

Afterschool Advocate

A media outreach newsletter published by the Afterschool Alliance

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AFTERSCHOOL ADVOCACY NEEDED IN '05

Citing the shortage of afterschool programs, which leaves millions of children with no supervised activity each afternoon, and the possibility of cuts to federal afterschool funding, advocates are stepping up their advocacy this year and calling on communities to join them.

“This year, we must convince lawmakers to deliver on the promise of the *No Child Left Behind Act* by increasing funding for the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) afterschool initiative,” said Afterschool Alliance Interim Executive Director Jen Rinehart. “We need state and federal budgets, and corporate and private philanthropy, to address the great unmet need for afterschool and the broad public support for these programs. Afterschool supporters should begin working now to send the message that America needs more afterschool funding.”

The 21st CCLC initiative, which supports afterschool programs serving 1.4 million children, was flat-funded at \$1 billion in the Fiscal Year 2005 budget – the fourth year in a row without an increase.

President Bush will announce his Fiscal Year 2006 budget proposal on February 7. There is widespread speculation that the White House will recommend deep cuts to many domestic programs, to reduce the federal deficit and pay for overseas commitments. Congress begins considering appropriations bills in mid-May.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Education and Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. may release the third and final phase of

their controversial afterschool evaluation this year, making it even more crucial that voters remind lawmakers of the value of afterschool programs.

To remind lawmakers and the public of the importance of afterschool, advocates are planning a series of activities and events, many of which are listed online at www.afterschoolalliance.org/prog_tools_advoc_2005.cfm. The Afterschool Alliance will also provide the community with tips and resources for lawmaker and media outreach in the *Afterschool Advocate* throughout the year. Some activities scheduled for 2005 include:

- *Running Rocks: Fun and Fitness Afterschool* is a joint initiative launched this fall by the Afterschool Alliance and Running USA, aimed at combating the growing epidemic of childhood obesity through running and/or walking activities for children at thousands of afterschool programs across the nation. Started as a pilot effort in seven cities, the program will expand to hundreds in the months and years ahead.
- *Read Across America* (March 2, 2005), sponsored by the National Education Association and supported by national partners including the Afterschool Alliance, will feature reading events across the country to focus attention on the importance of motivating children to read and helping them master basic skills. *For more information, visit www.nea.org/readacross/.*
- The 14th annual *National Healthy Kids Day* (April 2, 2005), sponsored by the YMCA of the USA, will bring kids and families together at more than 1,150 YMCAs across the nation to discover the wide range of wellness activities and youth sports available

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MEDIA OUTREACH

The start of a new year is a great time to remind the public of the value of and need for afterschool, and that speaking out on the issue can make a real difference. Below is a sample op-ed that can be personalized and submitted to local newspapers (simply fill in the blanks - everything in brackets should be replaced with your information). To submit the op-ed, check out your local newspaper's policy about submissions (most often in the Opinion section). Most papers accept email submissions, with instructions on the newspaper's web site.

*Place a follow-up call a day or two after submitting your op-ed to ensure it was received and to ask if the editors plan to use it (ask for the op-ed page editor or the editorial page editor). If the newspaper rejects the op-ed, don't be discouraged. Consider submitting it to another newspaper – perhaps a community, ethnic or weekly newspaper if you cannot place it in a daily newspaper. Remember **not** to submit the op-ed to two newspapers in the same market at the same time.*

A New Year's Resolution That's Easy to Keep

By [name]

This time of year, as holiday-inspired goodwill begins to recede, most of us are deciding whether to keep or ignore our New Year's resolutions. While contemplating vows to stick to gym schedules, diets and budgets, why not consider a resolution that is easy to keep: speaking out on behalf of worthy organizations and causes.

When concerned citizens contact their elected officials on behalf of important issues, their advocacy can pay huge benefits. On an issue I care deeply about – creating quality afterschool opportunities for every child who needs them – I have no doubt that the thousands of citizens who have reached out to their elected officials have made an enormous difference.

The last ten years have seen a surge in the number and quality of afterschool programs where children regularly spend the afternoon hours engaged in constructive activities under the supervision of caring adults. These programs keep children safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families. In [your city or town], **[Insert description of successful afterschool programs in your area, including, if applicable, ways that programs have met community needs or alleviated problems]**.

Much of the growth in afterschool is the result of the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, a wildly popular federal funding stream that supports afterschool programs serving 1.4 million children. Two years ago, this initiative faced a severe challenge: a proposed 40-percent funding cut. But afterschool supporters did a remarkable thing; they flooded Congress with letters, cards, phone calls and personal visits, and persuaded lawmakers to restore the funding. **[Insert an example of action taken in your community, if applicable]**. As a result, afterschool programs serving hundreds of thousands of children were saved.

