Student from Pryor Public Schools 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 Spencer Harrison, an 8th grade student at the Tiger Pride Clubs afterschool program and at Pryor Public Schools, is serving in its 2023 class of Youth Afterschool Ambassadors. Harrison is one of just seven students from across the nation selected for the honor. He was chosen on the basis of his 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 Spencer is in the 2023 class of Youth Afterschool Ambassadors,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “He has a powerful story to tell about the impact afterschool programs have had in his life, and we are proud to give him a platform to share his 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. Spencer will do a terrific job showing us all why we need to expand afterschool programs to reach more of his peers.”
“I’m really excited to serve as a Youth Afterschool Ambassador,” said Spencer Harrison. “My experience with Tiger Pride Clubs has been remarkable and has unlocked talents I did not know I had. As an exceptional tennis player now, I would have never known to try the sport if I had not signed up for the Tennis Club in third grade. I even signed up for E-Sports and the Soccer Club, and enjoyed them both very much, which surprised me! My beloved afterschool program has provided me with valuable lessons and learning opportunities with some friendships and social growth sprinkled on top. It is a great environment to keep kids from going down the wrong path and help them avoid making choices they will regret. All students deserve to have that safe space to learn new skills, and I am thrilled to work toward that as a Youth Afterschool Ambassador.”

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 15

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.

###
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.