

A media outreach newsletter published by the Afterschool Alliance

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Note to Readers: The Afterschool Alliance is a nonpartisan organization and does not endorse any candidate for office. Afterschool is an issue that affects all families and communities – a fact reflected in the broad support for afterschool that crosses all demographic and party lines. Afterschool cannot, and should not, be owned by any party or politician. The Afterschool Alliance will continue to encourage all, from the public to the private sector, to make afterschool a priority and to help realize the vision of Afterschool for All.

To serve as an effective and timely source of information, and to keep our colleagues informed of the latest debates and discussion, the Alliance will report on coverage of afterschool in the election season and candidate statements on it. In this issue of the Afterschool Advocate, we look at how afterschool was addressed at the Democratic National Convention. We will report on the Republican National Convention in early September.

AFTERSCHOOL PROMINENT AT DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

From former presidents to Members of Congress to governors to mayors, lawmakers and candidates talked about the importance of afterschool programs in their remarks and interviews at the Democratic National Convention.

During his prime time address on July 26, former President Bill Clinton talked about the fact that 300,000 children would have lost access to afterschool programs if Congress had not rejected last year's proposed cut to 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC). It was the Clinton Administration that launched the federal afterschool initiative. The former President praised afterschool programs for keeping young people "off the streets, out of trouble, in school learning" after the school day ends.

Senator and vice presidential candidate John Edwards echoed Clinton's sentiment. In discussing priorities and possibilities, Edwards said, "We can ensure that three million kids [have] a safe place to go afterschool." Elizabeth Edwards noted that she and her husband helped start two afterschool programs in North Carolina.

In his acceptance speech on July 29, Senator Kerry discussed afterschool programs. "Values are not just words. Values are what we live by. They're about the causes that we champion and the people we fight for. And it is time for those who talk about family values to start valuing families. You don't value families by kicking kids out of afterschool programs."

Reaction

"We urge lawmakers and candidates from every party to recognize that supporting afterschool is both sound policy and a winning issue," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Judy Y. Samelson. "Voters want more afterschool programs in their communities, and worry that funding shortfalls will rob children and families of the promise of afterschool: keeping kids safe, helping working families, *Continued on Page Five...*

MEDIA OUTREACH

Pitching Your Way onto a Local Talk Show

If you ever wondered how radio and television shows choose the guests they interview, here is the answer to the puzzle. Guests whose names have been in recent headlines are often invited by a show's producer. Practically everybody else – and for most shows, that means most guests – are there because somebody "pitched" the show's producers or host.

Talk shows can provide great opportunities to get out the afterschool message. Following is a description of how to try to place an afterschool spokesperson on a local radio or television talk show, followed by a sample "pitch letter" and talking points for the spokesperson to use on air.

- 1) Choose local talk shows you'd like your spokesperson to be on. If you're not familiar with a program, listen to it to get a sense of whether it would make a good venue. You can tell by listening if a particular show provides a good opportunity to get your message out. Also ask your friends and colleagues what shows they listen to or watch.
- 2) Call the stations and get the names of the "guest booker" for the shows, or their producers.
- 3) Send a pitch letter to the show. It must be shorter than one side of one page, must convey why the issue matters to listeners or viewers, why now is a good time for such an interview, and why your spokesperson is the right choice. You'll find a sample that you can modify and use following this article.
- 4) A few days later, call the booker/producer and see if they've gotten the letter and would be interested in an interview. Be prepared to make your case for being on the show.
- 5) If the show invites your spokesperson on the program, be prepared to do it at their studio or by phone from outside the studio, whatever they prefer.

In writing your pitch letter, remember that producers are looking for interesting guests to talk about subjects that matter to listeners. Communicate that what you are proposing will make for a strong, lively broadcast. Remember, too, to take the right tone. Don't speak in moral imperatives. Never tell them they "must" or "should" book a particular guest. Tell them instead about an opportunity to book a guest who can talk about an issue of interest to the community. Talk show producers closely follow the headlines, and they look for what is called "news you can use" – information that's of everyday value to listeners.

