



## Arizona Mental Health Criminal Justice Coalition

**Dear Arizona Psychiatric Society,**

Greetings and Happy Thanksgiving from all of us at David's Hope,

This holiday we have a very important message we are sending to you regarding the David Hope non-profit organization. In 2009 our organization was formed, due to what our family had experienced living in Arizona and caring for our son David, who in his early twenties was diagnosed with a serious mental health condition. For nearly fourteen years we have worked across our state to reduce the number of people with mental illness and mental disabilities who are incarcerated. Due to the love and support of partners like you, today David is doing well and experiencing a full and meaningful life. Recently the David's Hope board made the difficult decision to dissolve the organization and close our nonprofit. This will take place sometime early in 2023.

Though people living with mental health conditions continue to be disproportionately represented in Arizona jails and prisons, due to your support our efforts at David's Hope have had an impact at creating awareness of this issue and promoting efforts to improve this ongoing public health crisis. Your support has helped us bring a greater understanding between members of law enforcement and community members. We have seen amazing efforts by law enforcement professionals statewide, to increase the likelihood that individuals experiencing mental health crisis receive mental health treatment rather than arrest and incarceration.

This Thanksgiving we want to send our thanks to all of you, our friends who have stood with us and worked alongside us, to help shoulder the burden and often lead the way ahead of us in this effort. We send a huge thank you to our friends in law enforcement. You are really responsible for making our work possible. Without your partnership, our advocacy would have fallen on deaf ears. Because of the leadership law enforcement professionals have provided in Arizona, we have grown the efforts to reduce incarceration of people with mental disabilities into our courts and even our state legislature.

There are so many individuals who deserve our gratitude, as the stand they took gave David's Hope the opportunity to make an impact for good in our communities. First, I want to thank Dr. Dawn Noggle, former director of mental health at the Maricopa County Jail, whose vision really was the force which created our movement here in Arizona. Dr. Noggle, working with former Maricopa County Probation Dept SMI unit supervisors, Rebekah Trexler and Norma Brasda, along with Shelley Curran at the RBHA, were the visionaries who started Arizona on the path to a more just system for individuals living with mental disabilities. Then of course without Jim Dunn and Kathy Bashor at NAMI AZ who supported us from the start, we would have fizzled out long ago. I must also send a shout out to Amanda Stamps

formerly of Mesa PD, Sabrina Taylor - Phoenix PD, Chief Benny Pina - City of Surprise PD, David Rhodes - Yavapai County Sheriff, Paul Penzone - Maricopa County Sheriff, Jim Driscoll - Coconino County Sheriff, Judge Emilio Velasquez - Santa Cruz County, Martin Felix - justice liaison Santa Cruz County, Kate Vesely - Pima County, Don Bischoff - Mohave County Sheriff's Office and Donald Jacobson at the Arizona Supreme Court. Lastly, I must recognize community leader Bernardo Garcia, expert criminal defense attorney, whose fight for just outcomes in our courts has made us all safer and prevented suffering for so many. What a distinguished group of transformative leaders we have been privileged to work with.

There are countless individuals who I would like to mention here which would make this letter much too long, but I of course want to send my deep appreciation to each of our current and former David's Hope board members. Our board members have so faithfully carried out our mission over the years with little recognition as their work was done behind the scenes. If you are a current or former board member, please accept our deepest gratitude for your service.

I won't neglect to extend my thanks to my own family, especially my husband Paul whose love, support and dedication to our mission has been critical to our success. To our son David - Your life has enriched us all and made us all better. Thank you for taking the risk to trust us and all those who care for you, as you continue to gain the victory over sickness and disease. God is good and we will always thank him for choosing us to be the parents of such an amazing individual. Your strength inspires us!

Finally, we want to thank each of the peers and family members, whose cries for justice created our movement, in what often seems like a totally upside-down criminal justice system. Peers and family members who have themselves or with their loved ones, experienced the pain of an often brutal criminal justice system, have provided the strength of our movement. Through the tragedy of incarceration, hundreds even thousands of inmates have and will continue to suffer, though the primary cause of their incarceration is mental illness or disability. These peers and those who love them, will continue to be the driver of our movement and will continue the work, until mental disabilities truly are recognized as a medical condition, not to be cured by punishment in lock up.

We want to thank each of you as David's Hope partners for your longstanding commitment to our work. We know that though all of us will most likely feel a sense of loss with the closing of David's Hope, together each of us will surely look for and most likely find, other avenues through which to keep our state moving forward. We will continue marching toward the day when no man, woman or child, will be incarcerated due to a mental disease or disability.

In hopes of keeping you connected with other likeminded individuals, who are interested in keeping the efforts of the Arizona Mental Health Criminal Justice Coalition alive in our communities, we want to introduce you to the Arizona Peer and Family Coalition {APFC} and invite you to read an important letter written for us by their director, Kristina Sabetta and board president, Kathy Bashor. Click on the following link to view the letter which includes a direct link to sign up for Arizona Peer and Family Coalition news. [Letter for Davids Hope \(2\).pdf](#)

We invite you to contact APFC and sign up for their newsletter in order to stay informed of and connected to ongoing efforts in mental health and criminal justice collaboration.

You can also keep informed of the movement nationwide by staying connected with the Stepping Up Initiative at [Stepping Up Initiative](#)

Our thanks and best wishes for a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday from all of us at David's Hope. May you and yours enjoy God's best always.

Mary Lou Brncik - Director David's Hope

and the David's Hope Team