But the challenge facing the afterschool community is far from over. The President's *No Child Left Behind Act*, the cornerstone of his domestic policy agenda, laid out a multi-year roadmap for gradual funding increases for afterschool. And while cuts have been defeated, the promised

increases have not materialized. Sadly, funding today is nowhere near the levels promised in the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

Here in [your city or town], that means [tens of] thousands of children unsupervised each afternoon – wasting their time or, worse, getting into trouble.

[Insert a paragraph or two detailing the impact of inadequate funding in your city or state.]

So afterschool advocates have more work to do in the coming year to remind lawmakers of the importance of afterschool programs. There's no doubting what citizen advocacy can accomplish on behalf of programs meeting genuine community needs. So as you're evaluating your resolutions for the New Year, consider adding a little advocacy into the mix – perhaps sending a letter to Congress on behalf of afterschool programs, or on any issue that matters to you. But whatever cause moves you, advocacy is a meaningful contribution that will undoubtedly benefit your community and is a resolution you can easily keep.

[Name] is [your position] of [your program].



 **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? Please share with us, and other readers, your success stories, comments and suggestions. Contact *Afterschool Advocate* editor Christie Constantine with story ideas via email: advocate@afterschoolallianc.org; phone: 202/371-1999; or fax: 202/371-9142.

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to kids.

- The fourth annual *Afterschool for All Challenge* (May 18, 2005) will draw advocates, parents, educators and youth to Washington, DC, to attend a “Breakfast of Champions” honoring afterschool program providers from around the nation. Following the breakfast, providers and advocates will meet with their elected representatives to stress the importance of afterschool.
- *National Kids’ Day* (August 7, 2005), sponsored by Boys & Girls Clubs of America, will be celebrated by more than 1,000 youth organizations across the country and at military bases around the world. In addition to hosting events to honor young people, hundreds of thousands of adults are expected to make commitments to spend more meaningful time with kids year-round. *For more information visit www.kidsday.net.*
- The sixth annual *Lights On Afterschool!* rally (October 20, 2005), organized by the Afterschool Alliance, will bring together educators, community leaders, lawmakers, parents, and business and religious leaders to call attention to afterschool programs and the resources needed to keep their lights on and doors open.

“There are many ways supporters of afterschool can advocate effectively this year,” Rinehart added. “I encourage everyone to contact their representatives at all levels, participate in national and local activities that raise public awareness, and reach out to the media. Raising awareness about how afterschool programs help our children, families and communities is critical.”



RESOURCES FOR RESPONDING TO TSUNAMI DISASTER

As the staggering toll of the tsunami in south and southeast Asia came to light, people worldwide began to respond. The afterschool

field has also stepped up, not only in raising money for relief efforts, but also in helping young people cope with the disaster scenes and stories.

Save The Children has developed a “School Kit” with Ten Tips on How to Help Kids Cope with Disaster, a PowerPoint Presentation designed to help elementary and secondary students understand the crisis and how they can help, and a Teacher’s Toolkit with tips for talking about the tragedy and classroom activities. *It is available at www.savethechildren.org/emergencies/asia_school_kits.asp.*

To help raise funds, afterschool programs can participate in Quarters From Kids, an effort through which youth collect quarters for relief efforts. The nationwide campaign is being launched by a coalition of organizations including America’s Promise, Share Our Strength, Citizen Schools, City Year, YouthBuild USA, Youth Volunteer Corps of America and the Afterschool Alliance. Quarters From Kids will offer curricula for use in programs, and an opportunity to write letters to survivors. *For more information, visit www.quartersfromkids.org.*

Programs around the country are also adopting diverse fundraising activities. For example, children in the program run by Afterschool Associate Linda Barton in Lander, Wyoming, plan to raffle a homemade quilt and donate proceeds to the tsunami victims. Afterschool students working with Afterschool Ambassador Christine Gingerella in Central Falls, Rhode Island, have donated proceeds from their annual Martin Luther King Day performance to the tsunami victims.

Is your afterschool community raising funds for tsunami relief? The Alliance is interested in hearing your story and sharing it with others. Email us at advocate@afterschoolalliance.org.

Before sending donations to any relief effort, be sure to check that the organization still needs support. Some organizations are reporting that they have been overwhelmed

by the response, and some say they have all the resources they need for now.



MEET KEN GLADISH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF YMCA OF THE USA

The Afterschool Advocate recently sat down with Ken Gladish to learn more about afterschool programs provided by the YMCA of the USA.

