



Youth Afterschool Ambassador Program
A Project of the Afterschool Alliance

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**Eldon Student Is One of Just Three Youth Afterschool Ambassadors
in the United States This Year**

Halie Gier Is Working to Raise Awareness About Afterschool Programs

Washington, D.C. – The [Afterschool Alliance](#) announced that Halie Gier, an Eldon High School student, is serving in the 2019 class of Youth Afterschool Ambassadors. The 15-year-old, who will be a tenth grader this fall, also attends the Eldon Learning Enriched Afterschool Program. She is one of just three students from across the nation to be selected for the honor.

As a Youth Afterschool Ambassador, Gier is being mentored by Colleen Abbott, the Director of the Learning Enriched Afterschool Program and an alumna of the Afterschool Alliance’s long-running Afterschool Ambassador program, geared toward afterschool providers. The Youth Afterschool Ambassador program, inaugurated in 2017, builds on the success of that program.

The three Youth Ambassadors share their perspectives on afterschool programs and the role programs play in their communities. They write for the [Afterschool Snack](#), the Afterschool Alliance blog, about the importance of afterschool and their experiences in programs. This summer, they traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in the annual Afterschool for All Challenge, where they met with members of Congress and their aides.

Gier addressed Challenge participants at an Afterschool Showcase in the Dirksen Senate Office Building. “My father John, a single parent, never knows when he’ll be called into work... LEAP has been an important part of my family and gives my dad a break in the day between work and when my three siblings and I come home. I really understand why afterschool programs are so important to families. I’m proof that afterschool works. Five years ago, I was mentored by a preschool teacher, and now I see myself teaching. Two years ago, when I was struggling, the afterschool program made me believe I had a future. I wouldn’t be standing here without them. For every child who gets in an afterschool program, two more are waiting to get in. We need more afterschool programs because all students should have the same opportunities to learn and grow in a fun and supportive place. The skills we develop in afterschool help us develop as individuals.”

Other speakers at the Challenge included U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and U.S. Reps. Bobby Scott (D-VA), Donna Shalala (D-FL), and Don Young (R-AK).

“We are absolutely delighted to have Halie participate in the Youth Afterschool Ambassador program,” said Jodi Grant, Afterschool Alliance Executive Director. “Her story about the importance of afterschool is similar to what students across the nation experience. Afterschool programs keep children safe, inspire them to learn, and give working parents peace of mind that their children are safe, supervised and learning after the school day ends. But too many children don’t have a program available to them, so we need to spread the word. Halie is doing a terrific job helping get out the good news about afterschool programs.”

“Halie is a terrific Youth Afterschool Ambassador,” Abbott said. “I know from my work with the Afterschool Alliance and the Afterschool Ambassador program that there’s a huge need for thoughtful, energetic spokespeople for afterschool. She knows afterschool from the inside, and is eager to share her experience, as well as her conviction that we need more afterschool opportunities for kids in Missouri and beyond.”

In the fiscal year 2020 budget, the White House has recommended eliminating funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, the federal government’s only dedicated funding stream for afterschool programs.

The three Youth Afterschool Ambassadors in this class come from Idaho, Missouri, and Texas. They are:

- Halie Gier, Eldon Learning Enriched Afterschool Program (LEAP), Eldon, Missouri
- Viridiana Gonzalez, Texas Christian University, former afterschool student in Fort Worth, Texas
- Timothy Hall, Mountain Home Air Force Base Youth Center, Mountain Home, Idaho

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.