



NEWS RELEASE
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Project Exploration Co-Founders Honored as an Afterschool Champions in Nation's Capital

*Parents, Educators, Students, Afterschool Leaders
Urge Congress to Safeguard Afterschool Funding, Increase Afterschool Investments*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Afterschool Alliance today honored paleontologist Paul Sereno and educator Gabrielle Lyon for their support of afterschool programs. These visionary individuals 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, mentor, and role models. The honor was presented at the “Breakfast of Champions,” a gala event in Washington, D.C. featuring actor Kevin Sorbo, eight State Afterschool Champions and several Members of Congress. Drs. Sereno and Lyon founded Project Exploration twelve years ago and since that time, more than 1,000 Chicago Public School Students have participated in the program, developing their skills in science, technology, education and mathematics (STEM) and gaining an appreciation for these fields.

A 2010 longitudinal study of Project Exploration revealed that 95 percent of the students who participated in Project Exploration had graduated or were on track to graduate high school; three in five students who enrolled in four-year colleges were pursuing degrees in STEM or STEM-related fields; and three in five students who graduated college graduated with a degree in a STEM-related field.

“Project Exploration is a fantastic model for inspiring youth through science,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “It truly demonstrates what 21st Century STEM learning can look like for students who might otherwise be left behind. Because of the vision, dedication and innovation of Paul and Gabrielle, Project Exploration is changing the course of students’ lives. It is a tribute to what quality afterschool programs can accomplish.”

The “Breakfast of Champions” is part of the eleventh annual *Afterschool for All Challenge*, sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance, which brings together hundreds of parents, educators, children, program directors and advocates from around the country for a series of events and meetings with Members of Congress. Following the Breakfast, participants fanned out across Capitol Hill to talk to Members of Congress about the importance of afterschool programs to children, families and communities.

Members of Congress honored as National Champions included: 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).

State Champions honored at the *Afterschool for All Challenge* are: Jennifer Peck, Executive Director, Partnership for Children and Youth in California; Claudia Davant, Managing Partner, Adams St. Advocates; Dr. Elaine Johannes, Associate Professor, Kansas State University; Olivia Diaz, Assemblywoman, Nevada State Legislature; Lena Townsend, Executive Director, Robert Bowne Foundation in New York; Anne Lawrence, Program Officer, Robert Bowne Foundation; Dr. Monica J. Mitchell, Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Co-Director of INNOVATIONS, Cincinnati Children's Hospital & Medical Center; and 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.