



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

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Tulsa's Hovenga Selected as One of Just 15 'Afterschool Ambassadors' in Country This Year

*Danielle Hovenga Will Work in Oklahoma, Nationally to Increase
Students' Access to Afterschool*

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance announced today that Danielle Hovenga, Director of True Blue Neighbors at The University of Tulsa, has been selected to serve as a 2017-2018 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 policy makers and in other ways increasing support for afterschool and summer learning programs.

“We’re delighted that Danielle will serve as an Afterschool Ambassador this year,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “She is exactly the kind of powerful champion we need at this time when federal funding for quality afterschool and summer learning programs is at risk. I know she will mobilize business, community and faith leaders, parents, educators and others to convince lawmakers to secure resources for the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. These programs offer hands-on learning opportunities, homework help, mentors, science and technology, healthy snacks and meals, sports and fitness, arts programming, college and job prep, and much more. We’re facing very real challenges this year, and more than a million students across the country could lose their afterschool programs. We will work together to stave off that threat.”

“I am excited to join in the Afterschool Alliance’s work to build support for afterschool programs,” said Hovenga. “In the ten years I have spent working in the field, I’ve seen up close the many ways afterschool programs help students 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 opportunities to learn and grow, after the school day ends. I look forward to raising awareness and support for the out-of-school-time opportunities all students need.”

The University of Tulsa’s True Blue Neighbors Youth Mentoring Program (TBN-YMP) aspires to help build a better community through quality afterschool programming at Kendall-Whittier Elementary School, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. As a 21st Century Community Learning Center, TBN-YMP provides equitable out-of-school time opportunities for youth by enhancing academic achievement, providing consistent exposure to a broad array of extracurricular activities that lead

to lifelong interests, habits and abilities, and developing positive social skills to build a better citizen. TBN-YMP offers free afterschool programming for 140 students every school day, following the Tulsa Public Schools academic calendar. TBN-YMP heavily emphasizes volunteer-mentoring relationships by integrating TU faculty, staff, and students into the culture and program design. One of the hallmarks of the program is high-impact community and business partnerships. Through a unique collaboration and national pilot program with Cox Communications, TBN-YMP is able to offer free in-home internet, Chromebooks, and technology education classes to students and families of the afterschool program. “We applaud great partners, like Cox, for stepping up for children, especially those in afterschool programs like ours. By bridging the digital divide many experience in our community, we are seeing tremendous gains in quality of life and academic success for the children we serve,” said Hovenga.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance’s annual rally for afterschool, to be held on October 26 this year. Last year, 1 million people participated in some 7,500 *Lights On Afterschool* events across the United States and at U.S. military bases worldwide.

The 2017-2018 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Arkansas:** Ben Rediske, Program Director at Camp War Eagle in **Springdale**;
- **Florida (2):** Justin Pinn, Director of Auxiliary Programming at Breakthrough **Miami** and Sierra Newhouse-Ragoonanan, Project Coordinator at After-School All-Stars in **Orlando**;
- **Kansas:** Tony Yungeberg, Director of Valley Heights Community Education in **Waterville**;
- **Kentucky:** Tom Haggard, Program Director at Covington Independent Public Schools in **Covington**;
- **Louisiana:** Samuel Trevathan, Education Director at Kids Orchestra in **Baton Rouge**;
- **Maryland:** Terrell Sample, 21st Century Community Coordinator at Dorchester County Public Schools in **Cambridge**;
- **Michigan:** Rebecca Idzikowski, SPARKS Director at Clare-Gladwin RESD in **Clare**;
- **Montana:** Veronica Willetto, Site Coordinator at Pryor Public Schools 21st CCLC in **Pryor**;
- **Nevada:** Matt Sampson, Director of Operations at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Nevada in **Carson City**;
- **New Jersey:** David Haggerty, Director at the Morristown Neighborhood House in **Morristown**;
- **North Dakota:** Robin Nelson, Chief Executive Officer at the Boys & Girls Club of the Red River Valley in **Fargo**;
- **Oklahoma:** Danielle Hovenga, Director of the True Blue Neighbor’s Initiative at The University of Tulsa in **Tulsa**;
- **Tennessee:** Jennifer Pettyjohn, Chief Executive Officer at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Clinch Valley in **Knoxville**; and
- **Washington:** Dorinda Belcher, Project Director K-12 for the White Salmon Valley School District in **White Salmon**.

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.

The University of Tulsa is a private, independent, doctoral-degree-granting institution whose mission reflects these core values: excellence in scholarship, dedication to free inquiry, integrity of character, and commitment to humanity. More information is available at www.utulsa.edu.