



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

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Eastern Michigan University's Mitter Selected as One of Just 15 'Afterschool Ambassadors' in United States This Year

Maria Mitter Will Work in Michigan, Nationally to Increase Students' Access to Afterschool

Washington, DC – The [Afterschool Alliance](#) announced today that Maria Mitter, Assistant Director at Eastern Michigan University's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Bright Futures Afterschool Programs, has been selected to serve as a [2016-2017 Afterschool Ambassador](#). She is one of just 15 leaders from across the nation chosen for the honor this year. Each Afterschool Ambassador will continue directing or supporting a local afterschool program while also serving a one-year Afterschool Ambassador term, organizing public events, communicating with elected officials and policy makers, and in other ways growing support for afterschool programs.

“We are thrilled that Maria will serve as an Afterschool Ambassador this year,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “She is a dedicated champion for quality afterschool and summer learning programs. I know she will mobilize business, community and faith leaders, lawmakers, educators, parents and others to increase resources for afterschool programs, which keep students safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. These programs offer hands-on learning opportunities, homework help, mentors, science and technology, access to healthy snacks and meals, sports and fitness, arts programming, civic engagement, and much more. I’m eager to work with Maria to bring us closer to the day when no children or youth are unsupervised and at risk after the school day ends.”

“I am delighted to support the Afterschool Alliance’s work to increase resources for afterschool programs, here and around the country,” said Mitter. “In my 15 years working in this field, I’ve witnessed firsthand the many ways that afterschool programs give students opportunities to explore their interests and discover their passions, while giving parents the peace of mind that comes with knowing their children are safe and supervised, with engaging, educational activities, during the afternoons. I look forward to raising awareness and support for the out-of-school-time opportunities all students need.”

EMU Bright Futures is a cohort of high-quality afterschool programs in 20 school sites across three school districts including Romulus, Wayne-Westland, and Ypsilanti. Bright Futures serves more than 1,500 students each year. The focus of Bright Futures is to improve academic achievement, develop self-efficacy and prepare elementary, middle, and high school students to transition to the next level of schooling. Bright Futures is designed to address the needs

expressed by the families and children served, community stakeholders, and school staff. The strongest needs are in the areas of math, reading, writing, health, and social growth.

Programs meet after school for three hours Monday through Thursday, 32 weeks during the school year and six weeks in the summer. Students participate daily in homework help, targeted academic assistance, mentoring, and service-learning and select from a rotating menu of clubs and activities. Clubs focusing on student interests in science, the arts, technology, engineering, culinary, and physical fitness integrate writing skills, personal development, and specific skills to support a successful transition from elementary to middle and from middle to high school.

EMU Bright Futures provides a rich and engaging culture for students and families through the program's diverse set of community partners which allow the program to provide a wide variety of meaningful experiences within our youth driven content. Partners include, but are not limited to FLY Art, 4-H MSU Extension, Bricks 4 Kids, Growing Hope, GameStart School, Gamer Society, The Neutral Zone, Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan, Ypsilanti Running Company, Sweetwaters Café, The Michigan Theater, Riverside Arts Center, UM Regional Alliance for Healthy Schools, EMU College of Education, EMU CrossTown Theatre Troupe, EMU Athletics, and the University of Michigan School of Education Interactive Communications & Simulations.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's annual rally for afterschool, to be held on October 20 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 2016-2017 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Arizona:** Jeremy King, Community Services Supervisor, Kid Zone Enrichment Program in Tempe;
- **Delaware:** Beth Ohline, Senior Child Development Director, Bear-Glasgow YMCA in Newark;
- **District of Columbia:** Daniela Grigioni, Executive Director, After-School All-Stars DC in Washington, D.C.;
- **Idaho:** Lissa Hall, School Age Coordinator, Mountain Home Air Force Base Youth Programs in Mountain Home;
- **Illinois:** Tammera Holmes, President & CEO, AeroStar Avion Institute in Country Club Hills;
- **Iowa:** Nate Clark, Vice President, John Deere Foundation and Manager of Enterprise Citizenship, Deere & Company;
- **Maine:** Amy Pichette, Director of Afterschool Programming, LearningWorks in Portland;
- **Michigan:** Maria Mitter, Assistant Director, Eastern Michigan University Bright Futures 21st CCLC in Ypsilanti;
- **New Jersey:** Sarah Cruz, Special Assistant, Newark Public Schools Office of Expanded Learning Time in Newark;
- **North Carolina:** Bill McClain, Executive Director, Guiding Institute for Developmental Education (GIDE) in Winston-Salem;

- **North Carolina:** Betsey McFarland, Executive Director, Wade Edwards Foundation in Raleigh;
- **Oregon:** Debra Jones, Program Coordinator, Oceanspray Family Centers and Housing Authority of Lincoln County in Newport;
- **Rhode Island:** Ayana Crichton, Expanded Learning Program Director, Cranston Public Schools in Cranston;
- **Wisconsin:** Eric Vanden Heuvel, Chief Academic Officer, The Boys & Girls Club of Greater Green Bay in Green Bay; and
- **Wyoming:** Tamra Petersen, Grant Coordinator, 21st CCLC Uinta B.O.C.E.S. #1 Education Center in Evanston.

The [America After 3PM](#) household survey of more than 30,000 families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, found that participation in afterschool programs has 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. Unmet demand is especially high in rural communities and communities of concentrated poverty. One in five students in the United States today is unsupervised after the school day ends.

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.

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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.

Eastern Michigan University's Bright Futures is a 21st Century Community Learning Centers Afterschool Program. More information is available at www.emubrightfutures.org.