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Idaho
Out-of-School
Network

connecting youth & communities

Idaho Afterschool Champions Recognized

Boise (4/24/24) **-** The Idaho Out-of-School Network today announced the names of six Idaho Afterschool Champions for 2024, as part of National Afterschool Professionals Appreciation Week. This national celebration highlights the importance of the more than 850,000 people who provide academic support, social support and enrichment activities for youth outside of classroom time.

Each year, ION requests nominations from across Idaho to identify Afterschool Champions and recognize individuals for their outstanding contributions to youth programs and communities. This year winners fall on a spectrum from volunteer "Grandpa and Grandma Library" Clifford and Kathy Scheline at the Donnelly Library to professional afterschool advocate and STEM educator Claire Sponseller with the University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Program.

Winners will receive their award at a public event at the JUMP Center in Boise on September 18-19. ION's Idaho's Afterschool Champions for 2024 across the state are as follows:

1. ***Rathdrum, ID (Kootenai County) Deanna Finley*** *- First Robotics Educator.* The best robots are the ones built with love. 14 years ago, Deanna Finley started her First Robotics team in Rathdrum with just 4 kids. Now, this third-grade teacher at Classical Christian Academy spends a big chunk of her after school time helping students reach their full potential building robots, even opening up her home when necessary to make sure all of the kids (and robots) feel the love. It has worked so well that now 78 kids participate. Deanna's program is especially welcoming to kids that need a different focus from online entertainment and inspires them to get involved in robotics competitions.

2. ***Riggins, ID (Idaho County) Susan Hollenbeak*** *- Library Program Director.* Susan is a one-woman-army at the Salmon River Public Library in Riggins. Her library is the beating heart of the community and one of the only places for kids to go where they know with absolute certainty they'll be safe, entertained, and learn something new. Susan has lived in the community most of her life – even serving on the school board - and has dedicated her career to expanding horizons for everyone. Her work now as the program director for the library includes building the collection and coordinating special programs. The result is an outstanding example of the amazing work done in Idaho's small libraries. Susan accomplishes this all while also serving as the Deputy City Clerk.

3. ***Donnelly, ID (Valley County) Clifford and Kathy Scheline -*** *Library Volunteers.*
   Six years ago, Clifford and Kathy Scheline began volunteering with the Donnelly Library's after-school program. The building was so small the program had to meet outside (see photo with tipi). Now, the Dragon Readers' Club is a huge success and the kids all call them "Grandpa and Grandma Library." Papa shovels walkways so children can reach our outdoor classrooms, fills propane for our two outdoor heaters, and constantly builds fires in our outdoor fire pit. Grandma takes blankets home to wash, makes snacks and brings treats. Both offer laps to sit on, encouragement and time for reading. Donnelly Elementary was recently awarded the top IRI in the State of Idaho. Many believe that is because every kid in the area has been afforded the opportunity to have a "grandparent" to read with. From providing healthy snacks, to shoveling to sitting down and reading with a young child, Papa and Grandma are always there with support and attention. See full blog post

4. ***Treasure Valley, ID (Ada and Canyon) Lisa Brady*** *- Safe Routes to School Coordinator.* Lisa Brady really knows how to organize and run a Bike Rodeo. Lisa and her team teach kids how to ride bikes safely throughout the Treasure Valley and how to participate in other active transportation alternatives like Walking School Buses. She provides safety presentations, bike repair classes and teaches the rules of the road for pedestrian safety. As a passionate advocate for bicycle and pedestrian safety, "Safety Deputy Brady" has earned her stripes. Her work in the Safe Routes to School program is a great example of how out-of-school youth programs are both fun and essential for youth safety. (See full blog post)

5. ***Statewide Afterschool Advocate - Claire Sponseller*** *- STEM/4-H Educator.*
   Claire Sponseller's passion is to help kids "get messy and learn." As a statewide STEM educator for the University of Idaho's Extension Service 4-H Youth Program, Claire is a catalyst for hands-on education in rural and underserved communities. She is a leader in Idaho's Think Make Create (TMC) mobile makerspace program, a partnership between the University of Idaho, Idaho Out-of-School Network and other afterschool professionals. These afterschool and summer youth programs launched 28 STEM trailers, trained 500 educators and reached more than 30,000 K-8th grade students. In the long term Claire hopes to redesign what it means to educate students through hands-on engagement. The lesson she hopes kids take from their experience with the STEM trailers and hands-on education in general is that learning is fun.

6. ***Ammon, ID (Bonneville County) Rachelle Paxman*** *- White Pine Charter.* Kids in Ammon, ID, have a lot of choices for what to do after school. Many of those options are available because of Rachelle Paxman's work as an afterschool professional. Rachelle is the volleyball coach and club advisor for both middle and high schools. She is responsible for Student Councils, Battle Bots, Dungeons and Dragons and the Future City Engineering Competition. Every year, members of her Student Councils volunteer at the African American Alliance fundraising banquet. Students assist with event logistics, serve as greeters and hosts and actively contribute to a cause that resonates with the broader community. Students gain valuable hands-on experience in event management and learn the importance of community service.

(also see photo sheet at *www.idahooutofschool.org*)

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