



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

News Release

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Linda Phillips of Des Moines, Iowa Selected as One of Just 14 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year

*Phillips Will Work in Iowa 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 Linda Phillips, After School Program manager at the 21 Century Community Learning Center (21CCLC) and Metro Kids, to serve as a 2024 Afterschool Ambassador. She 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 Linda Phillips 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. Phillips is exactly the kind of champion we need.”

“I am delighted to have the chance to work with the Afterschool Alliance to increase awareness and support for afterschool and summer learning programs this year,” said Phillips. “I’ve seen firsthand the many ways these programs help students and families overcome challenges. That’s especially important now. Many of our students 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 be a 2024 Afterschool Ambassador.”

Des Moines Public School’s 21CCLC programs served over 1,500 kids at 15 sites in the 2022-2023 school year. Programs meet daily after school until 5:30pm, Monday through Friday. Children receive a daily snack and participate in reading, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math), music, language and service-learning. Programs are tailored to student needs and provide necessary skill building opportunities for students to gain 21st century workforce, academic and social emotional skills. Other activities include cooking, global arts, and physical fitness. There are 22 Metro Kids locations at elementary schools in Des Moines Public Schools. The Department of Human Service licensed daycare centers currently serve over 1,000 children and families. Metro Kids offers childcare on non-school

attending days, holidays and breaks. Children in Metro Kids receive a daily snack and participate in creative, recreational and interactive opportunities in a safe, nurturing, challenging, fun environment.

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.

21CCLC and Metro Kids programs ensure children have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to succeed at the next stage of their lives. The programs bridge the gap between school, family and community, forging connections and providing a comprehensive support system to help children succeed and thrive.