



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

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Tiger Academy-Hollister Schools' Cowsert Chosen as One of Just 15 'Afterschool Ambassadors' in United States This Year

Mark Cowsert Will Work in Missouri and Nationally to Increase Access to Afterschool Programs

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced that Mark Cowsert, Program Director at Tiger Academy-Hollister Schools (21st CCLC), 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. 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 Mark 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 am honored to serve as an advocate, not just for Hollister’s afterschool program, Tiger Academy, but also for other local, state and regional efforts,” said Cowsert. “That includes the Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA and other programs working diligently to keep children safe and engaged after school. All of these organizations help kids with homework, encourage healthy lifestyles and provide mentors to guide students to make good choices at school and at home.”

Cowsert attended an Afterschool Ambassador training in Washington, D.C. provided by the Afterschool Alliance, and will perform the duties of an Ambassador while continuing his responsibilities at Hollister. One of his first directives is organizing a major *Lights On Afterschool* event at Hollister Elementary on October 25th as part of the organization’s annual nationwide rally for afterschool programs. Next April he will return to Washington, D.C. with the other ambassadors to talk to senators and representatives about the importance of supporting afterschool programs.

Tiger Academy at Hollister Schools is a 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) grantee, serving more than 430 children in grades K-12 with college-career-readiness programming. Tiger Academy at Hollister Schools strives to encourage our Elementary students to “Discover their Future Stories” and empower middle and high school students to “Create their Future Stories” through creative college and career readiness programming. The curriculum fosters community partnerships, special elective academies, STEM projects, mentoring and additional academic support, including tutoring.

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.

Tiger Academy at Hollister Schools is a 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) grantee program that serves grades K-12 with college-career-readiness-targeted programming.