



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

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Las Vegas's Jessica Knudson Chosen as One of Just 15 'Afterschool Ambassadors' in United States This Year

Knudson Will Work in Nevada and Nationally to Increase Access to Afterschool Programs

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced that Jessica Knudson, Site Coordinator at the 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) at Mendoza Elementary School has been selected to serve as a 2018-2019 Afterschool Ambassador. She is one of just 15 leaders in the country who was chosen for the honor this year. 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 Knudson 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 her. She 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 Mrs. Knudson. “I’ve been working in afterschool for ten 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.”

Mendoza is one of 35 Clark County School District (CCSD) schools to receive the 21st CCLC grant. The program at Mendoza currently serves 155 students before and after school and will add students as the year progresses, if funding allows. Students that attend spend 50% of each day in an academic class where they receive assistance with homework, math fact practice, and extra time to develop reading skills. They spend the other 50% in an enrichment class of their choosing, where they experience things such as archery, Lego robotics, STEM activities, art classes, and cultural awareness activities. Average class size during academic times ranges from 12 to 15 students, allowing them more one-on-one attention than the regular school day. Each student also gets a healthy meal provided by Three Square, our community partner, before

tutoring begins daily. Community partners such as this play an important role in afterschool programming.

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.

Mendoza ES 21st CCLC tutoring provides daily academic and enrichment classes to students. In addition, family literacy classes are offered once per month, allowing families to spend time together engaged in a quality literacy experience.