



NEWS RELEASE  
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CONTACT: Gretchen Wright  
202/371-1999

## **Chicago Afterschool Program Wins National Award From MetLife Foundation**

*Initiative is one of five nationwide recognized for innovation and excellence.*

MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance today honored America SCORES Chicago with an Afterschool Innovator Award. The award recognizes the program's success at providing multiple benefits for middle school students, particularly in the area of supporting literacy. MetLife Agency Sales Director Marla Muzzy presented the award at Douglas Park Field House during a special event that was part of *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. America SCORES Chicago also received \$10,000 to sustain its work.

"The lessons young people learn in middle school stay with them for a lifetime," said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "It is important to take advantage of this unique time in young people's development to provide them with the tools they will need to be successful in high school, college and life. MetLife Foundation is pleased to partner with the Afterschool Alliance to recognize afterschool programs that are doing an outstanding job of teaching life lessons and skills and helping young people achieve their potential."

America SCORES Chicago is one of only five afterschool programs nationwide to be named a 2011 MetLife Foundation Afterschool Innovator. It will be highlighted later this year in an [Issue Brief](#) on how afterschool programs benefit middle school students – part of an Afterschool Alliance series that examines critical issues facing youth, schools and communities, and the role that the programs play in addressing these issues. Other award categories and Issue Brief topics this year include: providing middle school students with opportunities for service learning, addressing bullying in middle school, and middle school strategies for aligning afterschool with the school day.

America SCORES Chicago serves families in the city's low-income West Side neighborhoods by offering free afterschool programming that combines soccer, creative writing and community service. Each middle school program consists of a boys' team and a girls' team, which are open to students without trying out. Guided by a soccer coach and a writing coach, the teams work together on the field, in the classroom and in the community, with students emerging as poet-athletes attuned to their own skills and creativity, as well as to social concerns such as sexual harassment, gang violence and healthy living.

"Our students are already proving themselves to be leaders," said Amy Vondra Stark, the executive director of America SCORES Chicago, "and it's fantastic to see that reflected in this recognition by MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance. The Afterschool Innovator Award will help us continue to help at-risk students make choices that contribute to their success."

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, *Lights On Afterschool* includes more than 7,500 events being held across the country on and around October 20, providing children, parents, community leaders, educators and others an opportunity to come together to urge Congress not to divert funds away from the afterschool programs that children and families need. Events will also give youth a chance to showcase the skills they learn and talents they develop at their afterschool programs and send the message that millions more kids need quality afterschool programs.

“Afterschool programs are a fundamental way to make sure that learning doesn’t stop when the school day ends,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “These programs utilize countless creative ways to help children expand their horizons and get the support they need for educational success. The MetLife Foundation Afterschool Innovator Awards honor programs that stand out in helping kids excel.”

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*The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*

*MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 to carry on MetLife’s longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation is committed to building a secure future for individuals and communities worldwide. Through programs focusing on empowering older adults, preparing young people and building livable communities, MetLife Foundation increases access and opportunities for people of all ages. Since it was established, MetLife Foundation has made more than \$500 million in grants and \$75 million in program-related investments. For more information, visit [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org).*