Afterschool Alliance Names 16 New Afterschool Ambassadors

Afterschool Ambassadors Will Work to Make Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs Available to More Children and Youth

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today announced the 16 leaders across the country it has selected to serve as 2023 Afterschool Ambassadors. Each Ambassador continues her or his work with local afterschool programs while serving a one-year Afterschool Ambassador term, organizing events, working with community leaders and policy makers, and in other ways increasing support for the afterschool and summer learning programs families rely on.

“We are absolutely delighted with our 2023 Afterschool Ambassadors,” Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant said. “While students and families need afterschool and summer learning programs more than ever, programs are facing significant challenges including staff shortages, funding shortfalls, and finding ways to meet the academic and social needs of students as they recover from the challenges the pandemic created. We need strong, creative champions to spread the word about the essential role afterschool programs play in keeping kids safe, inspiring them to learn, and giving parents peace of mind that their children are safe and supervised after the school day ends. Each of our new Afterschool Ambassadors is poised to be just the kind of powerful advocate we need.”

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 26, 2023.

The 2023 Afterschool Ambassadors are:

- **Stamford, Connecticut**: Tiffany Wilson, Mill River Park Collaborative
- **Shoshone, Idaho**: Karma Metzler Fitzgerald, Lincoln County Youth Commission
- **Indianapolis, Indiana**: Chrystal Struben, AYS – At Your School
- **Terre Haute, Indiana**: Eleanor Ramseier, Camp Navigate, Inc.
- **Skowhegan, Maine**: Dawn Fickett, RSU/MSAD 54’s 21st CCLC The REACH Afterschool Program
- **Derwood, Maryland**: Zainab Abbas, SciTech2U
- **Battle Creek, Michigan**: Deondra Ramsey, Michigan Afterschool Partnership
- **Medford, New Jersey**: Becca Gutwirth, YMCA of the Pines
- **Newark, New Jersey**: Dorine Francis, FOCUS Hispanic Center for Community Development, Inc.
- **Zuni, New Mexico**: Valarie Bellson, Pueblo of Zuni, Zuni Public Library
- **Brooklyn, New York**: Earl Whitfield, CAMBA East New York Beacon 166
- **Norman, Oklahoma**: Whitney Dunn, Boys & Girls Club of Norman, Center for Children and Families
San Antonio, Texas: Shawn Petty, Texas ACE Program @ Westat
Newport, Vermont: Elizabeth Chambers, North Country Supervisory Union Encore Afterschool and Summer Program
Hampton, Virginia: Michelle Simpson, Alternatives World Changers
Pasco, Washington: Margarita Alaman, Educational Service Districts 123 21st Century Programs

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 and conducted by Edge Research in May and June of 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.

# # # #

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.