



Youth Afterschool Ambassador Program
A Project of the Afterschool Alliance

NEWS RELEASE
July 29, 2019

CONTACT: [Lisa Lederer](#)
202/371-1999

**TCU Student, Alum of Fort Worth After School, One of
Three Youth Afterschool Ambassadors in Country This Year**

Viridiana Gonzalez Is Working to Raise Awareness About Afterschool Programs

Washington, D.C. – The [Afterschool Alliance](#) announced that Viridiana Gonzalez, a rising junior at Texas Christian University, is serving in the 2019 class of Youth Afterschool Ambassadors. A former student in the afterschool program at Fort Worth’s D. McRae Elementary School, Gonzalez is one of three students from across the nation to be selected for the honor.

As a Youth Afterschool Ambassador, Gonzalez is being mentored by Miguel Garcia, the Director of Fort Worth After School, an alumnus 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. Earlier 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.

Viridiana addressed Challenge participants at an Afterschool Showcase in the Dirksen Senate Office Building. “I attended an afterschool program at my elementary school,” she said. “I joined because my parents didn’t have a place for me to go after school. They could either pay for someone to look after me when they were working or I could just go home... Rather than feeling like I was being dragged, I actually wanted to go to the afterschool program. ... I got homework help, which I didn’t get at home, because my parents didn’t speak English, so that really helped me succeed in elementary school. Once I went to middle school, I went back to volunteer, doing community service. And I got a Fulbright Scholarship based on community service, and now I’m a first-generation college student.” 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 Viridiana participate in the Youth Afterschool Ambassador program,” said Jodi Grant, Afterschool Alliance Executive Director. “Her story about the importance of afterschool in her formative years is the story of millions, of children across the nation. 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. Viridiana is doing a terrific job helping get out the good news about afterschool programs."

"I'm excited about serving as a Youth Afterschool Ambassador," Gonzalez said. "My afterschool program made a huge difference in my life, and I love sharing my story, and advocating for afterschool programs in Texas and across the nation."

"Viridiana is a terrific Youth Afterschool Ambassador," said Garcia. "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 Texas 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.

###

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.