



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

News Release

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Dr. Michelle S. Frase of Shinnston, WV Named One of 16 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year

Frase Will Work to Make Quality Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs Available to More Students and Families, Locally and Nationwide

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance has selected Dr. Michelle S. Frase, Director at the Buzz Henderson Center’s afterschool program, the Buzz Learning Academy, to serve as a 2026 Afterschool Ambassador – one of just 16 leaders in the entire nation chosen for the honor this year. Afterschool Ambassadors continue working at their local afterschool programs while serving the one-year Afterschool Ambassador term, during which they engage with policy makers and community leaders to organize events and in other ways grow support for the afterschool and summer learning programs that students and families rely on.

“The country urgently needs strong afterschool advocates, so we are thrilled that Michelle Frase will serve as an Afterschool Ambassador for the Afterschool Alliance this year. She will help spread the word that too many children and youth are without the afterschool programs that help them succeed in school and in life,” said Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance. “This is a pivotal year when we must continue building support for these essential programs, which 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. Frase is exactly the kind of champion we need.”

“I am honored and excited to work with the Afterschool Alliance to increase support for afterschool and summer learning programs this year,” said Frase. “My previous professional experience as a law enforcement officer and as a registered nurse working with inpatient youth showed me how vulnerable students can be in the hours after school when supportive programs are not available. In my current role as Director of the Buzz Learning Academy, I’ve witnessed just how vital afterschool programs are in meeting the needs of students, families, and entire communities. Afterschool programs not only help students stay engaged and explore their passions, they also give parents confidence that their children are safe, supported, and building the skills they need to succeed. I am proud to be part of the afterschool movement and to serve as a 2026 Afterschool Ambassador.”

“In our first year at Buzz Learning Academy, we’ve served dozens of Harrison County, WV students, providing more than 9,000 student-hours of support,” Frase continued. “As a faith-based program, I believe the church has a responsibility to meet real, tangible needs in our community. Each afternoon begins with a full meal, followed by homework help and hands-on opportunities in reading, science, engineering, art, dance, and gardening. Most importantly, we connect students with caring adults and

peers, helping them build confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging. As with all high-quality afterschool programs, families can trust that their children are safe, supported, and growing after school.”

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 22, 2026.

The 2026 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Alabama, Tuscaloosa:** Lindsey Blevins, Tuscaloosa City Schools
- **Alaska, Fairbanks:** Lindsay Weaver, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
- **Arkansas, Hot Springs:** Amos Gray, High Impact Movement, Inc.
- **Arkansas, Texarkana:** Tina Jones, Four States Urban Development Project
- **DC, Washington:** Katrina Owens, DC SCORES
- **Florida, Miami:** Sean Prospect, South Florida After-School All-Stars, Inc.
- **Indiana, Indianapolis:** Christine (Chrissy) Balak, Central Indiana Educational Service Center, MSD of Pike Township Schools
- **Mississippi, Cleveland:** Tracy Henshaw Cameron, Delta Area Association for Improvement of Schools
- **Mississippi, Hattiesburg:** Jo Hawkins-Jones, Going Beyond Apprenticeship 21st CCLC Program
- **North Dakota, Grafton:** Lori Zahradka, North Valley Career and Technology Center
- **Oklahoma, Oklahoma City:** Les Thomas, Urban Bridge
- **Pennsylvania, Milton:** Travis Stevens, Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, STEAMS Afterschool & Summer Programs
- **Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh:** Ana Kay Yaghoubian, Building for Success in School and Life, United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania
- **Texas, Dallas:** Angelica Portillo, Dallas Afterschool
- **Virginia, Arlington:** Paula Fynboh, Aspire Afterschool Learning
- **West Virginia, Shinnston:** Michelle Frase, Buzz Learning Academy

A [2025 household survey](#) found that the parents of 29.6 million children want afterschool programs for their children – but less than 7 million kids are currently enrolled. Another 22.6 million children would attend an afterschool program if it were available. That means three in four kids whose parents want afterschool programs for them (77%)—including many in middle- as well as low-income families – are being left behind. Cost and accessibility are the barriers many families cannot overcome. It’s no wonder that 89% of parents favor public funding for these programs. Ninety-five percent of parents with children in afterschool programs are satisfied with the program their child attends.

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, more 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.

The Buzz Learning Academy (BLA) meets a vital need during the after-school hours by providing a safe, structured environment for K–8 students. We care for the whole child—academically, socially, physically, and spiritually – by offering homework help, fun and engaging activities, a full meal, and a faith-filled curriculum. As an outreach of Jewel City Church, we are committed to showing the love of Christ in tangible ways and helping every child feel seen, supported, and equipped for the future.