



## **Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership**

### **For Immediate Release**

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### **Medford's Becca Gutwirth Selected as One of Just 16 Afterschool Ambassadors in Country This Year**

*Becca Gutwirth Will Work in New Jersey and Across Nation to Make Afterschool and  
Summer Learning Programs Available to More Children and Youth*

Medford, NJ – Becca Gutwirth, Executive Director of School Age Child Care at the YMCA of the Pines, 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 Becca Gutwirth 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. Gutwirth is poised to be just the kind of powerful advocate we need."

"I am looking forward to joining Afterschool Alliance Ambassadors nationwide to help grow awareness and support for before and after school and summer learning programs this year," said Gutwirth. "For the last four years working with YMCA of the Pines, and as a teacher before that, I've seen up close the incredible ways these programs support students and families. Those supports are even more important now, as many of our students and families are still recovering 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 New Jersey this year."

YMCA of the Pines currently operates 14 before and after school programs in Burlington, Gloucester, and Salem Counties. Each site operates as a state-licensed child care center, and provides homework help, art and STEM activities, group games, healthy snacks, and more. Children have the opportunity to

build relationships with students in their own grade, as well as older and younger students from other grades.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's annual rally for afterschool. YMCA of the Pines' event is set for Wednesday, October 25, at its 800-acre property in Medford. The program will be open to the community and details will be announced in early fall.

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. To learn more about YMCA of the Pines' Before and After School Care, visit [www.ycamp.org](http://www.ycamp.org).

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#### **About Afterschool Alliance**

*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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*

#### **About YMCA of the Pines**

*YMCA of the Pines is an interfaith, charitable association dedicated to helping children, teens and families explore, grow, thrive and ultimately become the best version of themselves. It is located on 800 acres off Stokes Road in Medford, NJ. For more information, visit [www.ycamp.org](http://www.ycamp.org) or call 609-654-8225.*