***For immediate release***

YouthPower365’s Sarah Johnson chosen to be one of only 15 ‘Afterschool Ambassadors’ in the country this year

Johnson will work in Colorado and nationally to increase access to afterschool programs

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced that Sarah Johnson, Senior Vice President of Education and the Arts at the Vail Valley Foundation, 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 Sarah Johnson 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 Sarah. Her work will mobilize parents, educators, youth advocates and business and community 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 Johnson. “Our team at the Vail Valley Foundation and YouthPower365 has seen time and again the extraordinary difference that afterschool makes in the lives of young people in Colorado. 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.”

Johnson leads Eagle County, Colorado’s YouthPower365, which serves more than 3,000 young people in the areas in and around Vail, Beaver Creek, Edwards, Eagle, and Gypsum, Colorado. The organization has a decades-long history building public/private partnerships, and working together with Eagle County Schools, to ensure that “every child, every day” has an opportunity for success.
Johnson will join other Ambassadors to organize an event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's annual rally for afterschool, which will celebrate its 20th anniversary this year. Most *Lights On Afterschool* events will be on or around Thursday, October 24. Last year, 1 million people participated in some 8,000 events across the United States and at U.S. military bases worldwide.

The 2019-2020 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Alaska**: Courtney Havrilek, Lead Coordinator, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Fairbanks NSB School District, *Fairbanks*;
- **California**: Leslie Einhorn, Founder & Executive Director, CASA (Children's After School Arts), *San Francisco*;
- **Colorado**: Sarah Johnson, Senior Vice President of Education & Arts Vail Valley Foundation & YouthPower365, *The Vail Valley*;
- **Florida**: Suzette L. Harvey, President/CEO, Prime Time Palm Beach County, *Boynton Beach*;
- **Iowa**: Robert C. Reid, Executive Director, Camp Fire Heart of Iowa, *Des Moines*;
- **Michigan**: Willie Buford, Site Manager, Flint & Genesee Chamber of Commerce - YouthQuest, *Flint*;
- **Michigan**: Trevor Davies, Sr. Manager, Forum for Youth Investment, David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, *Wyoming*;
- **Minnesota**: Nicole Hernandez, Youth Development Director, Children's Defense Fund Minnesota, *St. Paul*;
- **New Mexico**: Melinda Franco, Director, Lovington Youth Center, *Lovington*;
- **North Carolina**, Abigail Swanger, Family and Community Coordinator, Community Kids Afterschool Program, *Boone*;
- **Ohio**: Lori Garrison, Program Manager, 21st CCLC, Graham Local Schools, *St. Paris*;
- **Tennessee**: Rico X, Vice President of School Age Services, YMCA of Middle Tennessee, *Nashville*;
- **Utah**: Kaylee Milliner, Center Coordinator, Promise South Salt Lake, *Salt Lake City*;
- **Virginia**: Daryle Rodgers, Out-of-School Time Coordinator, Hampton City Schools, *Hampton*; and
- **Wisconsin**: Jennifer Smith, Afterschool Program Manager, Marshfield Clinic Health System, *Marshfield*.

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 Vail Valley Foundation’s YouthPower365 provides afterschool and summer programming in early childhood (PwrUp), to K-12 (PwrHrs), and career & college readiness (PwrOn) throughout Eagle County, Colorado, so that young people are working with familiar faces every step of the way along their journey. YouthPower365 has a mission to provide year-round extended learning opportunities that empower and educate the youth and families of Eagle County from cradle to career, with a vision to serve, “Every Child, Every Day.” Visit www.YouthPower365.org for more.