fielding phone calls, PIC representatives are on the road, taking LOSFA program information into schools, businesses and civic organizations.

Last year, PIC answered 48,282 phone calls, conducted 209 high school visits, 37 parish-wide high school events, 97 general public presentations and 29 guidance counselor workshops to reach a total of 43,035 people face-to-face. There were also 191 attendees at Trailblazer Camp.

In addition to daily outreach, PIC also conducts several special events each year -- Trailblazers Camp, Guidance Counselor Workshops and STS Training. This year, PIC is also conducting College Knowledge Nights across the state.

Trailblazer Camp

The Trailblazer Program trains high school students about the availability of financial aid for college or technical school. The program includes a three-day training workshop, presented on a college campus by LOSFA personnel and other financial aid professionals for the purpose of educating selected high school juniors about the college admissions process and how to obtain financial assistance for college. One student is nominated by each public and non-public high school in the state. Under the direct supervision of the high school guidance counselor, each Trailblazer is expected to share knowledge of financial aid procedures with peers throughout their senior year of high school. Each Trailblazer is given a manual outlining all aspects of the federal and state financial aid programs available.

Guidance Counselor Workshops

Each Fall, LOSFA conducts half-day workshops for

Public Information and Communications staff: (left to right, back row) Rhonda Bridevaux, PIC Supervisor Kristen O'Neil, Suzan Manuel, Charnia Cheatwood, Scott Burke, PIC Director Gus Wales and Jerri Mack; (left to right, front row) PIC Supervisor Michelle Darling, Kate Herke, student worker Haley Plauche, Kendra Woods, Nicole Southern, Jessica Warner and Mona Kraushaar.



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high school guidance counselors at a minimum of seven locations around the state. These workshops are designed to update counselors about the student financial aid process so they can best assist their students in preparing for their crucial first year of college. At each workshop, LOSFA representatives and financial aid professionals instruct counselors on the latest changes to both federal and state aid programs, completion of the FAFSA and other LOSFA services. During the 2008-09 school year LOSFA introduced workshops for middle school guidance counselors. These workshops are designed to provide middle school counselors with some tools and resources to promote early college and career awareness.

Publications

PIC is also home to LOSFA's Publications Section. All of the brochures, hand-outs, newsletters, press releases and other documents released by the agency are handled by publications.

Each summer after legislative session, updates are made to the TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Brochure and the TOPS Tech Brochure. In 2008, such changes lead to the update and printing of 75,000 TOPS Tech Award brochures and

150,000 TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Awards brochures. Those brochures were then shipped to schools and libraries across the state, as well as handed out at Financial Aid presentations by PIC representatives.

Publications also handles creation and distribution of program bulletins for all LOSFA programs. These bulletins are sent to high schools, colleges, technical schools and other agencies to keep them informed of changes to LOSFA programs, as well as Common Manual updates.

The Publications Section is also responsible for creating and distributing the LOSFA Loop each month, as well as the STARTing Line on a quarterly basis.

Publications also handles all creative work for the agency -- creating fliers, hand-outs, application forms, fact sheets and other publications as needed.

NEW FACES

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Deborah Paul -- Scholarships and Grants Director



After an eleven year absence, Paul returns to LOSFA as director of Scholarships and Grants. The Ville Platte native felt the opening was a "good opportunity" to continue doing what she loves -- helping Louisiana's college students.

Previously, Paul had worked in LOSFA's Public Information Department. She has also worked as a Financial Aid Counselor at Southern University, a Student Aid Counselor at LSU, the Assistant Director for Student Loans and Customer Service at LSU, a Human Resources Manager at LSU, and as the Compliance Coordinator and Senior Woman's Administrator for Southern University's Athletic Department.

She says she's glad to be back at LOSFA and finds that the management here is "much more inclusive, which I think is a good thing." At the moment, her plans for S&G include taking on a more publicly visible role. Other changes may come, but not until she sees what is working and what is not working in the department.

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Of course, since Boutte and the group she traveled with were from Louisiana, they couldn't just stand around in the tunnel doing nothing. Instead, on the advice of a man they met from Seattle, Boutte's husband decided to get the crowd moving to stay warm. How? By teaching them all the electric slide. Before long, there were hundreds of people in the tunnel doing the electric slide and having a good time.

"It would be the Louisiana group that started the party and shared the pralines," she said.

LOSFA Deputy Executive Director Sujuan Boutte is all bundled up against the cold as she waits in the Purple Tunnel on January 20, 2009 to see Barack Obama inaugurated as President of the United State.



This photograph of Pres. Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama was taken by a friend of Sujuan Boutte's after the inauguration.



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.