



LOSFA LOOP

March 2009 Edition

Volume 2-3

From the Desk of the Executive Director

We knew going into February that it is the shortest month of the year, but when it is also National Financial Aid Awareness month, the month of Louisiana's 2nd Annual College Goal Sunday Event as well as the month of LOSFA's 7th annual Call-In night, February seemed to have come and gone very quickly.

LOSFA is so indebted to everyone who helped to make College Goal Sunday so successful: the Lumina Foundation, LASFAA, site coordinators, volunteers and attendees. I was especially pleased with the fact that, despite these challenging economic times, sponsors were still willing to donate funds which made it possible to provide at least one scholarship to an attendee at each College Goal Sunday site. Once again, the citizens of Louisiana have proven that they are committed to pursuing post secondary education and are willing to seek out the necessary resources and information.

Last year we had 12 sites throughout the state. This year we had 16 sites. We plan to keep working, building and improving on this solid foundation of College Goal Sunday until College Goal Sunday is a household word in our state and it is as anticipated an annual event in Louisiana as Mardi Gras.

February may be over, but every month is National Financial Aid Awareness Month here at LOSFA.

There are numerous outreach activities scheduled for March, but I'm especially excited about a new endeavor beginning this month called College Knowledge Nights. This new initiative will allow us to work with the middle school population, which is something that we've wanted to do for several years. Finally, I look forward to seeing all of my colleagues in this most honorable profession of ours at the upcoming LASFAA Spring Conference in Marksville. Once again, thanks for all that you do to help us continue to be Louisiana's First Choice for College Access.

-- Melanie

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LOSFA Outreach

SEVENTH ANNUAL CALL-IN NIGHT A SUCCESS

Nearly 60 families took advantage of LOSFA's seventh annual "Financial Aid Call-In Night" on Monday, February 9, 2009, utilizing special nighttime hours to get answers to their higher education financial aid questions.

"We did get a lot of people who seemed to be totally confused about the FAFSA, about TOPS," PIC Representative Mona Kraushaar said. "They seemed to know they were confused, but did not know whom to call. When their high schools told them, in regards to Call-In Night, to call 800- 259-5626, they seemed enormously relieved that they had come to the 'right place.' I think we helped a lot of people that night."

LOSFA staffers stayed late, answering 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 Rev-

enue Trust (START) program – Louisiana's 529 college savings plan.

They also provided 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.

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.

LOSFA's new email encryption system improves information protection

In an effort to provide better service to its clients, LOSFA is now using ProofPoint Secure Messaging -- an encrypted email system that prevents anyone other than the intended recipient from viewing the content of email messages.

If you receive an email from a LOSFA employee only to find an attachment that takes you to a message with the LOSFA logo, don't panic. This is merely the first step in ensuring your electronic communications with LOSFA are safe and secure.

Simply follow the instructions in the message -- create a "SecureMailID" and read your message. It's that easy. You just hit 'reply' to respond and that message is encrypted as well. Due to increased security, replying directly to a LOSFA encrypted message does not allow you to CC anyone, even yourself.

In order to provide troubleshooting assistance, LOSFA advises that you make certain you are clicking on the attachment in encrypted emails, not the LOSFA logo. Also, it may be necessary to check advanced settings in Internet Explorer to ensure that the Use SSL button is checked.

You may also need to add <https://voltage-pp-0000.osfa.la.gov> to your 'Trusted Sites' list.

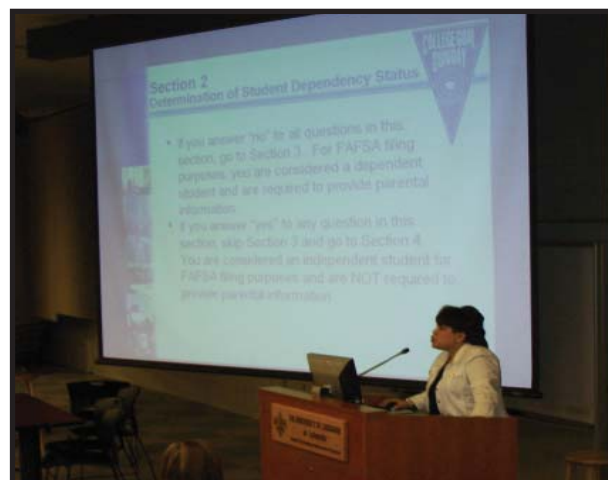
If you have any questions or concerns about LOSFA's new encrypted email system, please call LOSFA at 1-800-259-5626, ext. 1012 or 922- 1012.



College Goal Sunday

LOSFA's second successful College Goal Sunday was held Feb. 15th at 16 sites throughout the state. College financial aid professionals and LOSFA representatives helped students and their families begin to navigate the financial aid application process.

