



DDS celebrated Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month In March

APRIL

World Autism Month

Stress Awareness Month

Move More Month

4/1 April Fool's Day

4/2 Autism Awareness Day

4/2 International Children's Book Day

4/15 Good Friday

4/15 Tax Day

4/17 Easter Sunday

4/20 Administrative Professionals Day

4/22 Earth Day

4/23 World Book Day



Dawn Stehle, Cindy Gillespie, John Taylor, FranSha' Anderson, Paula Stone, Governor Asa Hutchinson, Shannon Roberts, Tracy Turner, Tammy Benbrook, Melissa Weatherton, Portland Gilbert

DDS celebrated Developmental Disabilities by kicking off a month long campaign. The campaign sought to raise awareness about the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all areas of community life, as well as awareness to the barriers that people with disabilities still sometimes face in connecting to the communities in which they live. Our community is comprised of various abilities and differences.

The campaign included the Governor's Proclamation of March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and a DDS executive staff video with a call to action. The video can be viewed at the following link.

<https://youtu.be/Zks3Ibzne14>



DHS Awarded \$112 Million In Funding For HCBS Workforce Stabilization Incentive Program

DMS, DDS, DAABH, and DPSQA worked for over a year to obtain approval to use federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding to stabilize our community providers. In March we expended \$112 million to Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) provider organizations to support workforce retention and recruitment efforts. Provider organizations can use the funds for hiring bonuses, retention bonuses, or bonuses to workers who provide care for consumers with complex conditions.

Full-time, part-time, hourly and long term contracted employees are eligible for all bonus categories. The size of the maximum payments to direct support professionals (DSPs) varies, as follows:

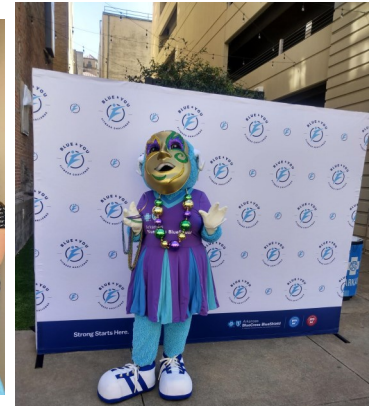
- Hiring bonuses are limited to \$1,000 per new hire from October 1, 2021, through March 31, 2024. The hiring bonus can be paid after 30 days of employment.
- The maximum longevity bonus cannot exceed \$15,000 per DSP and cannot be paid in a lump sum. The longevity bonus is for DSPs who have continuously provided services under the same employer for a minimum of three months. The recurring longevity bonus can be paid through March 31, 2024, or until the allocation is depleted.
- The complex care bonus is up to \$3,500. It is for DSPs caring for at least one beneficiary with complex needs. The bonus payments will be provided on a regular and recurring basis determined by the employer for services provided from October 1, 2021, through March 31, 2024. DSPs can earn bonuses up to the cap. Complex case beneficiaries have legal involvement, are at risk of wandering or running away, have exhibited combative or aggressive behavior, have multiple inpatient placements, are involved with child welfare or the juvenile justice system, need a wheelchair, or are bed-bound.

The funding is intended for provider organizations that serve approximately 78,000 Medicaid beneficiaries enrolled in HCBS programs including:

- AR Choices
- Independent Choices
- Living Choices
- Community and Employment Supports (CES) Waiver
- Behavioral Health Services
- Autism Waiver
- State Plan Services: personal care, private duty nursing, home health

DHS 1st Mardi Gras Parade

DDS and DMS teamed up for the Parade competition and won 2nd Place! The theme was:
Let The Good Times Boil!



Women in Leadership at DHS

In honor of Women's History Month, DDSPPEAKS reached out to women in leadership positions within DHS. The purpose of this article is to inspire, encourage, and uplift the women around you and those coming behind you. The following women shared from the heart and dropped invaluable nuggets. Sometimes, we need these reminders! Thank you ladies for your participation.

