



NEWS RELEASE

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California Kicks Off *Lights On Afterschool* 2004

More than 6,000 Events to Follow in Every Corner of Nation

LOS ANGELES, CA – Actor and children’s activist Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger helped more than 4,000 Los Angeles children send the message that afterschool is key to kids’ success at Birmingham High School here today, as *Lights On Afterschool* kicked off for 2004.

Organized by the Los Angeles Unified School District’s (LAUSD) Beyond the Bell Branch, with LA’s BEST and dozens of other afterschool agencies, the event featured student activities, performances and displays. In addition to Governor Schwarzenegger, who is National Chair of *Lights On Afterschool*, speakers included LAUSD Associate Superintendent John Liechty and Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Judy Y. Samelson.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, *Lights On Afterschool* is the nation’s largest rally for afterschool. More than 6,000 events will take place this month in every corner of the country, with most set for Thursday, October 14. “This month, students, parents, community members, educators, and religious and business leaders in communities across the U.S. will join athletes, actors, lawmakers, and other leaders to send the message that we need more afterschool programs,” Samelson said. “This October, hundreds of thousands of Americans will rally to show support for the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, help working families and inspire children to learn. We expect this year’s *Lights On Afterschool* to be the most exciting nationwide rally for afterschool yet.”

In May, the Afterschool Alliance released *America After 3 PM*, the most in-depth study ever to explore how America’s children spend their afternoons. It found that 14.3 million kindergarten through 12th graders care for themselves after the school day ends. In California, 22 percent of kindergarten through 12th graders care for themselves. The parents of more than 15 million children nationwide say their children would participate if an afterschool program were available. The JCPenney Afterschool Fund supported *America After 3 PM*.

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Lights On Afterschool was launched in October 2000. That year more than 1,200 events were held across the country. By last year, more than half a million people rallied at more than 5,000 events in all 50 states as well as Guam, Japan and South Korea to show their support for afterschool programs. Organizers expect this year's event to be even larger. A listing of 2004 *Lights On Afterschool* events is online at http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa_2004/find.cfm.

The more than 150 organizations that are supporting *Lights On Afterschool* this year include: After-School All-Stars; American Association of Museums; Boys & Girls Clubs of America; 4-H Afterschool; Girl Scouts of the USA; Junior Achievement Inc.; National Association for Bilingual Education; National Indian Education Association; National Parent Teacher Association; United Way of America; and YMCA of the USA.

The 2004 National Presenting Sponsor of *Lights On Afterschool* is the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is a National Sponsor of the event. The David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Open Society Institute are providing additional support.

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 the year 2010. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, established in 1926 in Flint, Michigan, by an automotive pioneer, is a private philanthropy committed to supporting projects that promote a just, equitable and sustainable society. More information is available at www.mott.org

JCPenney Afterschool is committed to helping provide children with high-quality, affordable after-school programs to help them reach the "power of their potential." The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization. JCPenney Afterschool has contributed more than \$34 million during the past five years to five of America's leading after-school advocates. JCPenney Afterschool's support helps provide safe, fun and educational after-school programs and raise awareness of the need for more such programs across the country.

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