



NEWS RELEASE
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Recent New Hope High School Grad Colby Holmes Returns to Alabama After Sharing Views on Afterschool Programs with Officials in Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. – As part of a trip sponsored by Boeing, New Hope High School recent graduate grader Colby Holmes, who attended the STEM Afterschool Pilot Project at New Hope High School, spent part of this week meeting with U.S. Representative Martha Roby and aides from the offices of Sens. Luther Strange Richard Shelby and Reps. Terri Sewell, Mo Brooks and Mike Rogers to discuss the importance of investing in afterschool and summer learning programs for youth. Holmes is one of just six afterschool students from five states selected to travel to Washington, D.C. for the annual Afterschool for All Challenge, organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#).

On Wednesday, Holmes shared his experiences and perspectives on afterschool programs with members of Congress, emphasizing how he was able to discover that he wants to pursue a career as an electrician thanks to participating in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers STEM Afterschool Pilot Project. Boeing sponsors the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) Afterschool Pilot Project at New Hope High School, and sponsored Holmes' trip in collaboration with the [Alabama Afterschool Community Network](#) and the Afterschool Alliance.

“Boeing is honored to enable Colby’s trip to D.C., as he communicates how afterschool learning and STEM engagement help to provide much-needed workforce skills. We realize afterschool and out-of-school experiences are an essential component for student development in teamwork, problem solving and critical thinking concepts, all of which are inherent to success within today’s challenging business environment,” said Tina Watts, Global Corporate Citizenship, Community Investor at Boeing.

“The STEM afterschool program showed me how to apply STEM learning to real life situations,” Colby said. “We went out into the community and saw that many residents were living in trailers with no heat or air conditioning. So as a part of the afterschool program we developed solar powered heating and cooling units and delivered them to residents. I’m lucky because I was able to discover what I want my career to be in my afterschool program. Anyone who thinks afterschool doesn’t work, I’m here to tell them that it does. I’m living proof afterschool works.” Colby was awarded a scholarship to J F Drake State Technical College. He plans to enroll in the fall and become a licensed electrician.

The Afterschool for All Challenge is an annual event that brings together afterschool program providers and experts, along with students, to showcase some of the innovative activities their afterschool programs provide.

“Students like Colby speak so eloquently about the kinds of innovative, hands-on learning activities that quality afterschool programs offer students,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “These programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. They help young people discover their passions and have fun while they learn. We need to increase public and private funding so all students can take advantage of the opportunities afterschool and summer learning programs provide.”

Afterschool providers, educators, community leaders, parents and youth from 46 states visited Washington, D.C. this week as part of the Afterschool for All Challenge. Congress will soon begin working on the federal budget for the next fiscal year; President Trump is proposing to eliminate federal funding for afterschool programs in 2018.

Participation in afterschool programs has increased to 10.2 million students nationwide, up from 6.5 million in 2004, according to [the America After 3PM household survey](#) of 30,000 U.S. families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance. But the unmet demand for afterschool programs has increased as well. Today, for every child in an afterschool program, there are two more whose parents say they would participate, if a program were available. One in five students in the country today is unsupervised after the school day ends.

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.