Preparing for a Broadcast Interview

If a radio or television show invites your spokesperson to come on the program to talk about afterschool issues, you'll need to do some preparation beforehand. Here's some advice for the spokesperson and for whoever helps them prepare:

- 1) **Know the show**. Prepare the spokesperson for the interviewer's style, whether there will be calls from listeners, how long the segment will last, whether there will be other guests, and whether there will be commercial breaks.
- 2) **Do some research**. Make sure you're ready to talk about everything that was promised. In this case, be prepared to talk about local afterschool programs, how parents can find them, and how

they should evaluate them before enrolling. Also be prepared to talk about afterschool funding issues.

- 3) Convey the message; don't just answer questions. Answer questions put to you, but use them as opportunities to convey your key message points, and to convey them several times over the course of the interview.
- 4) **Make your answers brief, but not terse. Don't drone on.** Listen to the show in advance to get a sense of the flow of the conversation. Start by giving answers that are between 20 seconds and a minute in length, and then see how the host reacts.
- 5) **Be clear and succinct.** Speak in short and relatively simple sentences. Use topic sentences. Speak in outlines, if possible: "I'd make three points about the benefits of afterschool programs. First... Second... Third..." Don't speak in jargon, or use acronyms or abbreviations for institutions.
- 6) Use anecdotes or personal stories to illustrate your points. Listeners relate to and remember stories about personal experiences, and afterschool programs generate powerful stories every day.
- 7) **Assume no prior knowledge on the part of the listener/viewer or the interviewer.** Speak as if you are talking with someone who is brand new to the issue.
- 8) **Know exactly how you would answer the baseline question about your subject** questions like "so, tell me how you think afterschool programs are working?" Don't let yourself be caught flat-footed by a softball question!

Key Afterschool Messages

Broadcast time is short and precious, so be sure to communicate your key messages when you have the chance. Here are few important points you might want to make. As always, you will find a wealth of information on a variety of afterschool issues at www.afterschoolalliance.org. Following are some key message points to blend with your own local messages and information.

- Afterschool programs keep kids safe, help working families, and inspire students to learn.
- <u>Americans strongly support afterschool programs</u>. More than nine in ten voters think all children should have some type of organized activity or place to go after school every day that provides opportunities for them to learn.
- But afterschool programs are in dangerously short supply. All across the country, afterschool programs are fighting to keep their doors open. The Afterschool Alliance's recent household survey, conducted with support from the JCPenney Afterschool Fund, found that 14.3 million kindergarten through twelfth grade youth, including nearly four million middle schoolers, care for themselves in the afternoons. Just 6.5 million children are in afterschool programs, but the parents of another 15.3 million children say they would participate if an afterschool program were available.
- The federal government is not making good on its past commitments to afterschool. The No Child Left Behind Act authorizes \$2 billion for 21st Century Community Learning Centers in Fiscal Year 2005. The President has asked for only \$1 billion flat funding for the fourth straight year. Unless Congress increases the appropriation, hundreds of thousands of children will have no place to go after the school day ends.

Sample Pitch Letter

August 17, 2004

Ms. Denise Falco WLIT-FM 1111 Enrichment Way Kinderburg, WI 53500

Dear Ms. Falco,

If the radio station's office is like other workplaces, a number of your colleagues spend the hours between 3 and 6 PM distracted by worries about what their children are doing while they are home alone. Over the last decade, the nation has made great strides in increasing the number of afterschool programs for our kids, but new data finds that millions of families who need afterschool programs don't have access to them.

With the new school year about to begin, I wanted to propose that you have [name of spokesperson], [title] of [organization] on your program to talk about afterschool opportunities in the community this year, as well as about the pressing need for more support for afterschool from local, state and the federal government, and from the business and charitable communities.

M[r/s]. [last name] is [briefly describe spokesperson's qualifications to be an afterschool expert – years in current job, past experience, advanced degree in the field, etc.] [She/He] is also an accomplished spokesperson, eager to get the afterschool message across to your listeners. She'll be able to help your listeners find specific afterschool programs in the community, describe the questions they should ask about programs before enrolling their children, discuss recent research on afterschool programs' value, and talk about how listeners can help protect local programs from budget shortfalls and help increase afterschool funding here and across the nation.

