

# Afterschool Advocate

A media outreach newsletter published by the Afterschool Alliance

Volume 4, Issue 11, September 2, 2003

## **LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL!**

With less than six weeks to go until *Lights On Afterschool!*, communities nationwide are gearing up for the largest rally for afterschool ever. The events on October 9 celebrate the educational and other benefits of afterschool programs while highlighting the resources needed to keep the lights on and the doors open at these vital programs.

*Lights On Afterschool!* is a national day of activity organized by the Afterschool Alliance. The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is the National Presenting Sponsor. The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and Open Society Institute are providing additional support. More than 80 national organizations are supporting this year's *Lights On Afterschool!*.

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As schools begin their new academic year, parents across the country are searching for afterschool programs. Help shine the light on existing programs and rally for more afterschool programs. Host or attend a local *Lights On Afterschool!* event in your community. For more information, visit [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org)

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### **Local Events in Austin, Texas**

The Travis County Afterschool Network (TCAN) will host its second annual *Lights On Afterschool!* kick-off rally at the Texas State Capitol on Saturday, October 4. Hundreds of children, parents, legislators, teachers, advocates and community members will gather at the Capitol to watch children from local afterschool programs complete the last, symbolic mile of the torch race that they will have begun the previous week. Participating

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## **WORKING MOMS MOST CONCERNED ABOUT KIDS' SAFETY AFTERSCHOOL**

The number one concern of working mothers is the safety of their children, especially during the afterschool hours. These fears outrank concerns about the quality of their children's education or funding for education, finds a survey released last week by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids.

Mason-Dixon Polling and Research conducted the nationwide survey of 1,000 working mothers with school-age children. Other key results include:

- When asked to name their top concern as children head back to school, nearly six out of ten working mothers listed crime, violence or risky behaviors like drugs, alcohol and sex.
- Despite public focus on school shootings and other violence during the school day, nearly nine out of ten working mothers said they are most concerned about their children's safety during the afterschool hours.
- Nine out of ten also agreed with the statement: "America could greatly reduce youth violence if Congress expanded prevention efforts like afterschool programs."
- When asked which strategy would be more effective in reducing school and youth violence, seven out of ten mothers chose investments in afterschool

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## **OUTREACH – TELL LAWMAKERS AMERICA NEEDS MORE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS**

The new school year brings a host of concerns for working families with school-age children. One of parents' greatest worries is whether their children will be safe during the afterschool hours, because that is when many children are unsupervised and when juvenile crime peaks. Recent surveys by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and the National PTA found that working parents worry about their children during these hours and believe that afterschool programs can prevent juvenile crime and keep children safe.

The Senate is scheduled to reconvene on Tuesday, September 2, to begin debate on Senate Bill #1356, the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriation. A final vote on that appropriation is expected late that week or early the week of September 8.

This is a critical time to send a message to Senators about the need for more afterschool programs. Please write, call, email and/or meet with your U.S. Senators and other elected officials and remind them that all children in your state need access to safe, educational programs after the school day ends. Ask your Senators to invest in children's safety and education by supporting amendments that increase funds for 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

### **When you Contact your Elected Officials, Tell Them:**

- The U.S. Census Bureau reports that as many as 15 million "latchkey children" go home to an empty house on any given afternoon. (U.S. Census Bureau, Urban Institute estimate, 2000)
- The number of afterschool programs in this country today meets only half the demand among elementary and middle school parents. (National Opinion Research Center, August 1998)
- The hours after school are "prime time" for violent juvenile crime. Between the hours of 3 and 6 PM, a youth's chance to become a victim of crime more than triples. (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 1999)
- Teens who do not participate in afterschool programs are three times more likely to use marijuana and other drugs, and they are more likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and engage in sexual activity. (YMCA of the USA, March 2001)
- In a new national poll, nearly nine in ten working mothers with children said that they are most concerned about their children's safety during the afterschool hours. In the same poll, nine in ten mothers also agreed that expanded prevention efforts such as afterschool programs could greatly reduce youth violence. (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2003)
- Students who participate in extracurricular activities have better grades, feel greater attachment to school, have lower truancy rates and do better in college, according to a 17-year study that followed 1,800 6<sup>th</sup> graders in ten Michigan schools through high school and college. ("Extra Benefits Tied to Extracurriculars," Education Week, October 2000)

For information about keeping kids safe after school, go to [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org). For a message to send to your Senators, go to <http://capwiz.com/afterschool/home/>.

