



NEWS RELEASE  
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## **Ada, Michigan Volunteer Working to Strengthen Afterschool Programs Nationally**

### ***Danielle Grondin Joins Eight Other Afterschool Alliance VISTA Volunteers Nationally to Support Afterschool Sustainability and Expand Nutritional Resources***

Afterschool programs help working families, keep kids safe and inspire learning. In communities across the country, they are considered vital resources. But the economic downturn has put a squeeze on programs, causing many to scale back their offerings or even close their doors. Danielle Grondin, an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, is working with the Afterschool Alliance to change that.

Based in Washington, DC, Grondin leads a team of eight other VISTA volunteers selected from across the country, who are working to develop a local afterschool sustainability plans and increase local participation in free afterschool and summer meals programs. In addition to managing the program, her work includes identifying resources and needs and collaborating with local and national leaders to strengthen afterschool programs. She began her service in August of this year, and will complete her service in August 2012.

“Today, children and parents depend on high quality afterschool programs to provide engaging hands-on learning opportunities, nutritious and healthy snacks and meals, and opportunities to explore the sciences, arts, physical fitness and more. But many of these same programs are in dire financial straits. That’s why the Afterschool Alliance is delighted to have the support of Danielle Grondin in Washington, DC. We are looking forward to the contributions she will make in helping keep the doors open at afterschool programs, so that more children and families can benefit from all they have to offer,” said Jodi Grant, Executive Director of the Afterschool Alliance.

Afterschool Alliance VISTA Volunteers are helping to expand participation in the Afterschool Meal and Summer Food Service Programs by increasing the number of afterschool and summer learning programs offering these meals, as well as increasing the number of students participating in the programs. They are working with several different communities across the country to identify critical gaps in service and developing plans to increase awareness of the Afterschool Meal and Summer Food Service Programs among afterschool and summer enrichment partners. They are also working with school districts, state level officials, and community advocates to remove barriers to the programs and engage community partners.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 included a provision to expand the Afterschool Meal program to all states. The Summer Food Service Program is one of the least utilized food assistance programs.

Afterschool Alliance VISTA Volunteers are also working to ensure that 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC ) continue to provide high quality afterschool programs for low-income children. The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program provides funding for school/community partnerships at schools that serve primarily low-income students. To help maintain this funding in states, volunteers are working to increase community engagement and program sustainability through engaging community volunteers, creating sustainability plans to ensure long-term success of programs, gathering data and research to show the positive impact of these programs, and examining other programs' sustainability models.

The need for afterschool is great. Research conducted by the Afterschool Alliance has shown that only 15 percent of K-12 students nationally are in afterschool programs, while 26 percent care for themselves 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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*