Afterschool Advocate

A media outreach newsletter published by the Afterschool Alliance

# AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE ISSUES OBESITY PREVENTION AGENDA

Citing the growing epidemic of childhood obesity in America and the unique role afterschool programs can play in reversing that trend, the Afterschool Alliance this week released its national policy agenda on obesity prevention. The agenda calls for significant investment in afterschool as a way to combat childhood obesity and offers suggestions to help the afterschool field find and implement solutions to this problem.

"Afterschool programs are wellpositioned to reach children at risk of becoming obese and to help young people establish lifelong habits that will promote good health and fitness," said Afterschool Alliance Interim Executive Director Jen Rinehart. "Afterschool programs can make a tremendous difference in this arena. Over the coming year, we will work to increase support from federal and state lawmakers so that afterschool programs can do more on this essential issue."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 16 percent of U.S. children and adolescents ages six to 19 are overweight. Although the federal 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* released last month stress the importance of a balanced diet and recommend at least 60 minutes of physical activity for children on most, preferably all, days of the week, studies show that students are increasingly less likely to get adequate exercise and eat healthfully. The CDC reports that 61.5 percent of children ages nine to 13 do not participate in any Volume 6, Issue 4, February 18, 2005

# ESSAY CONTEST

The Afterschool Alliance and the Advertising Council are sponsoring an essay contest for kids who have discovered a new passion in life through an afterschool program. The *Something Way Better to Do: Finding Inspiration Afterschool* essay contest will award top prizes of \$1,500 in several categories. To enter, students in grades five through 12 should submit an essay of 500 words or less that answers one of the following questions:

- Has an afterschool activity changed your life, and what you want to do when you grow up?
- Has a person you met through an afterschool program made a big difference in your life?
- Do you think your experiences in afterschool activities make you better off than other youth?
- What if you had never been in an afterschool program?

Official rules and entry forms are available at www.afterschoolscene.com and www.afterschoolalliance.org. Entries are due June 30, 2005, and can be submitted on either web site.

organized physical activity outside of school hours.

In a separate study, the CDC found that less than ten percent of the elementary, junior high, middle and high schools that were surveyed provided daily physical education or an equivalent at the time of the study. Less than half of schools offered any out-of-school time intramural activities or physical activity clubs for students.

According to data from the CDC's 2003 *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance*, just onefifth of youth in grades nine through 12 consumed the recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

In response to these challenges, the Alliance's policy agenda recommends aligning the goals of afterschool with efforts to reduce childhood obesity. Its recommendations, geared toward federal and state policy makers, funders and program leaders, include:

For Federal and State Policy Makers

- Increase funding for programs that promote physical education and nutrition initiatives for afterschool;
- Encourage federal wellness initiatives to include afterschool;
- Support clearinghouses that identify and disseminate best practices for obesity prevention in afterschool settings, and require these clearinghouses to identify and disseminate culturally appropriate nutrition and exercise programs that are adaptable to afterschool settings; and
- Increase funding for the U.S. Department of Education's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers initiative to the authorized level of \$2.25 billion for Fiscal Year 2006.

# For Funders

• Encourage partnerships between afterschool programs and community health advocates and agencies; community garden programs; nutrition educators; college and university exercise science departments; national organizations; faithbased organizations; and local park and recreation programs;

- Draw on the knowledge and experience of exercise and sports clubs, personal trainers, nutritionists and other well-qualified individuals and apply lessons learned from those fields to spreading effective physical activity and nutrition programs in the afterschool environment; and
- Expand funding for staff training and equipment for programs that operate in inner-city areas. Examine the availability of safe places for physical activity and high-quality produce and healthy foods in these areas, and provide adequate resources to expand options.

