



Afterschool Alliance

MetLife Foundation

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Afterschool Programs in California, Idaho, Michigan, Wisconsin, Washington, D.C. Recognized for Innovation by MetLife Foundation

Winning Programs Focus On Arts, Digital Learning, School Improvement and Parental Involvement to Boost Student Success

The Afterschool Alliance and MetLife Foundation today announced the winners of the 2012 Afterschool Innovator Awards, recognizing programs that are using new and fresh approaches to help middle school students succeed in the programs, school and life. Each program will receive \$10,000 to expand its work.

“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 pleased to join the Afterschool Alliance in recognizing five afterschool programs that represent some of the most exciting innovations in expanding ' horizons and helping middle school students achieve their full potential.”

The 2012 Afterschool Innovator Award winners are:

California: The Wooden Floor in Santa Ana for using dance to empower low-income youth and strengthen their self-esteem, self-discipline and sense of accomplishment, as well as problem-solving, teamwork, leadership and other skills.

Idaho: Parma Learning Center for their partnership with Parma Unified School District, which utilizes 21st Century Community Learning Center and School Improvement Grant funding to provide hands-on activities, including robotics, broadcasting and gardening, to teach math and science skills and support overall school improvement efforts.

Michigan: Green Energy Technology in the City (GET City) in Lansing for taking advantage of digital learning to provide hands-on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programming for low-income and under-represented youth.

Wisconsin: Latino Arts Strings & Mariachi Juvenil Program in Milwaukee, for a high quality, skills-based musical program that prepares middle school students to participate in top-level high school orchestra programs.

Washington, D.C.: Kid Power, Inc. - The VeggieTime Project for involving students' families in regular gardening and cooking activities to encourage healthy eating habits.

Every program honored as an Afterschool Innovator has been or will be highlighted in an [Issue Brief](#) on the Afterschool Alliance’s website addressing the ways in which 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.

Representatives of MetLife and the Afterschool Alliance presented the awards at special local ceremonies that were part of *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. 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