

## From the Desk of the Executive Director



Dr. Sujuan Boutté

"When you are young and healthy, it never occurs to you that in a single second your whole life could change." This quote by Annette Funicello represents for me the spirit of the 2014 American Heart Association Campaign. If you or someone you know has been affected by heart disease then you know it's what we do

about it that counts.

"A healthy attitude is contagious but don't wait to catch it from others. Be a carrier."

This quote by Tom Stoppard represents to me the 'carrier spirit' the LOSFA staff exhibited as we participated in the American Heart Association Campaign last month. Our hearts go out to...

### ♥ Aubrey Martin

Aubrey is the daughter of our own Amber Martin. Aubrey is a precious and happy baby girl who was born with a congenital heart defect. She is progressing well and is scheduled for open heart surgery on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Our LOSFA team dedicated our 'heart decal sale' and our short walk to Aubrey.

### ♥ Deborah Paul

Deborah was our agency representative this year and as usual she dedicated her 'carrier spirit' and her natural ability to gather resources and talent to serve and help others. Deborah recruited several 'carriers' from her staff in SG and the rest of the LOSFA team to get the job done. She also recruited members of her running club to come out to the Heart Walk to support the cause and 'infect' others with their dedication to having a healthy attitude.

- Erica Hughes

- Caleshia Clark
- Bonnie Lavergne

Erica and Caleshia were Co-chairs for the campaign and Bonnie served as Treasurer. This group of dedicated individuals led the charge by organizing the activities our agency participated in for the campaign:

- Blue Jean Week
- Heart Decals in honor of Aubrey
- Trash to Treasure Sale
- Fitness Presentation by an expert from the YMCA

The team tirelessly sent out email reminders of events, staffed tables to promote participation, set up the tent for National Walking Day, and coordinated snacks for the big day.

### ♥ Nyetta Meaux

Nyetta formed Team MEAUXtivation, in honor of her father, Joseph Meaux. Joseph passed away unexpectedly this past November of heart disease. Nyetta channeled the pain of her loss into the hope that a healthy attitude begets. She designed team t-shirts, assembled a team of walkers that included family, extended family, friends and LOSFA team members, and raised over \$900! We know her dad is smiling upon her as she raises awareness of how we should become the change we wish to see.

♥ Our LOSFA National Heart Walk Participants: Nyetta Meaux, Paula Smith, Linda Roquemore, Jamela Foreman, Erica Hughes, Jerri Mack and Deborah Paul. Thanks to each of them for setting up the tents, bringing food, snacks, family and friends and walking the 5K for a cause that touches us all!

### ♥ S.

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## An Important Message Regarding Louisiana Connect

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) has learned that ConnectEdu, the Boston-based vendor responsible for constructing and maintaining the Louisiana Connect College Access and Career Planning portal, filed for reorganization on Monday, April 28.

Users of [www.louisianaconnect.org](http://www.louisianaconnect.org) should be aware that while the site will remain accessible, there will be no updates to the data contained therein for the immediate future. However, student data stored in the portal including college searches and comparisons, test scores, academic and service data and other student-entered information will remain accessible, both from the site itself and via the Louisiana Connect mobile application. ACT scores, course completion data and TOPS Core Grade Point Average information in the TOPS Tracker section will continue to display the date of the last update, but will not receive future updates.

As an alternative to the TOPS Tracker feature, graduating high school seniors should log on to the LOSFA homepage, [www.osfa.la.gov](http://www.osfa.la.gov), click on the Louisiana Award System tab and follow the instructions to create

an account. Once a completed FAFSA is received for the student and matched with an ACT score, the account will be created. As final grade data is received, it will also populate the student's Louisiana Award System account. The first TOPS processing eligibility run for 2014 graduates will occur on the night of June 6. Those students determined eligible at that time will have their status reflected on their Louisiana Award System account on Friday, June 7. Additional eligibility runs will occur every Thursday night so students should continue to check their account for updates.

"We sincerely regret any inconvenience this unfortunate occurrence may present for student and parent users of Louisiana Connect," said LOSFA Executive Director Dr. Sujuan Boutté. "While the future of the Louisiana Connect portal in its current incarnation is uncertain at this time, please be assured that LOSFA will use the summer months to ensure that the most critical student-centric features, including the TOPS Tracker and college cost calculators, will remain available through incorporation into the LOSFA website or another appropriate platform," she concluded.

### START Attends Baby Grand Event

New and expecting parents learned about the START Saving program at the Woman's Hospital Baby Grand event in Baton Rouge on May 3. Members of LOSFA's Public Information and Communications (PIC) outreach team (including START Mascot, Earl E. Start) spread START's message about the importance of saving for college from an early age and gave the crowd information on how to start saving for their child's education.





## Team MEAUXtivation Heart Walk



**Top left: Nyetta Meaux, her mother, Rebecca Pillette and her brother, Leandro Meaux tailgate after the heart walk.**

**Above: Amber Martin and Aubrey Martin.**

**Middle left; Erica Hughes and Tunisha Leah stop for a picture at Mile 2.**

**Middle: Nyetta Meaux and Sujuan Boutté relax under the tailgate tent.**

**Middle right: Erica Hughes with friends and family after the Heart Walk.**

**Bottom Left: Nyetta Meaux and Jerri Mack complete the Heart Walk.**



**Bottom Right: Team MEAUXtivation, front row: Jerri Mack, Linda Roquemore. Back row: Paula Smith, Erica Hughes, Nyetta Meaux, Sujuan Boutté, Jamela Forman and Deborah Paul.**

## START Saving Program Sets Facebook Chat for 5/29

The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) will observe national "5-29 Day" at night with its second annual "5-29 Day Facebook Chat" on Thursday, May 29 (5-29), from 6-9 p.m.