**With your help, we can ensure that no child is locked out of afterschool programs!**

## HELP SAVE AMERICORPS

AmeriCorps is facing a budget crisis that could deprive afterschool programs and other community agencies of crucial volunteers. The AmeriCorps budget has been cut 55 percent and unless these cuts are restored, communities, schools and children who depend on AmeriCorps members will be left behind; thousands of young people ready to serve in AmeriCorps will be turned away.

*For more information on how you can help, visit [www.saveamericorps.org](http://www.saveamericorps.org).*



## MEDIA OUTREACH

### Afterschool Letters in Print

One sometimes overlooked device for getting the afterschool message before the public is to send a letter-to-the-editor. Letters are good vehicles for a message because they are well read and provide an opportunity to present a message that won't be filtered by a reporter or producer.

Of course, the key is to get the letter printed. Here are eight steps to getting your letter in print, followed by two sample letters.

- 1) Do a little research. Read the letters page today and tomorrow, and make note of how long the letters are – count the words both in the longest letter and in a couple of average-size letters.
- 2) While counting words, also figure out whether printed letters always respond to specific stories that have appeared in the newspaper or whether the collection of letters is more in the nature of a “community forum.”
- 3) Find out how to submit your letter. Most newspapers accept letters via email or from their web sites. Just about all papers accept them by regular mail. Some newspapers accept faxes. Often you will find a box on the letters page that explains the process and on the web site you will likely find out how to submit your letter electronically.
- 4) Look for opportunities to send a letter. If your newspaper's letters page is limited to letters that respond to other stories, you will need to find a story or opinion article to which to respond. It need not be entirely or even mostly about afterschool; it just needs to give you a chance to make a related point. If your paper's letters section is more of a community forum, it is still useful, but not critical, to relate your letter to something that has already appeared in the paper.
- 5) When the right moment presents itself, consult your notes from step one and then write a letter that's about the length of the average-length letter and absolutely no longer than the longest letter. The classic letter is three short paragraphs. The first paragraph should begin with a reference to the story or event to which you are responding and very briefly say what was wrong, right or relevant about it. The second paragraph should contain your core message about afterschool (for example: afterschool programs keep kids safe, help them achieve academically and help working families).

It's tempting to spend this second paragraph – really the meat of the letter – replying point by point to the original story, but remember that the purpose of the letter is to communicate your message, not to echo someone else's. The third paragraph should tie the letter up, perhaps with a call to action or some other concluding thought. It might, for example, exhort readers to support afterschool by joining in some activity.

6) Show your letter to someone you trust to make sure it is not too "hot." Passion is important, but a letter should not sound angry.

7) Include at the end of the letter your name, title, street address and day and night telephone numbers. The newspaper will not print your address or phone number, but will want to know that you are from the reading area and may want to call you to confirm that you actually sent the letter.

8) Send the letter. The letter should arrive at the newspaper no more than two days after the triggering story or event.

## **SAMPLE LETTER**

September 2, 2003

Letters-to-the-Editor

***The Greenbury Bugle***

123 Main Street

Greenbury, Vermont 00000

To the Editor:

Arnold Schwarzenegger's candidacy for governor of California ("Schwarzenegger Muscles Challengers to Side," August 30, 2003) is a reminder that afterschool programs are popular with America's families. The actor/children's advocate has been a champion for afterschool programs for many years.

And for good reason. Afterschool programs keep kids safe during the sometimes perilous afterschool hours. They help children achieve academically by providing tutoring and homework help and a variety of academic enrichment activities. And they help working parents, by relieving them of worries about whether their kids are being supervised by caring and competent adults.

Afterschool's record of success explains why Americans are so strongly supportive of them and why candidate Schwarzenegger hopes to make the move from Hollywood to Sacramento.

Sincerely,

Jenna Bartlett, Director

Greenbury 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center

127 West Centerway

Greenbury, VT 00000

600-555-1212 (day)

600-555-2121 (evening)

**SAMPLE LETTER**

August 30, 2003

Letters-to-the-Editor  
***The Greenbury Bugle***  
123 Main Street  
Greenbury, Vermont 00000

To the Editor:

The recent decline in juvenile crime (“Teen Crime Drop Called Hopeful Sign,” August 29, 2003) is an indication that we’re doing something right when it comes to teaching and supervising our kids.

