



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

NEWS RELEASE
September 20, 2012

CONTACT: [Luci Manning](#)
202/371-1999

Brevard County's Francisco Selected as One of Just 12 'Afterschool Ambassadors' from Across Nation

Jackie Francisco Will Work in Florida and Nationally to Expand Afterschool

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced that Jackie Francisco, Assistant District Coordinator of Brevard Public Schools School Age Child Care Program, has been selected to serve as a 2012-2013 Afterschool Ambassador. She is one of just 12 local leaders from across the country to be chosen for the honor this year. Each Afterschool Ambassador will continue directing or supporting a local afterschool program while also serving the one-year Afterschool Ambassador term organizing public events, communicating with policy makers, and building support for afterschool programs. Francisco's Ambassadorship is sponsored by Bright House Networks, as part of the company's ongoing commitment to afterschool initiatives and to education in STEM topics.

“Quality afterschool programs are essential to students, families and communities,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “These programs keep kids safe during the afternoon hours, help working families and inspire students to learn by offering hands-on science, math and other activities as well as homework help, mentoring opportunities, and much more. In addition, quality afterschool programs have a vital role to play in educating our children in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The hands-on, engaged learning that characterizes afterschool is ideal for these topics, and programs across the nation, including the ones Jackie works with at Brevard Public Schools, are focusing in on this critical area of our students' 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 Jackie will bring great skill and energy to her role as an Afterschool Ambassador. We are profoundly grateful to Bright House Networks for its support of Jackie's ambassadorship, and for its longstanding support of afterschool. I look forward to working with Jackie to build even stronger support for afterschool programs among parents, business and community leaders, lawmakers and others.”

Afterschool programs are under intense pressure. The Afterschool Alliance's [Uncertain Times](#) survey project, the only research effort to examine how the economy affects afterschool

programs, found that nearly two in five afterschool programs (39 percent) report that their budgets are in worse shape today than at the height of the recession in 2008. More than three in five (62 percent) afterschool programs report that their funding is down “a little or a lot” from three years ago. Even in communities where local economies and program funding are faring better, program leaders express significant concern about their financial outlook and their inability to reach all children who need afterschool.

“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 Francisco. “Afterschool programs are critical to students’ success in school, to families trying to survive in this economy, 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.”

Brevard Public Schools, through its School Age Child Care Program, serves more than 4,000 students daily in 57 elementary schools, including more than 1,000 students in 15 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) grant programs. The programs provide academic and personal enrichment including activities such as homework help, fine arts and music, technology, and fitness. Ms. Francisco has worked in afterschool programs with Brevard Public Schools for more than 12 years. She has served as a site coordinator in a school, program development coordinator at the district working with all 57 sites, and since July, as an assistant district coordinator working primarily with 21st CCLC grants. Her duties have afforded her the opportunity to experience child care at all levels of service.

“We congratulate Jackie 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 13th annual national rally for afterschool, to be held on October 18 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.

The 2012-2013 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **California, Oakland:** Kasey Blackburn, After School Program Manager, Oakland Unified School District;
- **Delaware, Newark:** Fontella Taylor, Youth Development Extension Educator, University of Delaware, 4-H Afterschool;
- **Florida, Titusville:** Jacalyn Francisco, Assistant District Coordinator, Brevard Public Schools;
- **Georgia, Riceboro:** Christopher Stacy, CEO, Georgia Coastal Youth, Inc.;

- **Indiana, Indianapolis:** Milele Kennedy, Manager, City of Indianapolis Department of Parks & Recreation;
- **New York, Forest Hills:** Patrick Pinchinat, Beacon Director, Queens Community House;
- **North Dakota, Mandan:** Andrew Jordan, Program Director, Missouri River Educational Cooperative;
- **Rhode Island, Cranston:** Kelly Whaley, Program Manager, Cranston Community Learning Center.
- **South Dakota, Sioux Falls:** Heather DeWit, Director of Childcare and Education Services, Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota;
- **Vermont, North Clarendon:** Carrie Becker, Director, Rutland South Supervisory Union Afterschool;
- **Washington, Lynwood:** Victoria Raya, Diversity Program Manager, National Girls Collaborative Project; and
- **Wyoming, Thermopolis:** Jenny Davis, Program Coordinator, Hot Springs County School District #1.

####

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.