Regina Davenport, DDS Assistant Director

1. What advice would you give your younger self just starting out regarding:

A. Career/goals- Your career and goals may not always align and that's ok. More important is that you have a vision that aligns with God's purpose. Everything else will fall into place.

B. Life – As I enter a new season of my life, if I could go back and tell my younger self anything about life it would be that life is an adventure. Sometimes it is fun, other times it is just plain hard but every day life is worth living and giving it all that you have. I would also tell my younger self to live every day, make those memories, go on that trip, learn how to speak a foreign language live. Don't get so busy making a living that you fail to live.

C. Friends- Friends are probably the greatest influencers after your family. Not everyone you associate with are friends. Some are just associates, learn the difference. Be careful who you let into your inner circle.

D. Health – Guard your health. Not just your physical health but your spiritual and mental health are also important. Pay attention to the little things and never be afraid to speak up and advocate for yourself. You know yourself better than anyone else and if you feel that something isn't right, seek answers.

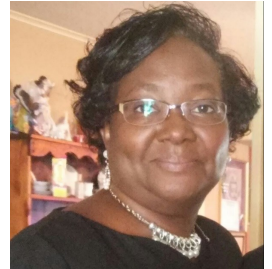
E. Finances- Develop a relationship with a good financial adviser when you get that first paycheck. Financial literacy is like everything else that you have to learn as you grow, it does not come naturally. Tithing is important. Learn to make giving back a priority.

F. Relationships- Relationships are important. There are different types, some that will last a lifetime, some that last only for a season. Any relationship requires investment.

G. Being your own critic- I would tell my younger self to "Just chill".

2. What do you want your legacy to be? What do you want your life to say about you? I want my legacy to be one of character and faith. I want others to be able to say that I helped make things better, that I made a difference.

3. If speaking to an audience of women of all ages, backgrounds, race, experiences- what one thing would you say to them to encourage them to keep going and not give up on life, their dreams. I would say to them that "you are enough". God has already given you everything that you need to succeed. Go after that job, you are enough. So what if you mess up along the way, learn from it and keep moving. Have a vision for your life, write it down, break it down in plain steps, celebrate the successes, and learn from the messes. Sometimes, it may seem like you have to start all over. That is ok. I keep in my mind constantly Jeremiah 29:11 and because I know that His plan for me is to prosper and one of hope and a future, that everything else is just stuff to get there. Don't let anyone else define you. God's definition for me is that I am enough, just as He created me, fearfully and wonderfully made.



Lori McDonald, Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, Constituent Services

1. What advice would you give your younger self just starting out regarding:

A. Career/goals– I grew up running and don't do it as often as I used to or should, but I do love the challenge and satisfaction it brings. I think my career goal is very similar to the finish of a good, long run. Always find something or someone in front of you that you can pass and set that as your goal. It's kind of funny because that's the way I drive as well! I believe in setting goals, making a plan to fulfill the goal, and work the plan and the outcome is usually one that I can live with. I'm a firm believer that God has a purpose and calling on my life and that is revealed in part through my career.

B. Life– Have fun, travel as often as possible and never forget the importance of soaking in the memories you make. I often find it's those memories that keep you charged and bring a smile to the face and heart. It is imperative to pray daily and maintain a good, healthy walk with your Lord.

C. Friends– Friends are a must! My Momma always told me as a girl, you are known by the company you keep and as an adult, I couldn't agree more! Surround yourself with people who love you and care about you. Make sure they are the type of friends who bring you up and stay far away from the basement dwellers. Find you a balcony person and stick with them because they are a rare thing. And be a balcony person to someone!



Women in Leadership at DHS cont'd

D. Health— No one knows you like you do! Listen to your body and take good care of it. Physical, spiritual, and mental health are just as important as the air we breathe and we must pay close attention and not neglect the importance each play in our daily lives.

E. Finances— Plan for retirement! The “older” me now sees how the younger me could and should have contributed and planned for retirement in a much better way. I’m 3 1/2 years out from retirement and I can tell you, it got here much quicker than I ever expected!

