



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

News Release

March 6, 2023

Contact: Amanda Pulis, apulis@ccfinorman.org

Contact: Kim Hayes, Afterschool Alliance, Kim@prsolutionsdc.com

Boys & Girls Club of Norman Executive Director Selected as One of Just 16 Afterschool Ambassadors in Country This Year

*Whitney Dunn Will Work in Oklahoma and Across Nation to Make Afterschool and
Summer Learning Programs Available to More Children and Youth*

Washington, DC – Whitney Dunn, Executive Director of Boys & Girls Club of Norman at Center for Children and Families, Inc., has been selected to serve as a 2023 Afterschool Ambassador, the Afterschool Alliance announced today. Whitney is one of just 16 leaders across 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 Whitney 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. Whitney with Boys & Girls Club of Norman is poised to be just the kind of powerful advocate we need.”

“I’m honored to represent Oklahoma this year as part of the Afterschool Alliance and look forward to joining other ambassadors as we continue advocating for our youth,” said Dunn. “I’ve seen first-hand the incredible ways afterschool programs, such as Boys & Girls Club of Norman, support students and how important these services are for families as a whole.”

Boys & Girls Club of Norman empowers youth through trauma-informed afterschool programming that enhances character, builds leadership skills, encourages academic success, and facilitates healthy lifestyle activities. The Club is uniquely centered in a community agency, Center for Children and Families, Inc., that specializes in prevention programs for caregivers and provides mental health services for children that have experienced complex trauma. Every member of Boys & Girls Club of Norman has access to these services at a very low cost of only \$20 a year. Through the hope-centered support of our family resource center, we provide a safe haven in our community for youth to grow up safe, nurtured and loved.

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, North Country Supervisory Union 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.

#

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.

Since 1969, Center for Children and Families has sought to end the generational cycles of poverty, child abuse and neglect for local children and families by providing services that heal the wounds of childhood trauma and strengthen family relationships. Boys & Girls Club of Norman at Center for Children and Families provides mentorship and enrichment opportunities to kick-start great futures for youth from low-resource neighborhoods. CCFI's mission is to heal children, empower youth and strengthen families because every child deserves to grow up safe, nurtured and loved. Please visit www.ccfinorman.org for more information.

