

Afterschool Advocate

A media outreach newsletter published by the Afterschool Alliance

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VOTERS VALUE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS, WANT GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Across all demographic and party lines, Americans see afterschool programs as a necessity. Voters say afterschool programs are key to keeping students out of trouble, and they want governments at all levels to provide more funds for these programs. They are willing to pay more taxes if they are certain those monies will support afterschool programs. Those are among the findings of a telephone survey of registered voters age 18 and older conducted for the Afterschool Alliance in September by Lake Snell Perry & Associates and The Tarrance Group.

The results were released at a Capitol Hill briefing on October 29, featuring U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee (R-RI), Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Judy Y. Samelson and pollsters Celinda Lake and Dave Sackett.

Just 29 percent of respondents say there are enough afterschool programs for children and teens in the nation today. Seventy-six percent are concerned that, with no new funds coming to afterschool programs, not only will there not be new afterschool programs but some existing programs may have to reduce their services or close their doors. More than three in four voters (77 percent) say they favor the federal government setting aside specific funds to be used for afterschool programs. And three in five (61 percent) say that they would be reluctant or unwilling to vote for officials who want to cut afterschool funding.

Politicians Support Afterschool

“These are extraordinary results,” said Senator Chafee, who opposed cutting the 21st Century Community Learning Centers budget this year. “We were successful in fighting off the cuts this year. We will keep fighting.”

“This poll underscores what mayors across this country already know,” said Mayor John DeStefano, President of the National League of Cities and Mayor of New Haven, Connecticut. “Americans value afterschool programs and recognize the many benefits they provide. The public recognizes that afterschool programs reduce juvenile crime, help working families and give kids needed help with their schoolwork. Federal, state and local lawmakers can learn a lot about what matters to their constituents by looking at this research.”

“I am not surprised at the poll results,” said Mayor Linda Etheridge of Waco, Texas, who sits on the National League of Cities Human Development Steering Committee of its Council on Youth, Education and Families. “Quality afterschool programs are a valuable community asset that working families cannot do without. The economic reality for most American families is that two incomes are required to support a family. Quality afterschool programs are a necessity and not a luxury for communities.”

Additional Findings

Support for afterschool programs is strong across all demographic groups – race, age, partisan affiliation, geographic region, gender, level of education, marital status, urban/suburban/rural, religion, and type of employment.

Continued on Page Four...

MEDIA OUTREACH

Below is a sample letter-to-the-editor on the recent poll findings. It can be personalized or localized, and submitted to local newspapers. Most newspapers accept letters by email or Internet, in addition to postal mail. To figure out what your newspaper takes, look in the letters-to-the-editor section of the paper, check the web site's letters section (or sometimes the contact section), or just call the paper and ask. Be sure to sign the letter-to-the-editor and include an address and a phone number so that, if your letter is selected for publication, the newspaper staff can confirm that the letter is indeed from you. The newspaper will not print your contact information.

Sample Letter-to-the-Editor

To the Editor:

When it comes to afterschool programs, there's a growing gap between what the public wants and what our elected representatives are delivering. That's one of the most important findings of a new poll on Americans' views on afterschool programming, conducted for the Afterschool Alliance and released the last week of October.

According to the poll, four in five Americans describe afterschool as a "necessity" in their communities, but just three in ten think there are enough programs for children and teens in the nation today. A majority even say they'd be willing to pay an additional \$100 in state taxes to fund more programs.

Given that level of support, it's maddening that afterschool budgets are shrinking not growing. The result of the funding crunch: some programs are cutting back their services, others are closing down altogether. That's not what voters want, and it's not what kids, our families and our communities need.

Sincerely,

[your name]

[your affiliation]

LAWMAKER OUTREACH

One of the most important things constituents can do is to tell officials that they consider afterschool programs to be essential. The findings from the recent Afterschool Alliance poll strengthen the case that voters value afterschool programs and want government to help fund them. Below is a sample letter to President Bush, asking for his support for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program at the full funding level authorized under the No Child Left Behind Act in the next fiscal year.

