In this issue:

Mark Your Calendar
  Kendra Gives Back - April 12; 6-8pm
  Brews and Bites - April 21; noon-5pm
  Zaza's 10th Birthday Party - April 22; 12-4pm
  Serving up Solutions - June 14; 6:30-9pm
  Hunger Action Breakfast - September 20; 7:45-9am

Cooking Matters: Empowering Inmates with Life Skills

Cooking Matters at the Store:
  Event Days Coming Up
  New Partner Training

Capacity Building Grants Make Progress Possible

Boozman Making Nutrition a Priority

SNAP Impacting Arkansans in Need

An Ounce of Prevention...

School Breakfast Month Good2Go

The Alliance Hunger Advocates Council

Cooking Matters: Changing Lives

Become A Summer Meals Sponsor

Timing of SNAP Benefit Affects Children's Test Grades

Kroger Community Rewards Program

Monthly Donors Key to Long Term Planning

Mark Your Calendar:
Kendra Gives Back
April 12  6-8pm
Promenade at Chenal
17717 Chenal Parkway
Little Rock, AR
Join us for sips, sweets and jewelry as Kendra Scott once again devotes 20% of her proceeds to benefit the Alliance on one special evening. See the yummy jewelry, fashions and accessories waiting for you when you shop the look on April 12th.

Brews and Bites
April 21  noon - 5pm
11201 Bass Pro Dr
Little Rock, AR
Food Trucks, Craft Beer & Live Entertainment at Outlets of Little Rock. This fun filled day benefits Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance & Arkansas Foodbank! Treat your taste buds while giving back to the local community, a win-win! Tickets are $6 online in advance (3/21 - 4/17) and $10 online after 4/18. Go to OUTLETSOFLITTLEROCK.COM
Sponsored by: Rock City Harley-Davidson
Entertainment by: Donnie Lee Strickland Music, Cassidy Hopper and Fire & Brimstone Duo

Zaza's 10th Birthday Party
April 22  noon-4pm
Heights Theatre
5600 Kavanaugh Blvd
Little Rock, AR
Join us on Sunday for a family-friendly afternoon of celebrating all things ZAZA as they turn their patio and parking lot into a backyard party centered around food, farms, and music. Proceeds go to the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. Enjoy LIVE MUSIC from Bonnie Montgomery, meet the farmers from Rattle's Garden, Little Rock Urban Farming, and New South Produce Cooperative, grab a draft beer or frozen Rosé cocktail from the outdoor beverage garden, enjoy pizzas, meet and hangout with the baby goats of Heifer Village and Urban Farm.

Serving up Solutions
June 14   6:30-9pm
Serving Up Solutions is our annual fundraising event in cooperation with the Arkansas Legislative Hunger Caucus. This year celebrates the 10th anniversary of the Arkansas Legislative Hunger Caucus, one of the first in the nation to focus on the issue of hunger and it's impact on the state.
The evening includes a delicious 4-course meal prepared by some of Arkansas's most celebrated chefs and served by members of the Arkansas Legislative Hunger Caucus. Guests can also participate in silent and live auctions.
Co-chairs for this year’s event are Daniel Campbell and Becky Barnes-Campbell.
Cooking Matters: Empowering Inmates with Life Skills

The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance's Cooking Matters team is partnering with the Arkansas Department of Correction's (ADC) Wrightsville Hawkins Center to roll out a program that was piloted recently. The program introduced nutrition education to the female inmates who would be completing their sentences soon. The six-week pilot course graduated twelve women from the Cooking Matters class, held as part of the prison's Think Legacy re-entry program, an evidenced-based program developed to increase the potential for successful reintegration of participating inmates into the community. The Hawkins unit's new deputy warden, Billy Inman, is eager to build on the success of the Cooking Matters program and make it a permanent part of the Think Legacy program.

Cooking Matters teaches adults and others the skills they need to shop for nutritious ingredients on a budget and prepare healthy meals for their families. The pilot class was taught by Deputy Warden Mark Warner, who decided to bring Cooking Matters to the Hawkins Center. "I had been looking for a way to bring cooking and nutrition into the Think Legacy re-entry program," said Deputy Warden Mark Warner. "When I learned about Cooking Matters, I knew it was exactly what I was looking for."

"Cooking Matters is absolutely the most popular program we've offered at the Hawkins Center," Deputy Warden Warner said. "We had better than expected results."

Upon release from their incarceration, knowing how to shop for and prepare economical, nutritious meals is important so these former inmates can make the most of their food dollars and provide for themselves and their families. One participant commented, "Cooking Matters has taught me how to cook. I've never been taught to cook a day in my life. I also have learned to cook healthy and feed me and my girls on a budget. I can now go home and teach my girls life skills they need."

