

VOLUME 30 DECEMBER 2023

Scoops of Information & Inspiration!



DURHAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Happy Holidays



TAKE A PEEK!

Check out our final edition of the year, of our Information & Inspiration news bulletin created with YOU in mind. We hope it has provided you with updates on our numerous programs, while providing you with practical living tips with a healthy dose of INSPIRATION



To get your SCOOPS delivered to your inbox, email:

DCoDSSPublicInformation@dconc.gov

Make Memories This Holiday Season



There is no better gift than the gift of your PRESENCE. Enjoy your loved ones and develop holiday traditions together!



Hit the link below for the video to see how these treats are made!

bit.ly/3RoH2Tr



Shortcut Peppermint Bark Cookies

Compliments from: The Food Network

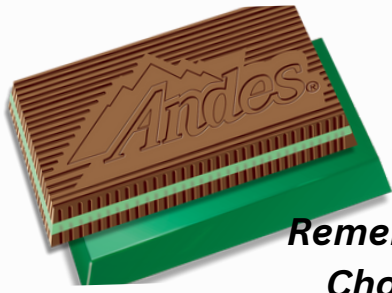
Ingredients

- 20 ounces white chocolate or almond bark, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract
- 30 mint-flavored chocolate sandwich cookies, such as Oreos
- Crushed peppermint candies or candy canes, for topping



Tips on White Chocolate

White chocolate is more sensitive to heat than regular chocolate. Melting it slowly over a gentle heat will help prevent it from seizing up when the peppermint extract is added.



*Remember Andes Mint
Chocolate Candy?*

SHORTCUT PEPPERMINT BARK COOKIES (CONTIN)

Directions:

- 1. Bring a shallow pan of water to a simmer. Add the white chocolate to a heatproof bowl. Turn the heat off and place the bowl over the hot water, making sure the bottom doesn't touch the water and steam can't escape (See note on White chocolate). Add the peppermint extract and stir with a rubber spatula until the chocolate is almost fully melted. Remove the bowl from the pan and stir until fully melted.**
- 2. Dip the cookies one by one in the melted chocolate to cover completely, then transfer to a parchment-lined baking sheet.**
- 3. Sprinkle the crushed candy over the tops. Allow the cookies to set and dry before serving.**

Feel free to add a twist to the recipe! Instead of white chocolate, use milk chocolate & dip the OREO cookies of your choice in it, and top with mint Andes candies! Make sure the candies are frozen before you crush them. Less mess.

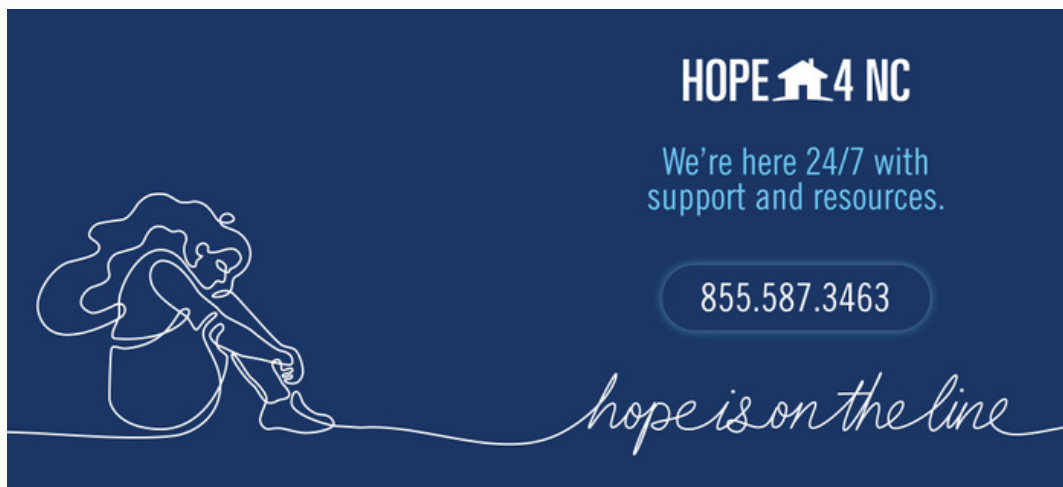
Do You Like this Recipe?

Please share with us pictures of ANY recipe that you make from SCOOPS! Include your name and contact information so that we can highlight you here. If YOU have any great life hacks, recipes or celebrations, send them to:

DcoDSSPublicInformation@dconc.gov

Your Mental Health Matters

At this time of year, many people suffer with loneliness and depression. Fortunately, our state provides the HOPE 4 NC hotline for FREE. Providing 24/7 support and resources to North Carolinians in need of mental health assistance.