Afterschool Advocate: What are some of the more exciting and unique opportunities offered to children in YMCA afterschool programs?

Ken Gladish: Afterschool programs play an important role in helping youth develop the skills they need to succeed in the 21st century. YMCAs recognize this important role and offer a wide variety of opportunities for youth. For example, The YMCA of Greater Louisville partnered with the city's Free Public Library to promote reading. Once a week a bookmobile stops by five afterschool programs run by the YMCA allowing about 300 children to board and check out books. The YMCA is now tracking the educational development of these youth by studying the school records of those kids attending Y afterschool programs.

Another example is at the YMCA of Central Maryland in Baltimore. There, the school system is under pressure to raise the math and reading scores of children in the public schools, eliminating many of the arts and music programs. So the YMCA teamed up with more than a half of dozen organizations to bring arts and music classes to the youth enrolled in YMCA afterschool programs. During the 2003-2004 school year, 1,000 youth took advantage of a number of different activities from guitar lessons to vocal lessons, to pottery classes to dancing and drumming lessons.

These are just two examples of how YMCAs use their afterschool programs to give youth in their community opportunities to pursue their interests and learn while having fun.

AA: How long have local YMCAs been offering afterschool programs? When did the YMCA of the USA first recognize afterschool as a priority for local YMCAs?

KG: Before there were public schools in the United States, most early YMCAs cared for children of the poor through free Sunday schools and mission schools. In 1856, the San Francisco YMCA enrolled 44 boys and three girls in a Sunday school for kids who sold newspapers on the streets. The Washington, DC, YMCA held "day-schools" for poor children. In Salem, Massachusetts, the YMCA's mission school offered classes and "social gatherings" for children who otherwise might not have had such opportunities. By the end of the 19th century, as public education became widely available, YMCAs stepped away from the child care arena. But during the 1960s, when YMCA youth workers noticed that teens often cared for younger siblings while their parents worked, YMCAs began organizing high-quality, affordable child care programs for kids of all ages. YMCAs pioneered afterschool care before the term "latchkey kid" was widely used. In the early 1980s the YMCA of the USA developed the first in a series of manuals on YMCA child care, school-age care, and youth development programs.

Today, YMCAs are collectively the largest providers of child care serving hundreds of thousands of youth of all ages everyday while offering affordable, quality care.

AA: Nationally, how many children are served by YMCA afterschool programs, and

what do you see as the most beneficial effects of these programs?

KG: Collectively, YMCAs serve more than 352,000 school-aged children each year in more than 8,400 afterschool sites, according to our 2002 child care survey. The most beneficial impact on children is the focus on whole child development. Y programs support academic achievement, promote physical health and well being, and help children develop social skills.

AA: How has JCPenney's support affected the YMCA of the USA's afterschool work and the afterschool programming offered by local YMCAs?

KG: In 1999, YMCA of the USA formed an alliance with JCPenney Afterschool. This partnership has proven to be a very important one as YMCAs have been able to better position their afterschool programs as affordable, high-quality "safe zones" that aid in the healthy development of America's youth. More kids and teens nationwide have been able to participate in YMCA afterschool programs thanks to JCPenney Afterschool grants. These grants have been used to fund youth financial assistance, secure additional staffing, provide transportation and enhance programs. JCPenney Afterschool has also provided funding for 431 YMCA staff and volunteers to obtain ongoing training in how to run safe and structured afterschool programs. YMCA is very fortunate to have such a strong partner alongside our organization to help us build stronger and better programs.

AA: Please share some of your greatest *Lights On Afterschool* successes.

KG: YMCAs from Maine to California celebrate and promote *Lights On Afterschool*. These events are as varied as the communities that YMCAs serve, but all feature fun, educational activities. Most YMCAs

collaborate closely with their local schools, other youth-serving organizations and JCPenney Afterschool partners. Examples of 2004 events include:

- McGaw YMCA (Evanston, Ill.) youth showed off their poetry reading and double-dutch-jumping skills before the Mayor and State Senator spoke on the importance of afterschool programs.
- The Helena Family YMCA (Montana) held its first annual ping-pong tournament -- for adults and youth -- to demonstrate YMCA sports principles. A pizza party and awards for all participants followed the tournament.
- The Sioux YMCA (South Dakota) distributed free books and combined the event with national Native American Day (October 11).
- The YMCA of Greater Worcester (Massachusetts) held open houses at all its afterschool sites. Activities included a talent show, essay contest, and an art project where children decorated banners and paper light bulbs with messages urging the community to keep the lights on for afterschool programs.

AA: To date, the vast majority of afterschool programs have been for younger children – elementary and early middle school years. Do local YMCAs offer programs for older kids? If so, how do these programs differ from programs for early grades?

