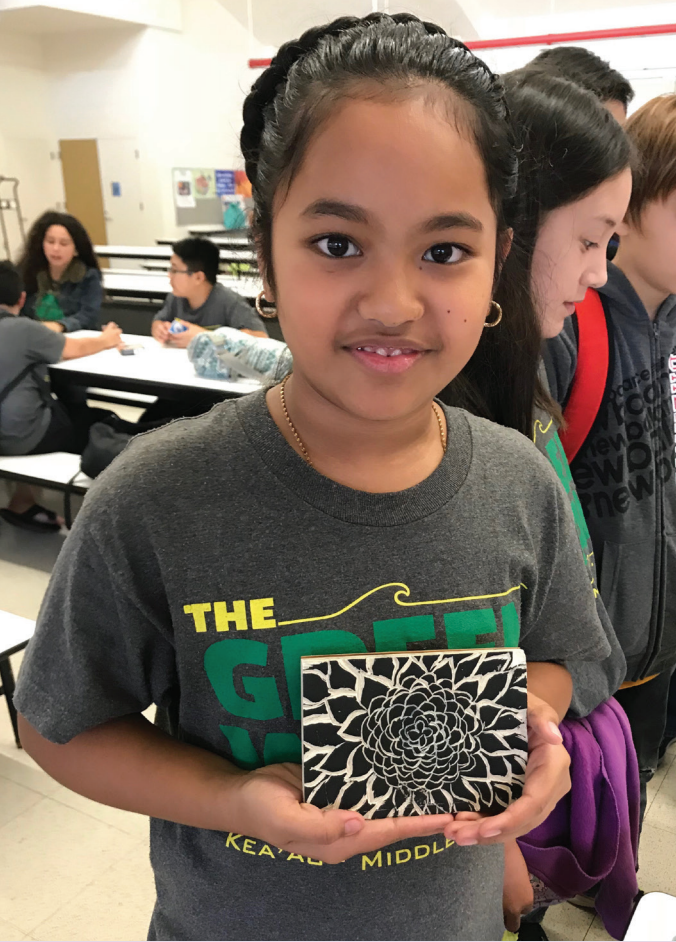


## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



## After-School All-Stars Hawaii: Life Service Action

Oahu and the Big Island, Hawaii

2,137

Average number of students served during the school year

77%

Students from low-income families

### Main funding sources:

- ▶ 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers
- ▶ Foundations
- ▶ Events
- ▶ Corporations
- ▶ Individual donations

## Offering opportunities for youth to take action

Civic engagement starts with our nation's young people. The afterschool field is an essential partner in ensuring that all children have the ability to participate in relevant, experiential civic engagement opportunities. Involvement in civic engagement has been linked to both short and long-term positive outcomes, including improvements in academics, behavior, and connection to the community and a lower likelihood of arrest. As 3 in 4 superintendents agree that preparing students for engaged citizenship is a challenge for their district, afterschool and summer learning programs are critical partners in strengthening student civic engagement and helping them become informed, involved, and conscientious individuals.

### Overview

After-School All-Stars Hawaii (ASASHI), an affiliate of the national After-School All-Stars organization, brings free afterschool programming to low-income, at-risk youth across 11 middle school sites in Oahu and the Big Island. Life Service Action is one of four national initiatives that After-School All-Stars incorporates into their programming to address important issues facing young people and advance youth service-learning opportunities.

### A typical day for students

Open five days a week, three hours a day, ASASHI provides middle school students with a diverse set of developmentally appropriate activities. ASASHI collaborates with school sites to provide academic support that complements each student's school-day learning. The first hour of programming is devoted to academics, as a network of mentors guide students while they do their homework. Students spend the remainder of the afternoon in interactive enrichment activities such as sports, performing arts, yoga, writing, and set design. Each ASASHI location considers feedback and community culture in order to tailor its programming to the unique needs of their student population.

### Outcomes

After-School All-Stars' national internal evaluations reported that students involved in the program participated in more than 1 million hours of service throughout the school year. In a 2015-2016 national survey, 89 percent of Life Service Action participants reported that they are more confident in their ability to make a difference in their community, and 74 percent now volunteer because of ASAS.

## Program characteristics

Life Service Action is After-School All-Stars Hawaii's student-led service learning initiative that mobilizes youth to lead community-minded service projects. For ASASHI, what began as a series of community service field trips developed into a broader yearlong themed service project after program participants took the initiative to distribute a community needs survey to their classmates. Based on the feedback, students on the ASASHI Youth Advisory Board identified three top areas of concern: poverty, bullying, and health and fitness. Students brainstormed solutions for these issues and met with local legislators in the Keiki Caucus—Hawaii state legislature's children's caucus—to speak out about change.

These advocacy efforts motivated ASASHI students to do more to address the issues they had identified in their community. The ASASHI Youth Advisory Board members selected poverty as their primary issue to guide the vision and purpose for 2018's Life Service Action initiative. ASASHI students are now working collaboratively to organize service events at the innovative Kauhiki Village community for homeless families. There, they are planning a service day and a carnival with food, games, and prizes—to serve children and families in the homeless population.

The Life Service Action year of service learning culminates every April on Global Youth Service Day, where ASASHI students share the work they have been doing in the community. Their passion and excitement for community engagement is a sign that they are tapping into their sense of social responsibility and civic duty.

## Program history

In 2008, a local couple saw a newspaper photo of a homeless boy crawling into a tent at the Wai'anae harbor. Deeply moved by the reality of issues facing low-income youth, this couple rallied community forces together to launch the Hawaii chapter of After-School All-Stars. In 2009, ASASHI began with locations at three schools on Oahu. It has since expanded to provide afterschool and summer learning opportunities to more than 2,000 students on Oahu and the Big Island across 11 school sites.

### Recommendations

*for offering opportunities for youth to take action:*

- ▶ Be aware of the integral role that program staff play in instilling civic values in youth. Offer regular training and formal professional development opportunities to ensure high-quality program staff.
- ▶ Keep long-term goals in mind by designing a full-year program rather than one-off field trips or one-time lessons. Impact comes with continued exposure to civic engagement opportunities and education about the root causes of poverty.



## Challenges

The U.S. faces a civic engagement predicament, particularly with the nation's young people.

***A disengaged public.*** Between 1980 and 2016, the percentage of voters aged 18-29 years old fell well below voting rates of older age cohorts and volunteerism among 16-to-24-year-olds remains consistently below the national average.

***Civics in schools is largely a second-tier subject.*** The No Child Left Behind Act ushered in a greater emphasis on reading and math, leaving less time for subjects like civics and social studies, despite poor student performance in these areas. A 2018 scan of civics education found that components of high-quality civics education, such as interactive and participatory opportunities for learning, were largely missing.

***Civic engagement as an equity issue.*** Disparities in voting turnout, volunteerism, and circumstances hindering civic participation across income levels and race and ethnicity have been observed. For instance, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) found that students in classes with a high average socioeconomic status level were more likely to report learning how laws are made, participating in service activities, and taking part in debates or panel discussions.

Read [Promoting Civic Engagement Through Afterschool Programs](#) to learn more.



**Afterschool Alliance**

[afterschoolalliance.org](http://afterschoolalliance.org)