



NEWS RELEASE  
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## **Award-Winning Chess Documentary Featured at Nationwide Rally for Afterschool**

### ***Film about Afterschool Chess Team Is Being Screened at Select Lights On Afterschool Events***

Afterschool programs not only keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. They also expose children to new experiences, help them build new skills and discover new interests. For many kids, including children in an afterschool program in Brooklyn, one of those new interests is chess.

For the 13<sup>th</sup> annual rally for afterschool, *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance is teaming up with the filmmakers behind “Brooklyn Castle,” a documentary about an afterschool chess program, to screen the film in select cities. A screening on Washington, DC on October 10 was followed by a panel discussion with filmmaker Katie Dellamaggiore, students from the film and representatives from the Afterschool Alliance.

“Brooklyn Castle” is the story of an inner-city public school and its afterschool chess team. The school is home to the most winning junior high school chess team in the country. Despite being credited with the school’s “culture of success,” like many other afterschool programs across the country, it faces the threat of cutbacks. “Brooklyn Castle” was the Audience Award Winner at the 2012 South by Southwest Film Festival, and won the Best New Director Award at the Brooklyn Film Festival.

“We’re so excited to be a part of *Lights On Afterschool* this year,” said Dellamaggiore. “It was incredibly moving to work on this film and see the ways that gaining chess skills helped children with so many other aspects of their lives – academic, social and emotional. Afterschool programs are doing more for our kids than we will ever truly know. Now, more than ever we need to work together to keep the lights on for all our children.”

“Brooklyn Castle” will be screened at additional *Lights On Afterschool* events in Austin, Dallas, New York City, Philadelphia and Portland, Oregon. *Lights On Afterschool*, organized by the Afterschool Alliance, is the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. More information about the film is available at <http://www.brooklyncastle.com/>.

“This film is a testament to the rich and important benefits of quality afterschool programs and the threats these programs face to their funding,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “We need to stand up for the afterschool programs that are doing so much for our students and our communities.”

The children, parents, grandparents, educators, community leaders, policy makers, celebrities and others expected to participate in the 13<sup>th</sup> 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 for programs. In 2007, the No Child Left Behind Act authorized \$2.5 billion for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the chief federal funding stream for afterschool. Yet federal funding stands at less than half that today. Congress is currently considering legislation that would allow afterschool funds to be directed to other uses.

Last month, *Uncertain Times*, a survey of afterschool programs released by the Afterschool Alliance, revealed that programs across the country are struggling to keep their doors open. At this year’s *Lights On* events, communities will rally behind these program and urge Members of Congress to increase federal afterschool funding and reject efforts to divert funds intended for afterschool programs.

According to *Uncertain Times*, nearly two in five afterschool programs (39 percent) report that their budgets are in worse shape today than at the height of the recession in 2008, and more than three in five (62 percent) report that their funding is down “a little or a lot” from three years ago.

A significant body of research demonstrates that students who attend 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

For the sixth year in a row, the Empire State Building will be bathed in yellow light in support of the nationwide rally.

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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).*