



# **Global Youth Service Day Arkansas Toolkit**

**April 21-23, 2017**



# About Global Youth Service Day

[Global Youth Service Day \(GYSD\)](#) celebrates and mobilizes the millions of young people who improve their communities each day of the year through volunteer service. Established in 1988, GYSD is the largest service event in the world and the only day of service dedicated to children and youth. GYSD is celebrated each year in more than 135 countries, with young people working together and with schools, youth organizations, NGOs, nonprofits, community and faith based organizations, and adult mentors to address the world’s most critical issues and change both their local and global community.



GYSD is an initiative of [Youth Service America](#), a coalition of local, state, national, and international organizations committed to engaging children and youth as leaders through volunteering, community service, service-learning, national service, and civic engagement.

# About VolunteerAR



VolunteerAR is a joint effort of the Governor’s Advisory Commission on National Service and Volunteerism and the Arkansas Department of Human Services’ Office of Communications and Community Engagement.



Launching April 28<sup>th</sup> 2017, VolunteerAR.org is a statewide online volunteer portal serving as a connection point, a gateway to service, and a clearinghouse of opportunities to make change in our communities.

The DHS Office of Communications and Community Engagement believes that by engaging citizens in meaningful and impactful volunteer opportunities, we have the chance to tackle chronic social issues that keep Arkansans of all ages from living up to their full potential. We envision a state that has citizens who are engaged in service to others and communities that are transformed by that work.



# How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit can be used by anyone who wants to participate in Global Youth Service Day or complete a project a related to senior hunger. Projects can be completed by a classroom, after school group, extracurricular club, youth council, faith-based group, or even as an individual.

The toolkit is a guide to help you understand senior hunger in Arkansas, think about the many different ways you can create impact, and provide resources for planning a project. You don't have to choose a project from the toolkit, and you can adapt projects to fit the needs of your volunteer group and the needs of your community.

## Ready to Volunteer?

*Three steps to get involved:*

Ready!

1. Learn about the problem Arkansas is addressing this year ([pages 4-5](#))

Set!

2. Pick a project ([pages 6-10](#)) or plan your own!

Go!

3. Report what you accomplished! ([page 11](#))

## Questions?

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# 2017 Focus: Senior Hunger

This year, for Global Youth Service Day and throughout the month of April, Arkansas volunteers are focusing on senior hunger issues. Why senior hunger? Because Arkansas consistently has one of the highest rates of senior hunger and food insecurity in the country. Thousands of people across the state are affected by hunger, and seniors, those who are age 60 or older, face serious health threats because of it.

Imagine if all the volunteers in Arkansas focused their energy on ensuring our seniors have enough healthy food! One person can make a difference, but a large group of people acting on the same issue, all over the state, can create widespread impact.

## What is Food Insecurity?

When people are unable to obtain enough nutritional food, they are said to have food insecurity. Food insecurity can look very different, and it doesn't necessarily mean a person does not have any food, maybe they don't have a grocery store in their neighborhood or don't have transportation to get to a grocery store. Maybe they don't have enough money to buy fresh, healthy foods like whole grain breads, fruits, and vegetables, which often cost more than white bread, a bag of chips, and soda. However, sometimes food insecurity can mean that a person has very little food, they may skip meals, eat very little, or eat the same low-cost item, like rice and beans, everyday. No matter what type of food insecurity a person is facing, their health and quality of life can have serious, negative consequences.

## What Causes Food Insecurity?

There are many reasons a person may face food insecurity including:

- **Financial hardship:** The most common cause of food insecurity. Most seniors live on a limited budget. They sometimes have to make decisions between buying food, paying for important medications, or paying for electric or water bills. If you could only pay for two of those things, which one would you choose? How would you make your decision?
- **Lack of grocery stores selling healthy food:** Many areas in Arkansas are designated as "food deserts." Food Deserts are areas where a large percentage of the population does not live near a supermarket or grocery store. People who live in these areas have a difficult time obtaining food, and obtaining healthy food is even harder.

- **Lack of transportation:** Seniors face unique barriers when it comes to transportation. Many elderly individuals may own a car but cannot drive due to poor vision or other medical reasons. People without transportation have to rely on a bus, family and friends, or shuttles to take them to the grocery store. This type of transportation can be unreliable and time consuming, so they are unable to make trips to the grocery store often.
- **Reduced mobility:** Many elderly individuals have a physical disability or other mobility restraints that make it difficult to leave home or go shopping. *In Arkansas 27% of people age 65 and older have mobility restraints.* They may require a wheelchair or walker, which can make grocery shopping more difficult.
- **Other Reasons:** Food insecurity has many layers, and there are numerous other reasons why seniors aren't able to obtain nutritional food. Things like the ability to chew and changing taste buds contribute to this problem. Another factor to consider is the ability to cook. This includes not only having knowledge about *how* to cook nutritional meals, but also being able to *move* around the kitchen if you use a wheelchair or walker.

