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Hello,

My name is Natalie O’Brien and I have had the amazing privilege of serving as the Historian for the 2023-24 Volunteer Action Center Board. The Historian role serves as an Associate of the Executive Team, providing support and necessary behind-the-scenes work for the success of the VAC General Board. As the Historian, I have managed record-keeping and documentation of all VAC happenings and managed alumni relations with our VAC Alumni. Through this experience, I successfully managed the VAC Alumni Mentorship Program and hosted two Alumni-related events for Homecoming Weekend. My final project has been the creation of this 2023-24 Volunteer Action Center Annual Report.

When I first began my role as Historian in April of 2023, I was entering a role that had been unfilled the past year. With so much support and encouragement from VAC advisors and other board members, I was inspired to create my vision for this position and carry on the role with my own creative ideas in mind. My first new project started as a simple “VAC Yearbook” for graduating seniors to leave a personal message for future board members. Throughout everything I have accomplished this year with the help of my fellow board members, I have felt nothing but support, love, and belonging in the VAC.

Now, ending with this report, I hope that I can convey how special this group is and the impact we have made on campus and the greater community. My vision for this report was to tell the VAC’s story of building community through service and the love and belonging that our organization creates through everything we do. Sharing the level of involvement, dedication, and determination of this group to make change is perhaps the easiest task I will have.

I’d like to give a special thanks to our Associate of Marketing, Jordyn Moore, for her aid in making my vision come alive with her top-notch design skills. I couldn’t have done this without her. I am so excited to continue my work with the Volunteer Action Center serving as the 2024-25 Vice President of Board History and Education. It is truly a blessing to work with a group whose legacy will always be remembered within the University of Arkansas community. I hope that you enjoy this report as much as I enjoyed creating it.

My very best,

Natalie J. O’Brien
Volunteer Action Center Historian

MISSION: TO PARTNER WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AND THE NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY BY PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE INTENTIONAL IMPACTS THROUGH STUDENT-LED SERVICE.

VISION: TO PROMOTE SERVICE THROUGH CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP, BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AND THE NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY, WHILE ENCOURAGING SOCIAL JUSTICE TO CREATE LASTING IMPACT.

CORE VALUES

SERVICE-MINDED
RELATIONSHIP-FOCUSED
STUDENT-LED
WHAT IS GIVEPULSE

GivePulse is a complementary online platform provided by the Volunteer Action Center that is used to connect non-profit agencies, student groups, and universities to their community. This web portal allows agencies and groups to easily list, find and organize events as well as measure impacts made in the community.

STATISTICS:

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

Volunteers: 7,060
Hours Given: 145,029
Economic Impact: $4,611,922

VOLUNTEER ACTION CENTER

Hours Given: 18,777
Economic Impact: $597,108.60
Hello,

As I reflect on my time as VAC President, I am full of admiration and pride. This year, each of our six signature programs experienced growth and development. They successfully expanded their operations to provide more volunteer opportunities to students and better serve our community. I am so proud of their ingenuity, innovation, and impact.

The three themes we focused on this year were outreach, awareness, and collaboration. All of our programs have brought these to fruition, but I want to specifically highlight the work of our executive team. Judy, our Vice President of Programming and Community Inclusion, executed a remarkable Envisioning Justice Conference, with sessions focused on combining education with action. Said, our Vice President of Board Development and Education, did a great job at supporting our programs and encouraging cross-team collaborations. Anna, our Vice President of Operations, helped our organization run smoothly and successfully managed a competitive selection process. Angela, our Vice President of Communications, developed exceptional communications strategies to drive engagement and share the VAC’s story.

I also want to recognize the work of our Associate’s team. Claire, our Associate of Digital Management, revamped our website to create a more seamless user experience. As the Associate of Marketing, Jordyn worked to communicate the VAC’s impact through projects such as our monthly summaries. Our GivePulse intern, Haris, has streamlined our data management practices. As the Historian, Natalie relaunched our alumni mentorship program and put together this outstanding annual report.

