



Afterschool Ambassador Program: Legacy of Leadership

News Release

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Ana Kay Yaghoubian of Pittsburgh Named One of 16 Afterschool Ambassadors in United States This Year

Yaghoubian will work to make quality after-school and summer learning programs available to more students and families, locally and nationwide

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance has selected Ana Kay Yaghoubian, director of Building for Success in School and Life at United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, 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 a 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 vital to students and families.

“The country urgently needs strong after-school advocates, so we are thrilled that Ana Kay Yaghoubian will serve as an Afterschool Ambassador for the Afterschool Alliance this year. She will help spread the word that all children and youth benefit from enriching and engaging 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. Yaghoubian is exactly the kind of champion we need.”

"Afterschool and summer programs are uniquely positioned to help students connect with peers and caring mentors, explore their interests and discover their passions," said Yaghoubian. "At United Way, I've seen up close the many ways these programs help students succeed and families overcome challenges. That's especially important now, as so many families are dealing with inflation and other rising costs. I am proud to be part of the afterschool movement and to be a 2026 Afterschool Ambassador."

United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania provides critical support to high quality out-of-school (OST) time program providers in Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland counties. Fostering long-term stability through multi-year impact grants providing consistent funding for agencies that deliver after-school and summer programming focused on literacy, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and social-emotional development. United Way also provides emergency funds and learning resources including STEM kits, and holds convenings that bring together OST providers to learn about best practices, share challenges and build community. By collaborating with regional

partners, United Way bridges the gap between traditional school days and family needs, empowering providers to deliver the essential academic and social support that helps students thrive.

Each Ambassador will organize a major event for *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance's annual rally for afterschool programming support. Most of the thousands of local *Lights On Afterschool* events will be on or around Thursday, Oct. 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 after-school programs for their children – but less than 7 million kids are currently enrolled. Another 22.6 million children would attend an after-school 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 need help to overcome. It's no wonder that 89% of parents favor public funding for these programs. Ninety-five percent of parents with children in after-school 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 after-school programs. Researchers have also found that students in after-school 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.

About United Way – United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, serving Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette and Westmoreland counties, convenes and mobilizes the caring power of individuals, the business community and organizations to help local people meet basic needs, move to financial stability and build for success in school and life. Together with dedicated donors and caring volunteers, United Way creates long-lasting change for the betterment of our community.