



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

News Release

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Elliot Rivera of Providence Selected as One of Just 14 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year

*Rivera Will Work in Rhode Island and Across 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 Elliot A. Rivera, Executive Director at Youth In Action, to serve as a 2024 Afterschool Ambassador. He is one of just 14 leaders in the country chosen for the honor this year. Afterschool Ambassadors continue working with local afterschool programs while serving a one-year Afterschool Ambassador term, 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 Elliot Rivera 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. Rivera is exactly the kind of champion we need.”

“I’m excited to be able to represent my communities at the national level through this fantastic opportunity with the Afterschool Alliance. Increasing awareness and support for afterschool and summer learning programs, especially for those statistically underserved within our communities, is paramount to the overall success of our young folks.” said Rivera. “I know firsthand the impact of afterschool and summer programs on young folks, especially those from underserved communities. It creates the foundation of care, joy and wellbeing for all of our young folks to thrive, and for their families to get support beyond the school day. As I continue to advocate for these critical programs with the support of my peers locally and nationally, I’ll do so with the most marginalized not just in mind, but in representation.”

For over 26 years, Youth In Action (YIA) has been engaging youth inside and outside of school in tailored, peer-to-peer and adult mentored programming to establish their core leadership identity, and then helping them step into action by enacting the social change they want to see. This can look like consulting on education equity issues, co-leading solutions with the state government to end youth homelessness or even bringing their peers out on one of their many outdoor leadership opportunities and strategizing around outdoor equity issues.

Not only is this all done free for youth and their families, these youth have historically earned school credit for their participation and earn paid stipends for their work and are part time staff with a pension and professional development plans that lead all levels of the agency, including its board of directors and executive team. This is done through the “nothing about us, without us, is for us” approach where they employ adults representative of their experiences and ensure intergenerational leadership through all of their work, internally and externally. They center the full needs of youth in afterschool and summer opportunities, ensuring that there is always access to tutors, meals and snacks whenever the YIA house is open, drop in recreation and joy offerings and many opportunities to express themselves creatively and fully.

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.*

***Youth In Action's** (YIA) mission is to co-create the spaces for youth to share their stories, practice leadership and create change in their communities. YIA is a nonprofit organization focused on young people--their capacity to lead, their natural ability to innovate, and their desire for positive change. YIA was started by teenagers in 1997 to help urban youth thrive and create social change, and to this day we support on average 100 youth a year through this deep level of programming. Since its inception youth have played key leadership roles at every level of the organization--making up the majority of YIA's Board of Directors and running all of its community programs and hired for critical roles throughout all internal departments. As a result YIA's internal and external programs are both youth centered and cutting edge in meeting the needs of diverse young people in our communities-- and all free of charge for our families.*