



## At A Glance

UAMS Northwest Community Health and Research, with funding from the Walmart Foundation, is partnering with the Arkansas Community Foundation to provide rapid response grants at a range of levels for organizations, school districts, and more to address increased food insecurity in Northwest Arkansas due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this program, Community Health and Research staff have identified and supplied funds to several organizations, including more than \$27,000 to Apple Seeds, a Northwest Arkansas nonprofit teaching farm.



Bentonville Public Schools set up a “farm stand” to hand out the Apple Seeds produce at the library’s meal pick-up site.

## Public Health Challenge

According to the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, nearly 20 percent of Arkansans face food insecurity, with more than 200,000 children in the state reportedly not receiving the amount of food needed to live a healthy life. While children can receive nutritious meals at school, accessibility to healthy foods was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and school districts were forced to shift toward food delivery services so that children at home could continue to have reliable, nutritious meals.

## Find Out More

To learn more Apple Seeds and the organization’s community work, visit [facebook.com/appleseedsinc](https://facebook.com/appleseedsinc).

The Office of Community Health and Research has developed resources related to the COVID-19 pandemic in English, Spanish, and Marshallese. Learn more at [northwestcampus.uams.edu/chr](https://northwestcampus.uams.edu/chr).

“The relationship Apple Seeds has developed with the Community Health and Research department at UAMS has been integral in our success in getting produce into the hands of students and communities that need it most. They helped us develop stronger connections to our neighboring rural communities that we know will be lasting beyond this temporary pivot of programming.

“The funds provided by the grant have been crucial to stretching our farms capacity to grow as much produce for our community as possible and developing engaging virtual educational content for our students and teachers to stay connected to food and nutrition during the school year.”

- Brett Williams  
Apple Seeds Program Director

## Contact

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## Approach

After receiving grant funding from the Walmart Foundation to establish the Northwest Arkansas Equitable Food Response and Relief Fund, Office of Community Health and Research staff identified several key community partners and organizations to help address food insecurity during the pandemic. Healthy Food Systems Program Coordinator Anna Fisher facilitated a connection between Apple Seeds, a local agricultural and nutrition teaching organization, to Northwest Arkansas school districts to provide farm fresh produce to families accessing free summer meals.

Apple Seeds' teaching farm, located in Fayetteville, Ark., works to educate youth about healthy living through garden-based education. In response to the pandemic, the organization quickly adapted its program from in-person teachings and field trips to virtual lessons and produce deliveries. Because students were no longer coming to the Apple Seeds farm, the organization had excess produce in need of a home, which they began delivering to local food pantries and school food programs.

## Results

Through the Northwest Arkansas Equitable Food Response and Relief Fund, the Office of Community Health and Research directed a total of \$27,170 in grant funds to Apple Seeds to expand its produce delivery program. Utilizing the grant funds, Apple Seeds was able to purchase bags, as well as print recipes and student engagement activities to include with the produce. Anna Fisher connected Apple Seeds to child nutrition programs in Bentonville, Gravette, and West Fork school districts, and the West Fork town librarian has taken this connection a step further by posting educational activities related to Apple Seeds' donations on Facebook.

## What's Next

The Office of Community Health and Research, Apple Seeds, and Northwest Arkansas school districts will continue to work together to provide healthy food access to children and families in Northwest Arkansas, and the Office of Community Health and Research is continuing to identify additional potential partners and programs to support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the office's partnership with the Walmart Foundation and the Arkansas Community Foundation, more than \$300,000 has been allocated to organizations and schools in Northwest Arkansas.