



NEWS RELEASE
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Stratford 9th Grader Harli Jo McKinney Shared Views on Afterschool Programs with Officials in Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. – Stratford High School 9th grader Harli Jo McKinney, who attends the C3 Afterschool Program in Stratford, spent part of last week meeting with U.S. Senators and Representatives and their aides to discuss the importance of investing in afterschool and summer learning programs for youth. Harli Jo came to Washington, D.C. for the annual Afterschool for All Challenge, organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#).

On Thursday, Harli Jo shared her experiences and perspectives on afterschool programs with Congressman Tom Cole (R-OK), emphasizing the ways afterschool programs, specifically the C3 Afterschool Program, has broadened her horizons and those of other students in the 10 years they've attended.

Harli Jo is one of five Youth Afterschool Ambassadors from four states: Missouri, Oklahoma, Washington and Wisconsin. She designed a video project that showcased the value of afterschool programs, sharing it with Members of Congress and their staff at an Afterschool Expo on Capitol Hill on Thursday, April 19th. She was accompanied to D.C. and mentored during this school year by Laticia Vacca, the C3 Afterschool Program Director and an alumna of the Afterschool Alliance's long-running Afterschool Ambassador program, geared toward afterschool providers.

"I loved every second on Capitol Hill," Harli Jo said. "I enjoyed talking with Oklahoma representatives and Senators. My afterschool program has encouraged me to be an outgoing person, which helped me talk and lobby for afterschool programs across our state and the country."

The Afterschool for All Challenge is an annual event that brings together afterschool program providers and experts, along with students, like Harli Jo, to showcase some of the innovative and hands-on learning activities afterschool programs provide.

This year afterschool providers and educators from all 50 states visited Washington, D.C. to meet with their elected officials. President Trump is proposing to eliminate federal funding for afterschool programs in 2019, a decision that would eliminate afterschool programs for 1.7 million youth, including the 21st Century Community Learning Center funded program that Harli Jo attends.

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.