All of our teams have focused on ensuring that they are structured in a way that continues to meet the changing needs of our community. I am especially excited for how we have restructured our executive team for next year, to continue investing in and enhancing the VAC Board Member experience.

Service truly has the power to make a positive difference and to transform lives. I know that I would not be the person I am today be it not for the Volunteer Action Center. I will always be inspired by the work and the people of the VAC and cannot wait to see its continued success.

All my best,

Ben Walworth
Volunteer Action Center President
WHO WE ARE
The VAC Executive and Associates Team works to maintain the overarching VAC mission and vision, while providing support to board members and the 6 signature VAC programs. Additionally, the Executive Team plans and executes weekly VAC General Board meetings.

WHAT WE DID THIS YEAR
- Current and incoming exec attended the IMPACT Conference in Nacogdoches, Texas
- Associates launched a new “Monthly Summary” project to highlight our impact
- 17 mentors and mentees for the Alumni Mentorship Program
- Focused more General Board Meetings on professional development topics such as networking, utilizing Clifton Strengths, and narrative building
My favorite part about the Envisioning Justice Conference this year was seeing how much all of the attendees enjoyed the sessions they went to. It was clear to see that each attendee was truly able to take something away from the conference. What made it even better is that most conference sessions were led by fellow students on campus so connections that will hopefully flourish in the future were established and that is just such a beautiful thing!

- Judy Kamau, Vice President of Programming and Community Inclusion

Using my fellow board members and the meaningful impacts they make in the lives of others has given me a constant source of inspiration to expand and focus my creativity. The opportunity to serve on the VAC board has been invaluable in shaping my personal and professional brand by allowing me the space to make unique contributions to the VAC’s overall identity while advocating for initiatives that promote inclusivity and human welfare.

- Angela Espares, Vice President of Communications
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

WHO WE ARE
The Student Engagement team serves as a bridge between University of Arkansas Students and the Northwest Arkansas community by connecting students to short-term volunteer opportunities. Through various initiatives, the SE team aims to create a stronger, more holistic relationship with our community.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY 2023
- 24 service projects in collaboration with 20 different service organizations
- 1,111 service hours generated across 479 volunteers
- Economic Impact of $35,329.80

WHAT WE DID THIS YEAR
- Find Your Impact Program: 6 sessions that engaged over 200 students
- Get Your 10 Program: 600+ students became members of the VAC by having at least 10 service hours
“Through this Intern role, I’ve learned that service is always about the connections and interpersonal relationships with people. Building a personal relationship that goes beyond your position is what makes working within the Student Engagement team and the VAC so special and is something I will always put first in my future endeavors.”

- Devan Mishra, SE Intern

“By going to events like Make A Difference Day, I have met people that have a similar interest in bettering the community and who constantly inspire me to keep moving forward in my goals. Without the VAC, I wouldn’t have this sense of community and would not have the same drive to be involved.”

- Sarah Waller, Volunteer
Hello,

Student Engagement entered this year feeling primed to have an outstanding year of service and opportunity. We returned a significant portion of our team members from 2022-2023; our inexperience of last year was replaced with determination and confidence in what this program could accomplish in the coming year. It has been an absolute privilege to watch each member of this program grow and succeed, and I know I am proud to be a part of that process. However, it should not be overlooked that the most remarkable characteristic this team possessed that allowed us to excel was our dedication to communication as our members not only focused on keeping each other informed but also growing collaborations with the other Volunteer Action Center programs.

We set the bar high for this year and have worked hard to ensure it stayed high. The introduction of our official membership program, the addition of multiple VAC ambassadors, and continuing to provide the Campus community with monthly volunteer programming have continued advancing the mission and spirit of the Student Engagement program to spread volunteerism across Northwest Arkansas. This is our standard, and I am confident that future teams will do well to maintain and grow that standard.

Moving into the 2024-2025 academic year, we’ll be introducing a lot of new faces and continuing to develop our framework as a team. We’ve added new positions and increased our focus on ambassadors and monthly volunteer programming. We conclude this year not only imparting our past knowledge to our team but also fostering their creativity and dreams for the future. Student Engagement continues to be in skillful hands and will most certainly continue to draw individuals who dream of significant change and are driven to bring it to fruition.

