



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

News Release

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Bramhall of Crete Selected as One of Just 14 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year

*Joel Bramhall Will Work in Nebraska 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 Joel Bramhall, the Director of Cardinal Community Learning Centers for Crete Public Schools, to serve as a 2024 Afterschool Ambassador. He is one of only 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 Joel Bramhall 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. Bramhall is exactly the kind of champion we need.”

“I am delighted to have the opportunity to work with the Afterschool Alliance to increase awareness and bolster support for afterschool and summer learning programs,” said Bramhall. “I have witnessed firsthand the impact these programs have on students and families, especially as they work to overcome challenges. That is especially important now, as many of students have ground to make up and afterschool programs can help them do that. I am so proud to be part of the afterschool movement and to be a 2024 Afterschool Ambassador.”

Cardinal Community Learning Centers is the afterschool and summer program for Crete Public Schools. Open to K-12 students residing within the boundaries of the school district, the program serves all public, parochial, and homeschool students free of charge. Annually, Cardinal Community Learning Centers supports over 1,400 students across four campuses, employs 105 part-time and five full-time staff members, saves local working families over \$2 million in K-5 childcare costs, and provides nearly 57,000 snacks and serves over 22,000 dinners. Additionally, the program holds 18 family engagement events throughout the school year and summer that brings the growing community of Crete together under the banner of afterschool. Located 20 miles southwest of Lincoln, the rural town of Crete (population 7,100) is celebrated for its remarkable demographic diversity and robust industrial sector,

blending a rich cultural tapestry with a strong manufacturing presence, all of which allows Cardinal Community Learning Centers to be a dynamic bridge between working families and local resources. Interacting face-to-face with families each day, employed university scholars from Doane University – Crete, the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, and surrounding community colleges gain workforce skills and professional development that serves them in their upcoming careers and aspirations.

Funded by federal, state, and private grants, Cardinal Community Learnings is further powered by a robust network of partners that include local businesses, nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and individuals. These multiple sources collectively supplement the foundational investments made by Crete Public Schools.

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.

Cardinal Community Learning Centers (CCLC) is the afterschool and summer program serving K-12 students and families in Crete, Nebraska. Each of the four campus sites offer afterschool and summer programming free of charge. CCLC is a local workforce leader, as a trained staff of nearly 100 employees facilitate future-focused learning to prepare students for careers during 170+ days of school year programming and a full-month of summer programming. Missioned to accelerate academic success by providing high-quality enrichment learning opportunities, increased social interactions modeling positive behavior, and active family and community engagements, Cardinal Community Learning Centers is funded in part by 21st Century Community Learning Center federal funds and is sustained by a network of community partners. More information is available at www.creteschools.org/page/cclc or by following @CardinalCenters on Facebook.