



MEDIA RELEASE

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

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ALLIANCE RECEIVES 2017 BLUE&YOU FOUNDATION GRANT

LITTLE ROCK, AR (December 12, 2016)—The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance has been awarded a Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas grant for \$88,682 to support Phase II of the *Arkansas Hunger and Nutrition Initiative Program*—introduced in 2016. The initiative was designed to help families struggling with food insecurity to put well-balanced, healthy food on their tables even when they are on limited budgets. Phase II of the initiative incorporates Cooking Matters, Cooking Matters at the Store, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach, Double Up Food Bucks and introduces Power of Produce, a pilot program through the mobile farmers market, which was launched successfully as part of the initial initiative.

“We are extremely grateful to the Blue & You Foundation for recognizing the profound impact the Arkansas Hunger and Nutrition Initiative Program is having on underserved communities in Arkansas since it began last year,” said Kathy Webb, executive director of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. “Too many families still lack access to affordable, nutritious food or the skills needed to incorporate fresh produce into their diets. In 2017, we will be building on the success of the initiative, by empowering more low-income Arkansans with the nutrition education, opportunity, access and skills they need to lead healthier lives.”

The Alliance will provide Cooking Matters classes through partner organizations including Boys and Girls Clubs of Arkansas, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, UAMS East, UA Cooperative Extension, Arkansas Departments of Health, Human Services and Education, the city of Little Rock’s *Love Your Schools* program, Northwest Arkansas Food Bank, Harvest Regional Food Bank, faith based organizations and more than 125 volunteer nutritionists and chefs. Partnering with grocery stores like Edwards Food Giant, Walmart, Kroger, Hays Harps and others, the Alliance’s Cooking Matters at the Store teams will conduct traditional small group tours and large station model tours that teach participants

how to stretch their food budgets without sacrificing nutrition. Additionally, two Cooking Matters classes will serve as pilots in a yearlong study to measure the long-term changes that occur.

The SNAP Outreach team will continue working toward identifying families, individuals and especially seniors who qualify for food assistance and will be offering the Double Up Bucks program, which doubles the amount of fresh produce SNAP participants can purchase with their benefits at the mobile market locations.

The Power of Produce (POP Club), a program of the National Farmers Market Coalition, will provide a fun opportunity for children to engage in the local food system through conversations directly with farmers and volunteers at the market. Children and teens receive POP Bucks (vouchers) as an incentive for participating in the POP Club's "Two Bite Club" challenge. Participants then use their own POP Bucks to shop for their choice of fresh produce. The benefits to this youth-centered program include being exposed to new fruits and vegetables, and empowering them to make healthy choices. Each participant also receives a "passport" for them to track new fruits and vegetables they try, activities in which they participate, and other lessons learned.

"Our grants this year went to programs across the state that address such issues as nutrition and exercise, dental health, and medical professional education," said Patrick O'Sullivan, executive director of the Blue & You Foundation. Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield established the Blue & You Foundation in 2001 as a charitable foundation to promote better health in Arkansas. The Blue & You Foundation awards grants annually to non-profit or governmental organizations and programs that positively affect the health of Arkansans. The Blue & You Foundation awarded more than \$2 million for 2017 grants to health improvement programs in Arkansas. The foundation is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association and serves the state of Arkansas. The foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization.

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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 480 hunger relief 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 for details on hunger relief programs, donor and volunteer opportunities.