

# ARGENTA CDC NEWS



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Argenta CDC receives \$39,000 grant from Walmart Foundation to create youth urban agriculture initiative**

**(North Little Rock, Ark.)** -- The Walmart State Giving Program has awarded Argenta Community Development Corporation a \$39,000 grant to launch the Vestal Urban Farm Project for 220 students at Boone Park Elementary and Argenta Academy, the North Little Rock School District's alternative high school.

For participants, the \$39,000 Foundation Grant will fund and foster academic and business opportunities, health and wellness initiatives, self-esteem and environmental stewardship through hands-on participation in all aspects of the creation, implementation, management and marketing of a sustainable urban farm. The farm will be located on one acre of land in Vestal Park in North Little Rock's Baring Cross Neighborhood.

Along with traditional planting and harvesting techniques, students will be taught numerous agriculture methods that are widely used in urban farm projects across the nation such as vertical farming. This method is used to maximize space by growing produce upwardly and incorporating aquaponics, the harvesting of fish waste, as a fertilizer. Another popular method that will be used on the farm will be vermiculture, the composting of worm waste for nutrients. Further more, with the anticipated construction of a hoop house and a greenhouse, students will also have the opportunity to extend the growing season and even grow produce throughout the year.

The majority of the participants come from communities that continue to experience systemic household and community barriers that may impede their abilities to reach their fullest potential. The cause and effects of these barriers include, but not limited to poverty, food insecurity, insufficient housing or homelessness, chronic unemployment, crime and early incarceration, low

academic performance, high dropout rates, physical abuse and neglect, teen pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse.

"Walmart is committed to give back to the communities we serve and we are dedicated to helping improve the overall quality of life for children and families in Arkansas," said Nick Infante, senior director for Walmart Public Affairs. "It gives us great pleasure to help Argenta CDC educate and foster a sustainable and healthy future for young children in urban areas."

Launched in 2008, Walmart's associate-led State Advisory Councils work with the Walmart Foundation to identify needs within their state, review grant requests to the State Giving Program and make funding recommendations to the Foundation. In 2010, Walmart stores, Sam's Club locations and the Walmart Foundation gave more than \$56.9 million in cash and in-kind donations to local organizations in the communities they serve in the state of Arkansas.

"We are pleased to have support from the Walmart Foundation as we collectively seek to make positive long-term impacts on our participants and Baring Cross," says Kelly Conley, Argenta CDC Board President. "Having the opportunity to develop this type of youth-based outreach and involvement further exemplifies and expands the community investment that we are making in this neighborhood."

Through 2013, Argenta CDC is working in partnership with the City of North Little Rock, Habitat for Humanity and North Little Rock Housing Authority to build and renovate over 100 homes that will be for sale and rental. This represents an \$8.4 million project, funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. In addition, Argenta CDC has recently hired a neighborhood resource coordinator who works with community residents, businesses, academic institutions, churches, government and other anchor institutions to advance neighborhood change by developing resident leaders, encouraging civic engagement, promoting homeownership, and implementing higher education, workforce development and youth outreach programs.

The **Urban Farm Project** has brought together a number of partners including North Little Rock Parks and Recreation. The Parks Department has offered Argenta CDC a complimentary, five-year renewable land lease and support for irrigation setup and maintenance. Working with Argenta CDC with the overall project implementation will be the People Tree, a North Little Rock nonprofit that consults with organizations and neighborhood groups to create sustainable and community-based food systems through community gardens, urban farming and civic engagement. In addition, neighborhood groups, individuals and local stores have committed to volunteer and in-kind support.

For more information about the **Urban Farm Project**, contact Shanta Nunn-Baro at 501-374-0622 or [sbaro@argentacdc.org](mailto:sbaro@argentacdc.org).

**About Argenta Community Development Corporation**

Argenta CDC's mission is to improve the economic vitality, quality of life, and sense of community in targeted

neighborhoods through the development of quality housing, the promotion of homeownership and the stimulation of economic growth. The organization achieves its mission through the following objectives: single-family and multi-family energy-efficient housing development, commercial property development, NeighborWorks America Homeownership Center and community engagement and organizing.

**About Philanthropy at Walmart** Walmart and the Walmart Foundation supports initiatives that are helping people live better around the globe. In May 2010, Walmart and its Foundation made a historic pledge of \$2 billion through 2015 to fight hunger in the U.S. The Walmart Foundation also supports education, workforce development, environmental sustainability, and health and wellness initiatives. In 2010, Walmart Stores, Sam's Club locations and the Walmart Foundation gave more than \$56.9 million in cash and in-kind donations to local organization in Arkansas.

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