



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

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Browning of Thornton Selected as One of Just 14 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year

*Mandi Browning Will Work in Colorado 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 Mandi Browning, Extended Learning Coordinator at The PEAK Learning Center in Adams 12 Five Star Schools, 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 Mandi Browning 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. Browning is exactly the kind of champion we need.”

“I am excited to have the opportunity to work with the Afterschool Alliance to increase awareness and support for afterschool and summer learning programs this year,” said Browning. “I’ve seen firsthand the many ways these programs help students, families and communities overcome challenges. Families need to work and students need a safe space to make up academic and social gaps. I’m honored to be part of the afterschool field and to be a 2024 Afterschool Ambassador.”

Since 2001, Adams 12 Five Star Schools has utilized federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers funds awarded through a highly competitive process to build valuable programs that have served thousands of students from ten highly impacted schools. PEAK participants spend their after school time engaged in academic and enriching experiences that have a track record of allowing students to thrive, excel, and be joyful. Students have access to meaningful activities, healthy snacks and community resources. PEAK aligns with district improvement strategies including creating multiple pathways for

student learning and building strong community partnerships. As of February 2024, PEAK has served over 700 students for the 2023-2024 school year.

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 / Adams 12 Five Star Schools
- **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.

Located just seven miles north of downtown Denver, Adams 12 Five Star Schools offers more than 35,000 students and their families the benefits of a large district with a close-knit feel. With more than 50 unique education centers, the Five Star district provides numerous opportunities for students, staff and parents to elevate student learning in every classroom, every day. The Five Star District's mission is to

engage and inspire all students to innovate, achieve and succeed in a safe environment by ensuring high-quality instruction in every classroom, every day. To learn more, visit www.adams12.org.