

## “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 UW-Madison Division of Extension Lincoln County.***

### **Need:**

Many young people find themselves without supervision on weekdays during the after school hours. 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:**

Over 675 different youth have participated in the “After the Bell” program during the sixteen years it has existed. Many of the youth who have participated have come to the program each year 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 high school/college students or 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.

The “After the Bell” program has been made possible for the past sixteen years through the generous donations and support of the following organizations and businesses: Ace Hardware; Beta Eta Chapter Xi Alpha Nu; Chip's; Church of the Ascension, 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; Johnson's Gifts and Home Décor; 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; O' Tannenbaum Tour; Park City Credit Union; Reindl Printing, Inc.; River Valley Bank; Schmitt Manecke Donner Auxilery Post #1638; Sierra Pacific Windows; Social Topics Club; Stifel, Nicolaus and Company, Inc.; St. Paul's Ladies Aid; 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.



### **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.



### **What is Needed for the 2021-22 Program:**

Plans are underway to offer the “After the Bell” program from October 4, 2021 through May 26, 2022.

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-Madison Division of Extension Educators 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.*

During the 2021-22 school year, the 5th graders will be moving to the middle school. We anticipate that this will mean additional students participating in the “After the Bell” program. This may require us to increase the budget for supplies and hiring additional staff which will increase the overall funding needed.

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