



# LOSFA LOOP

October 2008 Edition

Volume I-6

## From the Desk of the Executive Director

LOSFA wants to welcome all of the hard working financial aid professionals from throughout the great state of Louisiana to the city of Baton Rouge as you attend the 40th annual LASFAA Fall Conference.

We are so very excited that LASFAA chose Baton Rouge as the site for its annual conference this year and I am especially looking forward to making our annual LOSFA Update on State Initiatives. In addition to program updates and some announcements on new TOPS procedures, we will also present to the conference attendees news on the upcoming College Goal Sunday Event and our outreach efforts to make the dream of college access a reality for every Louisiana resident.

Our School and Lender Services Division, who are highlighted in this issue, will also be present during the conference as exhibitors. We want to recognize our College Goal Sunday volunteers from this year with a special gift. Please stop by the LOSFA table at the conference and identify yourself as a volunteer to receive your "Thank You".

On the very last day of the conference our School and Lender Services supervisor, Sigmund Morel, will be presenting on the topic of "Customer Service: Everyday Effective Tools"

LOSFA hopes that every LASFAA Conference attendee enjoys the time spent in Baton Rouge, but mostly, we hope that you go away from the conference with additional tools to help you serve your students. We at LOSFA look forward to doing the same so that we can continue to be Louisiana's First Choice for College Access.

--Melanie

*For more information about  
LOSFA's participation in  
the LASFAA Conference,  
see the story on Page 4*

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# LOSFA Outreach

## LOSFA REPRESENTS LOUISIANA AT NCAN CONFERENCE

The Annual Conference of the National College Access Network appeared to be in jeopardy. This year's conference took place in Houston, TX from Monday, September 22nd through Wednesday, September 24th. Still reeling from the after affects of Hurricane Ike, the city of Houston was more than happy to receive the economic boost that the conference brought to the city. LOSFA, who can relate to Houston's recovery efforts due to the effects of Hurricane Gustav in Louisiana, was also more than happy to be a part of Houston's recovery efforts and to be a presence for our state at the conference as Louisiana's first choice for college access. LOSFA joined NCAN as a member this year.

The theme of this year's conference was "Changing the Face of Education". LOSFA is looking to do just that in Louisiana as we look to dramatically increase the number of students with START accounts as well as the number of students who pursue postsecondary education and qualify for

our unique TOPS scholarship. During the conference we were able to attend workshops and obtain information on college awareness, cultivating statewide networks to create college access and success, serving disengaged, foster and/or homeless youth and establishing effective partnerships. We will be evaluating how the information that we received can be integrated into some of our current outreach efforts as well as possibly being used to implement new initiatives. Please continue to read the LOSFA LOOP and check our website for updates.

*The presentation must go on -- even if it has to be rescheduled. Hurricane Gustav forced Edna Karr High School in New Orleans to postpone a scheduled LOSFA visit, but things got back on track when LOSFA representatives Jerri Mack and Scott Burke talked to 30 parents and incoming freshman about TOPS requirements on Sept. 24, 2008. Has the ever-changing Louisiana weather forced your organization to cancel a LOSFA presentation? Don't worry, just give Michelle Darling a call at 225-922-2027 and we'll reschedule for you.*

## COLLEGE GOAL SUNDAY TASK FORCE READY FOR 2009

The College Goal Sunday Task Force had its initial meeting for the 2009 event which will take place on Sunday, February 15, 2009. The meeting took place on Friday, September 26, 2008 at the headquarters of LOSFA in Baton Rouge. Attendees included LASFAA president Elect, Alvina Thomas, Kathy Gray, guidance counselor with the Ouchita Parish School System, Nancy Beben from the Louisiana Department of Education, Lisa Lawson, Senior Financial Aid Counselor with Baton Rouge Community College as well as LOSFA staff: Sigmund Morel, Gus Wales and David E. Roberts.

A major difference between the 2008 inaugural

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*Members of the College Goal Sunday Task Force include (from left to right): Lisa Lawson, David Roberts, Sigmund, Nancy Beben, Gus Wales, Kathy Gray and (holding the folder) Alvina Thomas.*

# REMINDER!

## LOSFA 2008 Professional School Counselor Workshops

It's not too late to register for LOSFA's annual Professional School Counselor Workshops.

Training for high school counselors and other personnel about LOSFA programs began on September 29 in Alexandria.

There are nine workshops scheduled around the state, each focusing on the FAFSA, TOPS, the Early Start Program and a general financial aid review, Public Information supervisor Michelle Darling said.

"This is our annual time to talk to counselors about TOPS and give them tips on the trouble areas and try to make it easier for them."

Also, Nancy Beben, Director of the Louisiana Department of Education's Division of Curriculum Standards, will make a presentation on Core 4 and how it will relate to the TOPS Core Curriculum during each of the workshops.

Topics this year include hot issues with TOPS and counseling aids for TOPS including new additions to the LOSFA homepage and demonstrations on how to use the Student Transcript System to ensure students are on track to receive a TOPS award.

Additionally, this year debuts the Middle School Counselor Workshops. Held in the afternoon following the high school counselors event, the hour and a half program will let middle school counselors know about LOSFA programs relevant to middle school students.

They will include an overview of the TOPS program and general financial aid, as well as a presentation on the START Saving pro-

gram. At the sites nearest Baton Rouge, START spokespig Earl E. START is scheduled to appear.