The Best Mental Health Apps of 2023

- **Best Overall:** Moodfit
- **Best for Therapy:** BetterHelp
- **Best for Learning Coping Skills:** MoodMission
- **Best for Stress Relief:** Sanvello
- **Best for Meditation:** Calm
- **Best Fun App:** Happify
- **Best for Depression:** Depression CBT Self-Help Guide
- **Best for BIPOC:** Shine
- **Best for Bipolar Disorder:** eMoods
- **Best for Symptom Tracking:** Bearable
- **Best for ADHD:** Todoist
- **Best for PTSD:** PTSD Coach

Give of Yourself

One way to immediately lift your mood is to volunteer!

Love music? Volunteer at the NC Symphony. Love history? Volunteer at NC historic sites, and museums. The Volunteer Center in Durham has lots of opportunities too! Get connected to others by volunteering!



Nine Ways to Lift Your Spirits

1. **Give the gift of your time** – Giving to others can be an effective way to feel happy and giving of your time and/or skills can be the most rewarding. You might, for example, drop off food at a local food bank, send care packages to soldiers in the military or donate blood. If you love animals, volunteer at the animal shelter or donate food.
2. **Participate in a toy drive** – Participate in one of the toys for children programs available in your area. This is a great way to help a child who is underprivileged or whose family is struggling financially receive a holiday gift or gifts.
3. **Treat a good friend to a meal** – Make plans to dine with a friend via a Zoom call and then, prior to the call, surprise them by having their meal delivered. You can still enjoy their company—especially if you haven't seen them in a while. You'll not only feel good about treating them to dinner, but you'll get the added joy of having fun and spending quality video-conference time with a friend.
4. **Get plenty of rest** – Too many of us let our day-to-day lives get in the way of our sleep. It can be even more of a challenge during the holidays. Making sure you get an adequate amount of quality sleep can make a huge difference in improving or maintaining your mood.
5. **Donate holiday treats to the elderly** – Check with a local nursing home to see if it would be okay to give each resident a token holiday-themed gift or baked treat. They'll be happily surprised at the gesture and you'll feel good about helping make someone's day a little brighter.
6. **Get physical** – Follow an exercise video, go for a walk or run, ride a stationary bike or clean the house from top to bottom. Physical activity releases feel-good endorphins that will brighten your mood and reinvigorate you.
7. **Take a yoga class and/or meditate** – Practicing yoga can be a great low-impact way to increase your flexibility, increase muscle strength and tone and improve your breathing, but it can also have significant benefits in reducing stress and improving your mental well-being. Free online videos offer a variety from beginner to advanced. Taking time to meditate can also help reduce stress by making you clear your head, concentrate on your breathing and focus on being present.
8. **Make a list of people and things you are thankful for** – Write down the names of people you are grateful to have in your life and all things you are thankful for. By focusing on your blessings, you can put yourself in a position to appreciate and enjoy what you have, helping you feel more fulfilled.
9. **Learn something new** – Pick a subject that you know very little about or a skill you would like to have and start researching on YouTube. You could learn a new software program, learn to play an instrument, practice basic carpentry, fix minor issues on your car, take dance lessons, learn to knit...the list is endless. Learning keeps your mind sharp, boosts your mood and gives you a sense of accomplishment.

From Tenethealth.com



Clarity & Peace of Mind

I AM ENOUGH



I don't have to be perfect

I have weaknesses

I don't have to know everything

I'm doing what's best for me

I'm still growing

I can't please everyone

I can say "NO"

I make mistakes

It's safe for me to be unapologetically me

Comparison is the thief of JOY



@savingwithben

DURING THE HOLIDAYS IT'S OKAY...

- If you can't afford expensive gifts for loved ones
- To miss loved ones who are no longer with us and to take time to honor their memory
- If you need to be alone and have some me-time
- To say no to certain events or gatherings to maintain your mental health
- To decline alcohol or to leave a party early if you're not feeling up to it
- To opt for homemade gifts or experiences over store-bought items
- To feel sad or nostalgic; the holidays can be an emotional time
- To not have a festive feast—sometimes pizza and pajamas are just fine
- To ask for help with holiday preparations or choose easier options
- To have a quiet Christmas if that's what brings you peace
- To prioritize your own family's needs over others' expectations
- To break from tradition and start new holiday customs that better fit your current life

We are all special!



ONE MONTH UNTIL 2024:

- let go of what no longer serves you and prioritize peace.
- hoping your tough times turn into wins and brighter days in 2024.
- spend more time around people who uplift you.
- you deserve peace, do what it takes to find it.
- remind yourself that everything you need is already within you.
- whatever didn't work out this year wasn't meant for you.

