Student from Hodgson Vocational Technical High School Is One of Seven in Nation Selected to Serve as a Youth Afterschool Ambassador in 2023

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

Washington, D.C. -- The Afterschool Alliance announced today that Nekayla Stokes, a 10th grade student at Hodgson Vocational Technical High School and a student leader in the Black Student Union, the Delaware Afterschool Network, and the United Way of Delaware, is serving in its 2023 class of Youth Afterschool Ambassadors. Stokes is one of just seven students from across the nation selected for the honor. She was chosen on the basis of her essay submission in a competition held last year.

The seven Youth Ambassadors promote the value and impact of afterschool programs by sharing their experiences in these programs and their views about the role afterschool programs play in their communities. The Youth Ambassadors will participate 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 importance of afterschool programs.

“We are thrilled that Nekayla is in the 2023 class of Youth Afterschool Ambassadors,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “She has a powerful story to tell about the impact afterschool programs have had in her life, and we are proud to give her a platform to share her experiences and advocate for afterschool. Afterschool programs keep students safe, inspire them to learn, provide peace of mind to working parents, and also help children re-engage and recover during this difficult time. But sadly, too many young people don't have a program
available to them. Nekayla will do a terrific job showing us all why we need to expand afterschool programs to reach more of her peers.”

“I’m really excited to be a Youth Afterschool Ambassador,” said Nekayla Stokes. “What I love most about being involved with the Delaware Afterschool Network and United Way of Delaware is connecting with my peers to develop projects and activities that impact youth directly. As a Black Student Union leader, I have organized youth-driven events and activities that provide a safe space for students to share points of view, problem solve and look for solutions. Together, we design workshops relevant to us, such as public speaking, mental health, and vision boarding. I enjoy working with caring adults who encourage us to listen to one another and respect all voices in the room. I’m thrilled to share about my experiences as a Youth Afterschool Ambassador so more students can experience these kinds of transformative leadership and mentorship opportunities.”

The seven Youth Afterschool Ambassadors in this class come from Alabama, Delaware, California, Florida, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Washington. They are:

- **Trinity Ansley**, from San Diego, California’s Urban League Project Ready, age 17
- **Jamora Arroyo-Jefferson**, from Miami, Florida’s Breakthrough Miami, PAMM Teen Arts Council, Miami Waterkeeper Junior Ambassador Program, and The Children’s Trust of Miami-Dade Youth Advisory Committee, age 17
- **Spencer Harrison**, from Pryor, Oklahoma’s Tiger Pride Clubs, age 13
- **Madelyn Hinkleman**, from Summit, South Dakota’s Afterschool Network, age 16
- **Katelyn Miller**, from Birmingham, Alabama’s Create 205 Lab, age 17
- **Avery Reisinger**, from Puyallup, Washington’s Kids Rank Afterschool Club, Summer Club, and Youth Advisory Board, age 16
- **Nekayla Stokes**, from New Castle, Delaware’s Black Student Union, Delaware Afterschool Network, and United Way of Delaware, age 16

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 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.

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.

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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.*