



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

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**LITTLE ROCK, AR ( October 12, 2017 )**– September was Hunger Action Month, a time when hunger relief advocates and hunger agencies work to raise awareness of the impact of hunger in the nation and in Arkansas. This year hunger relief advocates and others gathered to recognize those individuals, businesses, elected officials, non-profit and philanthropic organizations that have gone the extra mile in helping alleviate hunger in their communities. This year’s Hunger Action Breakfast, held September 28<sup>th</sup> in Little Rock, recognized 11 Acting Out Against Hunger awardees.

**Category: Government or Elected Official**

**Representative Clint Penzo** (District 88) sponsored Act 1101 that will expand health incentives and nutrition education for SNAP recipients. His leadership in sponsoring this important legislation will help thousands of low wage Arkansans make healthful, nutritious choices for themselves and their families.

**Category: Individual**

**Joan Ball** of Cherry Valley was nominated by the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas for her leadership in opening the Cherry Valley Food Pantry. She recognized the dire need of families in the school district for food to feed their children, who were going to school hungry. In her position on the school board, she spearheaded the construction of a new facility and organized volunteers to man the many services the pantry offers besides food (health screenings, diabetic clinics and training opportunities for food pantry clients).

**Ruedean Lester** of Calico Rock was nominated by the Food Bank of North Central Arkansas for her work as coordinator of the Calico Rock Community Care Program, which serves a food pantry and USDA Commodities Distribution site for Izard County. Ruedean’s outstanding service to her community and the individuals who depend on her program is demonstrated daily through her intentional efforts to care for others.

**John Paul Pendergrass**, Charleston AR, was nominated by the Alliance for his work in helping develop and sustain the Arkansas Beef Project, a program of the Alliance. The innovative program offers cattle ranchers a unique opportunity to provide a much needed source of meat protein to many Arkansas children and families in need by donating cattle and the cash to process the meat for distribution to food pantries at no cost.

**Michele Rodgers**, SNAP Outreach Manager with Arkansas Department of Human Services and an advocate for SNAP recipient access to healthy food. She has helped shape the SNAP Outreach program with the Alliance team and is always interested in learning how to make the program accessible to those who qualify. Her focus on older adults has helped many food insecure seniors access a program that can

be very challenging to navigate without support. She is a joy to work with and learn from. The SNAP team wouldn't be complete without her.

**Category: Philanthropic or Non-Profit**

**Arkansas Children's Hospital Community Outreach** for their pioneering efforts at introducing food insecurity screening for patients, serving children free lunches year-round, supporting an on-campus food pantry, opening a WIC clinic on-campus, providing Cooking Matters classes and grocery tours in Little Rock, and taking Cooking Matters pop-up grocery tours into middle and high schools around the state where they provided nutrition education to 3,501 students at 32 different schools.

**Brenda Perritt and Cross Compassion Center** in Springdale, AR was nominated by the Northwest Arkansas Food Bank. The hunger agency has innovated a unique model for their pantry that allows people to choose the food they want and opened more space to increase capacity. The agency served over 1,000 people in July alone.

**Cayce's Charities** of Thornton, AR, was nominated by the Arkansas Foodbank. Cayce's Charities is an emergency assistance organization providing food, clothes, furniture, and toys to families all over southern Arkansas. The organization was featured in a recent PBS NewsHour segment looking at what cuts to SNAP will mean for people in high poverty states like Arkansas.

**Category: Business or Corporation**

**McLarty Ford** of Texarkana was nominated by Harvest Regional Food Bank for its generosity in donating a new Ford Transit vehicle for the food bank to use in their local food rescue efforts. McLarty Ford has continued their support not only through funding, but also through employee participation, in holding "fill a truck" food drives and numerous other community events to support the Food Bank's mission.

**The Kitchen Cabinet** organization was nominated by the Alliance for their work in providing food to children in the Little Rock School District when school was not in session and for sponsoring Cooking Matters classes that teach low wage workers and others how to shop for and prepare nutritious meals on tight food budgets.

**O.K. Foods** was nominated by River Valley Regional Food Bank in Fort Smith. O.K. Foods has pledged to donate 500,000 pounds of chicken to the food bank over the next 5 years. The food bank has already received 100,000 pounds in 2017. This generous donation will allow the food bank to feed many thousands of additional people in need per year.

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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.