



Youth Afterschool Ambassador Program
A Project of the Afterschool Alliance

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SIU Edwardsville East Saint Louis Charter High School Student
One of Nine in Country to Serve as a Youth Afterschool
Ambassador for 2021/2022

*Kyla Anderson Will Work to Raise Awareness About Importance and Value of
Afterschool Programs*

Washington, D.C. -- The Afterschool Alliance announced today that Kyla Anderson, a student at the SIU Edwardsville East Saint Louis Charter High School's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Afterschool Program, is serving in its 2021/2022 class of Youth Afterschool Ambassadors. Anderson is one of just nine students from across the country selected for the honor. She was chosen on the basis of her essay in a competition held earlier this year.

The nine Youth Ambassadors promote the value of afterschool programs by sharing their experiences in these programs and their views about the role afterschool programs play in their communities. They write for the [Afterschool Snack](#), the Afterschool Alliance blog, about the importance of afterschool programs. The Youth Ambassadors will also connect with members of Congress and their aides as part of the Afterschool for All Challenge next spring.

“We are delighted that Kyla is part of this year’s class of Youth Afterschool Ambassadors,” said Jodi Grant, Afterschool Alliance Executive Director. “She has powerful personal experiences that speak to the importance of afterschool programs in her life and the lives of other youth. As the pandemic continues disrupting the lives of so many young people, their schools and communities, it is especially important that we continue to share the benefits these essential programs provide. Afterschool programs keep students safe, inspire them to learn, provide peace of mind to working parents, and also help children re-engage and recover during this difficult time. But too many young people don't have a program available to them. Kyla will do a terrific job spreading the word about the need for more support for afterschool programs.”

“I’m really excited to be a Youth Afterschool Ambassador,” Anderson said. “The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program I’ve attended since elementary school has meant so much to me. In this program, I’ve made new friends, gotten help with homework, and developed communication and leadership skills, especially through the newspaper club. I hope sharing my experience will help more students access afterschool programs, so they can have experiences as powerful and enriching as the ones I’ve had.”

The nine Youth Afterschool Ambassadors in this class come from California, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, New York, Illinois, Utah, Virginia, and Washington. They are:

- **Kyla Anderson**, from East St. Louis, Illinois’ Southern Illinois University Edwardsville East Saint Louis Charter High School’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers Afterschool Program, age 17
- **Brock Brewer**, from Kelso, Washington’s Youth And Family Link Afterschool Program, age 16
- **Kaiya Jones**, from Ellicott City, Maryland’s Howard County Library System Teen Advisory Board Afterschool Program, age 15
- **Juliana Montell**, from Gardiner, Maine’s Boys & Girls Clubs of Kennebec Valley Afterschool Program, age 16
- **Belen Perez**, from Alexandria, Virginia’s Community Lodgings Afterschool Program, age 14
- **Naomi Porter**, from Los Angeles, California’s Boys & Girls Club at LA Harbor EntrepreYOUrship Afterschool Program , age 16
- **Noah Shaw**, from Murray, Utah’s Miller Family Boys & Girls Club Afterschool Program, age [AGE]
- **Ramaya Thomas**, from Dallas, Georgia’s VOXATL Afterschool Program, age 17
- **Zhonghui Zheng**, from New York, New York’s Global Kids Afterschool Program, age 17

The most recent [America After 3PM household survey](#) of more than 31,000 families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, finds that for every child in an afterschool program in the United States, three more are waiting to get in. The families of 24.6 million children — more than ever before — are unable to access a program. Many reports cost as a barrier. There are significant inequities, with Black and Latinx children unable to access the afterschool programs their parents want them.

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