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## **Aspire! Afterschool Learning Welcomes New Members to the Board of Directors**

### **New Members Bring Expertise to Aspire!'s Next Chapter of Growth**

(ARLINGTON, VA) - Aspire! Afterschool Learning announces two new members to the board of directors as the organization launches its next ambitious three-year strategic plan, which includes almost doubling the current number of students served in Aspire!'s daily afterschool program. At the same time that Aspire! is committed to serving more students, the organization must also balance the reality that missed learning caused by the pandemic has only widened the opportunity gap and historically underserved students are entering Aspire! much further behind past cohorts. Aspire! intends to grow in such a way as to not compromise the high-quality, individualized, and results-driven program for which it has become known, with historically 90% of students improving their reading levels each year.

To best achieve this balance, Aspire! focused on bringing in board members with experience in equity and access, along with growing nonprofits. Their backgrounds will allow them to offer valuable insight into the organization's plans and ensure that growth is effective, thoughtfully planned, and sustainable, as well as aligned with Aspire!'s core values of growth, excellence, connection, and equity and access.

Joining the Aspire! board of directors are:

**Patrick King**, COO and General Manager, Army Navy Country Club

**Mira Vasquez**, Human Resource Manager, Park Hotels and Resorts

These two new board members bring diverse experiences and complimentary skills that will serve Aspire!'s mission and meet its goal of expanding learning opportunities that help historically underserved young people fulfill their potential through afterschool and summer learning programs, while also centering the growing learning needs of existing students and their families.

Patrick King has a strong background in finance and operations, as well as board service, serving most recently as an Executive Board Member for Bridges to Independence (formerly Arlington Alexandria Coalition for the Homeless).

"It's exciting to see the growth opportunities for Aspire! in the coming months and years. Creating additional space in order to accommodate more students only helps reduce the educational opportunity gap for all students faster," said King when asked what he was looking forward to for Aspire!.

Mira Vasquez brings her experience in Human Resources to assist Aspire! in growing staffing capacity that ensures high-quality, individualized student support, as well as growing volunteerism and partnerships that will make organizational growth possible, equitable, and sustainable to meet the needs of students now and into the future. Ms. Vasquez also brings a first-hand understanding of the importance of Aspire!'s mission.

"As a child of immigrant parents, my family struggled to adapt to our new home, and finding child care for me afterschool and during the summer was a struggle. I think of how much Aspire! would have benefitted me and helped my parents during that stressful transition. Having experienced this first hand, I feel honored to be part of an organization that provides this type of support to families similar to mine," Vasquez said.

Aspire! is looking forward to working with Mr. King and Ms. Vasquez and benefitting from their expertise as the organization enters its next chapter.

**About Aspire! Afterschool Learning**

Aspire! is deeply rooted in the South Arlington communities it has been serving since 1994. Founded as Greenbrier Learning Center in response to community demand, Aspire! Afterschool Learning (rebranded in Fall 2015) has since grown from a grassroots effort providing enrichment activities to a handful of students into a robust academic program reaching about 1,000 underserved students each year, including serving 80-100 students intensively each day afterschool and in the summer. Over the next three years, it plans to almost double the number of students that it serves while maintaining its proven program model of individualized instruction and small class sizes. The organization aspires to provide access to the students and families most impacted by the educational opportunity gap and treat Aspire! students and families with dignity, fairness, and respect.