



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

News Release

March 9, 2023

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Derby's Elizabeth Chambers Selected as One of Just 16 Afterschool Ambassadors in Country This Year

*Chambers Will Work in Vermont and Across Nation to Make Afterschool and
Summer Learning Programs Available to More Children and Youth*

Washington, DC – Elizabeth Chambers, Program Coordinator at the North Country Supervisory Union (NCSU) Encore After School and Summer Program, has been selected to serve as a 2023 Afterschool Ambassador, the Afterschool Alliance announced today. She is one of just 16 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 events, working with community leaders and policy makers, and in other ways increasing support for the afterschool and summer learning programs families rely on.

"We are absolutely delighted that Elizabeth Chambers will serve as a 2023 Afterschool Ambassador," Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant said. "While students and families need afterschool and summer learning programs more than ever, programs are facing significant challenges including staff shortages, funding shortfalls, and finding ways to meet the academic and social needs of students as they recover from the challenges the pandemic created. We need strong, creative champions to spread the word about the essential role afterschool programs play in keeping kids safe, inspiring them to learn, and giving parents peace of mind that their children are safe and supervised after the school day ends. Chambers is poised to be just the kind of powerful advocate we need."

"I am looking forward to joining the Afterschool Alliance in growing support for afterschool and summer learning programs this year," Chambers said. "I've seen up close the incredible and critical ways these programs support students and families. That's even more important now, as we recover from the isolation and hardship the pandemic caused. Many of our kids are longing to socialize and feel belonging, and they need engaging, safe and passion driven programming with opportunities to see themselves as leaders of their own learning. Afterschool programs can help them with that. I'm so proud to be part of the afterschool movement and to have a chance to serve as an Afterschool Ambassador for Vermont this year."

The NCSU Encore program serves over 1,000 youth, K-8, yearly at nine sites, representing students from 12 towns in the Northeast Kingdom. Encore is a 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) grant funded program that provides afterschool programming daily throughout the school year, and for five weeks during the summer. Every afternoon youth have access to a snack or meal, recess, and homework help followed by the main event, the enrichment hour. Enrichment clubs change every eight weeks and revolve around youth interest. Examples of current clubs include programming with educational

partners like Siskin Ecological Adventures, NorthWoods Stewardship Center, The Aquatic Connection, Green Mountain Farm-to-School, Dunlavey's Black Belt Academy, and NEK Guides.

Encore also offers in-house programming like theater, newspaper clubs, cross-country skiing, sports, junior chef, watercolor painting, coding, social justice, leadership, pretend play and so many more with both school staff and community members jumping in to spend time with youth. Encore supports weekend SU-Wide GSA and Middle School Leadership Team retreats, as well as periodic community stewardship days. Encore programs are sustained by school investments, grants, and donations, with no set fees for enrollment.

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 26, 2023.

The 2023 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Stamford, Connecticut:** Tiffany Wilson, Mill River Park Collaborative
- **Shoshone, Idaho:** Karma Metzler Fitzgerald, Lincoln County Youth Commission
- **Indianapolis, Indiana:** Chrystal Struben, AYS – At Your School
- **Terre Haute, Indiana:** Eleanor Ramseier, Camp Navigate, Inc.
- **Skowhegan, Maine:** Dawn Fickett, RSU/MSAD 54's 21st CCLC The REACH Afterschool Program
- **Derwood, Maryland:** Zainab Abbas, SciTech2U
- **Battle Creek, Michigan:** Deondra Ramsey, Battle Creek Public Schools 21st Century Program
- **Medford, New Jersey:** Becca Gutwirth, YMCA of the Pines
- **Newark, New Jersey:** Dorine Francis, FOCUS Hispanic Center for Community Development, Inc.
- **Zuni, New Mexico:** Valarie Bellson, Pueblo of Zuni, Zuni Public Library
- **Brooklyn, New York:** Earl Whitfield, CAMBA East New York Beacon 166
- **Norman, Oklahoma:** Whitney Dunn, Boys & Girls Club of Norman, Center for Children and Families
- **San Antonio, Texas:** Shawn Petty, Texas ACE Program @ Westat
- **Newport, Vermont:** Elizabeth Chambers, NCSU Encore Afterschool and Summer Program
- **Hampton, Virginia:** Michelle Simpson, Alternatives World Changers
- **Pasco, Washington:** Margarita Alaman, Educational Service Districts 123 21st Century Programs

Some 24.7 million U.S. children not in an afterschool program would be enrolled, if a program were available to them, according to [a survey of nearly 1,500 parents](#) commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted by Edge Research in May and June of 2022. That is the highest number ever recorded. Unmet demand for afterschool programs is significantly higher among Latino and Black children (at 60% and 54% respectively) than among children overall (49%). Cost is the top barrier to enroll, cited by 57% of parents as a reason for not enrolling their child. Ninety percent of parents rate the quality of the program their child attends as excellent (51%) or very good (39%).

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.

NCSU Encore is a school-based summer and afterschool program working to expand our children's dreams and opportunities. www.facebook.com/NCSUEncore