Afterschool Alliance Names Megan Demarkis of Harlem RBI’s REAL Kids One of 22 ‘Afterschool Ambassadors’ from 19 States

Demarkis Will Work in New York and Nationally to Expand Afterschool

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced the selection of Megan Demarkis, Director of Harlem RBI’s REAL Kids Program, to serve as a 2007-2008 Afterschool Ambassador. She is one of just 22 local leaders from 19 states selected for the honor. Each Ambassador will continue directing or supporting a local afterschool program while serving a one-year Afterschool Ambassador term organizing public events, communicating with policy makers, and building support for afterschool programs. Demarkis’ Ambassadorship is sponsored by The Robert Bowne Foundation.

“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 her work as an Afterschool Ambassador, Demarkis 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 her to share the good news about afterschool with parents, community leaders, lawmakers, and the media. We’re very proud to have Megan on our team.”

Harlem RBI’s REAL Kids Program won the 2006 Excellence in Summer Learning Award from the Johns Hopkins University Center for Summer Learning. Demarkis is a Teach for America alumna who taught bilingual 2nd grade in Washington Heights for three years. Prior to joining the Harlem RBI staff, she helped create the Teach For America Teacher Training Institute in the Bronx, where she served two years as the Director of Operations.

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:
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 by 2010. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

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