"Our second annual College Goal Sunday event was a rousing success. We added four additional sites this year which allowed us to reach an even wider audience," LOSFA Assistant Executive Director of Marketing and Outreach David Roberts said. "This event would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our Task Force, sponsors, site coordinators, volunteers, guidance counselors -- everyone who helped us promote the event and most of all, the people of the great state of Louisiana who attended."



"It was awesome!"



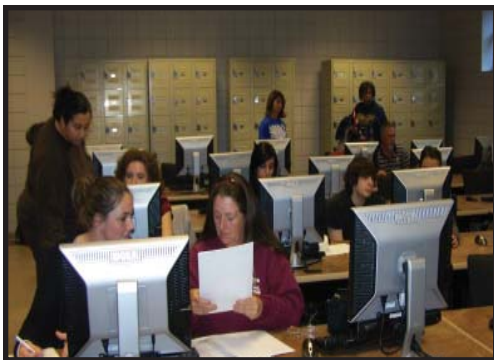
East St. John High School location hosted another successful year! We assisted 35 families. Every attendee appreciated the information imparted, and the assistance completing and explaining the FAFSA. I would like to personally thank each volunteer for making College Goal Sunday 2009 at East St John High School a huge success!

--Tiffany D. Magee, Site Coordinator



"This process works well. However, students need to take advantage of the opportunity."





College Knowledge Night -- It's never too early to start planning for the future

Paying for college is one of the largest expenses a person faces, so it's never too early to start planning and saving. College Knowledge Night, a new event conducted by LOSFA, aims to help middle school students and their families begin to navigate the financial aid process by providing them information about appropriate academic preparation and higher education funding sources.

"We are so excited about the upcoming College Knowledge Nights," LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein said. "We have been trying to find a way to work with the middle school population for years now. This grant presents a great opportunity to start an initiative that we can continue to grow in the future."

She also said, "We are pleased that this event has allowed us to embark upon a new partnership with organizations like the Council of Student Body Presidents and the Alliance for Community Development, as well as expand existing partnerships with the Board of Regents and LA GEAR UP."

College Knowledge Night will be conducted at eight sites around the state, over a four day period. The purpose of these events is to provide interactive, web-based information to middle school students in grades 6 through 8 and their parents about the importance of early academic and financial planning for educational opportunities after high school. LOSFA will also be demonstrating the new College Knowledge Web site during these events.

The focus will be on interactive resources students and their parents can use to learn more about:

- Benefits of Higher Education

- College Expenses at Louisiana schools
- Saving/Paying for College

Without this information, financial resources and years of academic preparation could be wasted as students and parents discover they failed to prepare in a timely manner to secure financial aid from state, federal and other sources.

This event is being presented by LOSFA, in conjunction with the LA Board of Regents and LA GEAR UP as a part of the College Access Challenge Grant.

The College Knowledge initiative fits right in with LA GEAR UP's efforts to provide students with the detailed information and guided practice they need to take full advantage of available programs for financing a college education. Accurate and timely college-access resources are vital to fulfilling the LA GEAR UP mission to increase the number of Louisiana students who attend and succeed in postsecondary education programs. Together, LA GEAR UP and LOSFA interventions can help dispel the myths and misunderstandings that often prevent students and their families from considering the pursuit of postsecondary education. It's a logical partnership, especially in troubled economic times.

Attendees of College Knowledge Night will be given a planning guide and folder, as well as a College Knowledge Night t-shirt.

As always, the event is free of charge and open to any who wish to attend.

For more information, contact LOSFA at 1-800-259-5626, ext. 1012.

College Knowledge Night Schedule

MARCH 2, 2009

- ▶ ALICE M. HARTE CHARTER SCHOOL – NEW ORLEANS
IN THE CAFETERIA FROM 6-7
- ▶ BETHUNE MIDDLE SCHOOL -- SHREVEPORT
IN THE CAFETERIA FROM 6-7

MARCH 3, 2009

- ▶ ROBERT E. LEE JR. HIGH SCHOOL -- MONROE
IN THE CAFETERIA FROM 6-7
- ▶ PRESCOTT MIDDLE SCHOOL – BATON ROUGE
IN THE CAFETERIA FROM 6-7

MARCH 4, 2009

- ▶ ESPERANZA CHARTER SCHOOL – NEW ORLEANS
IN THE RESOURCE ROOM FROM 6-7

MARCH 5, 2009

- ▶ MILTON ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE - LAFAYETTE
IN THE LIBRARY FROM 6-7
- ▶ RED RIVER JR. HIGH SCHOOL - COUSHATTA
IN THE CAFETERIA FROM 6-7
- ▶ PATTERSON JR. HIGH SCHOOL - PATTERSON
IN THE CAFETERIA FROM 6-7

FIFTY GOLDEN YEARS

It didn't take long for Dr. John Bell and his wife Robbye to decide they were right for each other. They met in July 1958 and were married the next February, in what may seem to be a whirlwind courtship.

