



NEWS RELEASE
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Increase Afterschool Funding, Parents, Students, Activists, Afterschool Leaders Urge Congress

Star of TV's 'Andromeda' & 'Hercules' Joins Effort to Promote Afterschool for All; Afterschool Programs from Georgia, Tennessee & Wyoming Honored

WASHINGTON, D.C. – More than 500 parents, children, program directors and advocates from around the country traveled to Capitol Hill on Wednesday to meet with more than 150 congressional leaders about afterschool funding. Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, the “Afterschool for All Challenge” kicked off with a *Breakfast of Champions* Wednesday morning. Lawmakers scheduled to speak at that event included Senators John Ensign (R-NV), James Jeffords (I-VT), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Ken Salazar (D-CO) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI).

Kevin Sorbo, star of TV's “Andromeda” and “Hercules, The Legendary Journeys” also discussed the importance of providing afterschool programs for every child.

“Every day, 14.3 million children leave school without a safe place to go,” said Afterschool Alliance Interim Executive Director Jen Rinehart. “We are here to ask lawmakers to honor the commitment they made in the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, which established a multi-year roadmap for slow but steady growth in afterschool funding, reflecting our strong national consensus that afterschool should be expanded.”

“*No Child Left Behind* established a Fiscal Year 2006 funding level for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool initiative of \$2.25 billion,” Rinehart continued. “The President has proposed just \$991 million – much less than what was promised in *No Child Left Behind*, and less than he proposed last year. That afterschool funding gap would leave 1.75 million children without the afterschool programs they need. We are here from every corner of the country to ask Congress to authorize the full \$2.25 billion for afterschool programs. Afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families.”

“I am proud to serve as a spokesperson for the Afterschool Alliance, and to do whatever I can to promote the afterschool programs that children and families need,” Sorbo added. “Every young person deserves a safe place to go after school, where they have opportunities to learn, be engaged with positive role models and become more physically active. For many, that place is an afterschool program. Unfortunately, too many kids are missing out. We must make afterschool programs accessible to all children. I'm excited to join the efforts of the Afterschool Alliance and today call on lawmakers to support afterschool programs.”

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At the *Breakfast of Champions*, Members of Congress joined the Afterschool Alliance in presenting Afterschool Champion Awards to three exemplary afterschool programs:

- Lilburn Elementary School, Lilburn, Georgia;
- Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority, Morristown, Tennessee; and
- Shoshoni Lights On! afterschool program, Shoshoni, Wyoming.

After the *Breakfast of Champions*, students, parents and afterschool leaders met with their senators and representatives to discuss the benefits offered by afterschool programs and to urge them to fully fund the 21st CCLC initiative, the chief federal funding stream for afterschool. Activists also delivered tens of thousands of paper light bulbs to lawmakers with messages about afterschool that were sent by children and parents from all across the country. The light bulbs were created last October at *Lights On Afterschool* events. *Lights On* is the Afterschool Alliance's annual rally for afterschool, is set for October 20 this year.

The day's events concluded with *Afterschool Rocks the House* at 4 PM in the Rayburn House Office Building Cafeteria. Sorbo emceed the afternoon event, which featured Representatives Judy Biggert (R-IL), Henry E. Brown Jr. (R-SC), John Conyers (D-MI), Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), Dale Kildee (D-MI), Nita Lowey (D-NY), Ralph Regula (R-OH), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Roger Wicker (R-MS) and Bill Young (R-FL). Lowey is a co-chair of the House Afterschool Caucus. *Afterschool Rocks the House* showcased afterschool program activities, and students from Rhode Island gave spoken word, dance and musical performances. Participating afterschool programs included:

- Northwest Buffalo Community Center, Buffalo, **New York**
- Kenmore West High School Challenge Club, Buffalo, **New York**
- YWCA Niagara District, Lockport, **New York**
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Rochester, **New York**
- Exceptional Family Resources, Syracuse, **New York**
- Lackawanna Trail Elementary School, Factoryville, **Pennsylvania**
- AS220 Broad Street Studio, Providence, **Rhode Island**

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

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