## How Does Food Insecurity Impact Seniors?

Being unable to eat balanced, healthy meals can have serious health consequences for seniors. Even worse, it can create a vicious cycle: health conditions may worsen and cause more hospital visits and more medication needs, which makes healthcare costs more expensive. This means seniors have less money to spend on healthy foods, which causes their health to decline even more.

- **Poor Health:** Seniors who are food insecure are more likely to have multiple chronic diseases and activity restrictions compared to other seniors.
- **Poor Nutrition:** Food insecure individuals often have lower levels of important nutrients. These nutritional deficiencies can contribute to many negative health conditions among the elderly, like longer hospital stays, low immune systems, and higher risk of cardiovascular disease.
- **Worsen Health Conditions:** Food insecurity can cause additional problems for people with long-term conditions such as diabetes. *In Arkansas, 1 in 5 seniors have been told by their doctor they have diabetes.* It can be difficult and expensive to buy diabetic-friendly foods. A poor diet puts seniors with diabetes at risk for complications like kidney failure, vision loss, heart disease, and stroke.

So, what can YOU do ?....



## Project Idea 1:

# Volunteer at Your Local Food Bank or Pantry

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**Do you know the difference between a food bank and a food pantry? They both have a mission to feed people in need, but they operate differently. Here's the quick run down:**

**Food Banks** are typically large warehouses where farmers, grocery stores, and individuals donate food items. At any given moment a food bank may be storing millions of pounds of food! The food bank, with the help of staff and volunteers, sort through the food and box up a variety of items for food pantries to pick up. Food banks work directly with other community organizations.

**Food Pantries** are typically smaller, because they serve a very specific community or area. They can be located in a lot of different places, sometimes in a church, school, or community center. Once they receive food items from their local foodbank they are able to distribute to people who they know are in need. Food pantries work directly with people.

## What do volunteers do at a Food bank or Food pantry?

At a **food bank**, volunteers usually sort through items that are received, checking to make sure food is not expired or opened. You may also box up an assortment of food so that it is ready to go out to the many food pantries that are served by the foodbank.

At a **food pantry**, you may unpack boxes of food and stock the shelves with newly arrived food. You may also have a role working directly with people, such as operating a sign in table or assisting people with bagging their items.

## How to volunteer at your local food bank or pantry

- Find out where your local food bank or pantry is. If you are unsure, use this handy tool: <http://www.foodpantries.org/st/arkansas>.
- Contact the volunteer coordinator, or another staff person, to ask if volunteers are needed. Let them you want to volunteer during Global Youth Service Day!
- Recruit your friends, family, or classmates to volunteer with you.



## Project Idea 2:

# Host a Fundraiser to Support Hunger Relief

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Hosting a fundraiser and donating the proceeds to an organization or charity that focuses on hunger relief is an easy way to make a big impact! Did you know that many foodbanks can buy food items much cheaper than you can at your regular grocery store? Think of it this way: you could spend \$1 to buy two canned good items, or you can give a dollar to a food bank. When a foodbank receives money they are able to buy more food at wholesale prices and buy items that they know people need (like fresh fruits and veggies!).

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## How to Host a Fundraiser

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**What kind of fundraiser do you want to host?** You can ask people to donate cash directly, but you can also have some fun with it, too! Dance-a-thons, car washes, bake sales, art shows, and tournaments are just a few examples of creative ways to raise money.

**Identify where the money will go.** Will you donate the money to a [local food pantry or food bank](#)? Or maybe a larger organization like the [Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance](#)? Regardless of which organization you pick, you should contact a staff person first to let them know your plan and see if they have any input. They will also be able to help you understand how their organization works, so you can tell people who donate exactly where their money is going!

**Plan it!** *When will the fundraiser take place*— in one day or over multiple days? *Where will it take place*— at your school, place of worship, neighborhood, local park? *How will you advertise your fundraiser?* You can create fliers, social media posts, and spread the event through word-of-mouth.

**Action!** Once you're ready, it's time to act. Be sure to educate people on who you are fundraising for, and why it is important for them to give. See pages 2-3 to develop some talking points about senior hunger.

**Follow Up.** Be sure to thank people who have given money. Once you complete your fundraiser, contact the organization you chose to schedule a time to drop off the donations.

### **Don't Doubt Yourself!**

Youth CAN make a big splash when it comes to fundraising! Check out [this](#) story about a teen from Paris, Arkansas who raised \$13,500 for a cause she was passionate about!



## Project Idea 3:

# Plan an Event for Seniors in Your Community

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*Did you know that 115,637 senior citizens live alone in Arkansas?* Isolation and loneliness are real issues that seniors may be facing. Planning a special event for seniors in your community can not only help with feelings of isolation, but if you serve a meal at your event you are also contributing to hunger relief efforts! Meals can be simple and made by a group of volunteers, or you could ask a local restaurant to donate items. Make sure your event is accessible to seniors by hosting at a local community center, senior center, school, or library.