Sample Letter to the President

November 15, 2003

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

Afterschool programs make a tremendous difference in our community, keeping children safe, helping them learn and supporting working families. I work with **[name of program]** in **[city]**, so I know firsthand that afterschool programs have a positive effect.

Without government funding, our program would not exist. The federal afterschool initiative, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, is supporting programs like ours across the country and, through them, helping countless children and their families.

Voters agree that afterschool programs are a necessity in today's society. A recent poll conducted for the Afterschool Alliance found that nine in ten voters support federal investment in afterschool programs.

Please, keep the doors open at afterschool programs by supporting the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative at \$2 billion next year, as authorized by the No Child Left Behind Act. This program urgently needs to grow. Your support for afterschool programs – and the families and communities who rely on them – is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your public service.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Phone Number]
[E-mail Address]
[Street Address]

Poll continued from Page One...

Other findings from the new poll:

- ✓ An overwhelming majority of voters (94 percent) agree that there should be some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides opportunities for them to learn.
- ✓ Four in five respondents are concerned that current budget problems in the states have resulted in afterschool programs reducing their services or closing their doors. Less than one in five (19 percent) say they are not concerned.
- ✓ Three in five voters say they are willing to pay more in taxes if it is guaranteed that the money would go to fund afterschool programs.
- ✓ Three in four voters say that President Bush's proposed cut to the federal afterschool budget this year makes them very or somewhat concerned about his commitment to "leave no child behind." More than three-quarters of Independent voters share that concern, as do 68 percent of Republican women.

Americans recognize that afterschool programs offer many benefits beyond academics, and parents in particular see other advantages. Three in five parents say that improving test scores should *not* be the primary goal of afterschool programs. Nearly two-thirds of parents (65 percent) and half of non-parents (51 percent) say that afterschool programs should *not* be an extension of the school day. The Bush Administration used an incomplete academic study as justification for its proposed afterschool budget cut this year.

"Afterschool funding was one of the most contentious domestic budget issues this year," Samelson said. "We hope this poll will inform the debate going forward. We will ask federal lawmakers for \$2 billion, or full

funding under the No Child Left Behind Act, in the next fiscal year. Lawmakers should listen to their constituents who recognize that afterschool programs are a smart, sound investment in our children and our future."

Findings were based on a telephone survey of 800 adults, aged 18 and older, who are registered voters. The margin of error in the poll is +/-3.5 percent. It was funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation.

The survey is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.



BOSTON NEARLY DOUBLES PARTICIPATION IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

According to a new survey from Boston's After-School for All Partnership, Boston nearly doubled the number of children who participate in afterschool programs during the last five years and, for the first time, a majority (51 percent) of school children participate in some kind of afterschool program.

"Afterschool programs offer multiple health benefits to youth," said J. Michael McGinnis, MD, MPP, Senior Vice President, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "When young people have opportunities for structured activities in their schools and communities, they have a better chance of avoiding drug use and violence, keeping fit, and excelling in school."

"There is no question this is tremendous progress," said Mayor Thomas M. Menino, who made expanding afterschool programs one of the key objectives in his 1998 Inaugural Address, and who helped bring together civic and philanthropic leaders to form Boston's After-School for All Partnership in 2001. "This is the kind of accomplishment made possible when the public and private sectors work together to achieve common goals. Afterschool

programs are absolutely critical to the success of our kids.”

Additional Findings

The survey also revealed strong unmet demand for additional afterschool programming. Of the 49 percent of parents whose children are not in afterschool programs, two-thirds said they wanted their child in a program. Eighty-five percent of those surveyed said afterschool programs, “are an essential public service and their funding should not be cut at all by the city, state, or federal governments.” Of parents with children in programs, 93 percent were satisfied with the program and 66 percent were very satisfied.

The survey was funded under a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and its After School Project, a pilot demonstration effort to expand afterschool programs for underserved children in Boston, Chicago and San Francisco.