# For Program Leaders

- Ensure that students have daily opportunities for active, engaging, developmentally appropriate physical activity that can be modified or adapted for participants at all levels of physical ability. Directed activities should focus on skill development that will facilitate the student's lifelong participation in physical activity;
- Ensure that nutrition and physical activity curricula and activities complement and reinforce classroom learning, physical education and school-wide health education and promotion efforts;
- Include food selection, handling and preparation as components of nutrition education and health promotion curriculum and activities;
- Examine ways to link nutrition and physical activity to academic content areas, as well as to afterschool leadership and entrepreneurship programs; and
- Partner with schools, districts and communities to support and promote walking and bicycling programs such as KidsWalk-to-School, Walking Schoolbus and Safe Routes to School.

The release of the new policy agenda follows a number of health-oriented activities by the Alliance in the past year. Last fall, the Alliance joined Running USA to launch *Running Rocks: Fun and Fitness Afterschool*, aimed at combating 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 in the months and years ahead. The Alliance also submitted a letter last fall to Members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee in support of the bipartisan *Childhood Obesity Reduction Act* (S. 2552).

"Our policy agenda is designed to begin a dialogue among Americans who care about our children's – and our nation's – health and future," added Rinehart. "Promoting healthy habits and lifestyles for our children will require a comprehensive and sustained effort in every community in America. Afterschool can be a significant contributor to that work."

# AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS AROUND NATION PROMOTE HEALTHY LIVING

In response to increased numbers of overweight and obese children across the United States, many afterschool programs have begun incorporating nutrition and physical fitness into their curricula. Here, the *Afterschool Advocate* offers several examples that reflect diverse approaches:

 Modesto City Schools in Modesto, California, has implemented the U.S. Department of Agriculture's "The Power of Choice" nutrition curriculum to help afterschool providers cultivate healthy eating and fitness habits among students. It has also partnered with Stanislaus County's Nutrition and Fitness Council and Office of Education to sponsor an annual "5 A Day Nutrition and Fitness Fair." In addition, the West Modesto Multicultural Neighborhood Collaborative has launched a "Kids off the Couch" initiative in conjunction with area schools. Finally, afterschool staff have received training in the SPARKS Physical Education and Recreation program to improve the quality of recreation and fitness components offered by afterschool programs.

- A grant from the Health Education Network of Delaware allowed Project C.H.A.N.C.E. in Wilmington to institute the "Smart Stepping" walking program in cooperation with Robert Sweetgall, a motivational speaker who has walked across America seven times. Children used pedometers donated by Sweetgall's organization to track their progress. The grant also allowed obese students and their parents to meet twice a week with a nutritionist who helped them monitor their weight, start an exercise program and learn to cook nutritious meals.
- The Evansville-Vanderburgh School • **Corporation: School Community Council** in Evansville, Indiana, provides diverse health programs including afterschool walking clubs, fitness programs, and family health fairs, among others. Its walking programs, available at most afterschool sites, have been particularly popular. Last summer a walking initiative known as the "50 Mile Club" was introduced as part of the summer recreational program. Students used pedometers and wall-sized graphs to track the miles they covered and received incentives for meeting certain milestones. At one site, teachers painted a sneaker gold, and groups within the program competed to win the "golden shoe award." By the end of the seven-week program, students had walked an average of 17 miles. The winning school received a banana split party with treats made from healthy ingredients.

- The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) program in Davenport, Iowa, successfully applied for a Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) grant, which will provide the Davenport school district with \$500,000 over the next two years. The funds will allow the district to review and enhance its physical education and health curricula, create professional development sessions for health and physical education teachers, and purchase new equipment and materials. By using afterschool programs as a platform to deliver healthoriented activities and professional development, the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program hopes to strengthen the community's awareness of and support for afterschool.
- SAFE BASE, a 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC-funded • afterschool program in Iola, Kansas, has employed a full-time registered nurse since 2000 to provide health and nutrition education. She has taught students to read nutrition labels to make healthy food choices, and has introduced students to health care professionals who promote the importance of healthy lifestyles. SAFE BASE also provides healthy cooking classes to students through a partnership with Kansas State University Research and Extension Family Nutrition Program. Finally, the program offers daily recreation classes including basketball, karate, jump roping, dance and yoga.
- In Minneapolis, the YMCA Beacons
   Program has launched the "Healthy Kids
   Initiative" with a grant from General
   Mills. The program features a healthy
   snacks menu created by a licensed
   dietician and physical activities based on a
   YMCA fitness curriculum. The program
   also hosts a Healthy Family Night event
   twice a year with sports, a healthy dinner,
   and prizes. Last year, the program
   conducted a project in conjunction with
   the Girl Scouts that taught girls to analyze

the impact of the media on their body image as well as how to prepare nutritious meals. At the conclusion of the program, girls produced a Public Service Announcement promoting healthy lifestyles and eating.