Kendall Miller
Kendall Miller
Student Engagement Chair
DREAM BIG
DREAM BIG

WHO WE ARE
Dream BIG is a mentoring program that matches college-aged women with middle school girls at J.O. Kelly Middle School to facilitate lasting relationships meant to empower and encourage growth through community.

THIS YEAR...
The Dream BIG Program doubled in numbers, with 37 mentors and 39 mentees

Piloted collaboration with the EMPOWER Program

Completed their 2nd Annual Spring Service Project

Added a new site: Helen Tyson Middle School
“One of the accomplishments that brings me the most pride is the impressive rate of returning mentors that we have managed to maintain. It has been an absolute pleasure to serve on the board and be a part of such an exciting and engaging experience. My time with the VAC has opened my eyes to the fact that service can take on many different forms and has helped me appreciate the diversity of ways in which we can give back to our communities.”
- Grace Holley, Dream BIG Communications Coordinator

“This year presented several challenges for us as a board, especially in managing a much larger group of participants than expected. We were able to create fun, engaging curriculum that facilitated growth in mentors and mentees alike. We also learned so much from the MENTOR conference in Washington, DC, which we will be applying to many different aspects of our program to make it more inclusive and effective.”
- Abby Hunter, Dream BIG Intern
Hello,

The 2023-2024 Dream B.I.G. Board has much to be proud of. We doubled the reach of our program at J.O. Kelly, thanks to support from the school’s Knight Times coordinator and cheer coach, and the outreach efforts of last year’s board. We had our second successful Make a Difference Day event, building 150 hygiene kits for girls at J.O. Kelly, and our second fabulous fashion show, where mentees decorated a t-shirt to represent something about them that couldn’t be seen, like their goals for the future or what they’re passionate about. In the spring semester, we spent the remainder of our Women’s Giving Circle grant on the second Spring Service Project, an activity designed to teach mentees how to be leaders in their community. After a brainstorming session, our mentees identified a need for anti-bullying and positivity messaging around their school and in the bathrooms, and a need for period care products; at the next Brave Girl Session, we brought supplies for them to decorate the bathrooms with sticky notes, create posters for the hallways, and package period care kits for anyone who needed one. We also had our first Brave Girl Session at Helen Tyson Middle School, hopefully opening the door to another long, successful partnership for Dream B.I.G.

With the increased number of mentees and mentors, our board had to manage funds efficiently and navigate a heavy match support workload, as well as redesign curriculum so Brave Girl Sessions required less direction from the board and more mentor leadership. As Chair, my goal was that each of my team members would become confident in their ability to solve problems creatively under pressure and take ownership of their roles. I’m incredibly proud of each and every one of them, and watching them grow comfortable and competent has been an absolute joy.

The best part of being on the Dream B.I.G. Board is watching the impact of mentoring not only on our mentees, but also on our mentors and on each other. We look out for one another, we check in, and we push each other to think outside the box. Dreaming big is more than our name or slogan– it describes the way we function as a group. We’ve spent the last year dreaming of ways that this program can grow and help more middle school girls become confident in their ability to achieve anything they set their mind to, and I know these dreams will become reality over the next few years. I hope the power of mentoring continues to inspire, and that our mentees, mentors, and future board members all remember to keep dreaming big.

Grace Martin
Grace Martin
Dream B.I.G. Chair
BE BOLD
BE BOLD

WHO WE ARE
Be BOLD seeks to empower young men through mentorship relationships by encouraging our mentees to embrace their unique abilities and overcome adversity. Be BOLD matches University of Arkansas mentors with young men at J.O. Kelly Middle School to offer unique programming and develop life skills.

