



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

## **Chicago Afterschool Program Wins National Award for Outstanding Programming for Middle School Students**

### ***BUILD, Inc. Recognized for Success as a Violence Intervention Program***

The Afterschool Alliance today honored BUILD, Inc in Chicago with the 2014 MetLife Foundation Afterschool Innovator Award. The award, sponsored by MetLife Foundation, recognizes the program's success in supporting and benefiting middle school students through violence prevention. The award was presented at the "Breakfast of Champions," a gala event in Washington, D.C. featuring Members of Congress and national Afterschool Alliance champions.

BUILD, Inc. was one of only five afterschool programs in the country recognized for using innovative approaches to help middle school students succeed in the programs, school and life. The Afterschool Innovator Award includes \$10,000 for BUILD, Inc. to expand its work. Executive Director Dr. Roslind Blasingame-Buford and two students, Zykia D. Pearson (seventh grade) and Jasmine Marchan (eighth grade) accepted the award on behalf of the program.

"The middle school years are critical years for a child's development," said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "Afterschool programs can play a central role in helping middle school students develop confidence and life skills that will help them succeed. We are honored to join the Afterschool Alliance in recognizing BUILD, Inc. for its outstanding work keeping middle school children safe and supported after school."

BUILD, Inc. is designed to help students reduce risk-taking behavior, develop personal competencies, and increase their interest in education and community service. The program includes violence and gang prevention and intervention efforts, health and wellness support, educational assistance, mentoring, and opportunities for leadership. An internal evaluation system shows that students who participate in the program have fewer suspensions, and less detention and aggressive behavior compared with their peers. They also have higher grade promotion and graduation rates.

"By providing wrap-around services to our students, we are able to help them avoid risk-taking behavior and make better decisions," said Blasingame-Buford. "We help students identify and discover their strengths and skills, and offer them opportunities to be mentored by caring adults who can share their experiences and act as sounding boards. We work to empower our youth to take charge of their own lives and transition from being 'at risk' to being 'at hope.' We are honored to be recognized for our success by MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance."

BUILD, Inc. will be featured in an Issue Brief on the Afterschool Alliance's website on how 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.

“Afterschool programs do so much for students – helping them discover new talents, develop new skills, and have new experiences – all in social environments that help those students feel safe and supported,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “There is great potential in these programs to make an important and lasting difference in lives of middle school students who participate in them. We are pleased to work with MetLife Foundation to recognize and honor the programs that are excelling in this area.”

The “Breakfast of Champions” is part of the 13<sup>th</sup> annual *Afterschool for All Challenge*, sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance, which brings together hundreds of educators, parents, afterschool leaders and advocates from around the country for a series of events and meetings with Members of Congress. After the Breakfast, attendees headed to Capitol Hill for meetings with their senators and representatives to discuss the ways afterschool programs benefit children, families and communities.

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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).*