One important factor in the drop in juvenile crime is the important work being done by afterschool programs in Greenbury. Research tells us that teens are most at risk of being victims or perpetrators of juvenile crime on weekday afternoons, so providing safe and constructive activities for them makes all the difference in the world. That’s just what afterschool programs do, keeping kids safe, helping them achieve academically and relieving working parents of worries about whether their kids are being supervised by caring and competent adults.

Truly, afterschool programs are key to our children’s success.

Sincerely,

Jenna Bartlett, Director  
Greenbury 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center  
127 West Centerway  
Greenbury, VT 00000  
600-555-1212 (day)  
600-555-2121 (evening)

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization supported by a group of Public, private, and nonprofit entities dedicated to ensuring that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010. The Alliance is proud to count among its founding partners the Mott Foundation, U.S. Department of Education, JCPenney Afterschool Fund, Open Society Institute/The After-School Corporation, the Entertainment Industry Foundation and the Creative Artists Agency Foundation.

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### ***Lights On Afterschool!* Continued from Page One...**

youth organizations include Boys and Girls Club, Girl Scouts, YMCA, YWCA, Heart House, Austin Independent School District (AISD) Community Education, AISD Primetime Afterschool and Round Rock ISD 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Centers. The children are running to raise awareness of the estimated 22,000 children in the Greater Austin area who do not have access to quality, affordable afterschool care. At the conclusion of the race, the children will hand their torches to local and state policy makers, asking them to bring quality, affordable afterschool care to every school-age child in Travis County. Several University of Texas (UT) star athletes are scheduled to attend, along with UT Baseball Coach Augie Garrido, who is honorary chair of the event.

On October 9, more than 80 afterschool programs will leave their lights on to show support for afterschool and to give neighbors, parents and community members a chance to see the various afterschool programs throughout the city.

### **Fort Stewart, Georgia**

On October 9, School Age and Youth Services in Fort Stewart, Georgia will host an open house for returning military personnel at its afterschool site. The center is located on a military base and plans to showcase the exciting activities children have been participating in while their parents have been stationed overseas. The *Lights On Afterschool!* event will include face painting, food and student performances and will be open to the entire community.

“The military service personnel are grateful for all of the help and support we provide, especially during their deployment overseas,” said Brenda Morgan, lead program technician at School Age and Youth Services. “Not only do we provide the children with an enriching afterschool program, but we

provide them with the reassurance and love they need while their parents are away.”

### **Jacksonville, Illinois**

4 Counties for Kids is planning a large *Lights On Afterschool!* event involving 21 of its 24 afterschool programs. Throughout September and the first week of October, students from each of the sites will work with community partners and/or local businesses to create light fixtures (everything from table lamps and wall fixtures to floor lamps). On October 9, local dignitaries will unveil the new light fixtures at each of the sites and “turn the lights on afterschool.”

Each site also will host its own unique open house for parents and community members. Guests will participate in some of the children’s daily activities and students will perform theatrical productions.

Later this fall, the light fixtures will be auctioned off to corporate sponsors and community members to raise money for the afterschool programs.

### **Logan, Utah**

Dan Johnson, principal at the Mount Logan Middle School and project director of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program in Logan, Utah, is planning two events during the week of *Lights On Afterschool!* On October 7, there will be a diversity celebration with dancers from Mexico performing traditional dances to welcome English-as-a-second-language students and parents to the school. The dancers will then go to various afterschool sites to teach the children a dance, which they will perform on October 9 at the *Lights On Afterschool!* event.

Also on Thursday, October 9, each afterschool program will host a celebration that will include food, games and other fun activities for the entire community. Children will display their artwork, crafts and technology projects.

To find an event in your area, learn more about how to participate or to register your event, visit [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org). The web site includes checklists, sample media materials, proclamations and invitations, Lights On Afterschool! artwork and more. Once you have registered your event, you will receive a planning kit in the mail and your event will be posted on the Afterschool Alliance web site. Information is also available by calling the Afterschool Alliance’s toll-free number at 1/877-759-9733, or by sending an email to [lightsonafterschool@radiantstrategies.com](mailto:lightsonafterschool@radiantstrategies.com).



**Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Continued from Page One...**

programs over investments in security measures like metal detectors.

Studies show that the afterschool hours from 3 to 6 PM are when kids are most likely to commit and become victims of crime. They are also the hours when kids are most likely to engage in risky behaviors like drinking, smoking and using drugs.

**Call for Congressional Support**

At the news conference to release the findings, Fight Crime President Sanford Newman called on Congress to increase funding for the two principal federal funding sources for afterschool programs: 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC); and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). Newman urged lawmakers to provide additional funding next year for 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC and to approve a proposed five-year, \$5.5 billion increase in CCDBG, which helps low and moderate income families afford afterschool programs for their children.

“To make America safe, we need to be as willing to guarantee our kids space in an afterschool program as we are to guarantee a

criminal room and board in a prison cell,” Newman said.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids is a national anti-crime organization of more than 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and victims of violence.

For more information about Fight Crime: Invest in Kids and its new research, visit [www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org).



**PTA MEMBERS SUPPORT AFTERSCHOOL**

Most PTA members believe afterschool programs are important for students in their communities. Nearly nine in ten PTA members would prefer that their children attend afterschool programs at their own schools. Those are among the findings from a National PTA survey conducted in February of this year.

National PTA commissioned Ipsos Public Affairs to conduct a telephone survey of 800 PTA members, inquiring about their views on afterschool programs. The PTA defined afterschool programs as adult-supervised programs, outside of regular school hours, such as child care, academics, music instruction or recreational programs held in places like schools, community centers or religious facilities – not sports or hobby clubs.

Ninety-five percent of PTA members surveyed said afterschool programs are “important” or “very important” for elementary school and middle school students. Eighty-two percent said they are “important” or “very important” for high school students. Additional key findings include:

- PTA members believe afterschool programs’ primary benefit is safety and supervision, followed closely by

development, which consists of learning new things, social interaction and academic achievement.

- Members cite financial reasons as the explanation for why their schools do not offer afterschool programs. A significant proportion of PTA members express some level of concern regarding the affordability of afterschool programs.
- Half of parents of elementary school students, 48 percent of middle school parents and 47 percent of parents of high school students say their child participates in afterschool programs.
- Members seem marginally satisfied with the programs available, with 60 percent indicating that the programs available in their area are “good” or “very good.” This figure is lower than members’ satisfaction with the school in general, indicating that increased involvement can lead to increased satisfaction with the afterschool program.

The survey is part of a two-year grant project from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to educate and motivate parents to be advocates for afterschool programs. Through the grant, National PTA will provide parents with the tools and resources necessary to evaluate and improve current programs and to work with school and community personnel to establish new afterschool programs. An important component of the project will be to provide resources in Spanish as part of National PTA’s Hispanic Outreach Initiative.

*For more information about National PTA afterschool project, visit [www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/afterschool/index.asp](http://www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/afterschool/index.asp) or call 800/307-4782.*

## IN THE NEWS...

**National** – Thanks to a \$350,000 grant from the JCPenney Afterschool Fund, Junior Achievement will be able to expand its afterschool programs from five pilot areas to 45 local markets in the United States. The new grant will allow Junior Achievement to continue working closely with other JCPenney Afterschool partners such as Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 4-H and YMCA of the USA. *For more information about Junior Achievement, visit [www.ja.org](http://www.ja.org)*

**National** – Fifty-nine percent of children ages six to 17 participated in at least one of three extracurricular activities (sports, clubs or lessons), finds a recent U.S. Census Bureau Report, *A Child’s Day: 2000 (Selected Indicators of Child Well-Being)*. While there was a decline in participation in sports and clubs between 1994 and 2000, more children were participating in lessons (music, language, computers or religion). “Many extended care (or after-care) programs in schools offer lessons to children and could account for the increases during this period,” cites the report. *To download the report, go to [www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p70-89.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p70-89.pdf)*

**Colorado** – Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper has donated \$272,500 from his inaugural campaign to the Denver Public Schools (DPS) Foundation, reports the *Rocky Mountain News*. The DPS Foundation assists arts, athletics and afterschool programs in the Denver schools. “By virtually any measure, the partnership that was established between Mayor Hickenlooper and the DPS Foundation was a phenomenal success. Our sincere appreciation to the Mayor for focusing the community’s attention on the needs of our students, especially as we begin a new school year,” said Cole Finegan, DPS Foundation Vice Chair.





