



Afterschool Alliance

MetLife Foundation

NEWS RELEASE  
November 12, 2012

CONTACT: [Gretchen Wright](#)  
202/371-1999

## **Parma Afterschool Program Wins National Award for Innovation from MetLife Foundation**

### ***Program Recognized for Innovation in Middle School Improvement***

The Afterschool Alliance and MetLife Foundation today honored Parma Learning Center with a 2012 Afterschool Innovator Award for promoting middle school improvement by offering a wide variety of hands-on learning activities for students. Parma Learning Center 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. Nikki Yamashiro of the Afterschool Alliance presented the award, which included \$10,000 for Parma Learning Center 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 Parma Learning Center which represents some of the most exciting innovations in expanding horizons and helping middle school students achieve their full potential.”

Parma Learning Center offers a number of activities for students including a robotics class, a broadcasting class, and a garden project. In the garden project, students cultivate garden plots, while learning about applicable math and science concepts including germination, transpiration, and the cycle of weather. Students take home some of the produce they grow and donate a portion of the crops to the local community food bank. The program relies on strong family input and offers outreach programs in language, literacy, survival and parenting skills. In the past year, program participants whose state standardized reading test scores were at or above proficiency realized a 10 percent increase in those scores. Students in the program also scored higher than non-participants on standardized tests in math and language arts and had significantly fewer discipline referrals.

The Parma Learning Center is funded primarily with a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers grant through the Idaho State Department of Education. Other grants which have recently or are currently supplementing the Parma Learning Center’s services are from Learn &

Serve Idaho, Operation Military Kids, Whittenberger Foundation and Benchmark-Idaho Health & Welfare.

“It is a great honor to be recognized by MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance for providing additional learning activities for middle school youth,” said Sheri Faust, Director of Parma Learning Center. “Our dedicated educators work tirelessly to provide outstanding opportunities in technology and innovation for our kids. And each day, we see how afterschool programs make a real difference in the lives of young people. The Afterschool Innovator Award is an excellent way to support our students in all their hard work!”

Parma Learning Center is featured in an [Issue Brief](#) on the Afterschool Alliance’s [website](#) on how middle school improvement 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.”

# # # #

*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](http://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](http://www.metlife.org)*