



Press release for Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. For immediate release.

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## **Celebrating 10 Million Pounds of Gleaned Produce And Growing**

**LITTLE ROCK, AR ( November 27, 2017 )**– Today Executive Director Kathy Webb, the staff of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance and volunteers celebrated the 10 millionth pound of fresh produce harvested by the Arkansas Gleaning Project. In a press conference held at Western Hills Park Hunger Garden in southwest Little Rock, Michelle Shope, director of Food Sourcing and Logistics for the Alliance was joined by Mayor Mark Stodola, Little Rock City Manager Bruce Moore, Johnny Pettus from Society of St. Andrew, Director of Little Rock Parks and Recreation John Eckart and Arkansas Department of Correction Wrightsville Unit Warden Randy Watson to recognize this landmark accomplishment. “Were it not for the partnerships we have developed with the organizations represented here today,” Shope remarked, “gleaning would never have had the impact it does today.”

Since the program began in 2008, 10 million pounds of produce has been donated by Arkansas farmers after their harvests to help put nutritious food on the tables of Arkansas families in need. With help from the Arkansas Department of Correction, the annual gleaning yield grew from 149,000 pounds in 2008 to more than 1.5 million pounds, which is the current annual yield. “Gleaning is the inmates’ most popular work unit at the prison,” said Warden Watson. “They feel like they are helping their families, many of whom depend on food pantries for food assistance. It’s good for their self-esteem.”

Thanks to a partnership between the Alliance and the City of Little Rock Parks and Recreation Department, unused public land is also being re-purposed to grow produce for the gleaning project. One such property is the Western Hills Park Garden, the location of today's event where turnips were gleaned following the press conference.

The generosity of Arkansas growers as well as state and local government partnerships have made the Arkansas Gleaning Project successful in putting fresh, locally grown fruit and vegetables on the tables of Arkansans struggling with hunger. Mayor Stodola called it “a model for hunger relief all over the nation.”

The Arkansas Gleaning Project provides fresh fruits and vegetables to food banks and other hunger agencies for a program cost of less than 5 cents per pound.

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**About The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance**

Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, lead partner in Arkansas for the No Kid Hungry campaign, is a non-profit collaborative network of more than 550 hunger relief and advocacy organizations across Arkansas. Our founding members include the Arkansas Foodbank in Little Rock, the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas in Jonesboro, Harvest Regional Food Bank in Texarkana, Food Bank of North Central Arkansas in Norfolk, Northwest Arkansas Food Bank in Bethel Heights and River Valley Regional Food Bank in Fort Smith. The Alliance is dedicated to reducing hunger through direct relief, education and advocacy. We invite you to visit [www.ARhungeralliance.org](http://www.ARhungeralliance.org) for details on hunger relief programs, donor and volunteer opportunities.

#### **About the Arkansas Gleaning Project**

The Arkansas Gleaning Project is a partnership between Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, Society of St. Andrew and the growers of Arkansas who donate their unharvested crops to feed Arkansas's hungry. Volunteers and others go into the fields and gather produce that is left after harvest. The cost of operating the Arkansas Gleaning Project is less than 5 cents per pound. Since the project began in 2008, 10 million pounds of fresh produce has been distributed to food banks, pantries, soup kitchens and shelters throughout Arkansas. The Arkansas Gleaning Project is funded in part through a grant from the Walmart Foundation and through the generosity of the many donors to the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance.