



NEWS RELEASE  
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CONTACT: Gretchen Wright  
202/371-1999

## **Former Astronaut Joan Higginbotham Joins Afterschool Alliance Board of Directors**

WASHINGTON, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced the appointment of Joan E. Higginbotham to its board of directors. Higginbotham is a former NASA astronaut who flew on a 2006 flight of the Discovery Space Shuttle. She brings years of cutting-edge expertise in science, technology and engineering to her role on the board of directors.

“We’re thrilled beyond words to have Joan Higginbotham join our board,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “She’s deeply committed to making sure children get the education they need and deserve, particularly in the areas of science, technology, education and math – STEM issues, as well call them. Afterschool programs across the nation are focusing on STEM, recognizing the great need for a workforce of the future that’s ready to compete in the global economy.”

Higginbotham began her career in 1987 at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, as a payload electrical engineer in the Electrical and Telecommunications Systems Division, and soon became the lead for orbiter experiments on the Space Shuttle Columbia. She subsequently served as back-up orbiter project engineer for the Space Shuttle Atlantis. Two years later, she was promoted to lead orbiter project engineer for the Space Shuttle Columbia. In this position, she held the technical lead government engineering position in the firing room where she supported and managed the integration of vehicle testing and troubleshooting. She actively participated in 53 space shuttle launches during her nine-year tenure at the Kennedy Space Center.

In 1996, NASA selected Higginbotham as an astronaut candidate. She moved to the Johnson Space Center in Houston later that year and began work on a variety of engineering and technical issues related to the Space Shuttle and the International Space Station. On December 9, 2006, she blasted into space aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery, on a 13-day mission to the International Space Station. Her primary task in space was to operate the Space Station Remote Manipulator System.

Higginbotham left NASA the following year to work as a Senior Technical Consultant at Marathon Oil. She now serves as Coordinating Manager for Marathon’s Corporate Social Responsibility Organization.

“I am honored to serve on the board of directors of the Afterschool Alliance,” she said. “I credit an afterschool program for igniting my interest in engineering and technology which ultimately

led to my careers as a rocket scientist and astronaut. Being able to give back some of what has been given to me is something I feel compelled to do; and the Afterschool Alliance provides me that opportunity.”

Higginbotham is a Chicago native, a graduate of Whitney M. Young Magnet High School in 1982. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, in 1987, a Masters of Management from Florida Institute of Technology in 1992, and a Masters in Space Systems from Florida Institute of Technology in 1996.

Higginbotham joins a board that features leaders of education, industry and public policy: **Terry Peterson**, Afterschool Alliance Chairman, Director, Afterschool and Community Learning Resource Network, Charleston, South Carolina; **Lisa Lucheta**, Afterschool Alliance Vice-Chair, Principal, Torani Syrups and Flavors, San Francisco, California; **Reinaldo Llano**, Afterschool Alliance Treasurer, Director of Corporate Community Relations, Bright House Networks, Orlando, Florida; **Herb Sturz**, Afterschool Alliance Secretary, Trustee, Open Society Institute, New York, New York; **Jaemie Ballesteros Altman**, independent consultant, food and restaurant industry, San Francisco, California; The **Honorable David Cicilline**, Mayor, City of Providence, Rhode Island; **Dr. Lucy Friedman**, President, The After-School Corporation, New York, New York; **Kenneth C. Montague, Jr.**, former Secretary of Juvenile Justice, State of Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland; **Gilbert Moreno**, Senior Relationship Manager, JP Morgan Chase, NA, Houston, Texas; **Mary Peavey**, President, Peavey Electronics Corporation, Meridian, Mississippi; **Diane Rogers**, Capstone National Partners, Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin; **Jean Margaret Smith**, Vice President of Public Affairs and Administration, Nickelodeon / MTVN Kids and Family Group, New York, New York; and **Stacey Gillis Weber**, active supporter of education causes, New York, New York.

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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).*