

2023-24 UTAH AFTERSCHOOL AWARD WINNERS



Each year, the Utah Afterschool Network seeks nominations for our Utah Afterschool Awards, which celebrate outstanding out-of-school time educators, programs, and individuals for their efforts in the field.

The Utah Afterschool Awards also recognize out-of-school time programs for their success in providing intentional programming and meeting the developmental needs of youth and families in their communities.

Candidates may be from nonprofit, public, private, faith-based, childcare centers, or any other program that supports youth during non-school hours in Utah.



Dr. Aaron Fischer

Community Champion of the Year
UTTEC-Lab, Utah SMH Collaborative
University of Utah



Nicole Navarro

Direct Service Staff of the Year
Provo Clubhouse
Boys & Girls Clubs of Utah County



Darlene Dixon

Program Admin of the Year
Tooele Club
Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Salt Lake



Allynne Mower

School Administrator of the Year
Fairview Elementary
North Sanpete School District



Erica Andino

Site Coordinator of the Year
YouthCity - Central City
Salt Lake City Corporation



Connor Ryan

Youth of the Year
Antelope Elementary
Davis School District



Wendy Hernandez

School Personnel
Provost Elementary
Provo School District



Buttons 'N Bows

Center of the Year
Preschool & Childcare
Holladay

2023-24 UTAH AFTERSCHOOL

Community Champion of the Year



Dr. Aaron Fischer

UTTEC-Lab, Utah School Mental Health Collaborative
University of Utah

Aaron J. Fischer, PhD, BCBA-D, is a Licensed Psychologist and Licensed Board-Certified Behavior Analyst, associate professor of school psychology, and adjunct associate professor of psychiatry.

He serves as the director of the University of Utah Technology in Training, Education, and Consultation (U-TTEC) Lab, Utah School Mental Health Collaborative, and Huntsman Mental Health Institute HOME interdisciplinary pediatric feeding disorders clinic.

Dr. Fischer has been working with individuals on the autism spectrum and individuals with social-emotional and behavioral problems, and their families, for over 20 years.

Dr. Fischer and his team have worked with UAN for the past 8 years providing behavior management, well-being, and DEI trainings.

They have also presented at Jump Start for several years.

During the pandemic, Dr. Fischer's team put together webinars and completely flipped the Well-Being Institute to provide it virtually for afterschool programs around the state. Dr. Fischer has also been an advocate for afterschool programs as an essential part of the overall well-being of children in the mental health support community by bringing UAN to the same table as school counselors, social workers and regional mental health professionals. He has also worked with UAN to include afterschool programming in Governor Cox's state mental health initiatives.



2023-24 UTAH AFTERSCHOOL

Direct Service Staff of the Year



Nicole Navarro

Provo Clubhouse
Boys & Girls Clubs of Utah County

Nicole started working at the Boys & Girls Club as a Youth Development Professional in March of 2022, and she has loved it dearly!

During this time she has cultivated her own leadership skills while providing a positive, unbiased, safe space for her students. She regularly checks in with the kids to see what they are interested in and finds ways to incorporate those interests into programming. She has helped forge a partnership with the Girl Scouts of America and runs Girl Scout Troop. She is passionate about DEI initiatives and creates parent nights that honor or highlight the various cultures of the families she serves.

Nicole is quick to volunteer with any extra project, planning, or cleaning that needs to take place at the club. She shows up with a smile on her face and is always striving to do better. Nicole is always thinking outside the box when it comes to planning program and activities (like her new Dungeons and Dragons club), and the students love going to her lessons.

Nicole graduated with a Studio Art BFA from Brigham Young University in 2020. She loves drawing, painting, photography, and videography, as well as supporting local artists. When she is not working, Nicole enjoys playing the piano, watching shows, and spending time with her husband and cat.



2023-24 UTAH AFTERSCHOOL

Program Administrator of the Year



Darlene Dixon

Tooele Club

Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Salt Lake

With almost 40 years of service to youth, Darlene Dixon began her career as a Summer Camp counselor with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Salt Lake.

She quickly advanced within her organization, taking on new challenges, and gaining experience along the way. She is currently the Area Director of the Club in Tooele.

During her almost 4 decade tenure, Dar has provided afterschool care to tens of thousands of youth. Club driven and youth focused, Dar says some people say she bleeds blue. She has always been youth focused and strived to provide Club to all youth, she even ran a Club for an entire summer out of her car.

Throughout her career, she has faced many new opportunities for youth but the one she is most fond of is the opening of the newest Boys & Girls Club, in Tooele. It was 20 years in the making and now, forever the youth of Tooele County will always have a positive Afterschool program to attend. Darlene's dream was to establish a permanent Boys & Girls Club location for youth to have for generations to come.

Darlene is very active in her community and is involved in many committees and local coalitions. She is one of the founding members of the Tooele County Prevention T.I.P.P. coalition. She is a member of the Salt Lake Afterschool Regional Network, Tooele County Chamber of Commerce, and the Tooele County Women's Guild.

Ms. Dar (as the kids call her) is happily married and has one daughter, a son in law, and two amazing grandchildren, which are her pride and joy. She is looking forward to retirement and she plans on going back to school, traveling, volunteering and spending time with her family.



