



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

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Afterschool Alliance Names New Class of Afterschool Ambassadors

Afterschool Leaders Will Work in Their Own Communities and Nationally to Increase Students' Access to Afterschool

Washington, DC – The [Afterschool Alliance](#) announced the selection of 15 afterschool leaders from around the nation to serve as [Afterschool Ambassadors](#) for 2017-2018. Each Afterschool Ambassador will continue directing or supporting a local afterschool program while also serving their one-year Afterschool Ambassador term, organizing public events, communicating with policy makers, and in other ways growing support for afterschool programs.

This year's class includes 15 Ambassadors from 14 states. More than three-quarters of the members of the new Ambassador class have programs funded, at least in part, by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative. Ambassadors' programs also rely on support from state and local government, the business and philanthropic communities, and parent fees.

“We're thrilled by the impressive group of leaders who will serve as Afterschool Ambassadors this year,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “They are exactly the kind of powerful champions we need at this time when federal funding for quality afterschool and summer learning programs is at risk. I know they will mobilize business, community and faith leaders, parents, educators and others to convince lawmakers to secure resources for the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. These programs offer hands-on learning opportunities, homework help, mentors, science and technology, healthy snacks and meals, sports and fitness, arts programming, college and job prep, and much more. We're facing very real challenges this year, and more than a million students across the country could lose their afterschool programs. We will work together to stave off that threat.”

Each Ambassador organized a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's annual rally for afterschool, held on October 26 this year. More than 1 million people participated in some 8,000 *Lights On Afterschool* events across the United States and at U.S. military bases worldwide.

The 2017-2018 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Arkansas:** Ben Rediske, Program Director at Camp War Eagle in **Springdale**;

- **Florida (2):** Justin Pinn, Director of Auxiliary Programming at Breakthrough **Miami** and Sierra Newhouse-Ragoonanan, Project Coordinator at After-School All-Stars in **Orlando**;
- **Kansas:** Tony Yungeberg, Director of Valley Heights Community Education in **Waterville**;
- **Kentucky:** Tom Haggard, Program Director at Covington Independent Public Schools in **Covington**;
- **Louisiana:** Samuel Trevathan, Education Director at Kids Orchestra in **Baton Rouge**;
- **Maryland:** Terrell Sample, 21st Century Community Coordinator at Dorchester County Public Schools in **Cambridge**;
- **Michigan:** Rebecca Idzikowski, SPARKS Director at Clare-Gladwin RESD in **Clare**;
- **Montana:** Veronica Willeto, Site Coordinator at Pryor Public Schools 21st CCLC in **Pryor**;
- **Nevada:** Matt Sampson, Director of Operations at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Nevada in **Carson City**;
- **New Jersey:** David Haggerty, Director at the Morristown Neighborhood House in **Morristown**;
- **North Dakota:** Robin Nelson, Chief Executive Officer at the Boys & Girls Club of the Red River Valley in **Fargo**;
- **Oklahoma:** Danielle Hovenga, Director of the True Blue Neighbor’s Initiative at The University of Tulsa in **Tulsa**;
- **Tennessee:** Jennifer Pettyjohn, Chief Executive Officer at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Clinch Valley in **Knoxville**; and
- **Washington:** Dorinda Belcher, Project Director K-12 for the White Salmon Valley School District in **White Salmon**.

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.