



## **Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership**

### **News Release**

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### **Tasha Esham of Laurel Selected as One of Just 14 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year**

*Esham Will Work in Delaware 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 Tasha Esham, Project Director at the Laurel Boys & Girls Club, 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 Tasha Esham 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. Esham 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 Esham. “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.”

Laurel Boys & Girls Club in Laurel, Delaware serves an average of 102 students year-round with activities such as homework help, peer and one-on-one mentoring, healthy snacks, Lego League Robotics, Girls on the Run, 4H, and Passport to Manhood. The Club has many local partners including the Laurel School District, Laurel Public Library and Laurel Police Department. The mission of the Club is to enable all young people, especially those who need it most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.

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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*

*About Boys & Girls Clubs of Delaware: Since 1931 Boys & Girls Clubs of Delaware ([bgclubs.org](http://bgclubs.org)) has enabled young people most in need to achieve great futures as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Today, more than 40 Clubs serve 30,000 children and teens through Club membership and community outreach. Located throughout the state, the Clubs also serve military families at the Boys & Girls Club-affiliated Youth Center at the Dover Air Force Base. Clubs provide a safe place, caring adult mentors, fun, friendship, and high-impact youth development programs on a daily basis during critical non-school hours. Boys & Girls Club programs promote academic success, good character and citizenship, and healthy lifestyles. To learn more*

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