It's a courtship that has lasted fifty years.

"It does not seem like 50 years," Bell said. "If we didn't have a son who will be 50 in December. . . it doesn't seem like 50 years."

The couple's golden anniversary was Feb. 15th. In a society where very few marriages last that long, Bell has a few thoughts on why his had made the grade.

First, they'd both been lucky enough to live this long, he said. Second, "I think people now make mental reservations -- we'll stay together until death do us part if it works out. We expected to stay together and we have."

Part of the key to a happy, longterm marriage, Bell said, is being around people who support your commitment to each other.

Fifty-year marriages are common in both their families, he said. Parents, grandparents -- they all made the 50 mile mark, so long as they both were alive.

Divorce was never an option for them, Bell said. Both are Christians and have seen the damage divorce does. "It cripples people emotionally," he said and neither wanted that for themselves or their two children.

In addition to common faith, Bell says common interests are also key to a lasting marriage, as well as the way each partner treats the other.

It's also important to marry "a person that you would enjoy being around even if you weren't married, someone you would like to visit in their home."



Robbye and John Bell, above, on their wedding day Feb. 15, 1959 and, below, at their home earlier this year, 2009. The couple has been married for 50 years. Bell is LOSFA's Awards and Renewals Manager.



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

Information Technology

Every division in the agency, all 142 employees, all relying on 16 people to keep their computers, programs and applications running smoothly and securely – that’s the reality for LOSFA’s Information Technology division.

“Everything that runs on your computer is maintained by these 16 people,” IT Director Alice Thibodeaux said of her employees. Every application, every program, every query for every division in the agency -- IT oversees the technology that makes it possible.

That Helpdesk request sent because the mouse quit working? IT handles that. Building a new Web portal so Louisiana residents can easily access their Scholarship and Grants information? IT does that as well. The frequent updates, RSS feeds and information videos available on the LOSFA Web site? IT oversees the technology that makes it all possible.

In the fall of 2008, IT worked with the LOSFA users to freshen up the Web site and give it a new look and feel. The new LOSFA logo was introduced, flash pages were added, and the “Did you know” statistics, alerts, and upcoming events were added.

But IT is far more than the Web site and email server, Thibodeaux points out. On-line applications for START or TOPS? Those are IT’s responsibility. Supplemental support for LOSFA’s loan program? IT does that too. Maintenance and operational support for the iSeries (aka AS/400) and other organizational technology? Yes, that is IT’s job as well.



Alice Thibodeaux
IT Director



Chris Cavell and Jason Whitworth
Web Support



David Vitteri, Maria Miligan, Nathan Brown, Steve LeBlanc and Mathilde Rivera -- Technical Support. Not pictured: Pam Jenkins

Applications and Programming -- Cynthia Marsellus, Marc Ellender, Ted Anderson, Sharon Chandler, Terri Jameyson and Ida Minor. Not pictured: Linda Lambert.



IT makes certain that the programs that run TOPS eligibility work smoothly, that programs are in place to send payments to schools. Any program that can be accessed by your computer, IT makes it possible.

“If you can get in and use your computer,” Thibodeaux said, “IT has done its job.”

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College Goal Sunday

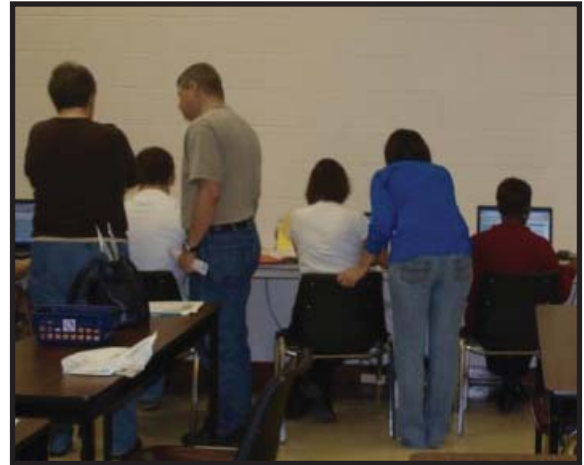


“It was a great experience for me.”



“College Goal Sunday was overall very helpful”





"I think everything was great."



"Speakers were knowledgeable and to the point. Good job."

LOSFA Executive Director Melanie Amrhein and Assistant Executive Director of Marketing and Outreach David Roberts hold the award LOSFA recently received from the United Way. The award, the 2008 Superstar Award for Growth and Participation, was given to LOSFA after the agency raised \$6,716 for the United Way last year.



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.