



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



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2023 Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest Winners Announced at Arkansas Farm to School Month Proclamation Ceremony

LITTLE ROCK, AR – Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders has proclaimed October as Arkansas Farm to School Month. The proclamation was celebrated today at Forest Park Elementary School in Little Rock as part of nationwide efforts to connect schools, early childhood education sites, and other organizations with farms to bring local, healthy food to children.

At the Arkansas Farm to School Month celebration, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture and Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas presented awards to winners of the 2023 Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest. The winners are as follows:

- **Best Start-Up School Garden Proposal:**
Joshua Academy, Van Buren (Crawford County), \$500 Award
- **Best Education Based School Garden:**
Pinnacle View Middle School, Little Rock (Pulaski County), \$500 Award
Ward Central Elementary School, Ward (Lonoke), \$500 Award
- **Best Harvest Partnership School Garden:**
The Centers, Little Rock (Pulaski), \$500 Award
Clinton High School, Clinton (Van Buren), \$500 Award
- **Best Community Collaboration School Garden:**
Sheridan Intermediate School, Sheridan (Grant), \$500 Award
Central Elementary School, Van Buren (Crawford), \$500 Award
- **Best Overall School Garden:**
Hugh Goodwin Elementary School, El Dorado (Union), \$1,000
- **Champion of School Garden Sustainability:**
Rena Elementary School, Van Buren (Crawford), \$1,000

The Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest was initiated by the Arkansas Department of Agriculture and Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas in 2014. The program provides the opportunity to promote the importance of involving young people in the process of fresh food production and cultivation. Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas generously provides the funding for the program.

“As a farmer-owned cooperative, we believe it’s important to support local food system initiatives such as the Arkansas Grown School Garden Program,” said Farm Credit of Western Arkansas CEO Brandon Haberer on behalf of the Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas. “Local food projects like this are a great way to educate the next generation and the public about food production and agriculture.”

The contest was available to public and private K-12 schools, early childhood education facilities, and alternative learning environments. Awardees were schools that had a school garden open during the 2022-2023 school year or planned to start a garden in the 2023-2024 school year.

“Farm to school initiatives connect Arkansas students to agriculture through school gardens, education, and procurement,” said Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward. “School gardens provide hands-on learning opportunities that have a lasting impact on children, their families, and entire communities.”

Find photos from the event at [flic.kr/s/aHBqjB125v](https://www.flic.kr/s/aHBqjB125v).

The Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas are made up of three Farm Credit associations serving more than 11,000 customer owners in the state. Farm Credit supports rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services, today and tomorrow. It has been fulfilling its mission of helping rural America grow and thrive for more than a century with the capital necessary to make businesses successful and by financing vital infrastructure and communication services.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture, forestry, and natural resources conservation to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while sustaining natural resources and ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit agriculture.arkansas.gov/. The Arkansas Department of Agriculture offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