Results of the survey are available at www.afterschoolforall.org.



IN THE NEWS...

National - While most young people currently do not participate in organized afterschool activities, 79 percent of boys and 84 percent of girls are interested in such activities, finds a Junior Achievement/Harris Interactive poll released in early October. The poll also found that only about one in ten boys (ten percent) and one in seven girls (14 percent) participate in organized afterschool activities.

National – In the fall of 2002, 99 percent of classrooms in U.S. public schools had access to the Internet; 53 percent of these schools reported that they made computers available to students outside regular school hours (96 percent after school, 74 percent before school, six percent on weekends). This is according

to the U.S. Department of Education’s report, “Internet Access in U.S. Public Schools and Classrooms: 1994-2002.” The report is available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2004014>.

California – In early November, the Museum of Children’s Art (MOCHA) in Oakland was awarded a “Coming up Taller” award from the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The \$10,000 award honors MOCHA’s model afterschool program, Project YIELD, which serves 250 of the 25,000 children served annually through MOCHA’s school and community programs. Project YIELD provides daily arts classes in visual, performing, digital and literary arts, as well as leadership development, tutoring, homework assistance, mentoring, workshops, field trips, community service projects and performances and exhibitions. For more information on MOCHA, visit www.mocha.org.

California – The Boys & Girls Club of Greater San Diego received nearly \$600,000 in grants from the state government – the largest grant for any club, reports the *San Diego Union Tribune*. The \$578,400 grant will help fund X-Track, an afterschool program that provides tutoring, homework assistance, arts programs, recreation and community service.

Florida – Thanks to Tampa Bay Devil Ray baseball player Lance Carter’s successful pitching, the Boys & Girls Club of Manatee County raised \$12,400, reports the *Bradenton Herald*. Carter, a former member of the local Boys & Girls Club, donated \$50 each time he pitched in a game. Three local businesses matched his donations.

Georgia – Thanks to a \$10,000 grant from SCANA Energy, 25 students at the Wilkinson Gardens Elementary School will be able to participate in a new afterschool program, reports the *Augusta Chronicle*. The Homework Center is one of many programs in several states funded by SCANA. For eleven years, SCANA has funded afterschool programs in Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

Illinois – In late August, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley announced that After School Matters, the city's afterschool program for teenagers, will double the number of students it serves by the end of the 2003/2004 school year. "The afterschool hours are the time that teenagers are most in danger," said the Mayor. "A recent study suggested they are more likely to drink or use drugs in the hours after school. In addition, we've found that young people who are not involved in extra-curricular programs are 57 percent more likely to drop out of high school. But the afterschool hours are also a time when we can capture the minds and hearts of teens. Many young people develop life-long interests -- and rewarding careers -- from their afterschool and summer activities." After School Matters provides arts, athletics and technology programs, as well as apprenticeships in areas such as web site design, newsletter writing, sculpture, athletics coaching, performance poetry, robotics, dance, broadcasting, storytelling and video production. For more information, visit www.cityofchicago.org.

Massachusetts – Due to drastic budget cuts from the University of Massachusetts Extension Service, 4-H programs in Massachusetts are being forced to become financially independent, reports the *Boston Globe*. Several 4-H officials are questioning the legality of the funding cuts, since the University is a land-grant school and is required to fund agricultural and mechanics programs.

New York – The Queens Borough Public Library received a \$109,000 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) grant for its afterschool program for sixth to eighth grade students, reports *School Library Journal*. The grant is the first 21st CCLC grant given to a public library. The afterschool program offers mentoring, homework assistance and seminars on careers, creative writing, health and more.

