

NAA'S **MOST INFLUENTIAL** IN

HEALTH & WELLNESS



EDITED BY AMY L CHARLES

TIn 2017, the National AfterSchool Association's annual Most Influential Award focuses on health and wellness. Honorees and honorable mentions are distinguished for their strong advocacy for and support of health and wellness in afterschool. Those honored represent individuals and organizations whose service, action and leadership align with and support NAA Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) Standards and affect large numbers of youth, families or afterschool professionals.

NAA's Most Influential in Health and Wellness 2017 is proudly sponsored by The Walking Classroom, a nonprofit organization that helps youth get fresh air and exercise while reinforcing academic subjects, health literacy and character values.

Congratulations and thank you to those lauded as our 2017 Most Influential!

times to program participants (95 percent demonstrating). Park and recreation sites have evaluated and modified their program and activity schedules to make sure that kids are meeting the daily requirements for physical activity (97 percent demonstrating) and spending time outdoors (97 percent demonstrating). Communities of all shapes and sizes are experiencing the benefits of local parks and recreation and their commitment to health.”

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE RELATED TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN AFTERSCHOOL?

“NRPA wants every child to have access to an afterschool program at their local park and recreation agency where they can safely play outside, eat nutritious foods and develop lifelong healthy habits. Through NRPA’s Commit to Health initiative, NRPA is helping 2,000 park and recreation sites accomplish these goals by 2019.”

JEAN WIECHA, PH.D. *Public Health Nutritionist, RTI International | Research Triangle Park, North Carolina*
| rti.org

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT RELATED TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN AFTERSCHOOL?

“Crafting the NAA HEPA standards with the HOST Coalition, which a small group of us convened in 2009, was an incredible example of collaborative leadership and research translation. We produced a document that everyone could get behind. Watching the diffusion of the standards throughout the OST field and participating in that process has been amazing. Our collaborative process has resulted in millions of children attending OST programs that are using the HEPA standards!”

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE RELATED TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN AFTERSCHOOL?

“We’re getting closer and closer to it: I’d like to be confident that eating delicious healthy food and participating in lots of fun physical activity is built into every child’s daily experience in afterschool. We’ll be done when that’s the new normal.”

YMCA ymca.net

Responses provided by Lauren Marciszyn, Manager, Capacity Building for Evidence-Based Programs, Membership & Programs, YMCA of the USA | Robert Hill, Director of Youth Wellness, YMCA of South Florida | Sheree Vodicka, Executive Director, North Carolina Alliance of YMCAs | Susan Fortier, Senior Program Director, Y Day Camp Director, Meeting Waters YMCA

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT RELATED TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN AFTERSCHOOL?

Lauren Marciszyn: “Garnering the support of YMCA staff and community partners to actively transform the afterschool environment and beyond through healthy eating and physical activity practices and policies. Together, 2,700 Ys across the country have committed to implementing the HEPA Standards, inspiring youth, their families and their communities to adopt healthier habits so they can achieve their fullest potential.”

Robert Hill: “My greatest achievement related to Health and Wellness in afterschool is overseeing a training program on evidence-based, physical activity that allows most afterschool providers in South



Florida—not just those run by the YMCA—to utilize trainings to help children get healthier. It has been so rewarding to establish this program for all afterschool providers and to create sustainable change. Through successes, we have also seen implementation of nutrition education strategies and every year we improve offerings in all of our interactions.”

Sheree Vodicka: “Getting the HOST recognition bill passed was significant for us, because we are contributing significantly to the building of a culture of health in our state.”

Susan Fortier: “Many of the children and families we serve in our afterschool and summer camp programs are what we’d consider ‘food insecure.’ So, our commitment to the national HEPA Standards has extended to the families of the young people in our programs. For many years now, our monthly Family Connection events at both our afterschool programs and camps have focused on providing experiences in healthy eating and routine physical activity with an emphasis on both foods and activities that can be easily replicated at home—within all families’ financial means or readily available at area food pantries, and using ‘equipment’ that most families have around the house.”

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE RELATED TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN AFTERSCHOOL?

Lauren Marciszyn: “Youth in our afterschool programs struggle with the health inequities found in every community. We know we can leverage this time to help all children gain access to and learn about healthy choices and habits. We hope the Y’s Healthy Eating and Physical Activity standards lay the foundation of a healthier future for all.”

Robert Hill: “When it comes to Health and Wellness in afterschool, I hope to have a lasting impact that will change policies and procedures to allow children to begin healthier lifestyles as soon as possible. In my organization, I will do this by further developing our model for health and wellness in youth programming: YFit. By continuing to build on the fundamental components of enjoying physical activity at a young age and role-modeling the importance of a healthy lifestyle, we are given the gift of being able to improve the health of whole families and increase years of quality life for children. This will allow myself and my peers to lead the work and always strive to be a signature change agent against childhood obesity and chronic disease: THE organization that shows others how it should be done and creates larger frameworks to turn these public health crises around.”

Sheree Vodicka: “I hope that we can fully institute the HOST Recognition program and get significant uptake. Aligning all child care, afterschool and school experiences for children such that they are all hearing and seeing and being positively impacted by every aspect of the communities in which they live, learn and play would be really meaningful and create a culture of health we are seeking.”

Susan Fortier: “Family, school and community norms around healthy eating and physical activity, if not consistently in support of positive behaviors, are just too hard for a child to overcome. So, we are committed to an ongoing effort to improve policies, systems and environments so that the healthy choice is consistently the easy choice for young people to make as they move throughout their days.”