



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

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James-Belin of Farmington, New Mexico Selected as One of Just 14 Afterschool Ambassadors in the United States This Year

Teahonna James-Belin Will Work in New Mexico and Across the 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 Teahonna James-Belin, After-School Activities Coordinator at Navajo Preparatory School, 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 policymakers, organizing events, and in other ways growing support for the afterschool and summer learning programs families rely on.

“We are thrilled that Teahonna James-Belin 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. James-Belin is exactly the kind of champion we need.”

“I am honored by the opportunity to advocate on behalf of Afterschool and summer learning programs across the Nation alongside the Afterschool Alliance to increase awareness and support for our youth through vital out-of-school-time programming,” said James-Belin. “I’ve seen firsthand how these programs help our students surpass their and their community’s expectations and grow into astonishing and exceptional members of society. I am extremely humbled to be part of the afterschool movement and a 2024 Afterschool Ambassador.”

Located in Farmington, New Mexico, Navajo Preparatory School is a college-preparatory school that serves 285 students. The school is grounded in Navajo language and culture and students take four years of Navajo language to graduate. Navajo Preparatory School is also an International Baccalaureate World School offering students the opportunity to participate in

rigorous coursework to prepare for college. The majority of Navajo Prep's 285 students live more than 300 miles from the school, and 65% of their students participate in the residential program. The afterschool program primarily runs between 3:00 and 9:00 pm Sunday through Thursday, with occasional activities during lunch, before school, and on weekends. Its purpose and goals are to assist in the perpetuation of Diné Language & Culture, provide academic support, prepare students for life after high school through teaching them life self-efficacy skills, including college and career readiness skills, and provide social and emotional wellness opportunities.

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.*

***About Navajo Prep:** The only Navajo-sanctioned, college-preparatory school for Native Americans, Navajo Preparatory School recruits some of the best and brightest students of the Navajo Nation. Navajo Preparatory School is a residential, tribally controlled college preparatory school. Navajo Preparatory School is an International Baccalaureate World School and serves Native and non-Native students. In harmony with the past, Navajo Prep encourages a deep appreciation of the Navajo Language, culture, and history. The school is located in Farmington, New Mexico, and has provided excellent education since 1991. For more information, visit <https://navajoprep.com>.*