



NEWS RELEASE
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Haltom City, Texas Fifth Grader Is Artist Behind the 2011 *Lights On Afterschool* Poster

A talented ten-year-old has designed artwork that will be featured at more than 7,500 events around the country as part of the only nationwide rally for afterschool. Nicole Tanner of Haltom City, Texas, a student in the Birdville Independent School District's After School Program Inspiring and Reinforcing Education (BISD ASPIRE), won the national contest to have her painting used on the official *Lights On Afterschool* poster for 2011. Her painting illustrates some of the exciting and fun activities available in afterschool programs, from playing soccer to building rockets to learning the violin to painting, music and computer programming.

October 20 marks the 12th annual *Lights On Afterschool*, organized by the Afterschool Alliance. More than one million people are expected to participate in the events, which will take place in cities and towns across the U.S. and on military bases overseas. 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.

In addition to having her painting selected by the Afterschool Alliance for its 2011 poster, Tanner won a trip to Washington, D.C., with air travel provided by American Airlines.

"Nicole's painting is a wonderful representation of the range of fun and educational activities available to children who participate in quality programs," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Afterschool programs do so much more than keep kids safe. They help working families, and they provide children and youth with exciting ways to engage in hands-on learning and discover new skills, talents and interests. This year's poster celebrates active learning and the great variety of activities afterschool programs offer."

"To me, the most exciting part about winning the *Lights On Afterschool* poster contest was finding out I won the trip to Washington, D.C.," said Nicole. "I've never been on a plane before, and I'm excited to see where the president lives and visit the Lincoln Memorial. My whole family is coming with me."

For the fifth year in a row, the Empire State Building will be bathed in yellow light in support of the nationwide rally. This year, the Afterschool Alliance and jpenney are holding a contest to encourage officials in other cities, towns and villages across the country to "Light Up a Landmark" as part of their *Lights On Afterschool* events.

The children, parents, grandparents, educators, community leaders, policy makers, celebrities and others expected to participate in the 12th annual *Lights On Afterschool* will be urging Congress not to divert or deny federal funding for afterschool. For years, the federal investment in afterschool has lagged far behind the need. The *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (the chief federal funding stream for afterschool) in 2007, yet funding stands at less than half that today. Congress is currently considering legislation that would allow other programs to compete for the already limited 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool funds.

During *Lights On Afterschool* this year, the Afterschool Alliance, in conjunction with jcpenny, will release 50 state progress reports that examine how each state is helping keep the lights on for kids and families after school. The progress reports review state policies, funding and other activities that affect afterschool programs, examine the need in each state for these programs, offer tips to parents seeking afterschool programs for their children and suggest ways that all state residents can support afterschool.

A significant body of research demonstrates that students who attend 21st CCLC afterschool programs regularly are more likely to improve their grades, tests scores and overall academic behavior. More than 15 million school-age children – more than one in four kids in the United States – are unsupervised after the school day ends. The parents of 18 million children say they would enroll their kids in afterschool programs – if programs were available.

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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.