



## *Director Melissa Stone's New Year Address*

Happy New Year DDS Team! I saw a meme last week that made me laugh. It said, "2022 feels like that boyfriend we're about to take back for the third time because he swears he's changed." Ha! It's pretty accurate. We thought this would be over by now but here we go again. And for that very reason, I struggled writing a New Year's Address this year. We are all tired and I'm not sure anything that I could say will inspire anyone. I was on a call yesterday with a group of therapists and was telling them that I want to renew hope in my team and encourage you all to keep going. A colleague on the call who works for Easter Seals asked me if I had read Amanda Gorman's newest poem—"New Day's Lyric."

*May this be the day  
We come together.  
Mourning, we come to mend,  
Withered, we come to weather,  
Torn, we come to tend,  
Battered, we come to better.  
Tethered by this year of yearning,  
We are learning  
That though we weren't ready for this,  
We have been readied by it.  
We steadily vow that no matter  
How we are weighed down,  
We must always pave a way forward.*

*This hope is our door, our portal.  
Even if we never get back to normal,  
Someday we can venture beyond it,  
To leave the known and take the first steps.  
So let us not return to what was normal,  
But reach toward what is next.*

*What was cursed, we will cure.  
What was plagued, we will prove pure.  
Where we tend to argue, we will try to agree,  
Those fortunes we forswore, now the future we foresee,  
Where we weren't aware, we're now awake;  
Those moments we missed  
Are now these moments we make,  
The moments we meet,  
And our hearts, once altogether beaten,*

## JANUARY

National Mentoring  
Month

Thyroid Awareness  
Month

National Blood Donor  
Month

1/1 New Year's Day

1/6 Epiphany

1/9 National Law En-  
forcement Appreciation  
Day

1/17 Dr. Martin Luther  
King, Jr Day

## *Director's Stone Address cont'd*

*Come, look up with kindness yet,  
For even solace can be sourced from sorrow.  
We remember, not just for the sake of yesterday,  
But to take on tomorrow.*

*We heed this old spirit,  
In a new day's lyric,  
In our hearts, we hear it:  
For auld lang syne, my dear,  
For auld lang syne.  
Be bold, sang Time this year,  
Be bold, sang Time,  
For when you honor yesterday,  
Tomorrow ye will find.  
Know what we've fought  
Need not be forgot nor for none.  
It defines us, binds us as one,  
Come over, join this day just begun.  
For wherever we come together,  
We will forever overcome.*

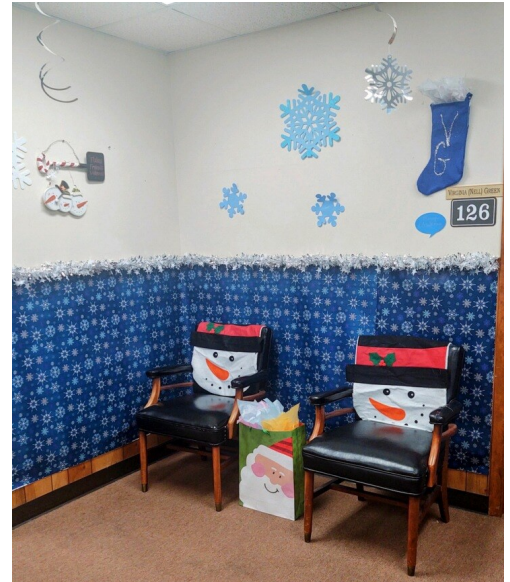
Isn't that beautiful? *"How we are weighed down, We must always pave a way forward."* We are paving a way forward in 2022 in so many exciting areas. We are tired but we keep going. There are so many projects in the works for 2022--eliminating the waiver waitlist as it stands today, adding additional slots to our Autism waiver so we can serve more children, continuing to enhance our processes for how people apply for DD services, building new buildings at the Human Development Centers, adding better training curriculums at the HDCs to care for clients who have behavioral issues, awarding millions of dollars to our community partners to help them expand home and community based services, and so much more. As these projects progress, I plan to give updates in the monthly newsletter.

2021 was a long, hard year. We lost another member of our DDS work family—Carla Williams, First Connections program, on the heels of losing Steve Farmer in October of 2020. We kept going. We continued to provide excellent care to clients both at the Centers and in the community. *"So let us not return to what was normal, But reach toward what is next."* We have so much up next. We have improvements to be made and we have clients who depend on us to keep moving forward, keep trying harder.

I will end with Amanda's ending, *"For wherever we come together, We will forever overcome."* You all continue to be the most dynamic team I have ever worked with. We can do anything if we come together. I wish you a healthy and rewarding 2022. We can do this together.



# DDS Jefferson County Office's Winter Wonderland



Pictured:

1st photo- Patricia White, Elychia Grigsby, Katrina Lewis, and Patricia Jenkins

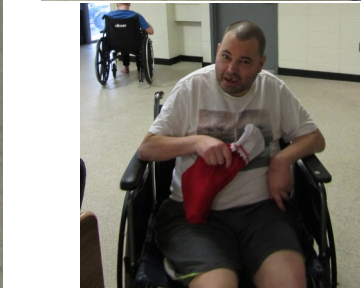
2nd photo- Grinch with Sarah Freeman

3rd photo- Grinch with Patricia Jenkins





# *Santa visits Arkadelphia Human Development Center*





## Conway Human Development Center's Polar Express



Families and Friends of Care Facility Residents (FF/CFR)



DHS Deputy Director Dawn Stehle donates 25 ft Christmas tree



Conway's local celebrity judges

## DHS Directors, Chief, and Superintendents Chili Cook-off



Congratulations to DDS's own **Jeff Gonyea** (BHDC Superintendent) on your 3rd place win!

Proceeds from the sales of chili raised \$500 for each of the families of the 6 DHS employees who died from COVID-19.



## *DDS Director Melissa Stone highlighted in DHS Secretary Cindy Gillespie's weekly Friday message*

On Tuesday, December 14th, Director Stone shared remarks at Governor Hutchinson's press conference and announced the plan to eliminate the waitlist for home and community based services for Arkansans with intellectual and developmental disabilities by June 2025.



## *Comments, Suggestions, and Q&A*

What would you like to learn more about or see featured? Please send all comments, suggestions, and Q&A to [Yvette.swift@dhs.arkansas.gov](mailto:Yvette.swift@dhs.arkansas.gov) by the 15th of the month.





# What's new at the Blue Umbrella?



The Blue Umbrella is excited to welcome Estie's Delightful Diamond Paintings & More to the store. What started as a gift in 2018 has now turned into a business for Estie and her siblings. Diamond Painting is a new craft that is similar to both paint by number and cross stitch. When an item sells, it makes Estie and her siblings feel good knowing they made something that someone liked. They pride themselves in making quality products so customers may come back for



more. Although Estie and some of her siblings may be limited physically or need some accommodations, their message is to never give up on your dreams! Stop by the store today to view the beautiful paintings and keychains made by Estie and her siblings!



Thank you for your support of our Blue Umbrella artisans during our Christmas Open House on December 3.



We look forward to having more events, introducing new artists, brand new products, and seeing you in 2022!



*A blue umbrella gift certificate is always an easy way to ensure the recipient gets exactly what they want or put toward that gift they've been eyeing for a while!*

# HAPPY NEW YEAR