



## **Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership**

### **News Release**

February 20, 2025

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### **Gadsden City School's Browning Selected as One of Just 15 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year**

*Janie Browning 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 Janie Browning, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program Director/Federal Programs at the Gadsden City Schools, 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 local afterschool 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 Janie Browning 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. Browning is exactly the kind of champion we need.”

“I am honored to work with the Afterschool Alliance to elevate awareness and support for afterschool and summer learning programs this year,” said Browning. “As both an educator and a parent who has relied on these programs, I’ve seen firsthand the vital role afterschool plays—not just for students, but for families and entire communities. Afterschool matters because it provides a safe space for students to grow, explore, and discover their potential. It matters to parents who need a trusted place for their children while they work. And most importantly, it matters to the students we serve, offering them opportunities, mentorship, and the extra support they need to succeed. I am incredibly proud to be part of the afterschool movement and to serve as a 2025 Afterschool Ambassador.”

Gadsden City Schools’ afterschool programs serve over 1,100 students each day across 12 sites, providing a safe, engaging, and enriching environment beyond the school day. Its programs offer a wide range of opportunities, including music camps where students create and produce their own music videos, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) activities that spark innovation, homework help that reinforces academic success, and clubs such as chess and robotics that build critical thinking skills. Students also participate in sports camps, career readiness programs, and leadership development activities. Through strong partnerships, the programs ensure students have access to mentorship,

hands-on learning, and real-world experiences. Afterschool in Gadsden City is more than just a program—it's a vital support system that empowers students, strengthens families, and enriches the community.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's annual rally for afterschool. Most of the thousands of local *Lights On Afterschool* events will be on or around Thursday, October 23, 2025.

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, YWCA Western New York
- **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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).

*Everybody dreams, but at Gadsden City Schools – we dream bigger.*