



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

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Dawkins-Schade of Knoxville Selected as One of Just 14 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year

Sindy Dawkins-Schade Will Work in Tennessee 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 Sindy Dawkins-Schade, President at SHADES of Development, 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 Sindy Dawkins-Schade 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. Dawkins-Schade is exactly the kind of champion we need.”

“I am thrilled to have the chance to work with the Afterschool Alliance to increase awareness and support for afterschool and summer learning programs in both Tennessee and our great nation this year,” said Dawkins-Schade. “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.”

SHADES of Development is a private non-profit organization that provides school-based afterschool and summer learning programs to students in Knoxville and Knox County. It uses an adventure learning approach to connect academics, college and career readiness, and job-ready durable skills such as communication, negotiation and problem-solving to afterschool and summer learning activities. Its curriculum is grounded in three foundational pillars 1) creative art (performing arts, fine arts, creative writing and reading and language arts), 2) STEM (science technology engineering and math), and 3) healthy lifestyles (sports, fitness, nutrition, healthy habits, mindfulness and self-regulation). SHADES also provides a healthy snack, homework help, and high dosage, low ratio (1:3) tutoring. In addition, SHADES begins teaching the importance of volunteerism, service learning and advocacy at an early age, allowing

students to see how service to others strengthens the community. SHADES currently serves 650 students per day in Pre-K through 8th grade. Its valuable partners – such as Knox County Schools, CACFP (Child and Adult Food Program), Foster Grandparents, the Knox County Health Department, United Way of Greater Knoxville, the Tennessee Afterschool Network, America Corp, its volunteer Board of Directors, and a host of local volunteers and businesses – help it positively impact students and achieve positive outcomes.

According to surveys collected by the Tennessee Department of Education in the Spring of 2023, school-day teachers indicated that 91% of students who participated in SHADES 21st Century Community Learning afterschool programming during the school year demonstrated an improvement in school-day engagement in learning. And 91.9% of the families with children/youth who participate in the program reported an overall high level of satisfaction with the quality of services provided by SHADES.

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.

*SHADES of Development is a nonprofit afterschool and summer learning organization with the mission to empower kids with skills for life. SHADES vision is to provide **Safe, Healthy, Adventures** that **Develop Essential Skills** for lifelong learning and success for all children in need of out-of-school time services.*