# SUSTAINABILITY PROFILE: Camp Fire USA Lone Star Council

"If you think back to the 1950s through the 1970s," says Tim James, Executive Director of Camp Fire USA Lone Star Council in Dallas, Texas, "we've always provided some form of afterschool. But it was different then. Our programs were oneday a week, usually administered by a volunteer mother, and just for girls."

Today's Lone Star Council's Kids Club program still provides afterschool services, but it follows a very different model. Programs now run five days a week at 21 sites, involve a broader range of services, and are run by paid staff with help from volunteers. And while the children served by Camp Fire in the 1950s were mostly upperand middle-class girls whose parents wanted them to participate in a weekly youth development activity, today's program aims at children living in low-income apartments and public housing neighborhoods with an eye toward keeping them out of trouble and helping them become responsible members of the community.

The change for Camp Fire in the Dallas area came in the mid-1980s, amidst sharp budget cutbacks in government services to the poor. The organization had already begun to reorient its afternoon programs to serve latchkey children and their families, beginning with a staffed phone line for athome children to call with questions, worries, or even just to hear a friendly voice in the afternoon. A cocktail party conversation between a Camp Fire board member and a



# PROJECT 2010 CONTINUES TO GAIN SUPPORT

The Afterschool Alliance's *Afterschool for All: Project 2010*, a sign-on campaign designed to demonstrate the diverse support for afterschool, is growing by leaps and bounds. Nearly 1,000 individuals and organizations have signed on to the goal of afterschool for all by the year 2010. Project partners include 120 mayors, 115 police chiefs and 190 national organizations.

The Alliance welcomes new partners to *Project 2010*. To become a *Project 2010* Partner, contact Jonathan Rhoads at jrhoads@afterschoolalliance.org. To view a complete partner list and other partner news, click on Afterschool for All: Project 2010 at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

representative of a large apartment complex that was slowly converting from seniors-only to low-income housing led to a considerably larger commitment.

In 1987, the apartment complex donated space and a small support fee to Camp Fire to launch an afterschool program in the complex itself. Says James: "The complex had a senior center, and a number of programs catering to seniors, including churches coming in on a regular basis to provide programs. But everybody was irritated by the presence of these new kids – the people serving meals, the volunteers at the senior center, even the seniors themselves. The kids were driving everybody crazy, largely because there was nothing there for them to do in the afternoons. So they'd just walk around being kids. The managers recognized the problem, and looked to us to be the solution."

As the resulting afterschool program flourished, the relationship between Camp Fire and the one apartment complex eventually grew into a considerably larger arrangement between Camp Fire and the Apartment Association of Greater Dallas. Camp Fire became the "official provider of afterschool care" for the association, using a similar resource model in all its sites: donated space, paid staff, and some financial support from the apartment complex.

Today's participating students get a rich afterschool experience in the bargain, including an afternoon snack, homework help, tutoring, physical activity, arts and crafts, and Camp Fire's proprietary "Five Trails" afterschool curriculum aimed at building a range of skills children need to succeed in school and life. The programs often take children off-site for field trips, and even on weekend camping trips.

Families pay no fees for the service; indeed, many would not likely be able to pay. So Camp Fire has developed a series of fundraising approaches to fill out its program budget. Among the various sources of revenue the organization has developed over the years: the local United Way, direct mail fundraising appeals to individuals, a silent auction event with donated items, and a fundraising dinner honoring a community leader, Camp Fire USA volunteer, youth development professional, and business for their contributions to youth development programming and for attracting high-dollar donations from individuals and local businesses. "The model we'd like to see in all the sites," James says, "is one-third from the apartment complex, one-third from the United Way, and one-third from our fundraising." Each of the 21 sites has a budget, including staffing and materials, of about \$2,500 per month, not including the considerable time

from volunteers or the in-kind contribution of a facility.

