



NEWS RELEASE  
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## **Bainbridge Island, Washington Volunteer Working to Strengthen Afterschool Programs in Salem, Oregon**

### ***Mary Masla Joins Eight Other Afterschool Alliance VISTA Volunteers Nationally to Support Afterschool Sustainability and Expand Nutritional Resources***

Afterschool programs help working families, keep kids safe and inspire learning. In communities like Salem, Oregon, they are considered vital resources. But the economic downturn has put a squeeze on programs, causing many to scale back their offerings or even close their doors. Mary Masla, an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, is working with the Afterschool Alliance to change that.

Along with eight other VISTA volunteers selected from across the country, Masla is working to develop a local afterschool sustainability plan. Her work includes identifying local resources and needs and collaborating with local and national leaders to strengthen afterschool programs in Salem. She is working closely with the Oregon Statewide Afterschool Network. She began her service in August of this year, and will complete her service in August 2012. Other Afterschool Alliance VISTA volunteers are working to increase participation in free afterschool and summer meals programs.

“Today, children and parents depend on high quality afterschool programs to provide engaging hands-on learning opportunities, nutritious and healthy snacks and meals, and opportunities to explore the sciences, arts, physical fitness and more. But many of these same programs are in dire financial straits. That’s why the Afterschool Alliance is delighted to have the support of Mary Masla in Salem. We are looking forward to the contributions she will make in helping keep the doors open at afterschool programs, so that more children and families can benefit from all they have to offer,” said Jodi Grant, Executive Director of the Afterschool Alliance.

Masla is working to ensure that 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC ) continue to provide high quality afterschool programs for low-income children. The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program provides funding for school/community partnerships at schools that serve primarily low-income students. To help maintain this funding in Oregon, Masla is working to increase community engagement and program sustainability through engaging community volunteers, creating sustainability plans to ensure long-term success of programs, gathering data and research to show the positive impact of these programs, and examining other programs’ sustainability models.

The need for afterschool is great. Research conducted by the Afterschool Alliance has shown that only 15 percent of Oregon's K-12 students are in afterschool programs, while 31 percent care for themselves after the school day ends. Nationally more than 15 million children are unsupervised after the school day ends.

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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).*