I'm enclosing a fact sheet on our organization, along with M[r/s]. [last name]'s brief biography. I'll be in touch to follow up. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jill Smith 555/555-5555

Continued from Page One...

and inspiring kids to learn."

"We face a severe shortage of afterschool programs in America today, with millions of parents who want afterschool care for their kids unable to find it, and millions of children unsupervised in the often-perilous afternoon hours," Samelson continued. "The Afterschool Alliance encourages candidates of all parties, and independents, to join us in working to make afterschool for all a reality by the year 2010. Afterschool programs strengthen our nation by protecting and nurturing our youth."



LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL! 2004

Be sure to join afterschool advocates across the country for the fifth annual *Lights On Afterschool!* on **October 14**. Be part of this national rally for afterschool. Join the effort to save afterschool programs imperiled by funding cuts and underscore the need for quality afterschool programs for all children.

To learn more about how to participate or to register your event, visit www.afterschoolalliance.org. Help turn the lights on at afterschool programs!

NEW POLICY REPORT SUPPORTS AFTERSCHOOL FUNDING

The federal government must play a larger role in financing and supporting afterschool programs, according to a report released last month by the Progressive Policy Institute. The report, "After-School Programs: Expanding Access and Ensuring Quality," highlights the success of afterschool programs and offers recommendations to expand access and improve quality.

Chief among the report's recommendations is funding the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool initiative at its authorized level, along with rigorous evaluation and quality control standards to promote programs that work. The study also urges targeting resources toward communities with the greatest needs, such as children in lowachieving schools, welfare recipients, and other at-risk populations.

The study criticizes lawmakers who cite early, inconclusive data on afterschool programs' performance to justify funding cuts. Reminding readers that the afterschool movement is relatively young, the report stresses the need for time and flexibility to study program outcomes and build on what works rather than shut down funding which, the paper says, does nothing to ameliorate some programs' poor performance.

The full report is available at www.ppionline.org/documents/afterschool_0704.pdf.



IN THE NEWS...

National – The YMCA of the USA unveiled its "Activate America" initiative in July to promote community-based strategies to encourage healthy living. The initiative, which targets the rise in obesity and chronic diseases in our nation, will culminate in a national conference this fall where delegations of civic leaders from around the country will gain knowledge to bring back to their communities. Senators Arlen Specter (R–PA) and Tom Harkin (D–IA) commended the plan, which is supported by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund and the Kimberly–Clark Corporation.

California – The Village Drive Resource Center in Brentwood, which provides myriad community services including afterschool programs, received a seven-year grant of \$801,000 last month from the Brentwood City Council, the *Contra Costa Times* reports. The grant will help pay for staff, and will help the Center provide much needed community education and social service programs. The city also pledged a matching grant of \$500,000 for the construction of a new Village Center.

Florida – Palm Beach County

Commissioners have offered a helping hand to afterschool programs through the county's Recreational Assistance Program, according to the *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel*. Since 1993, approximately \$2.9 million has gone to county schools for music and sports activities, campus upgrades, afterschool programs and more. Commissioners and school officials say the extra money is necessary to compensate for cuts in state funding for such programs.

Illinois – Last month State Representatives Harry Osterman (D–Chicago) and Kathleen A. Ryg (D–Lake Co.) helped secure additional funding in next year's state budget for The Teen REACH afterschool program. It was slated for a cut of \$700,000, but was saved from the chopping block and instead received an additional \$1.2 million. Especially influential in this victory was the Illinois Afterschool Partnership, which organized parents and afterschool programs to encourage lawmakers to support the program. The Partnership is a project of the Illinois Center for Violence Prevention. The Partnership is now fighting a two percent across—the—board cut that would lower the program's funding.

Michigan – Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan has awarded \$50,000 "Healthy Schools" grants to three state school districts to launch or expand fitness and nutrition programs for elementary and middle school students. The programs will educate students and families about the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. Organizers say they hope to help students avoid obesity, which leads to high cholesterol, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes and orthopedic problems. The programs will run from September 2004 through July 2006, and will serve 28,000 students. More information is available at www.bcbsm.com.

