



NEWS RELEASE
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**ICAN Peer Leadership Program Receives National Afterschool
Award from MetLife Foundation at Chandler
*Lights On Afterschool Rally***

MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance today honored the ICAN Peer Leadership Program with an Afterschool Innovator Award in recognition of the program's success in recruiting and retaining teens by helping them develop and apply leadership skills through community service projects that they run. The Award was presented at the *Lights On Afterschool* event in Chandler, which was held in conjunction with the city's "Day of Play." Kory Budinger, a Financial Planner with New England Financial, a MetLife company, presented the Award.

"Despite the many benefits of afterschool programs, far too many youth in middle and high school do not have access to high quality programs during these critical hours," said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "We are pleased to join the Afterschool Alliance in recognizing and sharing ICAN's exemplary model of recruiting and retaining older youth, which helps put them on the path to success."

The ICAN Peer Leadership Program is one of only six afterschool programs nationwide to be named an Afterschool Innovator. It was highlighted in an [Issue Brief](#) on afterschool programs that is part of a series developed by the Afterschool Alliance with funding from MetLife Foundation that examines critical issues facing older youth, schools and communities, and the role that the programs play in addressing these issues. The briefs address: opening doors to work and careers, recruiting and retaining older youth; high school dropout prevention; and mentoring. ICAN Peer Leadership Program, highlighted in the brief about recruiting and retaining older youth, was selected to receive the MetLife Foundation Afterschool Innovator Award and \$5,000 to sustain its work.

"We know that older youth prefer to engage in activities into which they have input," said ICAN CEO Christy McClendon. "We're very proud of our success engaging young people in productive projects, like developing a community awareness and prevention program to reduce underage drinking. We're delighted to be honored for our work with this Afterschool Innovator Award."

At the *Lights On Afterschool* event, Mayor Boyd Dunn and other city officials will join community members in celebrating Chandler's recent designation as a "Playful City USA" by participating in a variety of fun activities from sun dial making to the 50-yard dash to face-painting. Booths also will distribute information on martial arts, tips for leading a healthy lifestyle, sports, literacy, conservation, health and more. Organized by the Afterschool Alliance,

Lights On Afterschool is the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. Today's event in Chandler is one of more than 7,500 being held across the country at which children, parents, community leaders, educators and others are coming together to urge leaders to increase support for the afterschool programs that children and families need. The events give youth a chance to showcase the skills they learn and talents they develop at their afterschool programs, and to send the message that millions more kids need quality afterschool programs.

“Afterschool programs provide children with unique opportunities to get the exposure, experiences and support they need to achieve success,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “The Afterschool Innovator Awards honor programs that have developed and are using promising practices to help children and youth excel.”

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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.

MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 by MetLife to carry on its longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. In youth development, MetLife Foundation funds initiatives that promote mentoring and provide safe places and constructive activities for young people, particularly during out-of-school time. For more information, visit www.metlife.org.