



NEWS RELEASE
June 6, 2017

CONTACT: [Luci Manning](#)
202/371-1999

Columbus Afterschool Program Wins National Award for Improving Literacy Skills

Dollar General Awards \$10,000 to Columbus State Community College ESL Afterschool Communities

The Afterschool Alliance today presented the 2017 Dollar General Afterschool Literacy Award to Ohio's Columbus State Community College's ESL (English as a Second Language) Afterschool Communities program, which is being honored for its demonstrated excellence in helping develop English language learners' literacy skills at its Southpark and Prairie Norton sites. The [Afterschool Alliance](#) presented the award, made possible by generous support from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, at a Capitol Hill event in Washington, D.C., during its annual Afterschool for All Challenge.

Florence Plagenz, Supervisor of [ESL Afterschool Communities](#) (ESLAsC), accepted the award, including the \$10,000 prize, on behalf of the program. "We're very proud of the work we're doing with Columbus' immigrant and refugee community—assisting to further develop their English skills and supporting them as new Americans," she said. "This award will help us to continue that work, and I hope it will help bring some attention to the particular needs of the children and families we serve. I'm very grateful to Dollar General and the Afterschool Alliance for this generous affirmation of our work."

"For more than 20 years, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation has been committed to enhancing literacy and education in the communities we serve," said Dollar General's Senior Director of Community Initiatives, Denine Torr. "We are thrilled to honor ESLAsC with the 2017 award, in recognition of the life-changing work the organization does in support of the students, parents, and communities it serves."

Plagenz said the program will use the funds to expand the summer program offered at its Southpark and Prairie Norton sites from three to six weeks. In addition, the funding will support the addition of six field trips (three per site), 48 hours of programming focused on literacy, as well as youth development and math enrichment activities. Columbus State Community College began offering afterschool programs for immigrant and refugee students in 2004. That work evolved over several years into ESLAsC.

In addition to supporting this award, Dollar General Literacy Foundation has also funded two [literacy-focused issue briefs](#) by the Afterschool Alliance, part of a larger series of [issue briefs](#)

examining the role of afterschool programs in addressing a variety of contemporary issues facing youth, schools and communities.

“It’s a great pleasure to work with the Dollar General Literacy Foundation again this year to highlight the terrific work afterschool programs are doing to improve literacy among students and their parents,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “In Columbus and around the nation, the hours after school provide a unique opportunity for students to catch up, brush up, or get ahead in a variety of academic topics, along the way exploring new interests and finding their passion. They do all those things under the watchful eyes of caring adults. That’s why parents in Columbus and elsewhere will tell you that afterschool programs keep children safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. ESLAsC is a terrific example of the great work being done by quality afterschool programs.”

Last year, the Afterschool Alliance gave the Dollar General Afterschool Literacy Award to the [Corbin, Kentucky-based Redhound Enrichment Afterschool Program](#). In 2015, the inaugural award went to Atlanta’s [New American Pathways’ Bright Futures Afterschool Program](#).

#

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.

About Dollar General Literacy Foundation

*The Dollar General Literacy Foundation is proud to support initiatives that help others improve their lives through literacy and education as part of the company’s mission of **Serving Others** for over 20 years. Since its inception in 1993, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation has awarded more than \$135 million in grants to nonprofit organizations, helping more than 8.6 million individuals take their first steps toward literacy or continued education. For more information about the Dollar General Literacy Foundation and its grant programs, visit www.dgliteracy.com.*