

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UAMS, AmeriCorps Announces Food Security Initiative in Arkansas

University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences awarded more than \$255,000 in American Rescue Plan funds to serve rural and urban communities

WASHINGTON, D.C. – AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism, announced more than \$255,000 in American Rescue Plan grant funding to the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences as part of the AmeriCorps VISTA program’s food security initiative over the next three years.

The AmeriCorps VISTA initiative, launched in 2020, is a comprehensive and collaborative approach to end hunger which affects [one in eight Americans](#) and [more than 400,000 Arkansans](#). AmeriCorps has awarded over [\\$2 million in grants](#) to organizations addressing the impact of hunger in their state during the pandemic.

The UAMS Office of Community Health & Research collaborates with Arkansas organizations who serve diverse food-insecure populations. Together with national and local experts, AmeriCorps and UAMS will work to improve the local food system.

On Thursday, Aug. 25, Daniel Dunlap, AmeriCorps South Central deputy regional administrator joined Amy Wenger, MHSA, vice chancellor, UAMS Northwest Regional Campus, Pearl McElfish, Ph.D., MBA, division director of the UAMS Office of Community Health & Research, and Mayor Doug Sprouse of Springdale, Ark., to recognize AmeriCorps members and announce the grant award at the UAMS Office of Community Health & Research in Springdale, Ark.

“The Biden-Harris Administration’s historic American Rescue Plan investment enabled AmeriCorps to expand our food security efforts in communities with the greatest need,” **said Michael D. Smith, AmeriCorps CEO.** “UAMS’ programs not only address immediate hunger, but they also prioritize public health education and agricultural production to disrupt the cycle of food access issues.”

“Addressing food security in Arkansas is a priority aim of UAMS Community Health & Research,” **Pearl McElfish, division director of the UAMS Office of Community Health & Research said.** “AmeriCorps VISTA Food Security Initiative service members will build the capacity of our partner organizations to best serve their communities. Access to healthy foods is key to building thriving communities, and we are thrilled to bring this program to Arkansas.”

UAMS is recruiting up to 25 AmeriCorps members to serve in the VISTA program to support organizations across the state working to meet the needs of Arkansas' most vulnerable and underserved populations. These AmeriCorps members will expand capacity and increase food access through their service in the charitable food system, support of local agriculture and production programs, improve coordination and connection to essential services that impact food security, and increase availability to culturally and medically appropriate foods.

In addition to grants, VISTA's collaborative approach to poverty and hunger alleviation includes a recently launched learning community for VISTA sponsors to meet every other month to share ideas, best practices and build their network.

AmeriCorps continues to invest in the nation's [COVID-19 recovery](#). With existing programs in more than 40,000 locations across the country, AmeriCorps is uniquely positioned to bolster community response efforts. In response to the pandemic, hundreds of thousands of AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers across all 50 states and U.S. territories have continued their service, quickly adapting to meet the changing needs caused by the pandemic and have provided vital support, community response, and recovery efforts, providing support to more than 12.5 million Americans, including 2.5 million people at vaccination sites.

Visit nwa.uams.edu/chr/programs/healthy-foods/vista/ to find out more about hunger relief in Arkansas, including opportunities to apply to serve as an AmeriCorps member.

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AmeriCorps, the federal agency for volunteerism and national service, provides opportunities for Americans to serve their country domestically, address the nation's most pressing challenges, improve lives and communities, and strengthen civic engagement. Each year, the agency places more than 250,000 AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in intensive service roles; and empowers millions more to serve as long-term, short-term, or one-time volunteers.

AmeriCorps offers opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds to be a part of the national service community, grow personally and professionally, and receive benefits for their service. Learn how to get involved at AmeriCorps.gov/serve

UAMS is the state's only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; a hospital; a main campus in Little Rock; a Northwest Arkansas regional campus in Fayetteville; a statewide network of regional campuses; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, Psychiatric Research Institute, Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, Translational Research Institute and Institute for Digital Health & Innovation. UAMS includes UAMS Health, a statewide health system that encompasses all of UAMS' clinical enterprise. UAMS is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 3,047 students, 873 medical residents and fellows, and six dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 11,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to

patients at UAMS, its regional campuses, Arkansas Children's, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).