Deputy Warden Warner has since moved to the Arkansas Community Corrections...
Cooking Matters at the Store: Event Days Coming Up

Ash Flat
March 29th
9:00 am - 2:00 pm
Walmart Super Center,
219 US-412
Ash Flat, Arkansas 72513

The next Cooking Matters at the Store Event Day will be in Ash Flat on March 29th in partnership with Food Bank of North Central Arkansas. The event is a self-guided tour of the grocery store where participants learn nutrition tips and tricks for stretching their food budget. Participants will receive a free $10 grocery gift card to practice the shopping skills they’ve learned on the free grocery tour.

We always need volunteers so if you or someone you know are in the Ash Flat area and are interested in volunteering, please contact Sam Stadter at sstadter@arhungeralliance.org. We will train volunteers before the event.

Cooking Matters New Partner Training

**When:** Tuesday, March 27th, 2018, 1-3pm  
**Where:** Something Good Family Fitness  
58 W. Main St  
Marianna, AR 72360  
Register by Friday, March 23rd to email address below

**When:** Thursday, April 24th, 2018, 1-4pm  
**Where:** Waldron United Methodist Church  
610 Featherston Street  
Waldron, AR 72958  
Register by Tuesday, April 22nd to email address below

We partner with local organizations across the state to offer classes for children, teens, families, and seniors. If you are interested in bringing one of these 6-week Cooking Matters classes to your community, please contact Alex Handfinger, Cooking Matters director, at alex@arhungeralliance.org.

Our team will train you, provide teaching materials and even get you started with some of the kitchen equipment and utensils you’ll need.

Capacity Building Grants Make Progress Possible

The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance has just completed awarding more than $188,000 in capacity building grants to hunger relief agencies around the state. The annual grants help food banks, pantries, shelter, soup kitchens and other agencies increase their ability to serve the food insecure in their communities. Funds for the grants are provided through the State Food Purchase Program allocated by the Arkansas Legislature in 2009.
Newton County Senior Center recently received $2,854 to buy trays for packaging home delivered meals and a multifunction steamer/pressure cooker, according to Tammy L Casey, senior center director. One of the services the Newton County Senior Activity and Wellness Center provides is its adult feeding program which includes Meals on Wheels delivering nutritious meals to the elderly and disabled in Newton County.

In an interview with the Newton County Times, Casey commented, "We are so pleased to have this expense taken care of for us. It will buy enough trays for almost a year's worth of home delivered meals. Unless we get more clients!"

Another recipient, Annette Dove's TOPPS, Inc., received $2,000 towards the purchase of a new commercial refrigerator. Annette has been tasked with taking on several additional sites around Pine Bluff to provide food boxes for families and seniors, as well as feeding more children after school. Their Emergency Food Program serves 420 families monthly, 300 more than they served in 2016.

The Alliance is honored to have these dedicated groups among the ranks of our members making sure children, seniors and families in need receive the compassionate care they deserve.

2018 Alliance Capacity Building Grants recipients

Boozman Making Nutrition a Priority

Senator John Boozman and Alliance Executive Director Kathy Webb talked at length with Fox 16 about the reduction in food insecurity in Arkansas in recent years. Webb credited the improving economy and outreach efforts by organizations across the state. The Senator was quick to recognize the efforts of the Alliance in helping increase access to nutritious food, especially for seniors and children.
Senator Boozman will be instrumental in negotiations around the Farm Bill, which determines funding levels for programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and SNAP Education as well as many child nutrition programs.

Watch the entire interview...

#SNAPmatters in Arkansas

In 2017, the Alliance SNAP Outreach team assisted 1,513 eligible Arkansans in applying for SNAP benefits - 361 of whom were seniors. That amounts to $4.04 million in benefits to very low-income families to purchase food, and is equivalent to 1.515 million meals. The Arkansas economy also benefited from incoming SNAP dollars in 2017. The impact on local economies across the state was $7.373 million.

As you can see, SNAP is important to Arkansas's low income population, but it's coming under increasing fire. Proposed budget cuts by the White House and Congress will put low-income Arkansans in danger. Children, seniors, the disabled and families for whom life is already hard enough, will face the prospect of losing benefits totally or having them reduced below already unacceptably low levels. The Alliance, through a grant from Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, conducted a series of five (5) SNAP Advocacy training sessions in the service areas of our Feeding America food bank members during the first quarter of 2018. More than 78 participants learned the facts about SNAP as well as effective means for lobbying legislators and others against cuts, block grants or structural changes to SNAP. We are happy to welcome new voices in our effort to save SNAP from destructive, shortsighted changes that would negatively impact more than 380,000 Arkansans.

