

# snapshots

## Russellville Polar Plunge

PHOTOS BY AMBER QUAID, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER



As the team recognized for raising the most money, \$4115.46, Team Friendship runs into the 34-degree water at Lake Dardanelle as part of the Russellville Polar Plunge on Feb. 6.



Maliya, 22, left, and Samuel Johnson, 13, hug during the Russellville Polar Plunge on Feb. 6 while waiting for the event to finish after all the participants took the plunge.



Judy, left, and Michael Galloway of Dover wait for the official announcement to jump into Lake Dardanelle for the Russellville Polar Plunge. This was Michael's seventh year to take the plunge, with Judy supporting him from the sidelines.



Everly Davis, 2, is encouraged by her mother, Breanne, of Russellville, to come pet Juno, an on-site dog brought by an onlooker, during the Russellville Polar Plunge.



Megan Selman, left, director of the Boys & Girls Club for the Arkansas River Valley, was one of four judges selected to choose the best costume during the Russellville Polar Plunge. She was joined by her family: Kate, 7, in front and back row, Hank, 1, and Chad.



Marty Duane of Team Friendship took home the award for best costume at the Russellville Polar Plunge.



Wendy Parks, center, trainee for the Special Olympics Area 17, and her grandsons, Skyler Curtis, 16, left, and Terrell Curtis, work together to help with all that is involved with setting up, running and taking down the various pieces of the Russellville Polar Plunge event.



Arkansas Tech University's Alpha Gamma Rho members Bryson Pitchford and Wyatt Petty accept the trophy for being the main supporting organization from a local college.



Michael Galloway of Dover, left, and Chris Kellner of Pottsville run into Lake Dardanelle during the Russellville Polar Plunge.

### PORTER'S HOUSE

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well," said Poteete, who is the founder and president of Porter's House. "I would like to see all foster families have a place to go that will assist with clothing, not only for babies, but with all sizes and ages — to have the ability to help in the transition from overwhelmed to where to go for help — and to call Porter's House as a guide to be all those things."

Porter's House got its name from Poteete's grandparents Harlon and Nancy Porter, whom she called MaMa and PaPa. Poteete's grandfather Harlon Porter died unexpectedly in October 2019.

"I want to continue the legacy of his giving and loving heart, his hard work, and be the hands and feet of Jesus — and the foster closet is my version of that," Poteete said. "My mission in life is to take

care of our foster children and families that are in need."

One way Porter's House provides for foster families is through the blessing boxes that are given out every month. The provisions consist of a laundry basket full of paper towels, plates, cups, napkins, plastic forks and spoons, as well as toothbrushes and toothpaste, toilet paper and cleaning supplies.

"This was one of the first items donated to us, and I am not going to lie — I cried," Poteete said. "It's amazing how something so small can make a difference."

Division of Children and Family Services caseworkers in Yell County use the closet a lot, Poteete said.

"They will swing by and pick up items for the families and children, and for the families who have working adults in the home, this helps out tremendously," she said. "We do have families that will

come into the closet personally, but at this time, it is easier and safer, healthwise, when the DCFS workers come in and pick up items or if I go in and make bags to drop off for the families."

Poteete said that, unfortunately, no money was raised this year for the blessing boxes, as money was tight for people this holiday season. She said some people did generously provide Christmas gifts for foster families and the homeless.

Kaylie Burge has worked for the Department of Human Services in Yell County for six years. She said she uses the closet to provide clothes, shoes, hygiene products and school supplies to clients.

"It is greatly appreciated because I get calls at all hours of the night," Burge said. "Walmart doesn't stay open, and the state doesn't have the funds to purchase things for children.

"Having these clothing closets helps us provide for the kids, and it is greatly appreciated. We just go in and get whatever we need."

She said Poteete is "a great person who continues to help the community of Dardanelle." Burge said Poteete volunteers at Home Church as well.

"She is a wonderful person, and I couldn't be blessed with a more wonderful friend," Burge said. "Ninety percent of the time, kids don't have shoes, but you can get all that at Porter's House."

"They also provide us with a shower so we can clean the kids and give them lice treatments before we send them to their foster home."

Poteete said that while Porter's House mostly serves Yell County families, the doors are open to members of any foster or adoptive family.

"We also opened our doors for others to use, such as grandparents who have taken

in their grandchildren to raise," Poteete said. "We really will not turn a foster family or child away."

Poteete said the biggest need for foster families in Yell County is for more people to "open their homes and their hearts to welcome children who come into care."

"The best way for people to help outside of fostering is to donate to a local closet — to donate items that are much needed, such as socks, hygiene products, shoes and other items," Poteete said. "There is also the choice of donating money, which, in turn, we can use to purchase the much-needed items for children."

She said that as a result of COVID-19, Porter's House is not able to put out donation boxes in local businesses to receive donated items for the closet. She said that in the beginning, she wasn't allowed to go into local businesses and

let owners know of this new resource that assists local families. She said Porter's House mailed out an estimated 150 donation informational packets in March.

"COVID-19 impacted us financially and kept us from receiving any local help for our closet," Poteete said. "We offer porch pickups for those who want to donate items to the closet."

"We also give people the option of donating money; this way, we can shop for what is needed, and there is no contact, due to COVID-19."

She said donations can be made directly to the organization's website, [www.portershouse.net](http://www.portershouse.net).

"Our biggest challenge has been getting our name out there, letting people know what our mission and goals are," Poteete said.

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