

Greenhouse to Your House

The Alford Youth & Community Center (AYCC), which opened its doors in 1999, is the nation's only combined YMCA and Boys & Girls Clubs in the nation. We have served the Greater Waterville area for over 20 years by providing a safe and inclusive space for youth and their families to learn, grow, and implement healthy behaviors into their lives. As an organization with the largest fully accredited DHHS-licensed day care in the state, the AYCC operates After School, Summer Enrichment, and Sustainable Garden programs, with the goal of increasing food security as a major concern. Over 50% of our families' incomes are below the poverty line and 80% of AYCC's 200 daily youth qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch Programs.



To help combat this, we are proud to introduce the AYCC **Greenhouse to Your House** Program, our own spin on meal kit delivery.

Greenhouse to Your House not only provides a free, healthy, and fresh product to our community to help mitigate food insecurity in the short term, but the kit concept helps create cultural change by defining a new narrative around healthy food and cooking at home with the goal of inspiring families to implement healthier practices in the long term.

The program is available to all ASP kids and families regardless of income. The attractive and desirable fresh food kits will be delivered directly into caretakers' vehicles during curbside pickup. Recipes, picture cards, and instructions are included with each meal kit.

A four-week pilot program with ten ASP families runs October 14 to November 11, 2022. Their feedback will help fine tune the full program. Each meal kit will contain six quality servings, with the extra portions available for hearty eaters or consumption as leftovers. Families with five or more members will receive two meal kits and a total of 12 quality servings. In the initial phase beginning in mid to late November, 50-75 families will choose between two meal options each week. As we scale the program and increase operating efficiency, we hope to expand to three meal options each week and anticipate distributing an average of 130 meal kits each week to a projected 125-150 families by the end of the first year.

To support the development of life skills, **Greenhouse to Your House** will be more strongly integrated with our AYCC Sustainable Gardens and Teaching Kitchen programs. Youth help operate our on-site, year-round, 42-foot geodesic greenhouse dome, which will produce some of the fresh ingredients used in kits. Perhaps most importantly, youth will develop culinary skills as they learn to prepare their families' choice of that week's meal option in the Teaching Kitchen. The goal is to develop kids' skills and confidence with food while reinforcing the essential lesson that preparing, cooking, and eating healthy meals with family can be both fun and delicious. We encourage youth to share their positive experiences and successes in our Teaching Kitchen with their parents and help prepare the meals at home.