Our SNAP Advocacy trainers are Linda Barnes and Chris Allen. If you would like to help organize a SNAP Advocacy Training event in your city, contact Kathy Webb at kwebb@arhungeralliance.org.

An Ounce of Prevention...

If only there were a way to keep seniors healthier longer, reduce healthcare costs and allow them to age in place with dignity. But wait, there is already a proven way: it’s SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). So why, if SNAP has such a positive impact for seniors and the country, is Congress trying to limit eligibility and reduce benefits for seniors? Read the latest policy brief from Benefits Data Trust, and then email it to your member of Congress. Our voices matters, we just need to speak a little louder. Find your legislators contact info: Representative  Senator

School Breakfast Month

Good2Go
assure more students at Hall, J.A. Fair and McClellan high schools start their days with a nutritious breakfast. The Good2Go breakfast program, funded by Baptist Health, is an effort to provide students with a tasty, nutritious, and portable means of getting the nutrition they need to get their days off to a good start.

Although many elementary and middle schools in the district already have successful Breakfast After the Bell programs, the three highest need high schools (all with free/reduced rates of 78 percent or higher) the district had struggled in attracting older students to eat breakfast at school. Older students are known for not eating early in the morning before class, often leaving them tired and unfocused until lunchtime. Thanks to the Baptist BHealthy Good2Go program, students will now be able to stop by a central location and grab a nutritious smoothie to have on their way to class. Baptist Health BHealthy provided funding to purchase industrial blenders, cups and other equipment necessary to introduce smoothies as a regular item in the district’s breakfast menu at Hall, J.A. Fair and McClellan high schools.

Arkansas School Breakfast Quick Facts

School Breakfast Month Off to a Great Start

The Governor proclaimed March as School Breakfast Month in Arkansas. Arkansas Department of Education Deputy Commissioner Ivy Pfeffer presented the Governor's proclamation and reminded those present that 64 percent (or fully 2/3) of Arkansas students are from low-income families. "They come to school with needs, one of which is hunger," said Pfeffer. She reiterated the department's commitment to making sure those students- like all others- get a quality education. Patty Barker, Arkansas No Kid Hungry campaign director, reported that according to the AR Department of Education figures, Arkansas has increased the number of meals served to children at breakfast by almost 4 million
meals since 2011 and has increased by 10 percent the ratio of low-income children who eat school breakfast relative to those who eat school lunch. The Arkansas No Kid Hungry campaign is aiming to meet the national Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) benchmark goal of 70 percent participation for school breakfast. Reaching that 70 percent goal would mean an additional 169,425 students eating school breakfast each day and an additional $4.14 million in federal reimbursements going into Arkansas’s school coffers.

Superintendent Doug Graham of the Nashville School District reported that they are feeding all students breakfast at school and are already seeing the benefits to student performance and their nutrition budget even though it is their first year to offer breakfast to all. Micheal Stone, Executive Director Student & Equity Services for the North Little Rock School District, described their successful early participation in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and Breakfast After the Bell saying, “Our increase for breakfasts is 492 each day. Putting this into perspective, we are PLUS 50,751 breakfasts and 44,612 lunches. Our reimbursement fund each day is PLUS $5,692.” Mr. Stone encouraged all educators saying, “If you are on the fence about adopting CEP or a program like Breakfast After the Bell that will help you feed more students, I would suggest you go for it.” Daniel Connerly, Russellville School District Child Nutrition director, explained how volume pricing and involving students in the choice made their financial commitment to feeding more students a win/win for students and the school district. He added, “As a district, we realized the choice the children often had to make in the morning was to eat breakfast or play. We decided to let them do both. Now we see them playing with their friends before school and then heading in afterwards to fuel up on breakfast while learning at their desks. This has doubled our students who now eat breakfast each day.”

Courtney Cochran, Arkansas 2017 Teacher of the Year, shared a moving experience of a student, Brenda, who was so hungry she couldn't learn. Said Cochran, “There is no method or strategy that can reach a child who does not have the nutrition to make her brain and body function properly. Not even the greatest teacher in the world can overcome that barrier.” For a transcript of Ms. Cochran’s moving story click here.
Our donors make so much possible for the children, seniors and families in Arkansas who struggle with food insecurity. Innovating and expanding programs that empower low-income Arkansans with the skills and access they need to increase their food security (like Cooking Matters, the Arkansas Gleaning Project, No Kid Hungry campaign programs and others) doesn’t come without a cost. We rely heavily on the financial support of the Alliance’s Hunger Advocates Council to sustain these exceptional programs that do so much for so many.

The Hunger Advocates Council is comprised of individual donors or family foundations that pledge unrestricted, tax deductible gifts of at least $1,000 annually. These important gifts allow us to build and maintain sustainable programs and resources that will have profound effects on eliminating hunger in the short term and into the future.