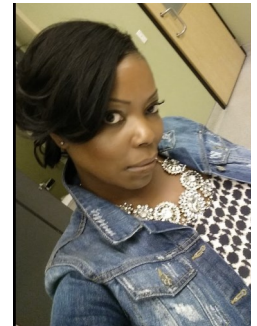
F. Relationships— Choose your friendships and working relationships wisely. The average person will spend about 90,000 hours at work over a lifetime so it is important to make sure those you are closely connected with share the same goals. Surround yourself with people who have your best interests, who want to see you succeed and are a part of the team. I know it may sound cliché, but there is no “I” in team.

G. Being your own critic— I’m definitely my own worst critic! I would tell my younger self that God knew exactly what He was doing when He knit me together and I’m fearfully and wonderfully made, I am enough.

2. What do you want your legacy to be? My desire is to know that I made a difference in the world. I want to be known as one who was generous with my time, finances, and heart. I want to leave a legacy that is lasting and will be missed when I breathe my final breath. I want to hear my Lord say well done! But I also want those left behind to miss the impact I made in the world. I want others to take the baton and do better, lead better, give more, and love harder. I want my life to inspire others to be better humans.
3. What do you want your life to say about you? I want my life to represent love, compassion, care, gentleness, mercy, grace, and fun! I want people to say she was spunky and made a difference in the life of others. We all have gifts, find your gift and use it well and wisely.
4. If speaking to an audience of women of all ages, backgrounds, race, experiences— what one thing would you say to them to encourage them to keep going and not give up on life, their dreams? I believe it is important for them to know they are needed, valuable, loved, treasured, and they are worth fighting for! Don’t ever, ever give up. Keep fighting!

Megon Bush, DCFS Assistant Director of Placement Support and Community Outreach

1. What advice would you give your younger self just starting out regarding:
 - A. Career/goals— I would say to shoot for the stars. Don’t ever doubt yourself or your abilities. Always remember that hard work pays off. When you think your work is unnoticed and not appreciated, there is someone watching you. What you are doing will be brought to light. Crush your goals!
 - B. Life— Life is what you make it. Don’t take anything for granted because what you have today can be gone tomorrow. Believe in some type of higher being. God has kept me grounded and has been my source of strength. Remain humble at ALL TIMES! Have life goals!
 - C. Friends— When you find individuals that are true, real and honest, hold on to them and value that relationship. Everyone does not have your best interest at heart and everyone is not your friend!
 - D. Health— Stay on top of this. As much as I hate it, exercise is food for your physical health as well as mental health. Mental health is just as important as your physical health. They affect one another. When one is off, the other will decline as well. A healthy you is a happy you!
 - E. Finances— I have struggled financially in my past so I know what that’s like. When I came out of my situation, I realized the importance of saving. It’s good to have a rainy day fund in the event something happens. Also.....spend wisely.
 - F. Relationships— Be wise about who you form relationships with. Relationships are important. Have positive relationships with people who want the best for you. Those people who have your best interest at heart. When you see a relationship is not affecting you positively or is toxic, it may be time to move on.
 - G. Being your own critic— Don’t be too hard on yourself. There are other people in the world that will do that. Give yourself some grace and room to mess up from time to time. No one is perfect. And it’s okay to pat yourself on the back when you deserve it.
2. What do you want your legacy to be? What do you want your life to say about you? I want people to remember me a good and kind person. A person that treated people how I wanted to be treated. A good loving mother to my four sons and a good wife to my husband.



Women in Leadership at DHS cont'd

I want people to know that whatever God blessed me with concerning life, employment, nice things... I always stayed the same. I never changed. I still presented myself like I did when I was a front line case worker fresh out of college. I also want people to know me/remember me as a God fearing woman.

