

“After the Bell”

A free opportunity for middle school youth to participate in enrichment activities through the support of community organizations and businesses, Merrill Area Public Schools and Lincoln County UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development.

Need:

Many young people find themselves without supervision on weekdays between the hours of 3 and 6 p.m. Afterschool programs not only keep kids safe, they also help improve students' academic performance, school attendance, behavior and health, and support working families. Overall, the research shows that children who are supervised and engaged in structured activities are less likely to participate in high risk activities. For middle school students, being supervised after-school reduces by half the risk that they will smoke, drink, or abuse drugs. At a time when families and communities are struggling financially and kids are falling behind academically, afterschool programs are needed now more than ever.



Response:

The “After the Bell” program has been made possible for the past twelve years through the generous donations and support of the following organizations and businesses: Ace Hardware; Beta Eta Chapter Xi Alpha Nu; Chip’s; Church Mutual Christmas is Committee; Church Mutual Employees Association; Dave’s County Market; Dr. Evans, Eagle’s Aerie 584; Eagles’ Auxiliary; East Troy Basketry Company, Inc.; F-M Graham Enterprises LLC; Friends of the School Forest; Good Samaritan Health Center Employee Advised Fund; Good Samaritan Health Center Mission and Values Committee; Good Samaritan Health Center Foundation Grant; Gruett’s Appliance Center; Hardee’s; Hugo’s; Kiwanis Club of Greater Merrill; Knights of Columbus, Kwik Trip; Laurette Alpha Alpha; Little Red Barn in Action; Lincoln County Bank; Lincoln County Safe and Stable Families Grant; Lincoln County 4-H Leaders’ Association, Inc.; Lincoln County Home and Community Education Association; Marshfield Merrill Clinic; McDonald’s; Merrill Area United Way; Merrill Forward Together Healthy Community Initiative, Inc.; Merrill Social and Sick Benefit Society, Inc.; Mid-WI AmVets; Optimist Club of Merrill; Park City Credit Union; Reindl Printing, Inc.; River Valley Bank; Schmitt Manecke Donner Auxilery Post #1638; Social Topics Club; Stifel, Nicolaus and Company, Inc.; T.B. Scott Library Board; T. B. Scott Library Staff; Trident Supply, Turtle Lake Forestry, LLC, and Wal-Mart. In addition, many individuals have contributed personally to the program.

Forty-seven unduplicated (1,041 duplicated) students participated in the 2015-16 program bringing the total number of different youth involved in the program for the twelve years it’s existed to 591. Many of the youth who have participated have come to the program for all three years they are in the middle school. The “After the Bell”



program provides middle school age youth with a safe, easily accessible place to go after school where they have the opportunity to participate in positive enrichment activities and to learn new skills. “After the Bell” operates from right after school to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday at the Prairie River Middle School on days school is in session. Students do not need to attend the program each day to participate. The program is supervised each day by an adult supervisor along with community volunteers as needed and available. Each day the program offers students a place to choose to participate in enrichment activities, do their homework, play board games, visit with friends and/or have a snack. Adult and older youth volunteers provide some enrichment programs throughout the year in addition to those led by program staff.

2015-16 Program Highlights:

The “After the Bell” program provides youth with a place to go after school where they feel a sense of belonging (i.e. positive relationship with adults involved, feel welcome and safe while at the program), provided them with opportunities to learn new skills (i.e. be creative and share what I have learned with others), helped them develop more independence (i.e. opportunities to choose and plan activities in the program) and allowed them to participate in service to others (i.e. community service projects, helping others in the program). Each of these represents one of the four Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development – belonging, mastery, independence and generosity.

The 2015-16 program was supported by the following local individuals, businesses and organizations: Church Mutual Christmas is Committee, Dave’s County Market, Eagles Club Aerie 584, Hugo’s, Kiwanis Club of Greater Merrill, Knights of Columbus, Lincoln County Safe and Stable Families grant, Optimist Club of Merrill, T.B. Scott Library Board, T.B. Scott Library Staff, Turtle Lake Forestry, LLC and Kristen and Jay VanDerGeest. We continue to be able to provide this program at no cost to the program participants through the generous support of these individuals, businesses and organizations who donate funds and/or supplies for the program. This is important as a large percentage of participants are from families with lower incomes. By keeping the program free, we are able to offer the opportunity for all middle school youth to participate.



What is Needed to Continue the Program in 2016-17:

Plans are underway to offer the “After the Bell” program from September 12, 2016 through June 6, 2017 (140 days the program would be offered).

In order for the “After the Bell” program to be offered the following funding/support is needed:

- \$3,000 Snack supplies and program supplies
- \$6,000 Hire an individual to provide daily supervision and coordination for the program
- In-kind Use of space as needed and available at the Prairie River Middle School
- In-kind UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Educator will continue to serve as the overall supervisor of the program.
- In-kind Community volunteers (older youth and adults) to teach/lead enrichment programs

Total Funds Needed for the “After the Bell Program” equals \$9,000

Overview prepared by Debbie Moellendorf, UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Educator for Lincoln County. For more information e-mail Debbie at deborah.moellendorf@ces.uwex.edu or call 715-539-1077.

Source: Afterschool Alliance. Afterschool Programs in Wisconsin Fact Sheet, 2013; Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development Impact Report, Wisconsin 4-H Afterschool Programs, January 2011 and Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, A Wiskids Policy Brief, Fall 2006, “School’s Out! Out-of-School Time Key to Children’s Success”.