South Carolina – The South Carolina Afterschool Alliance unveiled a new web site last month that gives parents information about afterschool programs throughout the state. The web site lists approximately 1,262 afterschool programs, along with information about what activities the programs offer, hours, locations and contact information. The web site is available at www.scafterschool.com.

Washington – Federal officials have awarded two million dollar grants to school districts in Washington state to provide afterschool programs to American Indian high school students who are in danger of dropping out. The *Associated Press* reports that the grant money will be used to teach students science, history, math and language arts, and

counselors will offer career guidance and lifeskills tutoring. The program's long-term goal is to prepare students for college. Another \$1 million was awarded to a consortium of five Indian tribes for a video conferencing system that will let students take high school classes from their tribal centers.

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

"Personally, for the last 25 years I have always stayed one step away from partisan politics. Instead, I have been partisan about a set of ideals: economic justice, civil rights, a humane foreign policy, freedom and a decent life for all of our citizens ... Like many others, in the aftermath of 9/11, I felt the country's unity. I don't remember anything quite like it. I supported the decision to enter Afghanistan and I hoped that the seriousness of the times would bring forth strength, humility and wisdom in our leaders. Instead, we ... ran record deficits, while simultaneously cutting and squeezing services like afterschool programs."

– Bruce Springsteen, Musician, *New York Times* Op–Ed, August 5, 2004

"The federal government already is spending seven percent of the national income on the elderly but only two percent on children. This disparity will grow exponentially over the coming decade. Even now, a not-very-popular prescription drug benefit is costing us more than it would have cost to provide universal health care for children along with high-quality preschool and afterschool programs for those who need them most."

 Isabel V. Sawhill, Vice President and Director, Economic Studies Program, Brookings Institution, Wichita Eagle, July 30, 2004 "Too many children go to schools that are overcrowded, and they can't get into afterschool programs because they are shortfunded. I know we can do better. And I know that you know we can do better."

U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D–CA),
Democratic National Convention, July 30,
2004

"As regards to education, the Kerry/Edwards plan is more than an empty promise to leave no child behind. It will provide resources to expand early childhood and afterschool programs, raise high school graduation rates, and give all high school graduates an opportunity to attend college."

Stuart Paisano (D–NM), Democratic
National Convention, July 29, 2004.
Paisano is one of 19 governors of Indian pueblos in the state

"Instead of denying child care and afterschool programs to hundreds of thousands of youngsters, we will support an administration that keeps our children safe and helps them learn."

 U.S. Representative Louise Slaughter (D–NY), Democratic National Convention, July 29, 2004

"We need a president who understands that small investments in afterschool programs pay huge dividends."

Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn,
Democratic National Convention, July 28,
2004

"We're committed to cutting the red tape that allows too many of our children to fall through the cracks. And John Kerry shares our goals of investing early in our children's lives by providing access to health care, pre-

kindergarten education and quality afterschool programs."

Lt. Governor Diane Denish (D–NM),
Democratic National Convention, July 27,
2004



RESOURCES

Experience Corps

The non–profit Experience Corps has developed a practical, hands-on guide to help community organizations involve older adults in afterschool programs. Seniors can provide tutoring, mentoring and homework help to students, among other activities. The guide includes: tips on program design; suggestions for recruiting, supporting and retaining volunteers; estimates on project costs; and guidance on project evaluation. For more information, visit www.experiencecorps.org/news/afterschoolre port/index.html.

The Forum for Youth Investment

The Forum for Youth Investment, a non-profit organization working to increase investment in youth, publishes a semi-annual, online "Out-of-School Time Policy Commentary" newsletter. Funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the publication distills research findings and policy analyses to educate local, state and national decisionmakers about the importance of out-ofschool time opportunities for youth. The newsletter covers such issues as increasing the quantity and quality of afterschool programs, ensuring program sustainability and the importance of summer learning opportunities. It can be viewed at www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/ostpc.htm



FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

The "Very Best in Youth" program, supported by Nestlé and Reading is Fundamental, is sponsoring a contest to identify 30 young people (ages nine to 18) who have made reading a priority in their lives and, in the process, have made contributions their communities. The winners will be featured in a special publication and honored at a ceremony in Los Angeles. Nestlé will also donate \$1,000 in the name of each winner to the charity of his or her choice. Applications are due November 1. For information, visit www.rif.org/what/eventscontests/verybestiny outh.



