HUNGER ALLIANCE RECEIVES BLUE & YOU FOUNDATION GRANT

LITTLE ROCK, AR (November 18, 2015)–The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance has been awarded a Blue & You Foundation grant for $128,276 to support the Arkansas Hunger and Nutrition Initiative Program. The initiative was designed to target underserved communities and families that are lacking access to healthy, affordable food and/or the knowledge or skills to incorporate fresh fruits and vegetables into their daily diets. Cooking Matters, Cooking Matters at the Store, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach and a mobile farmers’ market pilot program are the primary components of the initiative.

“We are extremely grateful to the Blue & You Foundation for recognizing the profound impact the Arkansas Hunger and Nutrition Initiative Program can have on underserved communities in Arkansas,” said Kathy Webb, executive director of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. “Too many seniors and families live in areas that make access to nutritious food impossible. This initiative seeks to remedy that, by empowering 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, Single Parent Scholarship Fund, 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 grocery store and farmers’ market tours that teach participants how to shop for nutritious foods on limited food budgets. With the assistance of more than 75 volunteers, the SNAP outreach team will increase the number of seniors and families who are eligible (but not receiving) food assistance benefits and offer “double bucks” in mobile farmers’ markets located in areas identified as food deserts. The mobile farmers’ market pilot
program will utilize a retrofitted city bus from Central Arkansas Transit Authority that will distribute locally grown produce on a weekly basis. The fresh produce will be grown by Raising Arkansas, a non-profit, year-round farming organization whose mission is to increase food access through collaborative agricultural solutions. The locally grown produce will be delivered on a weekly basis in areas identified in central Arkansas as food deserts.

“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. In its 14 years of operation, the Blue & You Foundation has awarded more than $24 million to 766 health improvement programs in Arkansas.

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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 Texarkana Regional Food Bank in Texarkana, Food Bank of North Central Arkansas in Norfork, 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.