



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

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Afterschool Alliance Names Michigan Afterschool Provider One of Just 19 ‘Afterschool Ambassadors’ from Across Nation

Gazell Watkins-Mitchell Will Work in Michigan and Nationally to Expand Afterschool

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced the selection of Gazell Watkins-Mitchell, Director of Communities In Schools of Detroit After Division to serve as a 2009-2010 Afterschool Ambassador. She is one of just 19 local leaders from 15 states selected for the honor this year. Each Ambassador will continue directing or supporting a local afterschool program while also serving a one-year Afterschool Ambassador term organizing public events, communicating with policy makers, and building support for afterschool programs. Mitchell’s Ambassadorship is sponsored by Bright House Networks, which has produced a new documentary on the benefits of afterschool, featuring the personal stories of youth and families across the country. It will be aired for *Lights On Afterschool* this October.

“Quality afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Americans strongly support afterschool programs but across the nation, we’re seeing programs cut back or closed in the face of recession-driven budget cuts. Gazell Watkins-Mitchell brings energy and talent to the role of Afterschool Ambassador, and will spread the word about the urgent need to make afterschool programs available to all children and families that need them. I look forward to working with her to build even stronger support for afterschool among parents, business and community leaders, lawmakers, and the media. We are proud to have Gazell on our team.”

“I’m delighted to have this wonderful opportunity to help secure the future of afterschool programs for kids and families in our community, and across the state and nation,” said Mitchell. “I’m proud of the contribution afterschool programs make to the community, and look forward to helping expand support for them.”

Communities In Schools of Detroit (CIS) is a local affiliate of the nation’s leading community-based organization helping kids stay in school and prepare for life. CIS serves more than 1,500 students before and after school in 31 schools in the Metro Detroit area. Gazell Watkins-Mitchell has been with Communities In Schools of Detroit for ten years.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's tenth annual nationwide series of rallies for afterschool, on October 22 this year. Last year, a million people rallied at 7,500 *Lights On* events. Despite overwhelming public support, and an agreement embodied in the *No Child Left Behind Act* to steadily increase federal funding, federal support for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative – the principal federal funding stream for afterschool programs – has lagged far behind the need. The *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion for afterschool this year, but funding is at less than half that level. Congress has not yet completed work on the education budget for Fiscal Year 2010.

Ambassadors will also work to share the results of the Afterschool Alliance's *America After 3PM* report, a nationwide survey of nearly 30,000 households. Released earlier this month, the report found that the percentage of Michigan children in afterschool programs increased to 12 percent in 2009, up from just 8 percent in 2004 – but 31 percent of Michigan children are responsible for taking care of themselves in the afternoons, and another 16 percent are in the care of brothers or sisters. The survey was sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. Complete results are available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

The 2009-2010 Afterschool Ambassadors are from:

- **Vestavia Hills, Alabama:** Ronda Charping, Vestavia Hills City Schools Extended Day;
- **Ridgecrest, California:** Sandra Goldstein, Southern Sierra Boys & Girls Club;
- **Bakersfield, California:** Garrett Shipes, Greenfield Success After School Program, Greenfield Union School District;
- **New Haven, Connecticut:** Dr. Charles Warner, Gateway Center, New Haven Public Schools;
- **Fort Shafter, Hawaii:** Peter Tedtaotao, Ft. Shafter Youth Center SAS Program;
- **Wichita, Kansas:** Patricia Houston, Community Education, City of Wichita;
- **Paris, Kentucky:** Leslie Spears, Promise Program, Paris Independent Schools;
- **Catlettsburg, Kentucky:** Teresa Spurlock, Catlettsburg Elementary WOW Afterschool Program, Boyd County Public Schools;
- **Boston, Massachusetts:** Daniel Rosen, Citizen Schools;
- **College Park, Maryland:** Kendra Wells, 4-H Youth Development Extension, University of Maryland;
- **Detroit, Michigan:** Gazell Watkins-Mitchell, Before and After School Programs, Communities In Schools of Detroit;
- **Farmington, New Mexico:** Florencia (Flo) Trujillo, Farmington Public Library (returning Ambassador);
- **Haddonfield, New Jersey:** Denise Sellers, Haddonfield Child Care;
- **Las Vegas, Nevada:** Judy Schroeder, Safekey Program, City of Las Vegas, Department of Leisure Services;
- **New York, New York:** Liz Hopfan, Free Arts NYC;
- **Bronx, New York:** Danny Peralta, THE POINT CDC;
- **Dallas, Texas:** Tanya McDonald, Dallas AfterSchool Network;
- **Irving, Texas:** Gail Vessels, YMCA of Metropolitan Dallas; and

- **West Valley City, Utah:** Margaret Peterson, Community Education Partnership of West Valley City, Inc.

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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.