



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

News Release

March 6, 2023

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Skowhegan's Fickett Selected as One of Just 16 Afterschool Ambassadors in Country This Year

*Dawn Fickett Will Work in Maine and Across Nation to Make Afterschool and
Summer Learning Programs Available to More Children and Youth*

Washington, DC – Dawn Fickett, 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) program director at the REACH After School 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 Dawn Fickett 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. Fickett 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," Fickett said. "I've seen up close the incredible ways that the REACH After School Program in Skowhegan, and other programs across our state, have supported students and families, and the critical supports and services they provide. That's even more important now, as we recover from the isolation and hardship the pandemic caused. Many of our kids have ground to make up and afterschool programs can help them do that. I'm so proud to be part of the afterschool movement and to have a chance to serve as an Afterschool Ambassador for Maine this year."

The REACH After School Program is a 21st CCLC grant-funded program. It serves more than 230 students year-round, offering free summer and after school programs for kindergarten through 8th grade. Each of its three school-year sites offers a healthy super snack, homework help and educational enrichment opportunities, including a full program-wide Lego Educate robotics club. Additionally, they hold partnerships with Somerset Public Health to offer Move More Kids and 100 Mile Club, both funded by the New Balance Foundation, plus prevention programming through the Drug Free Community grant.

Their partnership with the University of Maine Cooperative Extensions program offers nutrition program through Kids in the Kitchen, Food Fun and Reading, and CREATE Better Health, and their partnership with Skowhegan Outdoors AmeriCorps Program offers nature-based experiential learning and recreation programming.

Further partnerships with various social service organizations offer opportunities for all three sites to participate in community service projects throughout their community. REACH offers an additional 60 hours of literacy programming in partnership with district teachers throughout the school year, helping struggling learners to reach grade level by the end of each school year. The Camp REACH summer programs offer comprehensive STEM programming, physical fitness and healthy snacks at its K-5 program. And in partnership with the Somerset Career and Technical Center, it offers art, outdoor adventure and robotics camps, as well as cooking and carpentry clinics at middle school (grades 6 - 8) programs.

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.

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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 REACH After School Program is committed to moving its community forward through collaborative partnerships that create quality out-of-school time programming for children and families, providing a safe, structured, and supportive environment to promote learning, aspirations, opportunities, and growth.