



NEWS RELEASE
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Actors, Athletes, State & Federal Lawmakers Join Parents, Children, Educators at Thousands of Rallies for Afterschool

WASHINGTON, DC – Actor Kevin Sorbo, who portrayed television’s “Hercules” and starred in Gene Roddenberry’s “Andromeda,” and former Washington Redskin star Charles Mann, are lending their muscle to the nation’s largest rally for afterschool programs, headlining an unprecedented Afterschool Briefing today on Capitol Hill. Sponsored by the bipartisan House Afterschool and Children’s Caucuses, the Briefing is one of more than 7,000 events being held around the country as part of the sixth annual *Lights On Afterschool*. Again this year, actress and afterschool supporter Rhea Perlman is a national spokesperson for *Lights On Afterschool*, which is organized by the Afterschool Alliance with National Presenting Sponsor the JCPenney Afterschool Fund.

Sorbo and Mann joined JCPenney Afterschool Fund Board Chairman Wynn Watkins, Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant and Members of Congress at the Capitol Hill event to hear children discuss the ways afterschool programs have improved their lives. It included the unveiling of a mural featuring children’s art from afterschool programs across the country.

A giant inflatable Traveling Light Bulb has crisscrossed the country during the month leading up to *Lights On Afterschool* Day, stopping in Dallas, Los Angeles, Tucson, Albuquerque, Wichita, Chicago, Charlotte, Miami and elsewhere. The oversized light bulb represents the oversized need for more afterschool programs.

“Today is a day when children truly come first,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Throughout the country and at military bases around the world, Americans from all walks of life are standing with children in support of afterschool programs. Today we renew our pledge to work toward the day when all children can participate in the afterschool programs that keep them safe, help working families and inspire students to learn.”

“The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is proud to be a sponsor and an active participant in *Lights On Afterschool*,” said Wynn Watkins, Chairman of the Board of the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. “These programs are important to children, their parents and our communities. We all must do everything we can to increase the number of afterschool programs in this country, so that every child has somewhere to go when the bell rings.”

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From a Youth Resource Fair in Boston to the Arizona Science Center in Phoenix to an Army base in Hawaii, lawmakers, community and business leaders, athletes, creative artists and religious leaders are voicing their support for afterschool programs today. Hundreds of Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, and After-School All-Star, Junior Achievement and 4H programs are holding rallies and other events.

Forty-four governors, as well as hundreds of mayors, city councils and school boards, have issued proclamations declaring October 20 *Lights On Afterschool Day*.

A national household survey conducted for the Afterschool Alliance with support from the J.C. Penney Co., Inc. found that 14.3 million kindergarten through 12th graders care for themselves after the school day ends. The parents of more than 15 million children say their kids would participate if an afterschool program were available. Federal funding for afterschool programs has been flat for four years, and is unlikely to see an increase this year, despite the vast unmet need.

Lights On Afterschool began in October 2000 with 1,200 events across the country. Last year, more than half a million people rallied at 7,000 events to show their support for afterschool programs. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is National Chair of *Lights On Afterschool*, a position he has held since 2001. A complete list of *Lights On* events is available online at http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/lights_on/events.cfm.

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 have access to afterschool programs by 2010. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports programs designed to keep kids safely and constructively engaged during out-of-school time. The Fund's contributions allow for the creation and continuance of afterschool programs aimed at the academic, physical, and social development of children throughout the U.S. The JCPenney Afterschool Fund also works to raise awareness of the benefits of afterschool programming, and is committed to ensuring that every child has access to the world of opportunities that awaits them after school.

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