WHAT WE DID THIS YEAR

- Had 23 mentors and 31 mentees
- Hosted 18 hangtime sessions at J.O. Kelly and provided 18 training sessions to mentors
- Piloted the BOLD Bucks Program with mentees
“I’m most proud of the board for consistently making sure then hangtimes ran smoothly. Everyone played an integral role in making sure our hangtimes were impactful for the mentees and mentors of the program, and I couldn’t be happier with the results!”
- Jack Norris, Be BOLD Chair

“Kids are ecstatic to come to Be BOLD every week”
- Staff at J.O Kelly Middle School
Hello,

I started volunteering as a mentor with Be B.O.L.D. in my junior year. Once I got involved, it didn't take long for me to fall in love with the program! Afternoons building Legos and playing kickball with the mentees at J.O. Kelly Middle School bore a lighthearted reminder of the more formative years of my childhood.

As someone who grew up with a father I still look up to to this day, I know the impact that a positive male role model can have on a young man. As such, when a few leadership positions opened up in Be B.O.L.D., I didn't hesitate to tap a few friends to apply with me. Fortunately, we were accepted! The ensuing semesters were some of the most challenging yet fulfilling of my college career.

The curriculum we developed was chock full of engaging and exciting lessons for students. As we arrive in the twilight of Be BOLD for this year, mentees will be leaving the program with the knowledge and skills to change a tire, write code, balance a budget, craft nutritious meals, and more! Something I’m particularly proud of our team for implementing is the “B.O.L.D. Buck” system -- a financial literacy program we developed that gives students hands-on experience with saving and spending money. Students were given “money” for attending and participating in hang times and were able to spend it in a “marketplace” of cool prizes and trinkets.

Next year, the program will be in the safe hands of prior board members and stellar former mentors. I’m excited to see what they accomplish! As I step away from the program, I leave with the confidence that my team helped build something that’ll last and grow beyond us, as well as fond memories of mentees getting excited about coding and planting chili plants.

Jack Norris

Jack Norris
Be BOLD Chair
PASSIONATE ABOUT LITERACY
WHO WE ARE
The PAL program strives to foster a passion for reading and promote personal and intellectual growth in elementary school students through meaningful mentorship relationships with University of Arkansas students. We hope to encourage growth in literacy in our mentees through facilitated reading activities.

WHAT WE DID THIS YEAR

- Had 68 Volunteers and 74 Mentees
- Partnered with 5 Community Organizations
- New site at Fayetteville Boys and Girls Club
- Established ESL branch in program
- Held the first PAL Spelling Bee
PASSIONATE ABOUT LITERACY

MEANINGFUL MOMENTS

“The thing that I am most proud of from PAL this year is definitely the cross-team collaboration. Just the way our program is structured with school sites it can be isolated, but we were able to work with SE and a little with RFR this year for events on campus and for the kiddos at sites. That has been super special to work alongside other groups and get to know them and their program better.”
-Laney Kellybrew, PAL Communications Coordinator

"The Fayetteville Public Library has been a host location for PAL for several years now, and I cannot emphasize enough how positive this partnership has been. We love seeing our Grade School section fill up with kids who are excited to read and write with their PAL Volunteer, and we’ve had multiple parents reiterate to us how much they enjoy this program.”
- Emily Jones, Fayetteville Public Library
PASSIONATE ABOUT LITERACY

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Hello,

It has been yet another wild and eventful year with the Passionate About Literacy program. Leading this team has been the highlight of my year and I could not be prouder of our growth and development. In addition to continuing our partnerships with Jones Elementary, the Yvonne Richardson Community Center, Knapp Elementary, and the Fayetteville Public Library, we began working with the Fayetteville Boys and Girls Club this Spring, spreading our reaches and serving as much of the Northwest Arkansas community as possible.

In the 2023-2024 school year, the PAL program has grown to support over 67 matches across our five locations. Our Development Coordinator, Ella Nations, has been an integral player in establishing and supporting these matches, and our volunteer Coordinators, Esther Beller, and Addie Jones, have been pivotal in ensuring that each volunteer has the tools they need to succeed.

This year, our team continues to adapt to the communities we serve by implementing an ESL branch of the program at Jones Elementary, facilitated by our new ESL Coordinator, Valeria Patino. By pairing Spanish-speaking mentors with ESL students at Jones Elementary, we’ve been able to reach a new population of children through our program. I feel confident in the abilities of our current and new board to champion this type of growth next year and in years to come.