KG: Collectively, YMCAs serve more than nine million children from infancy to age 17 in a variety of activities such as afterschool programs, youth sports and camping. Over the years, we've seen an increase in the number of families where both parents work outside the home. As a result, more and more parents now describe afterschool programs as

an absolute necessity. Therefore, YMCAs have responded to the growing demand and have unveiled a package of afterschool options from sports to arts to academic coaching. Schools are a major player with the YMCAs in this effort. YMCAs know that structure and predictability are important for parents of younger children, but school-age youth demand more flexibility and choice in their afterschool activities, and so with older students there need to be leadership opportunities. Many YMCAs offer teens such programs as Youth in Government, Minority Achievers and Counselors in Training, all of which focus on leadership opportunities and responsibilities to empower them with skills they will use for the rest of their lives.

AA: Is there a particular success story involving a participant in a YMCA afterschool program that you'd like to share?

KG: James Torrence from Baltimore, Maryland, is a great example of what YMCA programs can do for young people. James, who grew up in an inner city public housing development, was going through a difficult period of his life when he got involved with the YMCA. His beloved grandfather had just died and middle school was difficult both academically and socially for him. He involved himself in the YMCA TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More), a YMCA afterschool program offered through his school. He received tutoring while participating in fun activities, surrounded by peers and adults who cared about him. James credits this program with helping him get the tools and skills he needed to improve his grades. In fact, this program allowed him to find a passion within himself – chess.

He went on to compete regionally in chess tournaments and soon found himself involved with the YMCA Youth and Government program, which helps kids gain leadership skills while learning about government. He quickly progressed in the Maryland Youth and Government program starting out as a

Page in the eighth grade to being a Delegate his freshman year, then serving as Attorney General his sophomore year followed by serving as President of the Senate his junior year. This year he is a senior and running his campaign to be Youth Governor. James feels it is necessary to give back and therefore, he continues to volunteer with the very program responsible for his success, helping other youth learn about chess and the Youth and Government program. He is looking forward to attending college next year and hopes to obtain some scholarships. The YMCA has helped James develop the skills and tools he needs for a bright future.

AA: How can people learn more about YMCA programs in their communities?

KG: To learn more about Y Afterschool and other Y programs in your community, contact your local YMCA. To find a YMCA near you, go to www.ymca.net and follow the path to “find a Y near you.”



IN THE NEWS...

California – San Diego’s juvenile court and community schools serving troubled youths have received a \$750,000, five-year grant from the California Department of Education to provide afterschool programs, according to the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. Programs, to be conducted with the YMCA, will tackle issues such as tobacco cessation and anger management, and offer tutoring, music, art and recreational activities.

Maine – A new program in the Windham and Westbrook school districts is preparing alternative education students for careers, reports the *Portland Press Herald*. The Teen Aspirations Project afterschool program, funded by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, helps students

find an interest, and explore it through interviews, job shadowing and other research. The Project expects to serve as many as 150 students each year. Participants have expressed interest in a wide range of careers, including stand-up comedy, obstetric nursing, criminal justice, business, and land development and construction.

Massachusetts – Seventh- and eighth-graders at the Forest Grove Middle School afterschool program in Worcester are learning to build and program robots, and have been gaining top recognition in regional robotics competitions, reports the *Telegram & Gazette*. The Intel-funded program is offered in conjunction with the local YMCA. Per this year’s competition theme, teams must create robots that can perform tasks to help the disabled, such as climbing stairs, opening gates, or putting food on a table.

New York – An innovative afterschool program in Harlem allows teenagers to act as judge, jury, and lawyers at trials of their peers, reports the *Christian Science Monitor*. Established in 1999, the Harlem Youth Court hears real cases of teenaged defendants arrested for misdemeanors such as truancy, graffiti or fighting. Sentences include community service, anger management classes or tutoring. The experience can be positive for defendants, many of whom return to volunteer with the program after completing their sentences. Organizers cite myriad benefits to participants, including gaining critical thinking, public speaking, and consensus building skills, and developing a more positive relationship with the criminal justice system.

New York – A New York City educator is using comic books to improve literacy at afterschool programs across the country, reports WNYC radio. The Comic Book Project, which teaches kids to create their own comics, was founded in New York by Michael Bitz in 2001 and has since been

adopted by 45 schools in Baltimore, Chicago and Cleveland, with funding from The After-School Corporation and several community-based organizations.

