



NEWS RELEASE
May 17, 2011

CONTACT: Gretchen Wright
202/371-1999

Laconia, New Hampshire Afterschool Student Speaks at National Afterschool Event in Washington, DC

Rebecca Dragon, a ninth grader in the Laconia, New Hampshire School District who attends the Engineering Club afterschool program, spoke to a crowd of national policy makers and students, parents, educators and other afterschool advocates about the importance of afterschool programs to her and her fellow students at the Afterschool Alliance's "Breakfast of Champions" on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC this morning.

The "Breakfast of Champions" is part of the tenth annual *Afterschool for All Challenge*, which brought together hundreds of parents, educators, children, program directors and advocates from around the country for a series of events and meetings with Members of Congress.

"The Engineering Club is a place I can go to use and apply my interests in engineering and learn more about robotics, mechanics and alternative energy sources," said Dragon. "It's important that young people like me get as many opportunities as possible to learn more about the sciences and math and afterschool programs can offer important hands-on learning opportunities. Kids in school today are going to be the leaders of tomorrow and afterschool programs are helping us learn the skills we need to become those leaders."

At the Breakfast, the Afterschool Alliance presented its national "Afterschool for All" Champion Award to Dean Kamen, the founder of *FIRST*, a nationwide afterschool program that helps young people discover the excitement and rewards of science and technology. The Afterschool Alliance also honored nine Afterschool State Champions for their support of afterschool programs. Many of the Champions were acknowledged for their leadership roles expanding opportunities for children and youth to learn and get excited about science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) in afterschool programs.

Following the Breakfast, Dragon joined parents, educators and other afterschool advocates in fanning out across Capitol Hill to meet with Members of Congress and talk to them about the importance of afterschool programs and expanding opportunities for kids to engage in STEM activities in those programs. This year is The Year of Science in Afterschool.

The 2011 *Afterschool for All Challenge* is sponsored by: United States Tennis Association, Peavey Electronics, NAMM, Open Society Foundations, Cable in the Classroom, National AfterSchool Association, Clever Crazes for Kids, and Arnold and Sandra Grant. Additional

funding is provided by the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, Time Warner Cable, the Noyce Foundation and jcpenny.

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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.