**District of Columbia** – In July, the Metropolitan Police Boys and Girls Clubs received a million dollar donation and merged with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, reports the *Washington Post*. With the donation from the Freddie Mac corporation and the Freddie Mac Foundation, the Metropolitan Police Boys and Girls Clubs will be able to continue to serve 5,000 children across the city in afterschool programs that offer athletic, computer and academic programs. *For more information on the Metropolitan Police Boys and Girls Clubs, visit* <http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/family/mpbgc.shtm>

**Georgia** – Approximately 550 students from 18 Richmond County elementary schools will participate in a three-year obesity prevention study conducted by the Medical College of Georgia, reports the *Augusta Chronicle*. The FitKid Project will examine the effects afterschool activities have on children's health. Half the students will participate in a two-hour, five-day-a-week afterschool program that will include homework assistance, nutritious snacks and 80 minutes of exercise. *For more information about the FitKid Project, visit* [www.mcg.edu/news/newsbriefs/fitkid.html](http://www.mcg.edu/news/newsbriefs/fitkid.html)

**Minnesota** – In early August, the Boys & Girls Club of Central Minnesota raised more than \$55,000 at its annual summer benefit, reports the *St. Cloud Times*. The additional funds will help the Boys & Girls Club offer afterschool programs to more than 46,000 children at three afterschool programs and 13 Kidstop programs in St. Cloud.

**Tennessee** – The Tennessee lottery board plans to divide the surprisingly large sum of unclaimed prize money from its statewide lottery equally between the state's prize pool and afterschool programs, reports the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*. The state's lottery will launch in 2004.



## TALKING ABOUT AFTERSCHOOL

“Some federal lawmakers are realizing they made a mistake with No Child Left Behind. U.S. Rep. Dennis Moore, a Kansas Democrat, is one. He wants Congress to pump more money into the law, which will be needed for the before- and afterschool programs, additional teachers and other assistance to students who can't make the grade. The goal should be to help all children succeed, but No Child Left Behind needs to be seriously modified. As it is now, the law is a disservice to hard-working children, the schools and the communities that support them.”

- Editorial by Laura Scott, *Kansas City Star*, August 21, 2003

“No one entity - whether it be a city or a school - can alone serve youths' needs. Collaboration is essential, especially given the valley's burgeoning youth population. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of valley residents under the age of 18 grew by 48 percent, generating a greater demand for a variety of new activities and services, especially afterschool programs... The need for such a program is punctuated by the fact that afterschool programs help reduce crime while raising student achievement levels. Fight Crime Invest in Kids California, an anti-crime organization led by law enforcement and crime victims, shows that while California leads the nation in creating and supporting afterschool programs, public and private partnerships and additional resources are needed to serve children adequately... Still, in Riverside County, only 16 percent of students from low-income families are served by the major publicly funded afterschool programs. Augmenting the argument to use school buildings for afterschool, youth and recreational programs is the fact that children spend 1,000 hours each year in school and 4,000 hours in leisure time. The 4-to-1 ratio

accentuates the need for afterschool and school-based activities, making school the most obvious place for such programs.”

- Editorial, *Palm Springs Desert Sun*,  
August 19, 2003



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### **October 9, 2003**

Join afterschool programs and advocates across the country for *Lights On Afterschool!* and host a rally in your community. *Lights On Afterschool! 2003* is sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. For more information, to find a local event or to host your own *Lights On Afterschool!* event, please visit [www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa\\_2003/index.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa_2003/index.cfm).

### **October 27 - 28, 2003**

School's Out Washington and The Oregon School Age Care, Enrichment and Recreation Project will host a two-day, multi-state conference on October 27 and 28 in Vancouver, Washington. Guest speakers include Beth Miller, author of *Critical Hours: Afterschool Programs and Educational Success*, and Paul Heckman, from the Center for Educational Renewal at the University of Washington. *The Bridge From School to Afterschool and Back: Supporting Children's Learning Across the Hours* conference is designed for program leaders, policy makers, educators and administrators who are exploring ways for schools and afterschool programs to work together to create successful learning environments. For more information, email Krista Galloway via at [kgallowa@schoolsoutwashington.org](mailto:kgallowa@schoolsoutwashington.org). Information also will be posted in early September on the School's Out Washington web site, [www.schoolsoutwashington.org](http://www.schoolsoutwashington.org).