The decision to include a presentation to middle school counselors was made because of research suggesting that middle school was prime time to "reach out and let (students) know about higher education and available financial aid for higher education," Darling said.

### Workshop Dates and Locations

October 1: Shreveport – LSU-S, Technology Center, Room 209

October 2: Lake Charles – McNeese State University, Student Union, Para Ballroom

October 3: Lafayette – Chenier Auditorium

October 6: Baton Rouge – Southern University, Student Union Ballroom

October 8: Mandeville – Castine Center at Pelican Park

October 9: New Orleans – Delgado Community College, Student Life Center Gym

October 10: Thibodaux – Nicholls State University, Student Union Ballroom

High School Counselors:  
Registration & Continental Breakfast: 8:00 a.m.  
Workshop: 8:30 a.m. – noon

Middle School Counselors:  
Registration : 1 p.m.  
Workshop: 1:30 – 3p.m.

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

## School and Lender Services

In addition to the TOPS scholarship, LOSFA offers a multitude of programs and services that benefit universities and lenders. The School and Lender Services department is tasked with promoting these programs.

"We go directly to the financial aid offices," SLS Supervisor Sigmund Morel said, "and say 'use us as guarantor, these are the benefits.'" Morel went on to add that his favorite benefit is the fact that LOSFA pays the 1% default fee for the borrower and many of LOSFA's competitors don't.

Other benefits include value-added programs on topics such as default prevention, TOPS retention and financial literacy, SLS representative Jennifer Guhman said. The programs are provided at no charge to any university or lender who wants them. They are also available for any LOSFA department what wants them.

"We do presentations even to schools that do not use us," Guhman said. "Any opportunity to get into the schools is an opportunity to get to know us."

In addition to providing presentations and marketing LOSFA's loan program to universities, SLS also sets up lender information in the Eagle system, provides customer service for schools, serves as a contact point for universities and lenders, provides support for Loan Administration, coordinates with universities and lenders to solve problems and attends state and national conferences to promote LOSFA's services.

One such conference is Louisiana Association for School Financial Aid Administrators (LASFAA) Conference, being held in downtown Baton Rouge October 8 – 10. Morel, Guhman and April Matessino will attend, to let everyone know about



### School and Lender Services

Sigmund Morel,  
Jennifer Guhman and  
April Matessino

the services LOSFA provides.

The trio will do presentations, maintain an information table and volunteer for "just about anything they'll let us put our thumb in," Guhman said.

The conference, which is open to any member of LASFAA, attracts attendees from across the state, including employees of universities, lenders, guarantors and servicers, Matessino said.

It's important to meet people, because "this is a relationship business."

Morel says the division is successful in part because it operates by the FISH! Philosophy – play, make their day, be there and choose your attitude.

"We enjoy what we're doing and it shows," he said.



## *Employee Spotlight*

# PIC Student Worker is a Rodeo Champion

You could say that Haley Plauche's love of horses is genetic. Her mother was an equestrian and had her on a horse "since I was born," she said.

Plauche, a student worker in Public Information and Communication, doesn't just love horses. She competes on them – and she does quite well for herself.

Her first title was won at the age of three, when she was crowned Tiny Miss Rodeo Queen at the Greenwell Springs Youth Riders Rodeo. Since then, she's won numerous prizes, both as an individual and as part of a drill team.

"My mom used to ride horses and I think she made me do it and then I started loving it and I didn't stop," she said. Her list of titles include: High Point Champion at the Deep South Show Horse Show Association, for three consecutive years; National Drill Team Champions, Sportsmanship Awards and Theme Drill awards. Haley and her drill team, the Greenwell Springs Youth Riders, have competed in rodeos and competitions across the south.

Horses aren't for the faint of heart. She's had several trips to the hospital over the years. At 10, she broke her arm when a horse kicked her, and she's had two concussions – once her horse slipped, fell and landed on top of her and again when her horse lost his footing, somersaulted and nearly crushed her beneath him.

And yet, she still rides.

"It's a way to relax," she said. "You can always talk to them. They're always there to listen." Plus, living her life with horses had taught her a great deal. She's more responsible, she says.

"Horses teach you how to be kind to people be-



cause they get along pretty well. You'll see them out in the pasture, playing with each other."

The animals have also inspired her artistically. A graphic art design major, Plauche is drawn to images of wild horses and frequently paints them.

"I love their free spirit, how in-tune with nature they are. No human hand has ever touched them, so they're pure."

She plans to transfer to LSU next semester to finish her degree and intends to continue working at LOSFA into the foreseeable future.

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Louisiana College Goal Sunday Event and the 2009 event is that Southern University in Baton Rouge and New Orleans have both agreed to be new sites. There are other new sites yet to be confirmed. In addition, a representative from LOSFA will be on hand at every site to answer questions relating to the TOPS scholarship program. Finally, the individual College Goal Sunday sites will have more autonomy in the promotion of the event at the local level, but LOSFA will continue to be responsible for promoting the event statewide. It is our sincere hope that this will increase attendance at an already well attended event.

For information about Louisiana's College Goal Sunday Event on Sunday, February 15, 2009 go to: <http://www.osfa.la.gov/CollegeGoalSunday.shtml>



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).