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AYS, Inc. Founder and President/CEO to Receive National Award

The National Afterschool Association (NAA) has announced that Ellen Clippinger, founder and president/CEO of AYS, Inc. and a leader in the out-of-school time programming movement at the local, state, and national level, will receive this year's Flame of Inspiration Award. Clippinger will receive the award at NAA's national convention, which is being held in Indianapolis this year. The award will be presented as part of the closing plenary session on Wednesday, April 10 from 10:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Indianapolis Convention Center.

The award is presented annually by NAA's board of directors. According to NAA's Executive Director Gina Warner, "Awardees must be recognized leaders in the profession and have an extensive repertoire of intellectual contributions to the profession, such as research work, published works and/or service with educational institutions and professional associations."

A former teacher, Clippinger started At-Your-School Child Services in 1980 as a non-profit after-school activity program at Indianapolis Public School #70 with a grant from The Indianapolis Foundation. Over the next several years, the grassroots program began to open at more sites and offer a variety of services, including before-school programs, summer day camps, kindergarten wrap-around, and pre-school programs. Now known as AYS, Inc., the agency currently operates 33 before- and after-school sites and five early childhood sites in Hamilton, Hendricks, Marion and Montgomery counties. AYS is set to offer summer day camps for school-age and pre-school children at 10 sites this summer. While always continuing to focus on safety, AYS programs offer a variety of enriching and educational activities and curricula for its participants.

"I am both honored and humbled by this award. It is a recognition of the many people with whom I've worked for many years. Together we have created a history of enriching lives through safe, engaging and fun after-school experiences for thousands of young people and their families," Clippinger said.

Currently, Clippinger serves on the board of the Children's Coalition of Indiana, co-chairs the out-of-school time committee for the Talent Alliance, and is actively involved with several state and local organizations, including the Indiana YouthPRO Association, Indiana Afterschool Network, and Afterschool Coalition of Indianapolis. She has been an avid proponent for the Indiana Youth Development Credential, a credentialing process for professionals working with children and youth.

Nationally, Clippinger is a training associate for the National Institute on Out-of-School Time at Wellesley College, travelling across the country to lead specialized training sessions for educators and practitioners.

Clippinger was a long-time board member of the National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA), which is now NAA, and is a past president. During her term as president in the late 1990s, she oversaw the

introduction of national standards and an accreditation process for after-school programs and attended the White House Conference on Child Care in 1998.

At the state level throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Clippinger was active in establishing Indiana legislation to ensure that children and youth had access to safe and enriching programs. She assisted legislators in establishing the School Age Child Care fund and testified for Step Ahead legislation. Clippinger has served on the Indiana Board for the Coordination of Child Care Regulation and previously chaired the Marion County Step Ahead Council.

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