### **November 3 – 6, 2003**

The National Center for Community Education will host its Community Education Orientation Workshops from November 3 through 6 in Flint, Michigan. The four-day workshops provide a comprehensive overview of community education from conceptual and practical perspectives. Workshops include site visits to exemplary community education programs and resource sessions on Community Involvement, Facilitative Leadership, Maximum Use of Resources, Integration with the K-12 Day, Youth Development, Collaborative Partnerships and Adult and Family Services. For more information, please visit [www.nccenet.org/the\\_center/workshopschedule.htm](http://www.nccenet.org/the_center/workshopschedule.htm).

### **November 6 – 8, 2003**

The California School-Age Consortium will host its National Middle School Conference in San Diego, California, from November 6 through 8. *The Ultimate Reality Show: Middle School from A New Perspective* conference is designed for professionals working with middle school youth in afterschool programs. For more information, contact [pchase@calsac.org](mailto:pchase@calsac.org) or visit [www.calsac.org](http://www.calsac.org).



## NEW PUBLICATION

The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) has recently published *No More Islands: Family Involvement in 27 School and Youth Programs*. The report, by Donna Walker James and Glenda Partee, compiles evaluations and profiles of schools and youth programs that have successfully incorporated family involvement into their programs. Profiled schools and programs include: Beacons; Boys & Girls Clubs of America; Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools; Community Schools; 4-H; Girls, Inc.; Head Start; and I Have A Dream. The report

describes some of the barriers to family involvement and provides recommendations for policy makers and school and youth program practitioners. No More Islands is available on AYPF's website, [www.aypf.org](http://www.aypf.org).



## **AFTERSCHOOL ADVOCATE: VIET PROGRAM SERVES NEW ORLEANS YOUTH**

New Orleans' Cyndi Nguyen says the afterschool program that she and partner Tina Owen founded in 2001 actually began as a business development project designed to serve the local Vietnamese community. "We wanted to listen to community needs," she says, and after surveying community members, they focused their effort toward providing daily afterschool care for low-income children.

Today the Vietnamese Initiatives in Economic Training (VIET) program serves 70 kindergarten through sixth grade children, most from one of two public schools in the community. Children begin the afternoon with a snack, followed by homework assistance, tutoring, a variety of enrichment activities, conflict-resolution instruction, arts and crafts, and more. The program also offers English-as-a-second-language courses for adults, with a special focus on English in the workplace.

The program began with 20 children and \$20,000 in funding from the City of New Orleans Economic Development Fund and the Wisner Foundation. "We were overwhelmed in the early days," Nguyen says, explaining that the program quickly developed a waiting list. Nguyen and Owen began working to increase the number of available slots by expanding the program's base, exploring both government grants and support from the local business community. Together they constructed a diverse board of directors, and began piecing together broader support.

Regular attendance at the program is mandatory for participating students, and parents are expected to be involved in program activities, as well.

Ninety percent of VIET's children are Vietnamese American, and the program makes a special effort to address the needs of that community. Many of the parents operate small grocery stores, working very long hours both early and late, she says, so the program works to create opportunities for parents and children to join together in field trips and other activities. At the same time, the program incorporates elements of Vietnamese culture into daily activities.

VIET's summer program provides services to 50 students in the community. This year, children worked with a medical curriculum, learning to clean and bandage cuts and wounds, take a patient's temperature, and administer CPR. In addition, a local bank provided students with instruction on basic money-handling skills – a feature Nguyen plans to expand next summer into a broader look at family finance issues.

The program has already begun planning its 2003 *Lights On Afterschool!* rally for this October. It will feature a Hawaiian theme. Students will make leis for all participants, and they and their parents will dress in Hawaiian-style clothing.

Nguyen says that, while her original intention of creating a community-based business development program took an unexpected turn toward afterschool programming, she still feels that it contributes to business development in the community. Parents are able to devote their attention to their jobs or businesses in the afternoon, and students are introduced to important money-management skills, she says. For Nguyen, herself a native of the New Orleans area, it's a contribution to the community she makes proudly.