



**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **Brooklyn Afterschool Program Wins National Award From MetLife Foundation**

*Program is one of six nationwide recognized for innovation and excellence.*

MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance today honored Cypress Hills/East New York (CHENY) Beacon program at Junior High School 302 in Brooklyn with an Afterschool Innovator Award, recognizing the program's success at providing multiple benefits for middle school students, including service opportunities and leadership and social development. April Hawkins of MetLife Foundation presented the award at a special event that was part of *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. The CHENY Beacon program also received \$5,000 to sustain its work.

"Middle school is a pivotal point in young people's development," said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "We are pleased to join the Afterschool Alliance in recognizing the CHENY Beacon program model, which is addressing the needs of middle school students and placing them on the path to success."

CHENY Beacon is one of only six afterschool programs nationwide to be named a 2010 Afterschool Innovator. It was highlighted in an [Issue Brief](#) on how afterschool programs provide multiple benefits to middle school students, part of a series developed by the Afterschool Alliance with funding from MetLife Foundation, examining critical issues facing youth, schools and communities, and the role that the programs play in addressing these issues. The briefs describe a variety of benefits that afterschool programs provide, including opportunities for community involvement; leadership development; pathways to higher education and careers; health and wellness; and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning.

CHENY Beacon engages middle school students in a multi-pronged path to leadership development. In addition to homework assistance, arts and sports programming and snacks, participants register for one of three service groups. In Heirs 2 the Community, students design and implement a series of three to four service projects in the community. The Intergenerational Services Program engages youth in service to local seniors. Leaders-in-Training offers middle school youth the opportunity to assume leadership roles with younger children. All participants who successfully complete their service groups are then eligible for the counselor-in-training program in the high school.

"It's a great honor to be recognized by MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance for our work with youth and pre-teens," said Michelle Neugebauer, Executive Director of Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, the agency of which CHENY Beacon is a program.

"Afterschool programs are uniquely positioned to provide youth with myriad opportunities to grow, thrive and learn. At CHENY Beacon we try to engage and embrace the whole child. We

are pleased to receive this award for our work to give youth the foundation they need to succeed in life.”

The *Lights On Afterschool* event included a tour of the program, an intergenerational celebration, and an opportunity to participate in a variety of program activities, including dance, sign language and a counselors-in-training-led read aloud.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, *Lights On Afterschool* is the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. The Brooklyn event is one of more than 7,500 being held across the country at which children, parents, community leaders, educators and others come together to urge leaders to increase support for the afterschool programs that children and families need. The events also give youth a chance to showcase the skills they learn and talents they develop at their afterschool programs and send the message that millions more kids need quality afterschool programs.

“Afterschool programs pick up where the school day leaves off,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “They provide children with unique opportunities to broaden their horizons and receive the support, experiences, and exposure they need to achieve success. The Afterschool Innovator Awards honor programs that have developed and are using promising practices to help children and youth excel.”

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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).*

*MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 by MetLife to carry on its longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. In youth development, MetLife Foundation funds initiatives that promote mentoring and provide safe places and constructive activities for young people, particularly during out-of-school time. For more information, visit [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org).*