$1,000 - $4,999 - Friends

- Listed as a Hunger Action Friend in the Alliance newsletter and additional materials
- Invited to all donor receptions and "Coffee with Kathy" events
- Receive semi-annual Hunger Action Council newsletter

$5,000 - $9,999 - Partners

- Listed as a Hunger Action Partner in the Alliance newsletter and additional materials
- Invited to all donor receptions and "Coffee with Kathy" events
- Receive semi-annual Hunger Action Council newsletter
- Receive 2 tickets to Serving Up Solutions (if not an event sponsor)

$10,000+ - Champions

- Listed as a Hunger Action Champion in Alliance Alert newsletter and additional materials
- Invited to all donor receptions and "Coffee with Kathy" events
- Receive semi-annual Hunger Action Council newsletter
- Receive 2 tickets to Serving Up Solutions and 2 tickets to the Hunger Action Breakfast (if not an event sponsor)
- A garden row at Western Hills named in your honor with garden marker

Thank you to our Hunger Advocates Council:

**Champions**
JCT Trust
Jo and Presley Melton
Judy W. Fletcher Family Foundation

**Partners**
Anita Davis
Anne Fund
Phillip R. Jonsson Foundation

**Friends**
Keith Prevost
Marcy and Mark Doderer
Sally and James Jones
Becky and Mark Allison
Anita Southard
Bonnie Harvey
Cooking Matters: Changing Lives

Are you, your church, or your organization looking for ways to make a difference in the lives of people in your community? Sponsoring a 6-week Cooking Matters course or offering Cooking Matters at the Store grocery tours are meaningful ways to give low-income adults, teens and families the skills they need to eat healthier and more economically.

"I had been looking for a way to bring cooking and nutrition into the Think Legacy re-entry program," said Deputy Warden Mark Warner. "When I learned about Cooking Matters, I knew it was exactly what I was looking for. It is a way to give inmates the skills to be good to themselves and their families. Cooking Matters is absolutely the most popular program we’ve offered at
The Alliance Cooking Matters team will provide training, materials and other assistance to churches, individuals, civic organizations and others who wish to bring the value of Cooking Matters or Cooking Matters at the Store to their communities. Want to know more? Take a look at our video, Cooking Matters in Arkansas. For information, contact Alex Handfinger at alex@arhungeralliance.org.

Cooking Matters is sponsored nationally by Walmart.

Become A Summer Meals Sponsors

Sixty percent of Arkansas students depend on free and reduced priced school meals. When school is out for the summer, many of these children will not have a reliable source of nutritious food.

That's where Summer Meals Sponsors come in. Groups that meet USDA eligibility standards can be reimbursed for the nutritious meals they feed to children 18 and under at approved sites in the summer. Churches, housing authorities, parks and recreation departments, Boys & Girls Clubs, schools, and other non-profit organizations can become sponsors.

Thinking about the need in your community? The Arkansas No Kid Hungry campaign’s Out of School Team can help. They provide technical assistance and grant dollars to help build successful, sustainable programs that will serve kids in communities like yours well into the future. For more information, contact SiKia Brown, Out of School Program director, at sbrown@arhungeralliance.org and visit our website.

Timing of SNAP Benefit Affects Children’s Test Grades

For schoolchildren who receive food through the monthly Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which day payment arrives affects their academic performance, according to new research from Duke University.

Student scores on end-of-grade reading and math tests vary depending on how much time has elapsed since the family’s SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps) benefit arrived, with scores peaking between two and three weeks after benefits were received. Scores dip to their lowest point right after SNAP benefits are paid and at the end of the benefit month, the study found.

With nearly 13 million American children receiving SNAP, the findings have broad implications, said Anna Gassman-Pines, an associate professor in Duke’s Sanford School of Public Policy. (Read the entire article)
Kroger Community Rewards Program

When you sign up for the Kroger Community Rewards Program, a portion of what you spend on groceries is donated by Kroger to the Alliance. Thank you to those families who make their shopping dollars do good for those who are less fortunate, and thank you to Kroger for offering such a community minded program.

You can be part of the program. Go to Kroger Community Rewards for details on how to make your grocery dollars do more to fight hunger in Arkansas.

Monthly Donors Key to Long Term Planning

Knowing that funds will be available month-to-month helps the Alliance maintain sustainable programs that meet the needs of Arkansas's low-income families, seniors and others. If you plan on making a donation to the Alliance this year, why not make it a monthly contribution?

Being a sustaining donor is convenient for you and helpful to the Alliance. If you're ready to become a monthly donor, contact Mary Bea Gross, Alliance development director, at mbgross@arhungeralliance.org or call 501.399.9999.

The Alliance Alert is the quarterly newsletter of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance.