



NEWS RELEASE
April 23, 2018

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Camdenton 9th Grader Maya Irvine Shared Views on Afterschool Programs with Officials in Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. – Camdenton 9th grader Maya Irvine, who attends the Camdenton **FIRST**® LASER Robotics Afterschool Program and attends Camdenton High School, spent part of last week meeting with U.S. Senators and Representatives and their aides to discuss the importance of investing in afterschool and summer learning programs for youth. Maya came to Washington, D.C. for the annual Afterschool for All Challenge, organized by the National [Afterschool Alliance](#).

On Thursday, Maya shared her experiences and perspectives on afterschool programs with members of Congress and their staff including: U.S. Reps. Blaine Luetkemeyer, Billy Long, Vicky Hartzler, Lacy Clay and U.S. Sens. Roy Blunt and Claire McCaskill, emphasizing the ways afterschool programs, specifically the Camdenton LASER **FIRST**® Robotics Afterschool program has broadened her horizons in the six years she has participated.

Maya is one of five Youth Afterschool Ambassadors from four states: Missouri, Oklahoma, Washington, Wisconsin. She designed a video showing the power of **FIRST**® Robotics and the value of afterschool, not only locally but around the world. The video can be viewed at www.laser3284.org Maya shared it with Members of Congress and their staff at an Afterschool Expo on Capitol Hill last week. Maya was accompanied to D.C. and mentored during this school year by Sherry Comer, the Director of Camdenton R-III Afterschool Services and an alumna of the Afterschool Alliance's long-running Afterschool Ambassador program, geared toward afterschool providers.

“It was so exciting to visit with members of Congress and talk to them about how my afterschool program has prepared me to succeed in school and in life,” Maya said. “I can’t wait to go back home and continue to advocate for afterschool programs with other members of our **FIRST**® LASER team and share what I have learned.”

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

This year afterschool providers and educators from all 50 states visited Washington, D.C. to meet with their elected officials. President Trump is proposing to eliminate federal funding for afterschool programs in 2019, a decision that would eliminate afterschool programs for 1.7

million youth, including the 21st Century Community Learning Center funded program that Maya and hundreds of other youth attends.

The [America After 3PM](#) household survey of more than 30,000 families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, found that participation in afterschool programs has increased to 10.2 million students nationwide, up from 6.5 million in 2004. 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. Unmet demand is especially high in rural communities and communities of concentrated poverty. One in five students in the United States today is unsupervised after the school day ends.

A large and growing body of evidence demonstrates improvements in attendance, behavior, academic achievement and more among children in afterschool programs. Researchers have also found that afterschool programs encourage increased parental involvement – an important building block for student success.

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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.