

**Remarks of Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant
September 24, 2008**

Thank you, Marty. It's a real pleasure to be here today as you launch the [Community Agenda for America's Public Schools](#). I am delighted to be part of such an esteemed and diverse panel of experts from different fields who have come together to send one message: School/community partnerships are essential to preparing students to succeed in school, work and life, and to solving many of the problems facing families, communities and our nation.

This new agenda affirms the work we do every day at afterschool programs all across the country. Quality afterschool programs often serve as a bridge, connecting communities to schools – and everyone is better off because of it.

Every day, afterschool programs bring in local business leaders to teach students how to dress and what to expect on the job. We bring students to museums, and museums to students. We engage local artists and musicians to help kids explore their talents. We bring local chefs into the schools to teach children to cook delicious and healthy food on a budget. We bring in paramedics to teach students first aid. We work with churches, synagogues and mosques to provide mentors and tutors to our children. We bring in college students to help some students imagine a different future.

When we do our work right, students don't just toss paper airplanes; they learn how air currents make them sail and why they fly farther when they're released at certain angles. In afterschool programs, kids learn math when they're not looking by figuring our profit margins at fundraisers and, for little ones, counting change for customers. Afterschool programs teach children science and biology by figuring out how flowers grow, why insects fly, and what makes frogs jump.

These partnerships are at the very core of the Community Agenda for America's Public Schools, and they are why quality afterschool programs are so successful at inspiring students to learn and helping them improve academically, socially and professionally. Kids want to come to their afterschool programs because they make learning both relevant and fun, and they do that by engaging the community. We are convinced that the entire education system can learn a lot from the afterschool approach.

We also know that this kind of community engagement is one of the reasons that 21st Century Community Learning Centers – the federal afterschool initiative – is so popular. It provides flexibility, promotes partnerships, and empowers community leaders, institutions and citizens to mobilize their resources to help students develop and learn. But 21st Century Community Learning Centers are badly under-funded, and more than 14 million children have no safe, supervised activities after the school day ends. We need to change that by increasing federal – and state, local, private and philanthropic – funding for afterschool programs, at the same time we promote the Community Agenda for America's Public Schools.

The Afterschool Alliance wholeheartedly supports this [Agenda](#), and congratulates you on its launch. Thank you for the chance to be here today.