



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

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### **Hampton Road's Graul Selected as One of Just 15 'Afterschool Ambassadors' from Across Nation**

*Allyson Graul Will Work in Virginia and Nationally to  
Make Afterschool Available to More Students*

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced that Allyson Graul, Director of Youth Civic Engagement at Alternatives, Inc., has been selected to serve as a 2015-2016 Afterschool Ambassador. She is one of just 15 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.

“We are so pleased to have Allyson serving as an Afterschool Ambassador this year,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “She will mobilize even more support for quality afterschool and summer learning programs among parents, business and community leaders, lawmakers, educators and others in the Hampton Roads area. “Quality afterschool programs keep young people safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families. They offer young people hands-on, team based learning opportunities, help with homework, science and technology activities, opportunities for sports and fitness, access to healthy snacks and meals, and much more. I look forward to working with her this year to bring us closer to the day when every child will have the chance to participate in an afterschool program.”

“I am excited to be part of the Afterschool Alliance’s work to increase resources for afterschool programs, here and across the country,” said Graul. “In my 30 years working with young people, I’ve seen firsthand how afterschool programs give students opportunities to explore their interests and discover their passions, while giving parents the peace of mind that comes with knowing that their children are safe and supervised once school is over, with engaging, educational activities. I look forward to helping raise awareness about the growing need for out-of-school time opportunities for all children and youth.”

Alternatives, Inc. is a nationally recognized nonprofit that provides youth, organizations, and communities with research-based youth development programs. One such program at Hunter B. Andrews in Hampton, Va., funded through a federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center initiative that Alternatives, Inc. coordinates, provides more than 100 middle school students with exciting afterschool enrichment activities, including intergenerational community service events, field trips to local colleges and universities, family activities and completing a local ropes

course. Trained AmeriCorps service members from area universities mentor youth and form positive relationships while leading afterschool programs and activities. Another example is the programs at Hampton City Schools, a collaborating partner of Alternatives, Inc., that provide STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and literacy enrichment activities, tutoring and homework help, as well as transportation.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's annual rally for afterschool, to be held on October 22 this year. Last year, 1 million people participated in some 8,000 *Lights On Afterschool* events across the United States and at U.S. military bases worldwide.

The 2015-2016 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Alabama:** Dr. Michael Wilson, Principal, Glen Iris Elementary School in Birmingham;
- **Colorado:** Patrick Wilhelm, Site Coordinator, Scholars Unlimited in Denver;
- **Connecticut:** Mark Fopeano, Program Manager, Dwight Hall at Yale in New Haven;
- **Indiana:** Brigitte Gurden, Executive Director, Boys & Girls Club of Morgan County in Mooresville;
- **Louisiana:** Patricia Johnson, Project Director, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, Monroe City Schools in Monroe;
- **Maryland:** Kat Stork, Deputy Director, Caroline County Recreation and Parks in Denton;
- **Minnesota:** Christian Kibler, Program Coordinator, Burnsville Youth Collaborative in Burnsville;
- **Mississippi:** Jannette Adams, Project Director, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Afterschool Academy, Columbus Municipal School District in Columbus;
- **Missouri:** Colleen Abbott, Director, Learning Enriched Afterschool Programs in Eldon;
- **New York:** Marcel Braithwaite, Director of Center Operations, The Police Athletic League New York City;
- **Oklahoma:** Kim Templeman, Principal, Central Oak Elementary in Oklahoma City;
- **Tennessee:** Kelly Drummond, Vice President of Human Resources and Administration at Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley in Knoxville;
- **Virginia:** Allyson Gaul, Director of Youth Civic Engagement, Alternatives, Inc. Hampton Roads area of Virginia;
- **Washington:** Beth Wyant, Program Coordinator, Northwest Community Action Center, a division of Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic in Toppenish; and
- **West Virginia:** Kasey Carter, Executive Director, Communities in Schools of Greenbrier County in Lewisburg.

A large and growing body of evidence demonstrates improvements in attendance, behavior, academic achievement and more among children in afterschool programs. Researchers have also found that afterschool programs encourage increased parental involvement – an important building block for student success.

The 2014 “America After 3 PM” study found that more than 30,000 families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, found that participation in afterschool programs increased to 10.2

million students nationwide, up from 6.5 million in 2004. But the unmet demand for afterschool programs has increased as well. Today, for every child in an afterschool program, there are two more whose parents say they would participate if a program were available. One in five students in the United States today is unsupervised after the school day ends.

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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).*

*Alternatives, Inc., founded in 1973, is a nationally recognized nonprofit that provides youth, organizations, and communities with research based youth development programs and training that build on the strengths of young people in order for them to become healthy, principled and creative young people fully engaged in the life of the community.*