



Farm to School and Early Childhood Program

May 2020

Farm to School and COVID-19

COVID-19 has impacted many of us around the state but farm to school continues on. Schools have officially closed for the rest of the school year, teachers are turning to digital instruction to support student learning, and farmers are shifting to online markets to sell their locally grown products. Teachers are sharing photos of their school garden plants growing, providing updates from the school chickens, and some are sending home gardening kits for their students and families to use. Beyond that, school meals continue to be served! The Arkansas Department of Education shared that 90% of Arkansas school districts are still serving meals versus 30% from around the nation! Thank you to the child nutrition directors, cafeteria staff, volunteers, bus drivers, and many more who make sure children in Arkansas have access to food.

Arkansas COVID-19 Food Access Map

We continue to update, verify, and add to the Arkansas COVID-19 Food Access Map. Two partnerships have developed to strengthen the impact of the map and spread awareness: Uplift Arkansas and No Kid Hungry.

Arkansas COVID-19 Food Access Map

Arkansas Farmers Receive Vital Support With Community Website UpliftArkansas.com

UpliftArkansas.com is a statewide, one-stop resource that provides a comprehensive, reliable list of information on local businesses, restaurants, services and other essential information for Arkansans during this pandemic. This new website update will provide a resource hub for Arkansans to reach farmers who provide fresh food direct to consumers, farm-to-table restaurants, and local grocery stores through online sales, farmers markets, and on-farm sales. Local farmers and farmers market managers can upload real-time information and control their listings on the website as they adapt their operations to the COVID-19 situation. With this partnership, Arkansans can access the Arkansas COVID-19 Food Access Map resource on UpliftArkansas.com and find Arkansas Grown food available in their areas, as well as schools and organizations that are offering free meals while schools are closed.





No Kid Hungry Text Line Helps Families Find Meals During Coronavirus School Closures

No Kid Hungry launched a texting hotline to provide information about emergency food distribution sites in communities where schools have been closed due to COVID19. Families can text the word “FOOD” (or “COMIDA”) to 877877 to find their nearest sites. This new partnership with No Kid Hungry ensures that all of the Arkansas School Meal data is available using the texting hotline.

Farm to School Discussions

School Garden COVID-19 Roundtable

May 7, 2020 at 12:30 PM CST

This call will be an informal space to share successes, challenges, and opportunities related to school gardens in Arkansas during the COVID-19 crisis.

[Register Here](#)

Virtual Field Trip at Heifer

May 14, 2020 at 1:30 PM CST

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture and Heifer Ranch will host a LIVE virtual field trip where we will tour their production gardens at Heifer Ranch and learn more about gardening best practices. Attendees will be able to ask questions and interact with Heifer Ranch throughout the LIVE event. In case of rain, the virtual event will be hosted on May 18, 2020 at 1:30 PM CST.

[Register Here](#)

May Arkansas Farm to School Network Conversation: Summer Feeding Programs

May 28, 2020 at 2:00 CST

Join the conversation to hear about Arkansas Farm to School and summer feeding programs. Child nutrition directors and staff will discuss the changes they have made to their meal programs amid COVID-19 and will talk about their plans to transition into the summer.

[Register Here](#)

VISTA AmeriCorps Position

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is hiring a Farm to School Innovation Lead VISTA position! The Farm to School Innovation Lead will conduct research on farm to school programs in the United States and pilot an innovative farm to school project at a child learning facility such as a school,

early childcare facility, or an alternative learning facility in Arkansas.



[Apply Here](#)

Grants and Resources

Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest

School entries will be accepted beginning May 11 for the seventh annual Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest sponsored by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture and the Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas. Applicants may be any public and private: K-12 school, early care facility, and alternative learning environment. Applicants must have had a school garden open during the 2019-2020 school year, or be a school planning to start a garden in the 2020-2021 school year.

[Learn more here.](#)

COVID-19 GENYOUth Emergency School Nutrition Funding

GENYOUth is providing grants of up to \$3,000 per school to supply much-needed resources for meal distribution and delivery efforts to get food to students during COVID-19. From soft-sided coolers, bags and containers for individual servings, to protective gear for food service sanitation and safety, this equipment will help ensure our children continue to receive the nutritious meals they need. [Learn more here.](#)

COVID-19 National Farm to School Network New Weekly COVID-19 & Farm to School Resource E-Newsletter

National Farm to School Network is launching a free weekly e-newsletter to share a roundup of new COVID-19 related resources and information with farm to school and farm to ECE stakeholders. [Sign up here](#) to have this information delivered in your inbox weekly.

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