INNERGROWTH



I'm so proud of how you handled this past year. You persisted through lots of the stress, tears, uncertainty, and discomfort. You surrendered to the beauty and turmoil that comes with growth and healing. You chose to do the best you could with the time and energy that you had. You picked yourself up after every setback and refused to give up. Please don't downplay the strength and courage that was required for you to get through 2023. With all the lessons you learned, challenges you overcame, and blessings you stepped up to, there is so much to give yourself credit for.

delicatehibiscus

Protect your mental health



May you receive the energy and strength to finish your projects, bring your idea to life, and accomplish your goals. May your path be cleared and all blocks be removed. May your creativity be multiplied and your imagination be filled with inspiration to make a difference.

DCo Honors



The DCo Honors is an annual event held by Human Resources and the DCo Engagement Committee. It's a wonderful time of year when employees are recognized for their years of service to the County. It is also a time where recent retirees are honored. Our agency had a record number of honorees this year! Here's a roll call of DSS honorees and their years served: Virginia Flood (35); Toina Coley (30); Chavella Fike (30); Latoria Britto (25); Prudence Glover (25); Karen Rice (25); Zerlina Agbogbe (20); Jacqueline Davis (20); Talitha Faucette (20); Sonya Hawley (20); Angela Johnson (20); Henry Johnson (20); Tina Morton (20); Shatana Rouse (20); Ivy Taylor (20); Althia White (20); Jaquator Burnette (15); Judith Dearing (15); Tara Gibbs (15); Jwisha Langley (15); Michele Morales (15); Jacqueline Proctor(15); Loretta Roberts (15); Cynthia Scott (15); Hawa Turay (15); Erika Ward (15); Elizabeth Woyee (15); Wynter Arrington (10); Maria Fuller (10); Sammevetta Garris (10); Dana Hart (10); Bonnie Hummel (10); Bettie Jordan (10); Lee Little (10); Felicia Lloyd (10); Michele Long (10); Kina McKinney (10); Brittany Moore (10); Ashley Perkins (10); Yahira Santana (10); Nancy Santos (10); Judy Spruiell (10); Ulessia Staten (10); Roddy Tate (10); Klunita Thompson (10); Zandra Wheeler (10); Marvis Bond (5); Tanisha Boone (5); Monica Cohn (5); Diamali Corbett (5); Ashleigh Crawley Scoggins (5); Mark Deer (5); Joshaline Douglas (5); Cierra Horne (5); Kelsey Howard (5); Quannah Jackson-Brown (5); Teffoney James (5); Eleanor Lee (5); Taquan Lynch (5); Diana Martinez Ceron (5); Shatia McGill (5); Vada Moore (5); Cassandra Owens-Buffaloe (5); Jacqueline Reddick (5); Lawanda Sanyang (5); Kokethia Saunders (5); Kristin Simpson (5); April Tate (5); Latusha Tyson (5); Tiffani Wilson (5); Kashondra Young-Buckner (5).

Retirements

SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)	ESTHER	HEADEN	38	8/1/2023	ESTHER
SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)	BRIDGETTE	COLEMAN	31	4/1/2023	BRIDGETTE
SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)	DEBORAH	JONES	29	4/1/2023	DEBORAH
SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)	LYNETTE	CRADLE	25	7/1/2023	LYNETTE
SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)	DENISE	JETT	22	2/1/2023	DENISE
SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)	VICTORIA	BECK	21	6/1/2023	VICTORIA
SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)	PAMELA	SMITH	21	9/1/2023	PAMELA
SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)	VIVIAN	HYMES	20	4/1/2023	VIVIAN
SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)	ERIKA	MCPHERSON	20	4/1/2023	ERIKA
SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)	JUDY	RANDALL	20	11/1/2023	JUDY
SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)	DARLENE	WHITFIELD	16	1/1/2023	DARLENE
SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)	JANEEN	GORDON	6	7/1/2023	JANEEN
SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)	ANTONIO	HARRIS	1	10/1/2023	ANTONIO



Catherine Williamson-Hardy
A DCoDSS Star



In 1989, Catherine was hired as a temp worker here at DSS as a LIEAP Supervisor. In 1990 Catherine was hired full time as an Income Maintenance Caseworker, and over a 3 year period she attended graduate school at NCCU and held various other IMC positions in Work First, Medicaid, and more. Catherine strategically left our agency for other opportunities that grew and expanded her skill set. Her last venture outside of our agency was as a faculty member in 2005 at Appalachian State University as a curriculum developer, trainer, and consultant for human services programs. Returning to DSS in 2011, Catherine was finally “home”. She was the Assistant Director of Customer Accountability and Talent Development (CATD) perfectly fitting into her wheelhouse of training and developing our agency staff. When Director Michael Becketts left, Catherine became our Interim Director from April 2017-October 2017. In November 2017, the woman who started as a temporary worker became our agency’s first Deputy Director of the Durham County Department of Social Services! Let Catherine’s story of success be an inspiration to all who read it. With hard work, determination, and talent, you too, can achieve your goals. Catherine you will be missed, but your legacy shall remain!