James says the mid-1980s refocusing of the organization's efforts has brought positive change in the years since. "We've carved out a niche that's a real positive for us. We're now very well known for providing quality programs to a target population of children from low-income families, often in public housing sites. That niche has given us a way to differentiate ourselves from the Boy and Girl Scouts. For years, people thought our work was basically the same. But that's not true anymore, at least not here in Dallas."

The transition had its bumps, too. "We lost a few supporters along the way," James says, "some very traditional, die-hard Camp Fire people, who felt we were moving away from our primary mission of classical youth development activities with girls. They think what we're doing just isn't Camp Fire. But the benefits far outweigh that, certainly in terms of our visibility and our relationships with major funding sources. The truth is that, if we hadn't changed our method of delivery, we might not be here today. We've made it very clear that we're serving a population of kids whose parents didn't just want us, but needed us in their lives. With a mission to build caring, confident youth and future leaders, Camp Fire is a positive force in the lives of thousands of local children."

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# IN THE NEWS...

**National** – Twelve community-based organizations in seven metropolitan areas will receive grants totaling \$336,000 to implement innovative afterschool projects this spring and fall. The grants were awarded as part of the "Discovering Community" competition sponsored by the MetLife Foundation, which supports educational, health and civic and cultural organizations, and The After-School Corporation (TASC). Projects serving nearly 1,000 middle school students and their families will focus on strengthening the bonds between schools and communities.

**Colorado** – An afterschool program in Arvada is boosting the leadership skills and classroom participation levels of fifth- and sixth-grade boys, reports the *Denver Post*. Students in the "Lynx to Leadership" program at Little Elementary School pledge to be responsible citizens and serve as mentors to younger students. The boys have recently established a school safety patrol, and report feeling empowered to make more positive contributions to their school.

**Florida** – The "Building Bridges" afterschool program at Crystal Lake Middle School in Lakeland is taking a unique approach to increasing mathematics proficiency, reports the *Ledger*. With help from the school's shop teacher, students enrolled in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers-funded program have built a skateboard ramp and are learning to build their own skateboards. Teachers say the popular project allows students to sharpen their math and reading skills while increasing their physical fitness.

Kentucky – Women4Women, a Louisville non-profit organization, is providing lowincome, middle school girls with nutrition and fitness education through its "Fit4Me" afterschool program, reports the *Courier-Journal*. Inspired by its 2000 study which found one in every six Kentucky girls is overweight or obese, the organization began the program with a \$20,000 grant from Louisville's Office of Youth Development. Community partners include University of Louisville women's athletics and Bellarmine University School of Nursing, among others.

**Nevada** – Students at Van Gorder Elementary School's afterschool program in Sparks are taking school governance into their own hands, according to the *Reno Gazette-Journal*. Elections were held last month for a new student government that will provide input on activities, scheduling, and other day-to-day matters. A high school student who serves as a mentor with the program was inspired to organize the elections by his Advanced Placement Government class. He expects that giving students a say in the afterschool program's structure will improve discipline and satisfaction with the program.

North Carolina – African Women in Action, an immigrant aid group founded by two Greensboro women, has begun offering a free afterschool program to help African children adjust to life in the United States, reports the News & Record. The program's founders, a native of Congo and a refugee from Sudan, have received a \$5,000 grant from the **Community Foundation of Greater** Greensboro to operate the program. The women, whose organization offers a variety of social services to African women, say the program will also tutor students whose parents' work schedules or limited English proficiency prevent them from helping their children with homework.

**South Carolina** – James Island Community Education has brought students from four area afterschool programs together to complete an innovative service-learning project. Working with a local environmentalist and a local artist, students held a community trash pickup and learned about limiting the negative effects of litter. Students then turned the litter into individual sculptures that were later incorporated into one large sculpture. The project culminated in a ceremony at a local Walmart where the sculpture was presented to the public.