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 (advocate@afterschoolalliance.org) or fax (202/371-9142). She will need your name, organization, phone and fax number, and email address. Thank you!

AFTERSCHOOL FOR ALL ATTRACTS BROAD SUPPORT

Nearly 400 prominent Americans and national organizations have joined "Afterschool for All: Project 2010," a new united national voice in support of afterschool programs. Partners of "Project 2010" include educators, youth, youth advocates, policy makers, faith-based leaders, parents, business

leaders, law enforcement and judicial experts, and others. Launched in May with 250 partners, "Project 2010" continues to attract highly respected individuals and organizations such as: New York Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg; Maryland Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.; former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley; Police Chief Richard J. Pennington, Atlanta; Citigroup Inc.; Friends of Libraries U.S.A.; Volunteers of America; National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy; West Virginia Department of Education; The Institute for Youth Development; National Rural Education Association; and the Sesame Workshop.

Today, a total of 385 partners have signed, including: 52 mayors, 21 police chiefs, 16 district attorneys and 273 organizations representing more than 25 million Americans. More information is available on the project's web site, www.afterschool2010.org.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

© October 14

Be sure to join afterschool advocates across the country for the fifth annual *Lights On Afterschool!* on October 14. Be part of this effort to save afterschool programs imperiled by funding cuts and underscore the need for quality afterschool programs for all children. To learn more about how to participate and to register your event, visit www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa_2003/index. cfm. Help turn the lights on at afterschool programs!

October 14

Results for America, a project of the non– profit Civil Society Institute, is sponsoring "Listen to Kids About Learning," an event for children across America to speak out on education. The organization is encouraging people to invite legislators to schools to listen to kids, arrange student visits to city halls to meet with mayors and city council members, and organize hearings at which kids talk to policy makers about learning and education. For more information, visit www.ResultsforAmerica.org and click on Listen to Kids.

№ November 4 – 6

The California School–Age Consortium is hosting its National Middle School Conference, "Take Your Job and Love It!" at the Cathedral Hill Hotel in San Francisco from November 4 – 6. The conference will provide information, activities and ideas on engaging youth in afterschool programs and empowering staff to plan programs that middle school youth will love. For more information, visit www.calsacconference.org.

№ November 10 – 13

The National Community Education Association (NCEA) is hosting its 39th annual conference in San Diego, California from November 10 - 13. "Creating a Future Without Boundaries" is the largest national gathering of community educators. The conference is designed to help participants create comprehensive community programs, including community schools, for the 21st century. The conference includes information on the latest issues, model programs, best practices, services and products to support participants' efforts. Join others to learn about community education management and professional development, community education programming and afterschool programs. On November 9, there is a preconference workshop on "Building Your Afterschool Program's Capacity to Provide Rich Academic Content." For more information, visit www.ncea.com/conferences or call 703/359-8973.

№ February 16 – 19, 2005

FOUNDATIONS, Inc. is hosting its 2005 *Beyond School Hours VIII*® national conference in Atlanta, Georgia from February

16 – 19, 2005. The Power of Partnership conference will include successful, contentrich, afterschool program models, as well as network opportunities with community, school, university and government leaders. There will also be discussions on current policies and practices that impact programming and school systems and on methods to maximize resources and funding strategies for schools and afterschool programs. The conference is hosted in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program and is sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Annenberg Foundation. For more information or to register online, visit: www.foundationsinc.org.

February 24 – 26, 2005

The National AfterSchool Association (formerly NSACA) is hosting its 2005 conference from February 24 – 26 in San Antonio, Texas. The conference will bring together 2,500 afterschool professionals - the largest conference of the profession - for practical, thought-provoking programs, sessions, and events. For more information, visit www.naaconference.org or call 800/606-0061.



The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization supported by a group of public, private, and nonprofit entities working to ensure 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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