

## Governor's Office of Disability Affairs Update

It has been a busy and a productive time for the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs. Since the new administration has taken office we have experienced a tremendous transition period. Of GODA's six employees, three have started within the last two months. GODA has assembled a talented, passionate staff, and I am confident that we are destined for great things.

Joey Cooper, the new assistant director, and I are working to get involved in the disability community. We are anxious to meet with all of the great advocacy groups of the state and get involved. With a new staff and foreign processes to each of us there will be challenges, but we are working feverously to grasp the processes and hit the ground running. It is my personal goal to strengthen the relationships with GODA and stakeholders/advocacy groups. I want GODA to be a hub of information. I have a complete open door policy at my office. I invite everyone to stop by, say hello, and share their knowledge and/or ideas with me.

Robert Wilson and the State Wide Living Council recently went through the Monitoring process with RSA. They had a great collaborative of informative meetings. The SILC was praised for their outstanding program and organization. In addition, Robert has been elected the chairman of the SILC Congress. It is our desire at GODA to strengthen the relationships between our office and other related state agencies.

A challenging decision we had to face right from the start was in regards to the 2008 Louisiana Youth Leadership Forum. I have made the decision to postpone the 2008 Forum. It is my desire to have the Forum in 2009. The Governor's Office of Disability Affairs is committed to providing the highest quality experience for the delegates. Due to situations beyond our control, we do not feel that our quality assurance standards have been satisfied.

These first few weeks since I have come aboard at GODA we have been working with the administration to strengthen and iron out our processes to become more efficient. One of the first tasks that we tackled dealt with the Governor's Advisory Council and its members. GODA reached out to the stakeholders of GACDA to confirm those who would sit on the council. We are awaiting official word of the status of the council from the administration.

GODA has been actively involved with GOHSEP in gathering information in regards to emergency preparedness and the disability community of Louisiana. We have met with GOHSEP to establish lines of communication. GODA is becoming

involved with the emergency preparedness and emergency situation evacuation processes with GOHSEP.

GODA has begun working on the Governor's 2008 Disability Community Awards. Our goal is to spotlight the awards, therefore, increasing the exposure of the office. We hope to have the event in the winter sometime and have the Governor actively participate in the process again. You will be receiving information about the awards shortly. If you would like to be involved, please let me know. GODA is reviewing our current website and making modifications and revisions as deemed necessary.