### What type of events might interest seniors?

- **Technology 101 Class.** There's no doubt that technology is moving faster than ever! While young people are quick to learn new technology, for older generations it can be similar to trying to learn a foreign language. Help bridge the digital divide by hosting a technology class for seniors. You can host a formal class on topics like how to set up an email account, how to attach files to emails, or conduct Google searches. You could also host an informal "Ask an Expert" session, where seniors can work one on one with technology savvy youth to ask specific questions about using their smart phones, tablets, or computers.

**In their own words:** [Read more about young people and seniors working together to share & learn technology](#)

- **"Senior" Prom.** Who doesn't love a night of dancing to your favorite tunes? Sponsoring a dance at your local Senior Center is a great way to bring people together for fun (while also having a bit of healthy exercise!) Bring back memories from days gone by when you create a playlist of top hits from past decades.
- **Share Your Talent.** Senior centers can be a great place to practice and share your talent. Maybe you enjoy singing or playing an instrument, or you enjoy art and would like to lead a painting class. There's lots of room for creativity when you identify what you are passionate about and ways you can share your skills with seniors.

### Find Your Local Senior Center!

[Care Link Senior Centers](#)

[Central Arkansas Development Council Senior Centers](#)

[Western Arkansas Area Agency on Aging Senior Centers](#)

[West Central Center on Aging Senior Centers](#)

[Northeast Center on Aging Senior Centers](#)

[Southwest Arkansas Development Council Senior Centers](#)

[Southeast Arkansas Area Agency on Aging Senior Centers](#)





## Project Idea 4:

# Collect Stories from Seniors

Senior citizens have a lot of knowledge and experiences that we can learn from. They have witnessed important historical events, the growth of technology, and a changing country - and their stories bring history to life. Organizations and historians value these “oral histories” because they give unique insight to a community, time-period, and life in America.

### Tips for Collecting Senior Stories

- Ask their name and age
- **Make sure to ask if the person is okay with their story/picture being shared.**
- Take pictures!
- Prepare beforehand with questions or ideas you want to talk about.
- Break the ice by talking about their day, family, favorite foods, etc.
- Be a good listener!

Stories help us connect to others and allow us to understand community problems and accomplishments from a different perspective. The [Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance](#) is interested in collecting stories from seniors for a Story Bank. They will use these stories to allow others to understand and connect with experiences like aging and senior hunger. But they need your help! You can collect stories from grandparents, neighbors, or members of your church. When you are done you can submit the stories you’ve collected to the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance by emailing

[alexandranyork@gmail.com](mailto:alexandranyork@gmail.com)

### Sample Interview Questions

- What are some challenges you have faced throughout your life? Any advice on how to overcome challenges?
- How have your experiences helped you in overcoming challenges and shaped you as a person?
- What are the most difficult and rewarding things about growing older?
- What would you say to other seniors who may be struggling with food insecurity, poverty, transportation, etc.?
- What have been some big world events that have been the most memorable throughout your life time?
- What gives you a sense of joy and peace? How often do you experience this?
- What advice for healthy aging do you have for the next generation?



## Other Ideas

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The possibilities for volunteering on Global Youth Service Day are endless! If you want to create your own project, below are some more ideas to get you started!

- Help a senior in your neighborhood spruce up their house for spring by raking leaves, cutting grass, or planting flowers.
- Offer to run errands for those seniors who can no longer drive. Make it a weekly ritual, and let them know they can call upon you when needed.
- Volunteer to deliver meals with a [Meals on Wheels Program](#).
- Volunteer with the [Little Rock Fresh 2 You Mobile Market](#). The mobile market is an old bus turned into a mobile grocery store. Check out their [Facebook Page!](#)
- Create and distribute a flier that shows where all the food pantries in your community are located and when they are open.
- Start a garden in your backyard, at your school, or in your neighborhood, and donate the produce to a senior home or senior living center.

## Other Resources



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- [GenerationOn Senior Citizens Fact Sheet](#)
- [Arkansas Senior Guide](#)
- [Beyond the Food Drive Handbook](#)
- [Senior Hunger in Arkansas](#)
- [Senior Hunger + Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance](#)



## Did you participate in a project?



VolunteerAR wants to inform Arkansans of the power of youth volunteers! But we can't do it without hearing from you!

If you completed any type of project for Global Youth Service Day or participated in a senior hunger volunteer effort during the month of April, **please fill out the short, five question survey linked below.**

You'll have the option to receive a certificate recognizing your participation, and your project could even be featured on VolunteerAR!

It's easy; we promise!

<https://goo.gl/forms/RbSfBx9W4Ppq8kRz2>