



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

News Release

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Homer's Jane Beck Selected as One of Just 17 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year

*Jane Beck Will Work in Alaska and Nationally to Increase Access to
Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs*

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced that Jane Beck, Executive Director at Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula, has been selected to serve as an Afterschool Ambassador for the Afterschool Alliance in 2022. She is one of just 17 leaders in the country chosen for the honor this year. Afterschool Ambassadors continue their work with local afterschool programs while serving a 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 thrilled that Jane Beck will serve as an Afterschool Ambassador this year,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “The pandemic has had a profound effect on children and youth, and the afterschool community has a vital role to play in helping everyone recover lost ground. That will require support of all kinds, and we need strong advocates who know their communities to lead the charge. Afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help give working families peace of mind. They offer hands-on learning, 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 – and students need all that more than ever.”

“I am eager to join the Afterschool Alliance in building support for afterschool programs,” said Beck. “Over the last two years, afterschool and summer learning programs have provided critical services to kids and families, and we have more work to do as we recover. Our kids have ground to make up – not just in academics, but in their social and emotional development, as well. I’m proud to be part of the afterschool movement and thrilled to have a chance to serve as an Afterschool Ambassador for Alaska.”

Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula is fortunate to receive 21st CCLC funding as well as funding from the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services to provide afterschool programming to six small, rural, isolated schools in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District. Collectively, the programs serve 120 children in grades 3-8 with highly engaging, programming, including hands-on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math)

activities, structured physical activities, a Collaborative Circle, and of course, a nutritious snack. Afterschool coaches lead students through academically rich activities as well as meaningful social emotional learning opportunities.

The STEAM component engages students to work together through frustrations, ask questions, make predictions, reflect, and analyze. The Collaborative Circle encourages respectful discussion about values, virtues, and issues while teaching effective strategies to manage difficult emotions through mindfulness and breathing. Partnerships include the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, Brightways Learning with its Integrative Youth Development framework, and the Center for Alaska Coastal Studies for environmental stewardship. The primary goal of all of the programming is to build healthy, trusting relationships among children and adults through fun, enriching educational opportunities.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's annual rally for afterschool. Most of the thousands of local *Lights On Afterschool* events will be on or around Thursday, October 20, 2022.

The 2022 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Homer, Alaska:** Jane Beck, Executive Director, Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula
- **Glendale, Arizona:** Manny Padia, Recreation Coordinator Senior, City of Glendale Public Facilities, Recreation, & Special Events Department
- **Leadville, Colorado:** Taylor Trelka, Out of School Time Director, Project Dream with the Lake County School District
- **Middletown, Connecticut:** Mackenzie Steadman, School Age and Youth Program Coordinator, Middlesex YMCA Kids' Korner Before and Afterschool Programs
- **District of Columbia:** Andrew Blickle, Community Engagement Manager, Life Pieces To Masterpieces
- **Sioux City, Iowa:** Jenna Andrews, Program Director, Beyond the Bell
- **Wichita, Kansas:** Jennifer Hartman, Program Manager, Wichita Public Schools STEALTH Afterschool
- **Belmont, Massachusetts:** Arthur Pearson, Chief Executive Officer, Thompson Island Outward Bound
- **Jackson, Mississippi:** Monique Ealey, Director of Education and Programs, Mississippi Children's Museum
- **Bloomfield, New Mexico:** Jarvis Mullahon, Programs and Projects Specialist, Navajo Nation Department of Dine Education
- **Charlotte, North Carolina:** Sil Ganzó, Executive Director, ourBRIDGE for KIDS
- **Ocracoke, North Carolina:** Nancy Leach, Program Director, Hyde 21st Century Community Learning Center, Hyde County Schools
- **Norman, Oklahoma:** Michael Hirsch: Executive Director, Loveworks Leadership
- **Medford, Oregon:** Crystal Ehlig, Director of the Campus Connection Afterschool program, Rogue Valley Family YMCA

- **Salt Lake City, Utah:** Angel Gomez, Community Program Manager, YouthCity - Fairpark
- **Charleston, West Virginia:** Michael Farmer, Chief Operations Officer, Step By Step WV
- **Fairmont, West Virginia:** Shannon Yost, Program Manager, Flipside Afterschool Program

The 2020 [America After 3PM](#) household survey of more than 30,000 families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted before the pandemic, found that unmet demand for afterschool programs has reached an all-time high. For every child in an afterschool program in America today, three more are waiting to get in. The study found significant inequities, with Black and Latinx children disproportionately without afterschool opportunities. Ninety-four percent of parents of afterschool students say they are satisfied with their child's program.

A large and powerful body of evidence demonstrates improvements in grades, school attendance, behavior and more among children who participate in afterschool programs. Researchers have also found that students in afterschool programs are more engaged in school and excited about learning and develop critical work and life skills such as problem solving, teamwork, and communications.

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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.

Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing educational enrichment and supports to students and educators in the region's most isolated, rural schools.