This program is my pride and joy, and it has been a great privilege to contribute to PAL as the Communications Coordinator last year and the Chair this year. I am proud to pass the baton to our next chair, Ella Nations, and I can’t wait to watch her grow, change, and improve the program as the VAC President next year.

Sincerely,

Gavin Miller
Passionate About Literacy Chair
RAZORBACK FOOD RECOVERY
RAZORBACK FOOD RECOVERY

WHO WE ARE
RFR has worked to recover and redistribute surplus food items to communities in need around the Northwest Arkansas region since 2014. RFR aims to address the issues of food waste and hunger within our community.

WHAT WE DID THIS YEAR
- Expanded recovery to Greek Life houses and the Union Catering Kitchen
- Held 4 collaborative events with Dream BIG, Pantry, PAL, and Chartwells
- Distributed 418 IMPACKS; prepackaged meals from dining hall and Greek Life recovery
- Recovered and redistributed over 5,958 pounds of food in the 2023-2024 academic year and 11,890 pounds in summer 2023
“This past semester as Comms for RFR has truly changed my perspective on non-profit work and food programs and left a lasting impact on me and my college experience. Working alongside our current board has been one of the best and most fulfilling experiences I’ve had over the past few years. The passion that fills a room when working a shift, at meetings, or at events, is something that nothing but the VAC could provide.”
-Maya Lewis, RFR Communications Coordinator

“The RFR food donations have assisted families in need within the YRCC community. Those donations have also assisted with feeding kids enrolled in after school programming and summer camp.”
-YRCC Staff
Hello,

I am endlessly grateful to have served with the Razorback Food Recovery program and the privilege to guide the team towards our mission in its 10th year. It has been an incredible journey to see how everything has evolved since my freshman year as a Pomfret dining hall recovery volunteer. I’m so thankful to have learned so much in what feels like such a short time and will carry the lessons I’ve learned into the future.

It has been so fun to work with the Razorback Food Recovery team and develop the program to what it is now. I am constantly outstanded with not only the progress we’ve made, but also each person’s drive and leadership they’ve shown in their role. I am proud of our work and confident that Razorback Food Recovery will continue to thrive and grow to meet Northwest Arkansas and the campus community’s needs.

I want to thank Wendy for your support and strong partnership. I’m grateful to have had the opportunity to create a great friendship. I want to thank Val for your determination and willingness to take on a new role, and Sophia for your innovation and quick thinking. I know that you both will do amazing work. Jade and Kendal, I always looked forward to our recovery shift at Jones last year and I’m so happy both of you were part of the team this year — thanks for always being so dependable. Thank you Haleena for your adaptability and critical thinking, and Ethan for your problem solving and diligence. Maya, thank you for always helping out and going above and beyond. I appreciate you all for what you have done to make this a memorable year!

Best,

Ella Fei Flesher

Ella Fei Flesher
Razorback Food Recovery Chair
JANE B. GEARHART FULL CIRCLE FOOD PANTRY
WHO WE ARE
The Full Circle Food Pantry strives to serve clients with well-balanced meals through non-perishables and fresh produce. The Full Circle Food Pantry focuses on nourishing bodies and empowering minds of all University of Arkansas students, faculty, and staff.

VOLUNTEERS
Pantry volunteers gave 2,168 hours
113 staff volunteers
Over 70 weekly student volunteers

GRANTS
Community of Practice, $10,000
Community of Practice Meetings, $400/monthly
Engage Arkansas Grant, $3,000
College Hunger Summit, $1,000
Arkansas Cooking Matters Grant, $1,200

DONATIONS
$70,000 in total monetary donations, including:
$25,000 from Hellmann’s
$25,000 from iHeart Media
FULL CIRCLE FOOD PANTRY

