



## **Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership**

NEWS RELEASE  
September 16, 2008

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### **Afterschool Alliance Names Melanie A. Haas One of 18 ‘Afterschool Ambassadors’ from 15 States**

#### ***Haas will Work in Colorado and Nationally to Expand Afterschool***

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced the selection of Melanie Haas, Colorado MESA Center Director (CSU) from Denver, Colorado to serve as a 2008-2009 Afterschool Ambassador. She is one of just 18 local leaders from 15 states selected for the honor. Each Ambassador will continue directing or supporting a local afterschool program while also serving a one-year Afterschool Ambassador term organizing public events, communicating with policy makers, and building support for afterschool programs. The Afterschool Ambassador program is supported by the William T. Grant Foundation.

“Afterschool programs keep children safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Americans strongly support afterschool programs but there aren’t nearly enough to meet the need, and rising fuel prices and tight budgets at all levels of government are putting financial pressure on the programs we have. In her work as an Afterschool Ambassador, Melanie Haas will bring energy and talent to the task of spreading the word about the need to make afterschool programs available to all families that need them. I look forward to working with her to build support for afterschool among parents, business and community leaders, lawmakers and the media. We are proud to have Melanie on our team.”

Colorado MESA (Math, Engineering, Science Achievement) currently serves 3,500 children in 160 Colorado schools. MESA promotes educational enrichment (K-12) for historically underrepresented children. It provides: career exploration, college campus visits, scholarships, academic support, leadership training and hands-on math, science and technology training. Colorado MESA currently has university partnerships with Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, Colo.; Colorado University, Boulder; and Colorado University Denver. Additional partnerships are planned for CSU Pueblo and MESA College in Grand Junction, Colorado.

Each Ambassador will plan a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance’s October 16 nationwide rally for afterschool. Despite overwhelming public support, and an agreement embodied in the *No Child Left Behind Act* to steadily increase federal funding, federal support for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers initiative – the principal federal funding stream for afterschool programs – has lagged far behind the need. The *No Child Left*

*Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion for afterschool this year, but funding is at less than half that level. Congress has not yet completed work on the education budget for Fiscal Year 2009.

The 2008-2009 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **CA, San Francisco:** Jenny Arcilla-Gonzalez, Chinatown Beacon Center.
- **CO, Denver:** Melanie Haas, Colorado MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement).
- **DE, Newark:** Carol Scott, University of Delaware, New Castle Cooperative Extension, 4-H Youth Development.
- **FL, Orlando:** Dr. Elizabeth (Betsy) Fulmer, Orange County Public Schools (returning Ambassador).
- **FL, Tampa:** Bobbi Davis, Children's Board of Hillsborough County.
- **IA, Clinton:** Loras Osterhaus, Clinton Community Schools.
- **ME, Addison:** Charles Harrington, EdGE Program, Maine Sea Coast Mission.
- **MI, Flint:** Ladonna Gamble, Bridges to the Future.
- **NE, Lincoln:** Dayna Krannawitter, Community Learning Center, Arnold Elementary (returning Ambassador).
- **NM, Farmington:** Florencia (Flo) Trujillo, Farmington Public Library.
- **NY, New York City:** Megan Demarkis, Harlem RBIs REAL Kids Program (returning Ambassador).
- **NY, New York City:** Nassim Zerriffi, Global Kids.
- **NY, Rochester:** Caroline Merenda, Rochester Area Community Foundation.
- **TX, Dallas:** Marco Galvan, Dallas Afterschool Network.
- **VT, Montpelier:** Virginia Burley, Community Connections.
- **VA, Annandale:** Regla Armengol, Prospera Initiatives, Inc.
- **WA, Seattle:** Sherrie Belt, School's Out Washington.
- **WI, Eagle River:** Robin Mainhardt, Project Bridges CCRR.

This year's *Lights On Afterschool* events will mark the end of a year-long celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers initiative. Last year, a million people rallied at 7,500 *Lights On* events to show their support for afterschool programs.

Afterschool programs offer young people safe, enriching, fun and engaging places to spend their afternoons. Youth in afterschool programs have been shown to perform better in school and have greater expectations for the future, while children who are unsupervised in the afternoons are at greater risk of becoming involved with crime, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy. A groundbreaking study conducted for the Afterschool Alliance in 2004 (with funding from the J.C. Penney Co., Inc.) concluded that 14.3 million latchkey children have no adult supervision in the afternoons and that the parents of 15.3 million children would send their child to an afterschool program if one were available.

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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).