



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

### **News Release**

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### **Paula Fynboh of Arlington, VA Named One of 16 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year**

*Fynboh 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 Paula Fynboh, CEO at Aspire Afterschool Learning, 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 supporting 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 Paula Fynboh 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. Fynboh is exactly the kind of champion we need.”

“I am honored to have the opportunity to work with the Afterschool Alliance to increase awareness and support for afterschool and summer learning programs this year,” said Fynboh. “I’ve seen up close the many ways these programs help students succeed and help families overcome challenges. That’s especially important now, as so many families are struggling with high costs, and too many students are being left behind. Afterschool and summer programs are uniquely positioned to help students connect with peers and caring mentors, explore their interests, discover their passions, and dream big. I’m proud to be part of the afterschool movement and to be a 2026 Afterschool Ambassador.”

Aspire Afterschool Learning expands learning opportunities to help historically underserved students in South Arlington fulfill their potential. Aspire offers the only daily academic afterschool and summer programs for 3rd-8th graders in Arlington that are provided at no cost to families. Aspire’s daily afterschool programming operates at three sites and serves 150+ students. Its holistic programming includes literacy, math, social-emotional learning, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), the arts, 1:1 tutoring, and a hot meal. Students engage in hands-on projects in Aspire’s library, STEM makerspace, and community garden, and enjoy gym/outdoor activities. Aspire’s 6-week full-day summer camp builds upon afterschool programming and emphasizes problem-solving, collaboration, and social-

emotional development. All Aspire programming reinforces school curricula while offering academic, enrichment, and social development opportunities beyond what students receive in 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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).

*Aspire's mission is to expand learning opportunities that help historically underserved students fulfill their potential through afterschool and summer learning programs that support and connect families, schools, and communities. Aspire envisions an Arlington where all children have the support they need from family, school, and community so they can succeed as learners and thrive as healthy and happy individuals. More information is available at [www.aspireafterschool.org](http://www.aspireafterschool.org)*