



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

### **News Release**

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### **DeAndra Harrison of Columbus Selected as One of Just 14 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year**

*Local Community Leader Uses Education Experience to Spread Reach Across Ohio and Nation to Make Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs Available to More Students and Families*

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance announced today that it has selected DeAndra Harrison, Founding Director at The Actions that Matter for Youth, to serve as a 2024 Afterschool Ambassador. She is one of just 14 leaders in the country chosen for the honor this year. The selected leaders will incorporate their contribution as afterschool professionals while serving a one-year Afterschool Ambassador term. The term includes working with community leaders and policy makers, organizing events, and in other ways growing support for the afterschool and summer learning programs families rely on.

“We are thrilled that DeAndra Harrison is serving as a 2024 Afterschool Ambassador for the Afterschool Alliance,” said Jodi Grant, Afterschool Alliance executive director. “This is a challenging time for the country’s students and families, and afterschool and summer learning programs are uniquely positioned to help. But there aren’t nearly enough programs to meet the need, and programs are facing significant challenges including funding shortfalls as the pandemic relief tapers off, staff shortages, and more. Now more than ever, we need leaders to spread the word that afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give parents peace of mind that their children are safe and supervised after the school day ends. Harrison is exactly the kind of champion we need.”

“I am beyond grateful for this amazing opportunity, which allows me to expand my reach amongst youth and educators as a walk in my purpose to enrich communities around Central Ohio,” Harrison said. “I’ve seen firsthand the many ways that out-of-school-time organizations help students and families overcome obstacles within their programs. That’s especially important now. Many of our students have both social and academic challenges and participating in afterschool programs provides them with the resources and tools to make the journey a little easier. I’m so proud to be part of the afterschool movement and to be a 2024 Afterschool Ambassador.”

Under Harrison’s leadership, [The Actions that Matter for Youth](https://www.atm4youth.org/) (ATM4Youth) organization serves over 200 students daily within two public schools, two charter schools, one community school, and several community-based sites. ATM4Youth is an organization that focuses on providing educators, students and their families with products and services to enhance their academic experience and contribution to the community.

ATM4Youth strives to develop its students to be a vital force in the community by living healthy and safe lives, using their life skills toward independence, appreciating their education by going into a career field they're passionate about and continuing to spread positive energy daily.

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 24, 2024.

The 2024 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Colorado, Thornton:** Mandi Browning, The PEAK Learning Center
- **Delaware, Laurel:** Tasha Esham, Laurel Boys & Girls Club
- **Iowa, Des Moines:** Linda Phillips, 21CCLC and Metro Kids/ Des Moines Public Schools
- **Kentucky, Covington:** Beth Wiseman, Learning Grove
- **Louisiana, Baton Rouge:** Yashica Newby, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Louisiana
- **Louisiana, New Orleans:** Aaron Frumin, unCommon Construction
- **Nebraska, Crete:** Joel Bramhall, Cardinal Community Learning Centers, Crete Public Schools
- **New Mexico, Farmington:** Teahonna James-Belin, Navajo Preparatory School
- **Ohio, Columbus:** DeAndra Harrison, The Actions that Matter for Youth
- **Ohio, Cleveland:** Kasey Morgan, MyCom
- **Pennsylvania, Philadelphia:** Cecelia Armstrong, Sunrise of Philadelphia
- **Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh:** Deanna Dugan, Propel Schools
- **Rhode Island, Providence:** Elliot A. Rivera, Youth In Action
- **Tennessee, Knoxville:** Sindy Dawkins-Schade, SHADES of Development

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

#### **The Actions that Matter for Youth**

*ATM's Vision: To make positive deposits into young minds by investing in their future.*

*ATM's Mission: We serve students by providing a STEAM-based out-of-school programming while focusing on character education, mental health, life skills, career readiness and financial literacy, specifically focusing on developmentally appropriate activities. ([www.atm4youth.org](http://www.atm4youth.org))*