New York – While most children are supervised after class, many Long Island parents would like more afterschool programs, finds a recent public opinion poll conducted for the Rauch Foundation by Carney Research. The survey found strong support for public education, early education and learning programs, afterschool programs, and family-friendly policies in the region's workplaces. "The results of this survey demonstrate that, despite their concern about fiscal issues, Long Islanders are committed to preserving the high-quality public education for which Long Island has become known," said Foundation spokesperson Phillip Sparks. Long Islanders with children "voice concern over difficult choices that they are forced to make between work and family," said Dr. Nancy R. Douzinas, Rauch Foundation President. "Long Islanders also want support for the challenging job of parenting. They expressed interest in parent resource centers and having more options for pre-school aged children and afterschool programming." For more information, visit www.rauchfoundation.org.

Pennsylvania – On October 8, the *Philadelphia Daily News* published the second edition of its ASAP Directory of After School Recreation Programs. The directory, a project of ASAP (After School Activities Partnership), contains information on hundreds of afterschool recreation programs in Philadelphia. The directory is also available online, at www.phillyasap.org.

Wisconsin – On September 26, CUNA Mutual Group, United Way of Dane County and Wisconsin first lady Jessica Doyle launched the “Lend A Hand” campaign, a county-wide effort to recruit volunteers for afterschool programs, reports the *Wisconsin State Journal*. Volunteers are needed in 36 local youth resource centers for middle school students. For more information on the campaign, visit www.uwdc.org.



- ◆ Issues Affecting Rural Mentoring Programs (November 10 – 14)
- ◆ Getting your Message Heard: Understanding Nonprofit Marketing (November 17 – 21)
- ◆ Promising Practices and Program Resources for Mentoring Programs (February 16 – 20, 2004)

The web site also provides complete listings of previous online discussions.



 **WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU** 

Is there an interesting program in your area? Has a corporation or business in your community become involved in funding or establishing an afterschool program? Do you know of a valuable, informative web site? Please share with us, and other readers, your success stories, comments and suggestions. Contact *Afterschool Advocate* editor Ridgely Benjamin with story ideas or information via email: afterschooladvocate@prsolutionsdc.com; phone: 202/371-1999; or fax: 202/371-9142.



SURFING THE WEB

MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership Online Forums

www.mentoring.org/community.adp

MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership is an advocate for the expansion of mentoring and a resource for mentors and mentoring initiatives nationwide. Their web site provides ongoing forums for a wide variety of issues concerning mentoring programs. The forums are free and open to all interested participants. Upcoming discussions include:

MEDALLION SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS AND ANNA MARIA ISLAND TURTLE WATCH: *Cultivating Respect for the Environment - One Turtle at a Time*
Guest article by Jean Falls, Medallion School Partnerships

“Medallion’s Sea Breeze Elementary School team’s vision is to instill a passion and a sense of ownership for the local environment in children,” says Medallion School Partnerships’ Program Administrator Nancy Dearden. Medallion operates a before- and afterschool program at Sea Breeze in Bradenton, Florida, and provides approximately 500 on-site enrichment programs nationwide. “Through hands-on involvement, children have the opportunity to discover and value our community’s unique natural features,” Dearden continues.

The Sea Breeze Elementary School program collaborates with Anna Maria Island Turtle Watch (AMITW), a local non-profit organization that is committed to endangered sea turtle conservation. The organization promotes sea turtle nesting and habitat awareness. It recently opened the Turtle Watch Education Center, which provides activities for kids and educational information for adults.

The Medallion School Partnerships/AMITW relationship is a perfect

match. Children have the opportunity to show their dedication and support for Anna Maria Island's wildlife. They educate beachgoers regarding turtle habitats as they clean damaging litter off the beach. Medallion kids also work at the Turtle Watch Education Center, learning how to run a cash register, stock shelves, price items, and promote the center.

Meanwhile, the center has a positive impact on children. "Confidence levels have increased dramatically, but the biggest change apparent is a renewed sense of responsibility and pride," says Dearden. She believes that Medallion kids are starting to exude compassion and empathy and a strong sense of ownership for the island. Parents, too, are becoming involved, often encouraging their children to go the extra mile to support the center.

"Best of all, the community at large is taking note of the dedicated work children are doing, and the community is spreading the word," Dearden concludes.

