



NEWS RELEASE
May 22, 2014

CONTACT: [Gretchen Wright](#)
202/371-1999

Los Angeles Afterschool Program Wins National Award for Outstanding Programming for Middle School Students

Hope Street Family Center – Youth Center Recognized for Providing Effective Wrap-Around Services for At-Risk Middle School Youth and Their Families

The Afterschool Alliance today honored the Hope Street Family Center – Youth Center in Los Angeles with the 2014 MetLife Foundation Afterschool Innovator Award. The award, sponsored by MetLife Foundation, recognizes the program's success in supporting and benefiting at-risk middle school students and their families through offering an array of educational, health, mental health, recreational and social services. The award was presented at the "Breakfast of Champions," a gala event in Washington, D.C. featuring Members of Congress and national Afterschool Alliance champions.

Hope Street Family Center – Youth Center, a program of Dignity Health-California Hospital Medical Center, was one of only five afterschool programs in the country recognized for using innovative approaches to help middle school students succeed in the programs, school and life. The Afterschool Innovator Award includes \$10,000 for the Hope Street Family Center – Youth Center to expand its work. Hope Street Family Center – Youth Center Education Coordinator Gina Avila and Donovan Hernandez, a seventh grader enrolled in the program, accepted the award on behalf of the Center.

"The middle school years are critical years for a child's development," said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "Afterschool programs can play a central role in helping middle school students develop confidence and life skills that will help them succeed. We are honored to join the Afterschool Alliance in recognizing the Hope Street Family Center for its outstanding work keeping middle school children safe and supported after school."

Located in the South Park neighborhood of downtown Los Angeles, the Hope Street Family Center's Youth Center is the only afterschool program in that area for middle school students. It offers structured afterschool programming and wraparound services for more than 300 students, including 100 middle schoolers. The program is a partnership between the California Hospital Medical Center, the University of California, Los Angeles, and community residents. The Youth Center has four major components: academic support and enrichment; promoting social skills, positive peer interactions and cultural identity; supporting parent engagement in school; and providing supports to improve parenting skills and family stability. During the 2012-2013 school year, nearly 70 percent of students receiving academic support or tutoring showed significant improvement in reading skills or grade point average.

“The Hope Street Family Center – Youth Center is really a safe haven for middle school youth, many of whom are living in neighborhoods with high levels of crime and gang activity,” said Avila. “We are proud of the work we do to not only keep our students safe but help them thrive and succeed and we are extremely honored to be recognized by MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance for our efforts.”

| The Hope Street Family Center – Youth Center is featured in an [Issue Brief](#) on the Afterschool Alliance’s website on how afterschool programs benefit middle school students. The Afterschool Alliance’s Issue Brief series examines the role of afterschool programs in addressing a variety of contemporary issues facing youth, schools and communities.

“Afterschool programs do so much for students – helping them discover new talents, develop new skills, and have new experiences – all in social environments that help those students feel safe and supported,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “There is great potential in these programs to make an important and lasting difference in lives of middle school students who participate in them. We are pleased to work with MetLife Foundation to recognize and honor the programs that are excelling in this area.”

The “Breakfast of Champions” is part of the 13th annual *Afterschool for All Challenge*, sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance, which brings together hundreds of educators, parents, afterschool leaders and advocates from around the country for a series of events and meetings with Members of Congress. After the Breakfast, attendees headed to Capitol Hill for meetings with their senators and representatives to discuss the ways afterschool programs benefit children, families and communities.

#

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.