



Youth Afterschool Ambassador Program
A Project of the Afterschool Alliance

NEWS RELEASE

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**Belmont Charter High School Student Selected As One of Ten in
Country to Serve as a Youth Afterschool Ambassador in 2024**

*Youth Ambassadors Will Raise Awareness About the Importance and Impact of
Afterschool Programs*

Washington, D.C. -- The Afterschool Alliance announced today that Jay'Len Clark-Carr, an IGNITE Afterschool Program participant and Belmont Charter High School 11th Grade student, is serving in its 2024 cohort of Youth Afterschool Ambassadors. Clark-Carr is one of just ten students from across the nation chosen for the honor on the basis of his essay in a recent competition.

The ten Youth Afterschool Ambassadors will spread the word about the importance of afterschool programs by sharing their personal experiences and their perspectives on how these programs support young people and their communities. The Youth Ambassadors will hone their advocacy and leadership skills by participating in the annual Afterschool Alliance Youth Voice Week as well as connect with members of Congress and their aides as part of the annual Afterschool for All Challenge later this year. They also write for the [Afterschool Snack](#), the Afterschool Alliance blog, about the impact afterschool programs have had on their lives.

“We are so grateful that Jay’Len is serving in the 2024 cohort of Youth Afterschool Ambassadors,” said Jodi Grant, Executive Director of the Afterschool Alliance. “He has a powerful perspective to share with community leaders, advocates, educators, and lawmakers about how the support afterschool programs provide has helped unlock his potential. Afterschool programs keep students safe, inspire them to learn, give working parents peace of mind, and help youth feel connected and supported. Unfortunately, unmet demand for afterschool is at an

all-time high. It is more important than ever that we learn from the experiences of young leaders like Jay'Len. We know he will do fantastic work promoting the benefits of afterschool for all."

"I'm thrilled to be a Youth Afterschool Ambassador," said Clark-Carr. "My afterschool program means a lot to me. There is a lot of gun violence in my neighborhood, and the IGNITE afterschool program has helped keep my siblings and me safe, active and learning. Whether directing a short film or slaying monsters in Dungeons and Dragons, I've learned life skills including problem solving, teamwork and more. I've also discovered new interests. For example, I never expected to like cooking but my afterschool program showed me how much fun it is, and even gave me the opportunity to meet real chefs who have their own restaurants. These are skills I plan to use for the rest of my life. Sadly, not everyone has the opportunity to join an afterschool program. I believe that needs to change, and I'm proud to work toward better afterschool access as a Youth Ambassador."

The ten Afterschool Ambassadors in this year's cohort live in Alabama, the District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Texas. They are:

- **Jay'Len Clark-Carr** (he/him) IGNITE Afterschool Program, Philadelphia, PA, age 16
- **Edgar Euceda** (he/him), Elsik Debate Club, Houston, TX, age 16
- **Ava Havidic** (she/her), Broward Youth Coalition of United Way, Fort Lauderdale, FL, age 17
- **Gabrielle Haynes** (she/her), Boys & Girls Club of Truckee Meadows, Reno, NV, age 14
- **Jully Myrthil** (she/her), Young Voices, Providence, RI, age 17
- **Issa Ouairid** (he/him), Life Pieces to Masterpieces, Washington, DC, age 14
- **Willany Sayles** (she/her), Gadsden City Schools 21st Century Afterschool Program, Gadsden, AL, age 14
- **Brandon Tibbs** (he/him), ComED Youth Ambassadors and Black Male Leadership Academy, Chicago, IL, age 15
- **James Tonetti** (he/him), Project Connections, Stockbridge, MA, age 14
- **Aurie-Anne Vixama** (she/her), After-School All-Stars South Florida, Miami, FL, age 13

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 1,500 parents](#) commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted by Edge Research 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 enrollment, cited by 57% of parents as a reason for not enrolling their child. Ninety percent of parents rate the quality of the afterschool 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.

[Torani](#) is a generous supporter of the Afterschool Alliance's Youth Ambassador Program.

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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.