



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

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**Afterschool Alliance Names South Asian Youth Action (SAYA!) Afterschool Program Coordinator One of Just 18 'Afterschool Ambassadors' from Across Nation**

### ***Neha Gautam Will Work in New York and Nationally to Expand Afterschool***

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced the selection of Neha Gautam, Coordinator of South Asian Youth Action's (SAYA!) Afterschool Program at Richmond Hill High School, to serve as a 2010-2011 Afterschool Ambassador. She is one of just 18 local leaders from 16 states selected for the honor this year. 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. Neha Gautam's Ambassadorship is sponsored by The Robert Bowne Foundation.

"Quality afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Americans strongly support afterschool programs, but across the nation many of the programs that working families rely on are being threatened because of budget cuts or efforts to divert afterschool funds to other programs. We need to spread the word about the urgent need to make afterschool programs available to all children who need them. Neha will bring great energy and talent to that challenge in her role as an Afterschool Ambassador. I look forward to working with her to build even stronger support for afterschool among parents, business and community leaders, lawmakers and others. We are proud to have Neha on our team."

"I'm thrilled to have this wonderful opportunity to help secure the future of afterschool programs for kids and families in our community, and across the state and nation," Gautam said. "Afterschool programs are critical to student success and the economic security of working families. I look forward to helping expand support for them."

South Asian Youth Action was started in 1996 with the mission to create social change and opportunities for low-income South Asian youth to realize their fullest potential. SAYA! provides free and comprehensive youth development programming including academic support, artistic expression, sports, leadership training and counseling to an estimated 600 youth each academic year at its Elmhurst Center and four Queens' public schools.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's 11<sup>th</sup> annual national rally for afterschool, to be held on October 21 this year. Last year, a million people participated in some 7,500 *Lights On Afterschool* events across the United States and at U.S. military bases worldwide. Afterschool programs are under intense pressure this year, with the Senate preparing to consider legislation that would divert some of the already limited afterschool funds to other programs. At *Lights On Afterschool* rallies this year, participants will sign a parents' petition calling on Congress not to divert or deny afterschool funding.

The 2010-2011 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Alabama, Birmingham:** Bretta Freeman, Northeast YMCA;
- **California, Richmond:** Tariq Norris, Director of Community Service Programs, West Contra Costa YMCA of the East Bay;
- **Colorado, Boulder:** Karen Brown, Director of Middle School, Teen, Summer Programs, YMCA of Boulder Valley;
- **Connecticut, Willimantic:** Bill Stover, Director of NCLB/SES, Windham Public School District;
- **Indiana, Carmel:** Don Kent, Chairman, Net Literacy;
- **Iowa, Cedar Rapids:** LynelleHenricksen, Childcare Services Director, Cedar Rapids YMCA, Helen G. Nassif YMCA;
- **Louisiana, Baton Rouge:** Gaylynne Mack, Executive Director, Big Buddy Program;
- **Maine, Waterville:** Laura Brock, 21st Century Grant Director, Greater Waterville Communities for Children;
- **Massachusetts, Malden:** Karen Steele, Partnership for Community Schools in Malden;
- **Minnesota, Faribault:** Lisa Wetzel, Kids World School Age Child Care;
- **New York, Bronx:** Alberto Cruz, Co-President, Afterschool Works! New York/Managing Director, PS87 Afterschool Program;
- **New York, Elmhurst:** NehaGautam, Afterschool Program Coordinator, Richmond High School, South Asian Youth Action;
- **New York, White Plains:** Byron Smalls, After School Connection, White Plains Youth Bureau;
- **Oklahoma, Stratford:** Laticia Wade, Stratford SAFE Bulldog Academy;
- **Oregon, Salem:** Krina Lemons, Executive Director, Salem-Keizer Education Foundation;
- **Pennsylvania, Philadelphia:** Lola Rooney, YMCA of Philadelphia & Vicinity;
- **South Dakota, Rapid City:** Carla Allard, Program Coordinator, The Learning Zone; and
- **Tennessee, Memphis:** Sonja Currie, Director of Grants and Initiatives, Memphis Leadership Foundation.

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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).*