Marshfield Clinic’s Jennifer Smith Chosen to Be One of Just 15 ‘Afterschool Ambassadors’ in the Country This Year

Jennifer Smith Will Work in Wisconsin and Nationally to Increase Access to Afterschool Programs

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance has announced that Jennifer Smith, Program Manager at Marshfield Clinic Health System, has been selected to serve as an Afterschool Ambassador for the Afterschool Alliance in 2019-2020. She is one of just 15 leaders in the United States chosen for the honor this year. Ambassadors will continue their work supporting local afterschool programs while serving the one-year Afterschool Ambassador term, organizing public events, communicating with policy makers and community leaders, and in other ways increasing awareness and support for afterschool and summer learning programs.

“We are delighted that Jennifer Smith will serve as an Afterschool Ambassador this year,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “With federal funding for quality afterschool and summer learning programs at risk, we need strong advocates like Jennifer. Her work will mobilize parents, educators and business, community and faith leaders, among others, to send the message that afterschool programs are vital to the future of our children, families, and communities. Afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help give working families peace of mind. They offer hands-on learning opportunities, opportunities to think critically and collaborate, homework help, mentors, science and technology, healthy snacks and meals, sports and fitness, arts programming, college and job prep, and much more.”

“I am eager to join the Afterschool Alliance in building support for afterschool programs,” said Smith. “In my 20+ years working with youth, I’ve seen time and again the extraordinary difference that afterschool makes in the lives of young people in Wisconsin. These programs help students explore their interests, discover their passions, and learn to communicate with peers and adults while giving parents the security that comes from knowing their children are safe and supervised, with opportunities to learn and grow after the school day ends. I look forward to building support for the out-of-school-time opportunities all students need.”

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for Lights On Afterschool, the Afterschool Alliance’s annual rally for afterschool, which will celebrate its 20th anniversary this year.

The Marshfield Youth Net program, located inside the Marshfield Clinic Health System YMCA, will host Lights On Afterschool Thursday, October 24 from 4:30-6 p.m. to help celebrate and
recognize the positive impacts afterschool programs have on youth and families. Join in a tour, participate in some activities or enjoy some food as you learn about the benefits of afterschool!

Last year, 1 million people participated in some 8,000 events across the United States and at U.S. military bases worldwide.

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.

Marshfield Clinic Health System is an integrated health system whose mission is to enrich lives through accessible, affordable compassionate health care. The Health System serves Wisconsin with more than 11,000 employees including over 1,200 providers comprising 86 specialties, health plan, and research and education programs. Primary operations include Marshfield Clinic, Marshfield Medical Center hospitals in Marshfield, Eau Claire, Rice Lake, Neillsville, Beaver Dam and Ladysmith, Marshfield Children's Hospital, Marshfield Clinic Research Institute, Security Health Plan and Marshfield Clinic Health System Foundation. Learn more at marshfieldclinic.org.