



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

News Release

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Buffalo's King Selected as One of Just 15 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year

Talisa King Will Work Locally and Across the Country to Make Quality Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs Available to More Students and Families

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced that it has selected Talisa King, Live Well Erie Project Coordinator for the Erie County Department of Social Services, to serve as a 2025 Afterschool Ambassador – one of only 15 leaders in the country chosen for the honor this year. Afterschool Ambassadors continue working with their programs while serving a one-year Afterschool Ambassador term during which they engage with community leaders and policy makers to organize events and in other ways grow support for the afterschool and summer learning programs that students and families rely on.

“We are absolutely delighted that Talisa King will serve as a 2025 Afterschool Ambassador for the Afterschool Alliance,” said Jodi Grant, Afterschool Alliance executive director. “This is going to be a pivotal year when we must continue the progress in making afterschool and summer learning programs available to more students, even as federal education spending is under scrutiny. We intend to continue spreading the word that afterschool programs are a wise, essential investment because they 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. King is exactly the kind of champion we need.”

“I am excited to have the chance to work with the Afterschool Alliance to increase awareness and support for afterschool and summer learning programs this year,” said King. “I’ve seen firsthand the many ways these programs help students succeed and help families overcome challenges. That’s especially important now, with families struggling with high costs and many students disengaged. Many of our students have ground to make up and afterschool programs are uniquely positioned to help them do that. I’m very proud to be part of the afterschool movement and to be a 2025 Afterschool Ambassador.”

Live Well Erie is a robust collaborative initiative dedicated to enhancing the health and well-being of residents in Erie County, particularly children, working families, and older adults. Children under 18 comprise approximately 20.4% of the county’s population, totaling nearly 189,000. Engaging with 95 community partners, Live Well Erie provides a comprehensive array of services aimed at improving children's health and success. These services address key environments impacting children, including families, schools, neighborhoods, and communities. Through strategic partnerships across public, private, and non-profit sectors, Live Well Erie is committed to achieving superior health outcomes and

enhancing the quality of life for Erie County residents. The initiative plays a vital role in empowering children and families, ensuring they thrive academically and personally.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's annual rally for afterschool. King will host a *Lights On Afterschool* event in partnership with the YWCA of Western New York (YWCA WNY) in Buffalo this October. The YWCA WNY provides school-age childcare services at four locations in Western New York, with three of those sites offering 21st Century programming; 21st Century Community Learning Centers are the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs.

The 2025 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Alabama, Gadsden:** Janie Browning, Gadsden City Schools
- **Alaska, Palmer:** Tyler Healy, Youth 360
- **Louisiana, Shreveport:** Victoria Morris, Volunteers of America LightHouse Program
- **Michigan, Detroit:** Curtis Blackwell, Sound Mind Sound Body Foundation
- **Minnesota, Minneapolis:** Clayton "Clyde" Quarles, Minneapolis Youth Congress
- **Nebraska, Omaha:** Nicole Everingham, Collective for Youth
- **New Hampshire, Stratham:** Melissa Goerbig, Big Brothers Big Sisters of New Hampshire
- **Nevada, Las Vegas:** Linda Johnson-McClinton, Enriching Explorations in Engineering
- **New York, Brooklyn:** Ghiles Jackson, After-School All-Stars
- **New York, Buffalo:** Talisa King, Erie County Department of Social Services
- **South Carolina, Charleston:** Lauren Herterich, Kids on Point
- **South Carolina, Irmo:** Julius Scott, School District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties
- **South Dakota, Rapid City:** Malachi Nelson, 21st Century CFS South Middle Club Hub
- **Virginia, Richmond:** Jeanine Turner, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Richmond
- **Wisconsin, Rhinelander:** Abbie Cline, YMCA of the Northwoods

A [public opinion survey](#) released in February found that 85% of voters say they want their newly elected leaders to provide more funds for afterschool programs, including 92% of Democrats, 81% of Independents, 77% of Republicans, and 77% of people who voted for President Trump. The unmet need is great. 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 in 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.

Live Well Erie is a broad-based, data-driven initiative involving numerous partners in the public, private, and non-profit sectors collaborating to achieve greater health outcomes and improving the overall quality of life for its residents. More information is available at <https://www4.erie.gov/livewellerie/>.