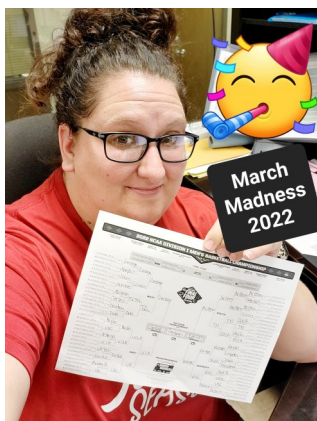
3. If speaking to an audience of women of all ages, backgrounds, race, experiences– what one thing would you say to them to encourage them to keep going and not give up on life, their, dreams? **Keep God first, stay prayed up, and crush your goals!**

Tonya Williams, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Director

1. What advice would you give your younger self just starting out regarding:
 - A. Career/goals– **Find a job you love and it never seems like work!**
 - B. Life– **Balance is everything!**
 - C. Friends– **Treasure each one!**
 - D. Health– **Everything in moderation and make sure you make time for exercise!**
 - E. Finances– **Be frugal no matter how much money you make!**
 - F. Relationships– **Don't be afraid to let go of negative relationships! Leave more room for the positive!**
 - G. Being your own critic– **I am my worst but after 58 years, I have learned not to be so hard on myself! Be kind!**
2. What do you want your legacy to be? **I feel so lucky to have 5 daughters– two of my own, two I gained when I married my husband, and one I adopted as an exchange student from Italy– they are my legacy and I am so proud of each of them.**
3. What do you want your life to say about you? **I have always tried to make the world around me better than the way I found it.**
4. If speaking to an audience of women of all ages, backgrounds, race, experiences– what one thing would you say to them to encourage them to keep going and not give up on life, their, dreams? **Be Kind and Brave!**



March Madness Bracket Winner



Dollia Langford, AHDC Human Resources Specialist, is the 2022 March Madness Bracket Winner with 28 wins. She also predicted one team that made it to the Final Four, Kansas. Thanks to all who participated! See ya' next year!
Congratulations Dollia!



CHDC's Spring Spruce-up Contest Winner-30 Hickory



30 Hickory is the winner of the CHDC 2022 Spring Spruce-up Contest! They did an amazing job of cleaning up their area! They put a lot of hard work into this project by doing their own pressure-washing, painting, and continuing to make last year's furniture look new from their regular care and maintenance of it. They were congratulated with a certificate presentation on Thursday, March 31st. Their Program Administrator, Peyton Sullins, Residential Services Manager, Kalisha Johnson, and the Administration staff will be grilling for them, providing food for the residents, and assisting with caring for the residents so the staff can enjoy their celebration meal. The evening staff will also be provided food brought in for them to honor their hard work!

The Easter Bunny makes a hop-stop at DHS, to take pictures with staff, on it's way to the Governor and First Lady's Easter Egg Roll!



Director Melissa Weatherton

There is a lot coming up at DHS. Stay tuned!

Save the Date

May

Employee Appreciation Event

5/6

11 am– 2 pm

June

HDC's Farmer's Market

6/17

11 am– 2 pm

DHS Juneteenth

*6/17 Tentatively**

July

4th of July

TBA

*7/1 Tentatively**



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 by the 15th of the month.

HAPPY Easter



Spring has arrived in the Blue Umbrella and we have the décor and gifts to prove it!

Items pictured: Welcome Peeps door hanger (CHDC), Tulip diamond art (Estie), Wooden Eggs (BHDC), Bunny Bottom Magnets (Jeremiah), It is well with my soul wreath (AHDC).



What's new in the Blue Umbrella?

Freshen up your day with a freshie!

These hanging air fresheners were made by artists at Southeast Arkansas Human Development Center (SEAHDC).

They are available in various shapes and colors and come in six fun scents: apple cinnamon, bubble gum, chocolate, cotton candy, and peaches & cream.

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We're Social



The Blue Umbrella

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WANTS TO HELP YOU
CELEBRATE HERE AT DHS!**

BIRTHDAY RENTALS:

FOR ONLY \$10, YOU WILL RECEIVE:

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(1) CHDC BIRTHDAY CARD + (1) 18" MYLAR BALLOON OF YOUR CHOICE.**

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