The "5-29" in "5-29 Day" refers to section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code which authorizes states to offer college saving plans that include substantial federal and state tax exemptions and other beneficial incentives to save. Louisiana's 529 plan is called the Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust (START) saving program.

To participate in the online START Saving Plan Facebook Chat, Facebook users need to first "like" LOSFA's page. After doing so, questions may be submitted on the LOSFA page. LOSFA staff will be online to answer all questions as they are posted.

May 2014						
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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29 5-29 Facebook Chat 6 - 9 pm	30	31

## LATTA Publishes START Saving Plan Interest Rates for 2013 Deposits

At its April 22 meeting, the Executive Committee of the Louisiana Tuition Trust Authority (LATTA) amended its program rules to publish certain START Saving program interest rates for deposits made during 2013 as determined by the State Treasurer.

The LATTA published an interest rate of 2.168% for START deposits made to the Louisiana Principal Protection Fund Option and an interest rate of 1.715% on accrued Earnings Enhancements for qualifying START investment options.

Deposits made to the Louisiana Principal Protection Fund Option are managed by the State Treasurer's Office and are invested in fixed earnings. The redemption value is guaranteed by the state and no administrative fees or investment management fees are charged for Louisiana Principal Protection Fund deposits.

Earnings Enhancements represent the state matching funds of 2% to 14% paid annually based on prior year adjusted gross income and Account Owner Category. The balance, as of December 31, 2013, of all Earnings Enhancements accrued since the account was opened earned the additional 1.715% interest rate.

START also offers a number of variable earnings investment plan options that are managed by The Vanguard Group. The START Saving program is charged an investment management fee on monies invested in these options. It is possible that monies invested in variable earnings will lose value and investment returns are not guaranteed.



April 2014

Dear LA GEAR UP,



Hello my name is Yo'Sha Lain and I am a 2012 honors graduate from Franklin Parish High School. I am an alumnus of the LA GEAR UP Explorers' Summer Camp. I began attending the Explorers' Camp when I was in the seventh grade at age 11, and I continued to travel to various camps each year until my ninth grade year at age 14. Attending the Explorers' Camp proved to me just how amazing college life could be.

From dorm room life to the excitement of meeting new people, the Explorers' Camp prepared me as a future college student. Thanks to the various activities that the camp offered, I was able to establish a career that best interests me. Learning while playing is the best way I can describe the Explorers' Camp. With so much to do there was no time for boredom. Though the camp lasts for one week, it truly passes by quickly. Within that week, I learned many new things about college life. I was able to ask questions about college that concerned me the most, and I was given accurate answers. I was able to explore the sites of college campuses and what they had to offer. Most of all, I was able to meet new people from all ethnic backgrounds. Though we were only with each other for one week, we quickly became attached to each of our Explorer friends.

Since my Explorer experience, I have been able to keep in touch with many of my camp friends. Amazingly, I have once again had the opportunity to become united with my Explorer friends because we are now college classmates! As you can see, the LA GEAR UP Explorers' Camp offers many exciting, life changing opportunities. These experiences do not just last for one week; they last a lifetime!

Sincerely,

Yo'Sha Lain

In the summer of 2014, LA GEAR UP 11th and 12th grade students will have an opportunity to attend multi-week residential Summer Bridge Programs to assist with the academic and social transition to higher education.

## Success Stories

At the 2014 Explorers' Club Leadership Conference and Summit, sponsors—the hard-working adults who oversee academic-year clubs—were asked to share success stories from this school year. To get the big picture, match the words (Column A) to the deed (Column B). An answer key will be provided in the June LOSFA Loop.

Column A

Column B

1. Example: We toured . . .
2. Our biggest success story this year is our . . .
3. More than 1,000 seniors . . .
4. Students were able to . . .
5. Due to the promotion of FAFSA this year, students . . .
6. Students are generally excited . . .
7. We encouraged our students to sign up . . .
8. Students are scoring . . .
9. Our club members tutored and mentored . . .
10. We encouraged students to . . .
11. Until now, very few of these kids have ever . . .
12. We filled . . .
13. At the beginning of school I encouraged students to . . .
14. Over 80% of seniors . . .
15. At the school-wide homecoming block party, the club had . . .

1. for ACT online prep and get on A+ Learning sites. Now they are scoring higher!
2. 50 boxes with donated gifts and toiletries for the Samaritan Christmas Project
3. begin a college search via La Connect.
4. about college.
5. 8th grade students on LEAP.
6. ten campuses.
7. ACT tutoring program.
8. set foot on a college campus.
9. applied for college during Louisiana College Application Week.
10. seem to finally have an understanding of the college admissions process.
11. attended our college fair.
12. two booths.
13. find a school of interest, apply, and gain acceptance.
14. for the ACT online prep and get on A+ Learning sites.
15. higher.

## LOSFA's Social Media Sites



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



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



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



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



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

By Phone: 800-259-5626

By E-mail: [custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@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 the LOSFA LOOP, please  
contact Gus Wales at [Gus.Wales@la.gov](mailto:Gus.Wales@la.gov).