Thank you for your 30 years of dedicated service to the Human Services profession.

Have you heard of MAAME, Inc.?

MAAME, pronounced ma-may, is the acronym for *Mobilizing African American Mothers through Empowerment*. ‘Maame’ is also the Ghanaian word for “mother”. Maya Jackson is the founder of this nonprofit that empowers Black, Indigenous, and other birthing people of color to navigate health systems; offering resources and support for holistic maternal health and wellness.

Researchers around the country have been discussing openly about the crisis in Black maternal health. Black women in America are 3 times more likely than white women to die from pregnancy-related causes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC sites the quality of health care, implicit bias, structural racism and chronic health conditions among the reasons for the disparity. Of course, Durham is on the frontline of this issue with a North Carolina Central University graduate leading the way!



Maya Jackson, founder
MAAME, Incorporated.

Ready to Learn More?

Visit this blog post found in Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina’s

“Changemakers” series:

bit.ly/3Ryq8Sw

Want to Get Involved?

MAAME is located at 1208

Fayetteville St., Durham

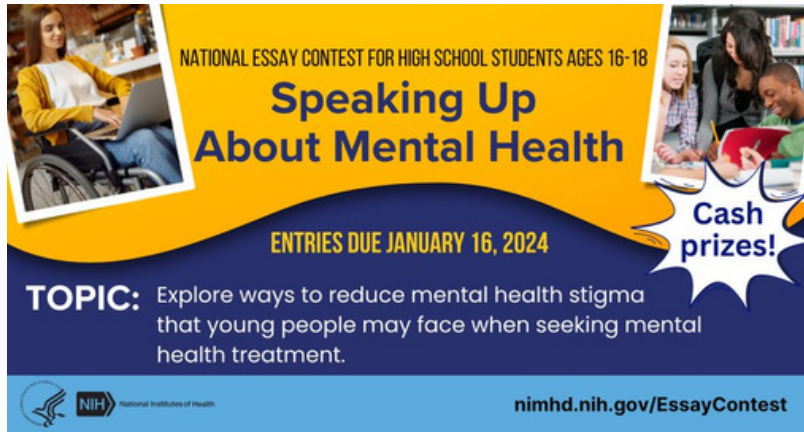
Phone: (919) 709-3120

Email: info@maameinc.org

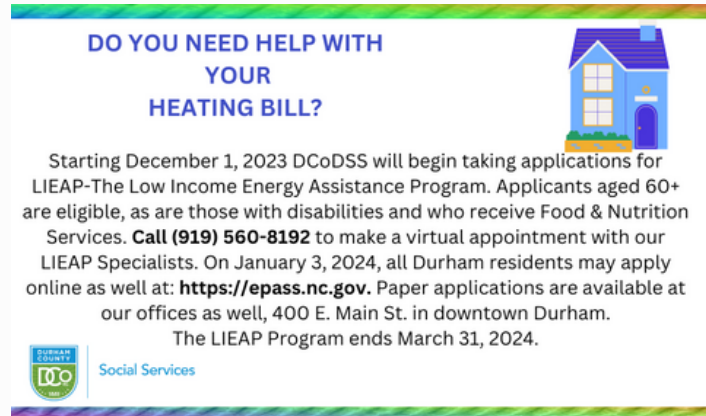
They have a healthy food program for their clients & so much more!

The More You Know

Here's a great opportunity for high school students!



NATIONAL ESSAY CONTEST FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AGES 16-18
Speaking Up About Mental Health
ENTRIES DUE JANUARY 16, 2024
Cash prizes!
TOPIC: Explore ways to reduce mental health stigma that young people may face when seeking mental health treatment.
nimhd.nih.gov/EssayContest



DO YOU NEED HELP WITH YOUR HEATING BILL?
Starting December 1, 2023 DCoDSS will begin taking applications for LIEAP-The Low Income Energy Assistance Program. Applicants aged 60+ are eligible, as are those with disabilities and who receive Food & Nutrition Services. Call (919) 560-8192 to make a virtual appointment with our LIEAP Specialists. On January 3, 2024, all Durham residents may apply online as well at: <https://epass.nc.gov>. Paper applications are available at our offices as well, 400 E. Main St. in downtown Durham. The LIEAP Program ends March 31, 2024.
Social Services

Durham has opened 12 courts dedicated to Pickleball! Read all about it here: bit.ly/4asWlmD



Follow Us!



@DCoDSS



/DurhamDSS



DurhamDepartmentOfSocialServices

Happy Holidays from Your Friends at DCoDSS!