



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

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

Computer Mentors’ Ralph Smith Will Work in Florida and Nationally to Expand Afterschool & Promote Science, Tech, Engineering and Math Education

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced that Ralph Smith, Executive Director of the Computer Mentors Group program in Tampa, has been selected to serve as a 2011-2012 Afterschool Ambassador in Florida, focusing on STEM education – science, technology, engineering and mathematics. He 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. Smith’s Ambassadorship is sponsored by Bright House Networks, as part of the company’s ongoing commitment to afterschool and to education in STEM topics.

“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. In addition, afterschool programs have a vital role to play in educating our children in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The hands-on, engaged learning that characterizes afterschool is ideal for these topics, and programs across the nation, including Computer Mentors Group in Tampa, are focusing in on this critical area of our kids’ education. 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,” Grant continued. “I know that Ralph will bring great skill and energy to his role as an Afterschool Ambassador. We are profoundly grateful to Bright House Networks for its support of Ralph’s ambassadorship, and for its longstanding support of afterschool. I look forward to working with Ralph 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 Smith. “Afterschool programs are critical to students’ success in school, to families trying to surviving 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.”

Computer Mentors Group is a non-profit organization focusing on educational and employment opportunities for underprivileged children, youth, and adults. The organization was founded in 1997 as an afterschool program focusing on providing computers and computer skills to high school aged youth. Computer Mentors Group partners with several organizations locally and nationally to promote its mission to provide computer training, in-home technology, information access, and skill development to those who live in communities without sufficient resources, and is now extending that mission to include STEM education.

“We congratulate Ralph and all of this year’s Afterschool Ambassadors,” said Reinaldo Llano, Bright House Corporate Director, Community Relations, and board member of the Afterschool Alliance. “As we continue to support the afterschool community, we look forward to helping students, teachers and families with resources that lead the way in learning, specifically with the STEM education initiative.”

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 full slate of 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, New York:** Esther Grant-Walker, Afterschool Program Coordinator/Director of School Age Programs, Isaacs Center Afterschool Program;

- **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.