Washington, DC – Members of the Revel Youth Shine afterschool program are speaking out against violence in their neighborhoods on a new CD, according to the *Washington Post*. Entitled “RYS Above the Violence,” the CD features spoken-word poetry, testimonials, rap and hip-hop by Washington-area youth. The program aims to create a safe haven for young people and teach them to make positive decisions in the midst of violence through music, writing, acting and dance. In past years, participants have created anthologies, songs and books to express their emotions about topics including love, hate, war, peer pressure, confusion and peace.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

“If it wasn’t for programs like this, I might not be in Congress today.”

-Congressman Gregory Meeks (D-NY) speaking about afterschool programs, *Newsday*, November 23, 2004

“From the day they are born, thousands of our children are denied access to the basic keys to healthy development and successful transition to adulthood: high quality health and mental health care, affordable and nurturing child care, effective early childhood and K-12 education, afterschool programs, economic stability, and safe and supportive families. And without access to what should be the birthrights of every child, these children are diverted . . . into the pipeline that leads to poor development, isolation, failure, abandonment, mental health problems,

substance abuse, violence, and ultimately, prison.”

-“What Would King Do Now?” *Ebony Magazine*, January 2005



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Grants for Youth Nutrition and Fitness Programs

The General Mills Champions Youth Nutrition and Fitness Initiative will award grants to community-based groups that develop creative programs to help youth (ages two to 20) adopt a balanced diet and physically active lifestyle. Grants will be awarded to programs that demonstrate significant potential impact on youth groups that are at-risk or that have an impact on large populations of youth. The deadline is February 1, 2005. *For more information, visit www.generalmills.com/corporate/commitment/champions.aspx.*



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

February 1, 2005

The Coalition for After-School Funding (CASF) will conduct *After-School Advocacy Day* in Albany, New York. More than 1,200 children, parents, afterschool providers and other supporters from all corners of the state will celebrate the outstanding achievements of afterschool programs, educate policy makers about the value of afterschool activities and call upon the Governor and lawmakers to increase their support for these vital programs. *For more information, contact Davia Gaddy-Collington at dcollington@citizenactionny.org.*

February 16, 2005

The California School-Age Consortium will hold the *California Afterschool Challenge*, a rally at the state Capitol in Sacramento to strengthen afterschool programs. Participants will meet with legislators from their districts to discuss why afterschool programs are critical for kids, families, and communities. *Please contact Christine Shirley at 415-957-9775 or cshirley@calsac.org for more information.*

February 16 – 19, 2005


FOUNDATIONS, Inc. will host its 2005 *Beyond School Hours VIII*[®] national conference in Atlanta, Georgia. *The Power of Partnership* conference will include successful, content-rich, afterschool program models, as well as network opportunities with community, school, university and government leaders. There will 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: wwwFOUNDATIONSINC.org.*

February 24 – 26, 2005

The National AfterSchool Association (formerly NSACA) will host its 2005 conference 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.*

 **March 2, 2005**

The National Education Association will hold its eighth annual Read Across America event, which focuses the country's attention on the importance of motivating children to read, and helping them master basic skills. The program is held every year on March 2 to commemorate the birthday of Dr. Seuss. *For more information on planning an event, as well as downloadable materials, visit www.nea.org/readacross/.*


 **March 9 – 11, 2005**

The Coalition for Community Schools will hold its fourth annual conference in Chicago, Illinois. The national forum will bring together leaders from across the U.S. who are implementing local community-school initiatives to share their practical experiences. The deadline to receive a discounted registration rate has been extended to February 2 for individuals and teams of four or more; discounted registration for teams of ten or more will end January 18. *For more information or to register, please visit www.communityschools.org.*


 **March 10, 2005**

The Kansas Community Education Association (KSCEA) will hold its fourth annual conference at the Wichita Airport Hilton. The theme for the conference is, Creating a Future With No Boundaries. The price is \$75 for members and \$110 for non-

members, which includes annual membership dues. *For more information, contact Lavonta Williams at lwilliams@usd259.net or 316-973-5107.*

 **April 15 – 17, 2005**

Youth Service America will sponsor its 17th annual National Youth Service Day, a public awareness and education campaign that highlights the contributions young people make to their communities throughout the year, and mobilizes millions of young people to address the needs of their communities. *To learn more, visit www.yusa.org/nysd/lead_agencies/la_faq_parent.cfm.*

 **May 17 – 18, 2005**

The Afterschool Alliance will convene its fourth annual Afterschool for All Challenge in Washington, DC. Advocates, parents, youth, educators and program leaders and staff are encouraged to participate in this event, which will include a “Breakfast of Champions” awards ceremony on the morning of May 18. Following the breakfast, providers and advocates will fan out across Capitol Hill for a series of meetings with their elected representatives. *For more information and the latest details, visit www.afterschoolalliance.org.*

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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