



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

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Afterschool Alliance Names Chicago's Blasingame & Polonsky Two of Just 22 'Afterschool Ambassadors' from 19 States

Team Will Work in Illinois and Nationally to Expand Afterschool

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced the selection of two Chicagoans – Mande Polonsky of the Office of Extended Learning Opportunities, Chicago Public Schools and After-School All-Stars Chicago; and Roslind Blasingame-Buford of Broader Urban Involvement & Leadership Development (BUILD, Inc.) – to serve as 2007-2008 Afterschool Ambassadors. They are among just 22 local leaders from 19 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.

“Afterschool programs keep children safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “The public strongly supports afterschool programs and wants to see them expanded, but at the federal level and in many states, dollars for these programs are frozen or even shrinking. In their work as Afterschool Ambassadors, Roslind and Mande will bring talent and experience to the challenge of making afterschool programs available to all families that need them. I look forward to working with them to share the good news about afterschool with parents, business and community leaders, lawmakers, and the media. We are proud to have them on our team.”

Polonsky has more than seven years experience delivering and administering afterschool programs that develop the whole child, outside of the regular school day. Enrichment programs at Chicago Public Schools serve more than 30,000 students through the After-School All-Stars program, the Keep Kids Learning summer initiative, Tuition Based After School, and various school-based volunteer tutoring partnerships.

Blasingame-Buford has a ten-year history working to empower youth and communities through quality, asset-based afterschool and enrichment programs. BUILD, Inc. is a youth development agency working in eight Chicago communities to engage gang-affiliated and other highly at-risk youth, in the schools and on the streets, so they can realize their educational and career potential and contribute to the stability, safety and well being of our communities. She was recently named one of Chicago's “35 Under 35” Community Leaders by the Community Renewal Society.

Each Ambassador will plan a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's October 18 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 afterschool has been flat or declining for several years. The *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion for afterschool this year, but funding is less than \$1 billion. The House of Representatives and Senate are considering increases for next year.

The 2007-08 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **California, Sacramento:** Joe Hudson, Sacramento City Unified School District (returning Ambassador)
- **California, San Jose:** Mary Hoshiko, YMCA of Santa Clara Valley
- **Colorado, Denver:** Sandy Baca-Sandoval, Skinner Neighborhood Center, Denver Public Schools Extended Learning Department
- **Florida, Orlando:** Dr. Elizabeth (Betsy) Fulmer, Orange County Public Schools
- **Idaho, Pocatello:** Joyce Anderson, 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- **Iowa, Sioux City:** Brenda Hervey, Beyond the Bell
- **Illinois, Chicago:** Roslind Blasingame-Buford, Broader Urban Involvement & Leadership Development (BUILD, Inc.)
- **Illinois, Chicago:** Mande Polonsky, After-School All-Stars Chicago & Office of Extended Learning Opportunities at Chicago Public Schools
- **Kentucky, Independence:** Chris Francis, Community Services, YMCA of Greater Cincinnati (returning Ambassador)
- **Massachusetts, Salem:** Jennifer Anderson, For Kids Only Afterschool
- **Minnesota, St. Paul:** Audrey Kendig, John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School and YMCA of Greater St. Paul
- **Montana, Missoula:** Rosalie (Rosie) Buzzas, The Flagship Program
- **Nebraska, Lincoln:** Dayna Krannawitter, Community Learning Center, Arnold Elementary
- **Nevada, Reno:** Danielle Bowen, Washoe County Public Schools Team Up (returning Ambassador)
- **New Mexico, Albuquerque:** Cindy Schlenker Davies, Urban 4-H, New Mexico State University
- **New York, New York City:** Megan Demarkis, Harlem RBIs REAL Kids Program
- **New York, Oneonta:** Lisa Merrihew, Creating Rural Opportunities Partnership, Otsego Northern Catskill BOCES
- **Ohio, Toledo:** Becky Spencer, YMCA/JCC of Greater Toledo
- **Pennsylvania, State College:** Robin Foltz, Child Development & Family Council
- **South Carolina, Columbia:** Traci Young Cooper, Richland County School District One
- **Washington, Seattle:** April Bowman, Garfield Community Center
- **Wisconsin, Green Bay:** Trina Lambert, 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, Wequioc Elementary School

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.

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.

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