



**Youth Afterschool Ambassador Program**  
**A Project of the Afterschool Alliance**

NEWS RELEASE

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**Academy of Arts, Careers and Technology Student Selected As One  
of Ten in Country to Serve as a Youth Afterschool Ambassador in  
2024**

*Youth Ambassadors Will Raise Awareness About the Importance and Impact of  
Afterschool Programs*

Washington, D.C. -- The Afterschool Alliance announced today that Gabrielle Haynes, a Boys & Girls Club of Truckee Meadows participant and Academy of Arts, Careers and Technology 9th grade student, is serving in its 2024 cohort of Youth Afterschool Ambassadors. Haynes is one of just ten students from across the nation chosen for the honor on the basis of her essay in a recent competition.

The ten Youth Afterschool Ambassadors will spread the word about the importance of afterschool programs by sharing their personal experiences and their perspectives on how these programs support young people and their communities. The Youth Ambassadors will hone their advocacy and leadership skills by participating in the annual Afterschool Alliance Youth Voice Week as well as connect with members of Congress and their aides as part of the annual Afterschool for All Challenge later this year. They also write for the [Afterschool Snack](#), the Afterschool Alliance blog, about the impact afterschool programs have had on their lives.

“We are so grateful that Gabrielle is serving in the 2024 cohort of Youth Afterschool Ambassadors,” said Jodi Grant, Executive Director of the Afterschool Alliance. “She has a powerful perspective to share with community leaders, advocates, educators, and lawmakers about how the support afterschool programs provide has helped unlock her potential. Afterschool programs keep students safe, inspire them to learn, give working parents peace of mind, and help

youth feel connected and supported. Unfortunately, unmet demand for afterschool is at an all-time high. It is more important than ever that we learn from the experiences of young leaders like Gabrielle. We know she will do fantastic work promoting the benefits of afterschool for all.”

“I’m thrilled to be a Youth Afterschool Ambassador,” Haynes said. “For many years, the Boys & Girls Club of Truckee Meadows has been nothing less than a second home to me. At the Club, I’ve connected with amazing mentors and met some of my closest friends. The one-on-one academic support at the Club has helped me succeed in subjects I was struggling in, and the Club’s mental health group has helped me manage my stress and feel safe to express myself. I believe every student should have access to a supportive afterschool program where they can explore their interests, and I’m excited to spread that message as a Youth Afterschool Ambassador.”

The ten Afterschool Ambassadors in this year’s cohort live in Alabama, the District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Texas. They are:

- **Jay’Len Clark-Carr** (he/him) IGNITE Afterschool Program, Philadelphia, PA, age 16
- **Edgar Euceda** (he/him), Elsie Debate Club, Houston, TX, age 16
- **Ava Havidic** (she/her), Broward Youth Coalition of United Way, Fort Lauderdale, FL, age 17
- **Gabrielle Haynes** (she/her), Boys & Girls Club of Truckee Meadows, Reno, NV, age 14
- **Jully Myrthil** (she/her), Young Voices, Providence, RI, age 17
- **Issa Ouarid** (he/him), Life Pieces to Masterpieces, Washington, DC, age 14
- **Willany Sayles** (she/her), Gadsden City Schools 21st Century Afterschool Program, Gadsden, AL, age 14
- **Brandon Tibbs** (he/him), ComED Youth Ambassadors and Black Male Leadership Academy, Chicago, IL, age 15
- **James Tonetti** (he/him), Project Connections, Stockbridge, MA, age 14
- **Aurie-Anne Vixama** (she/her), After-School All-Stars South Florida, Miami, FL, age 13

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 1,500 parents](#) commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted by Edge Research 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 enrollment, cited by 57% of parents as a reason for not enrolling their child. Ninety percent of parents rate the quality of the afterschool 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.

[Torani](#) is a generous supporter of the Afterschool Alliance's Youth Ambassador Program.

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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).*