



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

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Afterschool Alliance Names East Harlem Afterschool Provider One of Just 20 ‘Afterschool Ambassadors’ from Across Nation

Esther Grant-Walker Will Work in New York and Nationally to Expand Afterschool

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced that Esther Grant-Walker, Director of School Age Programs at Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center, Inc., has been selected to serve as a 2011-2012 Afterschool Ambassador. She is one of just 20 local leaders from 17 states chosen 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. Grant-Walker’s Ambassadorship is sponsored by The Robert Bowne Foundation.

“Quality afterschool programs are invaluable to students, families and communities,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “These programs keep kids safe, help working families and inspire students to learn. But in Washington, D.C. and all across the country, the afterschool programs that families rely on are being threatened by budget cuts and efforts to divert afterschool funds to other programs. We need to spread the word about the urgent need to make opportunities to attend afterschool programs available to all children who need them. Esther will bring great skill and energy to that work in her role as an Afterschool Ambassador. I look forward to working with her to build even stronger support for afterschool programs among parents, business and community leaders, lawmakers and others.”

“I am delighted to have this chance to help increase support for afterschool programs, which give students opportunities to explore their interests and give parents the security that comes with knowing that their children are safe and supervised, with engaging, educational activities after the school day ends,” said Grant-Walker. “Afterschool programs are critical to students’ success in school, to families trying to survive in this recession, and to America’s workforce in the future. We need to strengthen the afterschool programs we have and ensure that there is a program for every child who needs one.”

The Stanley M. Isaacs Center is a major multi-service social service agency founded in 1964 in the settlement house tradition. Its mission, in working with persons at-risk, the isolated and disconnected of all ages, genders, backgrounds and abilities, is to promote social and physical well-being and encourage growth, self-reliance and dignity throughout every stage of life.

The Isaacs Center Afterschool Programs serves 650 children in grades K-8 in the East Harlem and Yorkville community. The afterschool programs provide academic enrichment using the Youth Development model, and children enjoy thematic activities delivered through an array of arts and recreation specialists. In addition, the Isaacs Center partners with The After School Corporation/AmeriCorps Everyday Explorers Program and New York Cares to deliver STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) activities to its participants. Grant-Walker has been working with the Isaacs Center for 12 years.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's 12th annual national rally for afterschool, to be held on October 20 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 considering legislation that would divert some of the already limited afterschool funds to other programs.

The remaining 2011-2012 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Alabama, Loxley:**Cherry Penn, Afterschool Childcare Program Supervisor, 21st CCLC;
- **California, Santee:**Pamela Brasher, Director, Out-of-School Time Programs;
- **Tampa, Florida,** Ralph Smith, Executive Director, Computer Mentors;
- **Hawaii, Honolulu:** Paula Adams, Program Manager, Fun 5 Program;
- **Illinois, Orland Park:** Priscilla Steinmetz, Founder & Executive Director, The Bridge Teen Center;
- **Kentucky, Corbin:** Karen West, Special Projects Curriculum Supervisor, Redhound Enrichment and Corbin Independent Schools;
- **Michigan, Saginaw:** Christine Benecke, Program Director, Youth First;
- **Montana, Havre:**Tim Brurud, Club Director, Boys & Girls Club of the Hi-Line;
- **Montana, Libby:** Kaide Dodson, CCLC Afterschool Coordinator and Enrichment Coordinator, Libby High School;
- **Minnesota, Faribault:** Lisa Wetzel, Kids World School Age Child Care;
- **New Hampshire, Bristol:** Elizabeth Colby, Extended Learning/Afterschool Director, Newfound Area School District;
- **New York, Jamaica:** Deepmalya Ghosh, Director of Youth Development Programs, Child Center of NY;
- **North Carolina, Durham:** Michelle Gonzales-Green, Executive Director, SeeSaw Studio;
- **Pennsylvania, Etters:** Thierry Malley, State Program Director, PA Area Council of Boys & Girls Clubs;
- **Pennsylvania, Nesquehoning:** Jeanne Miller, Director of Carbon and Schuylkill County Education Services, SHINE Program at Lehigh Carbon Community College;
- **South Carolina, Spartanburg:** Greg Tolbert, President, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Upstate;
- **Tennessee, Chattanooga:** James McKissic, Chief Operating Officer, Urban League Chattanooga;
- **Washington, Tacoma:** Noah Prince, Partnership Administrator, Tacoma 360; and
- **Wisconsin, Racine:** Katherine Dunkerson, Director of Extended Day Programs and Community Engagement, Racine Unified School District.

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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.