



Afterschool Alliance

MetLife Foundation

NEWS RELEASE

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Milwaukee Afterschool Program Wins National Award for Innovation from MetLife Foundation

Program Recognized for Innovation in Music Education

The Afterschool Alliance and MetLife Foundation today honored Latino Arts Strings & Mariachi Juvenil Program in Milwaukee with a 2012 Afterschool Innovator Award for preparing middle school students to participate in top-level high school orchestra programs. Latino Arts Strings & Mariachi Juvenil Program was one of only five programs in the country recognized for using innovative approaches to help middle school students succeed in the programs, school and life. Alberto Padron, Agency Sales Director at MetLife presented the award, which included \$10,000 for Latino Arts Strings & Mariachi Juvenil Program to expand its work, during a special event that was part of *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs.

“Children learn in a variety of ways and middle school is the perfect time to take advantage of a student’s natural curiosity and interest in learning new things,” said Dennis White, president and CEO of Met Life Foundation. “We are honored to join the Afterschool Alliance in recognizing Latino Arts Strings & Mariachi Juvenil Program which represents some of the most exciting innovations in expanding horizons and helping middle school students achieve their full potential.”

Founded in 2002, Latino Arts Strings & Mariachi Juvenil Program teaches students to play instruments as part of a top-rate orchestra, offering instruction in violin, viola, cello and guitar. More than 90 percent of program participants are Hispanic youth from low-income homes. Students in the program perform throughout the greater Milwaukee area, and are required to practice 30 to 60 minute per day, keep practice logs and attend scheduled rehearsals. To stay in the program, they must maintain a “C” grade average or better. The program has grown to include 150 students who make up two youth orchestras, a guitar ensemble, a strings program and a Mariachi Juvenil ensemble. The Latino Arts Strings Program has performed at national conferences and on television, and was a 2008 President’s Committee on the Arts “Coming Up Taller” award winner.

“We are thrilled to be recognized by MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance for providing music education opportunities for our children,” said Dinorah Marquez, Latino Arts Strings and Mariachi Juvenil Program Strings Director. “There’s no question that afterschool

programs like this one are making a difference. The Afterschool Innovator Award is a remarkable source of support and will help us continue enriching young lives through music.”

Latino Arts Strings and Mariachi Juvenil program is featured in an [Issue Brief](#) on the Afterschool Alliance’s [website](#) on how arts enrichment afterschool programs benefit middle school students. The Afterschool Alliance’s Issue Brief series examines the role of afterschool programs in addressing a variety of contemporary issues facing youth, schools and communities.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, *Lights On Afterschool* includes more than 7,500 events being held across the country on and around October 18, providing children, parents, community leaders, educators and others an opportunity to come together to urge Congress not to divert funds from the afterschool programs that children and families need. Events also give youth a chance to showcase the skills they learn and talents they develop at their afterschool programs and send the message that millions more kids need quality afterschool programs.

“Afterschool programs are terrific settings for innovation,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “In afterschool programs, directors and staff have the flexibility to try creative and unusual approaches to learning and building skills that can help kids succeed in school and in life. We’re so grateful to MetLife Foundation for working with us to highlight and recognize these outstanding programs.”

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 to continue MetLife’s longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation’s commitment to building a secure future for individuals and communities worldwide is reflected in its dedication to empowering older adults, preparing young people and building livable communities. Since it was established, MetLife Foundation has provided more than \$530 million in grants and \$70 million in Program-Related Investments to nonprofit organizations addressing issues that have a positive impact in their communities. For more information visit www.metlife.org