



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

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San Benito's Garcia Chosen as One of Just 15 'Afterschool Ambassadors' in United States This Year

Jack Garcia Will Work in Texas and Nationally to Increase Access to Afterschool Programs

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced that Jack Garcia, director of the San Benito CISD Afterschool Program, has been selected to serve as a 2018-2019 Afterschool Ambassador. He is one of just 15 leaders in the country who was chosen for the honor this year, and one of two in Texas. Each Afterschool Ambassador will continue leading a local afterschool program while also serving a one-year Afterschool Ambassador term, organizing public events, communicating with policy makers and in other ways growing awareness and support for afterschool and summer learning programs.

“We’re thrilled that Mr. Garcia will serve as an Afterschool Ambassador this year,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Now more than ever, with federal funding for quality afterschool and summer learning programs under attack, we need strong advocates like him. He will mobilize parents, educators and business, community and faith leaders, among others, to help safeguard funding for the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help give working families peace of mind. 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.”

“I couldn’t be more thrilled about this great opportunity to help build the afterschool movement,” said Garcia. “I’ve been working in afterschool for 20 years, and I’ve seen afterschool change children’s lives – broadening horizons, connecting them to their communities, and to caring adults. I’m looking forward to a terrific year working to get the word out about all the great things happening in afterschool programs, here and across the state.”

The Afterschool Program at San Benito CISD has been providing services to children for almost two decades. The Afterschool Program focuses on four pillars; academics, enrichment, college and career readiness, and family support services. Through combined efforts of state, federal, and local funds, the afterschool program at San Benito CISD has serviced over 10,000 children since 1999. The Afterschool Centers of Education at San Benito CISD in partnership with Lyford CISD, Cycle 9, are funded by a federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant. Currently, a total of 1,700 students are being serviced for this 2018-2019 school year. In the centers, students receive academic tutoring, homework assistance, reading and mathematics

tutorials, exposure to science experiments, and introduction to typing. Students are also able to enjoy a diverse array of electives that include robotics, gardening, ballroom dancing, chess, piano, photography, music, animation, and theater. The hours they spend in the program give them an opportunity to further engage in academic, enrichment, and social activities. Each campus has a site-based committee that evaluates the schools' needs and makes recommendations to select students and incorporate academic learning classes based on their need. Important partners in the community include Cameron County, Willacy County, UTRGV, Texas A&M Agriculture Extension Center, San Benito Housing Authority, Toys for Tots, and the Boys and the Girls Club.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's annual rally for afterschool, to be held on October 25 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 2018-2019 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Alabama:** Andrea Bridges, Education Coordinator, The CARE Center, **New Hope**
- **Alaska:** Heather Schloeman, Executive Director, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Kenai Peninsula, **Kenai**;
- **Arizona:** Mike Cassidy, Youth Services Administrator, City of Surprise Youth Services, **Surprise**;
- **Arizona:** Eva Harlow, Community Education Program Supervisor, Deer Valley Unified School District, **Phoenix**;
- **Georgia:** Chris Bass, Community Schools Division Manager, Columbus Parks and Recreation, **Columbus**;
- **Georgia:** Michael "Bull" Brown, Coffee County 21st CCLC Program Director, Coffee County 21st CCLC/ Boys and Girls Club of Coffee County Region, **Douglas**;
- **Indiana:** Desiree Frederick, Unit Director, Boys & Girls Club of Huntington County, Huntington;
- **Maine:** Jenn Carter, Program Director, Lewiston 21st Century, **Lewiston**;
- **Missouri:** Mark Cowsert, Program Director, Tiger Academy-Hollister Schools, **Hollister**;
- **Nevada:** McKenna Hines, 21st Century District Data Coordinator, 21st Century Community Learning Center – Southside Elementary, **Elko**;
- **Nevada:** Jessica Knudson, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Mendoza Elementary School, **Las Vegas**
- **South Dakota:** Billy Mawhiney, Director of Operations, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Sioux Empire, Sioux Falls;
- **Texas:** Johanna L. Friedel, M.Ed., Director, Afterschool Center of Education at Greenville ISD, **Greenville**;
- **Texas:** Jack Garcia, Afterschool Program Director, San Benito Consolidated Independent School District Afterschool Program, **San Benito**; and
- **Vermont:** Christy Gallese, Director of Expanded Learning Opportunities, Burlington School District, **Burlington**.

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 SBCISD After School Program is an extension of the school day that enhances student's success by improving attendance, behavior, social skills and academics.