# IN HER OWN WORDS...

"Across the country, more than 14 million school-age children take care of themselves after school, and the time between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. are peak hours for juvenile crime. Studies show that afterschool programs like Think Detroit keep children safe and help improve their academic achievement."

-First Lady Laura Bush in remarks given at a Helping America's Youth Event in Detroit, Michigan, February 10, 2005

## RESOURCE

# New Evaluation Tool For Afterschool Programs

The New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) recently released the "NYSAN Self-Assessment Tool" for afterschool programs that uses a common set of quality standards to help assess, plan, design and execute strategies for ongoing program improvement. The free tool, whose use is required by the New York State Department of Education for all New York 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers programs, was produced by a collaboration of more than 200 afterschool program providers, stakeholders and advocates over the past several years. *For more information and to access the Tool, visit www.nysan.org.* 

# FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

#### **2005 Playground Opportunities**

The non-profit organization KaBOOM! is seeking community partners for new playground construction projects. Partners may include child-serving, non-profit organizations; community development organizations' neighborhood coalitions; charter schools; or any organization that can mobilize a volunteer force and is in need of a playground. Matching funds are required. *For more information, please visit www.kaboom.org/nooz.aspx?id=452*.

#### **Tony Hawk Skatepark Funds for Low-Income Communities**

Grants of up to \$25,000 are available for the establishment of skateparks in low-income areas through the Tony Hawk Foundation. Eligibility is restricted to 501(c) 3 charitable organizations, public schools, and public projects. The application deadline is March 1 for the current round and September 1 for the following round. *For more information visit www.tonyhawkfoundation.org/grant\_applicati on.asp.* 

#### **Corning Foundation Grants**

The Corning Inc. Foundation, established in 1952, develops and administers projects in support of educational, cultural and community organizations. Over the years, the foundation has contributed more than \$83 million through its grant programs. Each year, the foundation awards some \$2.25 million in grants, including those that support youth centers and afterschool programs. *For more information, please visit www.corning.com/inside\_corning/foundation. asp.* 

#### Schools as Centers of Community: A National Search for Excellence

Each year KnowledgeWorks Foundation and its partners search the country for excellent schools that successfully model the growing trend to build schools as centers of community. The top selected school, chosen by a panel of national experts, will receive the "Richard W. Riley Award for Excellence" and a \$5,000 grant. The panel also selects several schools with innovative design elements and initiatives to be members of the "Schools as Centers of Community Honor Society" and be part of the National Search web site. Submissions will be accepted from March 1 through June 24, 2005. For details, please visit www.nationalschoolsearch.org.

# MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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

#### *April 6 – 7, 2005*

The SPARK Programs, a national physical education organization dedicated to creating, implementing and evaluating programs that promote lifelong wellness, will hold its 2005 SPARK Afterschool Institute training in San Diego, California. The session will provide participants with SPARK certification, as well as leadership techniques and activity ideas that encourage youth to be physically active. The registration deadline is March 18. *For more information, call 800-772-7573 x204 or email jfrank@sparkpe.org. Registration can be completed online at www.sparkpe.org.* 

#### April 15 – 17, 2005

Youth Service America will sponsor its 17<sup>th</sup> 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.ysa.org/nysd/lead\_agencies/la\_faq\_parent.cfm.* 

#### April 20 – 22, 2005

The Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University will hold its 2005 National Conference at the Radisson Plaza Lord Baltimore in Maryland. The conference will feature four plenary sessions, concurrent workshops, and opportunities for networking among leaders in the field of summer programming and out-of-school learning. *Online registration is available at www.summerlearning.org/about/conference.h tml.* 

#### May 10 – 11, 2005

The After-School Institute will sponsor the Eastern Regional Conference on After-School (intended for advocates and providers in Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, DC, and West Virginia). Cosponsors include Associated Black Charities, DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, Maryland State Department of Education, and the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning, among others. The conference will be held at the Sheraton North in Towson, Maryland. *Online registration is available at www.afterschoolinstitute.org.* 

# 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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