WHAT WE DID THIS YEAR

- Launched the Grocery Grant Program
- New partnership with Bumper’s College for Munch Madness food drive
- Unlocked a total of $7,992 dollars in SNAP benefits for 32 eligible students
- Successfully launched the paperless initiative leading to an increase in locker orders
- Delivered 855 baskets of goods for various needs
- Adapted the garden to provide fresh fruits and vegetables for pantry clients

COOKING MATTERS

- 21 cooking classes for students on campus
- Earned Arkansas Cooking Matters Grant

The Cooking Matters program helps students, faculty, staff, and their families develop kitchen skills and better understand how to use ingredients, make healthy, affordable choices, and create more sustainable solutions to hunger.
“The VAC has been a large part of my life since 2021, but this year has been an important experience for me. Having the opportunity to standardize garden management, work with my volunteers collaboratively, and serve my neighbors has been an amazing way to spend my time. I am infinitely grateful for my fellow board members, my volunteers, and the staff for being a great team who gets things done!”

-Harper King, Garden & Sustainability Coordinator

“Thank you for all that you do. It helps me and my roommate so much throughout our education here at the university. Because of you all, we can focus on our studies more and worry about where and what we can eat less. Thank you so much.”

-Spring Cleaning Basket Recipient
Hello,

Reflecting over the past year fills me with immense pride. Full Circle has made remarkable progress in its commitment to serving the community by expanding access to food assistance. We accomplished many long-term goals from regularly providing fresh produce through grant groceries, securing substantial grants and donations, implementing paperless orders to improve client choice and internal efficiency, enhancing SNAP outreach, expanding student intern positions, revamping our garden, record-setting locker order usage, and expanding volunteer opportunities all while serving more clients than last year. I am so grateful for the passion and persistence shown by our board, staff, volunteers, and partners.

Each member of our team played a critical role in Full Circle’s accomplishments. Jacob, your dedication to intricately improving processes and services has dramatically expanded our projects and partnerships. Kerri, you amaze me with how you’ve transformed Cooking Matters to build relationships across campus. Katelyn, your determination to help others has impacted so many lives and will continue to with the groundwork you’ve laid for alternative assistance. Jadyn, your unmatched compassion makes the pantry such a welcoming environment as soon as you walk in. Gwen, thank you for your consistent dedication to making Full Circle better and improving the accessibility of services. Avie, I am continually impressed by your passion and drive in all that you do. Amber, you keep the pantry running and are truly a model for dedication to service. Harper, your commitment to the garden is enriching, and your creative problem-solving is such a great asset. Anna, your creativity is the difference maker in keeping shelves stocked through food drives you meticulously organize. Lillian, thank you for being a positive presence and always being so on top of things. Paul, none of these initiatives would’ve been nearly as successful without your invaluable advising and assistance. Delaney, you jumped in and led food programs through such an impactful year. I don’t know where we’d be without your advice and guidance, thank you.

To our volunteers, partners, donors, community, and UofA itself, your contributions are instrumental in Full Circle’s mission to nourish bodies, empower minds, and create a community of compassion. The dedication to this mission and the overwhelming generosity of the community since the founding of JBGFCFP is something I feel honored to be a part of, and I know that dedication and generosity will continue on for years to come in the many incredible people who will follow.

Caroline Wilson
Jane B. Gearhart Full Circle Food Pantry Chair
In April 2024, Razorback Food Recovery and the Full Circle Food Pantry partnered together in order to host the Universities Fighting World Hunger Summit at the Universities of Arkansas. This summit was centered on the theme of Feeding Futures, Fostering Community. This conference provided a space for the next generation of student leaders to: increase knowledge, share evidence-based strategies, build networks with regards to raising awareness about food and nutrition insecurity, take action to address and advocate for changes important to combat food and nutrition insecurity.

**WHO ATTENDED:**
- 132 attendees
- 13 poster presentations

“Increasing Preferred Food Items for Pantry Clients through strategic Grant Utilization”
- Poster authored by Pantry members Katelyn, Harper, and Avie
**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

THANK YOU TO OUR 2023-24 BOARD MEMBERS:

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<td>Hollie Perdue</td>
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