For more information about Medallion School Partnerships, visit www.medallionsp.com.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS...


"As district attorney, it is my job to look out for the safety of Onondaga County residents. One of the most effective ways to accomplish this is by preventing crimes from occurring instead of prosecuting them. The *Post-Standard's* Oct. 9 editorial, 'After School, Nothing,' reinforces what law enforcement and researchers have known for years: that quality afterschool programs prevent kids from becoming criminals and law-abiding citizens (including kids) from becoming crime victims. Afterschool programs not only keep kids out of harm's way while participating, but also help prevent them from becoming criminals down the road. A study of the Quantum Opportunities afterschool program


compared the conviction rate of boys randomly selected to participate in the program against those not enrolled. The results were astounding. Six years after the start of the program, boys not enrolled averaged six times more criminal convictions than boys who were enrolled. Protecting public safety is the most basic responsibility of government. Investing in proven crime-fighting tools such as afterschool programs is a necessity, not an option."

- William J. Fitzpatrick, Onondaga County District Attorney, Letter-to-the-Editor, *Syracuse (NY) Post-Standard*, October 22, 2003



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

 **October 27 – November 21**
Starting October 27, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will promote *Extra Hour for Extra Action*, the latest effort in its **VERB. It's what you do** campaign. **VERB** is an innovative, integrated marketing campaign coordinated by the CDC to motivate tweens to be active and have fun trying new activities that get their bodies moving, developing new skills, and enjoying physical activity with their friends and peers. *Extra Hour for Extra Action* is a multi-week VERB initiative to help get kids moving. Promotional materials will be posted on the VERB web site, www.cdc.gov/verb. Participating programs will be eligible to win one of 20 \$500 grants for physical activity equipment.

 **December 3 – 6**
The National Community Education Association (NCEA) will host its 38th Annual Conference, "Creating Communities of Learning ... No One Left Behind" from December 3 to 6 in New Orleans. NCEA hosts the largest national gathering of

community educators in a forum designed to help them create comprehensive community programs, including community schools. Participants will learn about community education management and professional development, community education programming and afterschool programs. The pre-conference workshop will focus on grant writing. For more information, visit www.ncea.com/conferences or call 703-359-8973.

 **February 15 – 18, 2004**

FOUNDATIONS, Inc. will host its Beyond School Hours VII conference in San Diego, California from February 15 to 18. Through speakers, institutes, sessions and exhibitors, participants will find out about successful, content-rich, extended-day program models; network with community, school, university and government leaders; make connections with faith-based organizations; discuss No Child Left Behind and other current policies and practices that impact programming; and more. For more information, call 888-977-KIDS (5437) or visit www.foundationsinc.org.

 **February 26 – 28, 2004**

The National School-Age Care Alliance will host its 16th Annual Conference in Tampa, Florida from February 26 to 28. More than 3,000 afterschool professionals will

participate in a broad array of programs, sessions and events. For more information, go to www.nsacaconference.com.

 **March 18 - 19, 2004**

The Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University will host its 2004 National Conference from March 18 to 19 at the Inner Harbor of Baltimore, Maryland. The theme of the conference is “Summer Learning for All: Programs, Policy, and Research.” Participants will include summer program providers, researchers, teachers, informal educators, youth development professionals and policy makers interested in improving the quality and quantity of summer learning opportunities for all young people. Conference registration materials are available online at www.summerlearning.org/about/conference.html.



Receiving the *Afterschool Advocate* via email

We would prefer to send you the *Afterschool Advocate* via email so that you can receive it in a more timely manner. If you would like to receive the newsletter by email, please contact editor Ridgely Benjamin via email (afterschooladvocate@prsolutionsdc.com) or fax (202/371-9142). She will need your name, organization, phone and fax number, and email address. Thank you!

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.

The *Afterschool Advocate* is produced for the Afterschool Alliance by PR Solutions, Inc., Washington, DC; Phone: 202/371-1999; Fax: 202/371-9142; E-mail: afterschooladvocate@prsolutionsdc.com
