



NEWS RELEASE  
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## **At Congressional Ceremony, Afterschool Alliance Presents Champion Award To Geary County, Kansas Afterschool Program that Serves Military Families**

### ***Nation's Leading Afterschool Advocacy Organization Honors Afterschool Program for Exemplary Community Collaboration***

WASHINGTON, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today presented its Afterschool Champion Award to Kansas' Geary County Schools 21<sup>st</sup> Century Afterschool Program at a Congressional Breakfast in Washington, D.C. The award recognizes the program's collaboration with community partners to establish comprehensive afterschool programming and adult education classes that have led to job placements. Senator Sam Brownback was scheduled to present the award to Dr. Larry Dixon, Associate Superintendent and Director of the Program.

“Through innovative community organizing, Geary County Schools 21<sup>st</sup> Century Afterschool Program provides valuable afterschool programs and classes to children and their families,” said Judy Y. Samelson, Executive Director of the Afterschool Alliance. “More than half a dozen community agencies are involved each week in the program, which amplifies what students have learned during the regular school day and offers educational enrichment opportunities that would not otherwise be available. We are proud to recognize the program with this award.”

“I am pleased to accept this award on behalf of Geary County Schools 21<sup>st</sup> Century Afterschool Program,” Dr. Dixon said in accepting the award. “But I am even prouder of the opportunity we have to make a difference in the lives of the children and parents in our county, including many military families that are under significant pressure at this time. Through our partnerships, our afterschool programs provide a vital service to our community by helping working families, keeping kids safe, and expanding educational opportunities for students and their parents.”

Geary County Schools 21<sup>st</sup> Century Afterschool Program serves more than 1,200 children, ranging in ages from five to 18, in Junction City, Geary County and the Fort Riley military base. In addition to curricular and enrichment activities offered to all students, the program provides unique classes for older students and parents. An innovative partnership with Millennium Rail allows the program to offer skills training to parents and high school seniors, helping them acquire critical job skills.

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The Afterschool Champion Award was presented during the Afterschool Alliance's annual *Breakfast of Champions*, part of its Afterschool for All Challenge on Capitol Hill. More than 300 afterschool providers and advocates participated in the *Breakfast*, joined by more than a dozen Members of Congress. In addition to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Afterschool Program at Geary County Schools, the Afterschool Alliance honored: Nortel Networks; Time Warner; the Farrell and Sharon School District 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers C.O.O.L. (Children's Opportunities for Outside Learning) Program in Pennsylvania; and the Richland County School District One After School Programs in South Carolina.

After the *Breakfast of Champions*, participants fanned out across Capitol Hill to urge lawmakers to support full funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers initiative, the federal government's chief funding stream for afterschool programs across the nation. The President has proposed freezing afterschool funding at \$1 billion for the fourth consecutive year. If approved, the proposal would leave afterschool funding at just half the level promised in the landmark "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001." Full funding for afterschool at the authorized \$2 billion level would create afterschool opportunities for an addition 1.4 million children. Millions more children who need afterschool programs do not have access to them.

A new Afterschool Alliance household survey, funded by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund and released this week, found that more than 14 million K-12 youth are responsible for taking care of themselves after school, and these children spend an average of nearly seven afternoon hours per week unsupervised. Afterschool programs offer young people safe, enriching, fun and engaging places to go once the school day ends. Research shows that afterschool programs are a good investment. Youth who participate have been shown to perform better in school and to hold greater expectations for the future, while children who are unsupervised during the afternoons are at greater risk of becoming involved with crime, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy.

The event is sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization supported by a group of public, private, and nonprofit entities working to ensure that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010. Information is available at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org)

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