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School Administrator of the Year



Allynne Mower

Principal, Fairview Elementary
North Sanpete School District



As principal, Allynne is an advocate and champion for afterschool programs at Fairview Elementary in Sanpete County. Allynne goes out of her way by regularly participating in activities with the youth, as well as sitting down with them during homework time and listening to them read. The youth are very excited to show her their finished projects and she is always willing to drop what she is doing in order to engage with them. Her dedication to the program conveys her passion for increasing the academic and social-emotional well-being of all youth involved.

Allynne loves her students and supports any program that better their academic achievement and personal well-being. She recognizes that daily afterschool programming provides a foundation for the growth and development of her students. As a result, Fairview's afterschool program has been a success for 12 years. Her dedication and support are reflected in Fairview Elementary afterschool participant testing scores. Due to Allynne's support, scores increased 26% from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

The students love her, and it shows. She knows them all very personally and takes an active role in their activities. The youth of Fairview Elementary, as well as Sanpete County afterschool educators are lucky to have her support.

2023-24 UTAH AFTERSCHOOL

Site Coordinator of the Year



Erica Andino

YouthCity - Central City
Salt Lake City Corporation

Erica Andino, a dedicated afterschool coordinator, hailing from Brooklyn, NY, brings a wealth of experience and passion to her role with over 15 years of diverse experience in afterschool programming.



Throughout her career, Erica has been a driving force behind numerous initiatives aimed at supporting young people and their families. From spearheading afterschool sports programs for teens, to orchestrating large-scale multicultural events, and personally tailoring traditional wear for hundreds of youth, Erica's work is deeply rooted in her dedication to fostering inclusive communities. A former foster youth, Erica brings a unique perspective and passion to the field, championing diversity, inclusivity, and community engagement.

Erica's staff say she is an approachable and genuine leader as well as a community steward. The relationships she forges with her students are personal and last a lifetime. She goes out of her way to provide for families through hard times. She keeps in touch with schools, rec centers, and local shelters, as well as families, to ensure that resources and opportunities are widely accessible to the students she serves. With a vision for unity and growth in afterschool programming, Erica is committed to creating spaces where communities can come together as a family to support and uplift one another regardless of background or circumstance.

2023-24 UTAH AFTERSCHOOL

School Personnel of the Year



Wendy Hernandez

Head Secretary, Provost Elementary
Provo School District

Wendy Hernandez is the head secretary at Provost Elementary. Although it's her first year helping to coordinate school-day efforts with the Boys & Girls Club at Provo Clubhouse, she has gone above and beyond the mark!

She regularly communicates with the program about families who could use afterschool services. She asks for ways that either she and/or the school can support the program. Wendy responds in a quick and timely manner to all of communication from the program at Provo Clubhouse. Attendance at the Clubhouse has grown this year from her efforts of referring families to join our program. One family in particular was pulling their kids out of school early because of the parents' work schedule and didn't have anyone who could pick them up after school. Wendy helped them fill out the application for the afterschool program, and now they stay in school until the end of the day and have a safe place to be.

Wendy has always been ready to help in any way she can. She answers the afterschool program's questions and helps solve problems that occur in the transition between school and afterschool. Wendy knows all the kids by name and makes the Provo Clubhouse staff feel welcome anytime they meet at Provost Elementary. She is an incredible team player who works very hard and jumps in to help in the moment of need. Wendy is kind, funny, and everyone that steps into the office feels welcome while she works hard to answer their questions.



2023-24 UTAH AFTERSCHOOL

Youth of the Year



Connor Ryan

Antelope Elementary
Davis School District

Since moving to Utah, Connor has been actively involved in out-of-school time programming in Utah for three years, but his participation dates back to his preschool years. Known for his willingness to assist both staff and fellow students, Connor is admired by all, especially younger peers who eagerly await his presence. He is a great listener, and fosters an environment of trust and understanding.

In addition to his participation in out-of-school time programs, Connor's leadership extends into the school environment. Recognized for his positive attitude in the classroom and his determination for academic growth, he consistently excels in both his regular and special education classes. Connor's unique blend of creativity, focus, and kindness distinguishes him among his peers, as he continues to overcome any obstacle in his path.

As a 5th grader, Connor's bright personality shines daily as an Antelope Elementary All-Star. Sometimes youth in older grades within the school are harder to please, but not Connor. His authenticity and dedication prove that being yourself and putting in the effort truly yields success.



2023-24 UTAH AFTERSCHOOL

Center of the Year



Buttons 'N Bows

Preschool and Childcare Center
Holladay

It's incredibly hard to adequately put on paper that joy and love you feel in the Buttons 'N Bows classroom. The children trust each other and the adults in charge of their care, and it opens the door for joy, fun, and learning.

The Buttons 'N Bows program is a fun, happy, family-like environment. It is an inclusive classroom setting that uses the Conscious Discipline program to foster a healthy social-emotional environment. This allows for the kids to feel safe, loved and relaxed before and after school.

The administrators office is located in the classroom, which allows for the admin to be available for support and questions at all times, both for the staff and the families. The admin are also known for starting dance parties with the kids and enjoy being involved in the games, crafts and other afterschool activities.

Buttons 'N Bows uses the Procare application to enable instant messaging with the families, keeping a line of communication open at all times. Each child is greeted with joy and by name. They also host events like a summer bbq and a flash mob that the families and public are encouraged to attend, and the kids get to be involved in all the planning and preparation.

They involve the kids in planning activities. The kids' favorite version of this is planning, practicing and performing plays on the classroom stage.

They write their own and it's always a work of art!

