



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

NEWS RELEASE  
September 12, 2012

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### **Oakland's Blackburn Selected as One of Just 12 'Afterschool Ambassadors' from Across Nation**

#### ***Kasey Blackburn Will Work in California and Nationally to Expand Afterschool***

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced that Kasey Blackburn, Manager, After School Programs in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), 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. Blackburn's Ambassadorship is made possible by support from the Noyce Foundation.

“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. 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. As an Afterschool Ambassador, Kasey will bring great energy to the work to build even stronger support for afterschool programs among parents, business and community leaders, lawmakers and others. I look forward to working with her this year.”

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 children and youth 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 Blackburn. “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."

Blackburn has worked with OUSD's After School Programs Office for six years. Prior to that she worked with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Silicon Valley and taught college-level education and youth development courses. At OUSD, Blackburn works in partnerships with youth-serving community based organizations to provide quality afterschool academic and enrichment programs to Oakland's 20,000 afterschool participants. In the 2011-2012 school year, the After School Programs Office managed and supported 84 after school programs throughout Oakland schools, including 52 elementary schools, 16 middle schools and 16 high schools serving more than 20,000 children and youth.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's 13<sup>th</sup> 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.

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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).*