



NEWS RELEASE

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## **Leaders in Sciences, Government, Education Call on Congress to Safeguard Afterschool Funding, Expand Children’s Learning Opportunities at Eleventh Annual *Afterschool for All Challenge***

***Event Focuses on Evidence Base for Afterschool; Science Exploration and New Documentary on Afterschool Chess Program Are Featured***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Hundreds of parents, children, educators and advocates from around the country are in the nation’s Capital this week to encourage Congress to preserve funding for afterschool programs. The eleventh annual *Afterschool for All Challenge* will highlight the evidence base for afterschool—how before-school, afterschool and summer learning programs can and are supporting a wide range of positive outcomes for kids, families and communities. Afterschool experts and professionals working in the field will be on hand to discuss the latest research and describe how programs are already putting it to work for continuous improvement.

The event is designed to give people the chance to voice their support for the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. This year’s theme is *Transforming Research Into Action*.

The *Challenge* will include a “Breakfast of Champions” on Wednesday to recognize afterschool leaders who have helped expand quality afterschool programs for youth. Paleontologist Paul Sereno and educator Gabrielle Lyon will be named the 2012 National Afterschool Champions. Sereno and Lyon are the co-founders of Project Exploration, a highly successful program in Chicago that provides girls and students of color with opportunities to work with scientists who act as teachers, mentors, and role models. At the Breakfast, the Alliance will also present awards to state afterschool champions from California, Florida, Kansas, Nevada, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Actor Kevin Sorbo will emcee the Breakfast. Senator Barbara Boxer (CA), Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (RI), Representative David Cicilline (RI), Representative Rosa DeLauro (CT), Representative Dale Kildee (MI), Representative Sheila Jackson Lee (TX) and Representative Nita Lowey (NY) are among the Members of Congress scheduled to speak.

The event will include remarks by “Pobo” Efekoro, a New York high school student who is featured in *Brooklyn Castle*, a new documentary film about a New York public school that is home to the most winning middle school chess team in the country. The chess afterschool program is now threatened by budget cuts; the school was told last week that city funding for the program was eliminated. Pobo was part of the chess team at I.S. 318 for three years and now coaches the team.

At the Breakfast, Gwynn Hughes, Program Officer at the C.S. Mott Foundation, will present Representative Dale Kildee (MI) with the William S. White Achievement Award for his long-standing commitment to and support for afterschool programs.

Following the Breakfast, participants will meet with their Representatives and Senators to discuss the importance of afterschool programs to children, families and communities.

“In afterschool programs, students are learning about science, playing chess and engaging in physical activity,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “They’re getting opportunities engage in activities and learning that aren’t a part of the regular school day. There is a wealth of research that shows how important these opportunities are in helping kids to succeed and master skills needed for careers in science, technology, engineering and math. Now more than ever, policy makers need to hear from educators, parents, kids and other advocates about the need to keep these quality afterschool programs open and expanding.”

The Afterschool State Champions being honored are:

- **California:** Jennifer Peck, Executive Director, Partnership for Children and Youth
- **Florida:** Claudia Davant, Managing Partner, Adams St. Advocates
- **Kansas:** Dr. Elaine Johannes, Associate Professor, Kansas State University
- **Nevada:** Olivia Diaz, Assemblywoman, Nevada State Legislature
- **New York:** Lena Townsend, Executive Director, Robert Bowne Foundation
- **New York:** Anne Lawrence, Program Officer, Robert Bowne Foundation
- **Ohio:** Dr. Monica J. Mitchell, Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Co-Director of INNOVATIONS, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital & Medical Center
- **Pennsylvania:** Dr. Kathryn Hynes, Assistant Professor, Penn State University

The 2012 *Afterschool for All Challenge* is generously sponsored by: United States Tennis Association, the NAMM Foundation, Peavey Electronics, Cable in the Classroom, National AfterSchool Association and Arnold and Sandra Grant. Additional funding is provided by Torani and the C.S. Mott Foundation.

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

*Project Exploration is a nonprofit science education organization that works to ensure communities traditionally overlooked by science—particularly minority youth and girls—have access to personalized experiences with science and scientists. **Project Exploration. Changing the Face of Science.** [www.projectexploration.org](http://www.projectexploration.org)*