



**NEWS RELEASE**  
October 20, 2011

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## **Oakland Afterschool Program Wins National Award From MetLife Foundation**

*Initiative is one of five nationwide recognized for innovation and excellence.*

MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance today honored Urban Arts/Project Phoenix, an Oakland, Calif.-based program, with an Afterschool Innovator Award. The award recognizes the program's success at providing multiple benefits for middle school students, particularly in the area of aligning afterschool with school-day learning, lessons and content. John Favaloro, a Managing Director from MetLife, presented the award during a special event at the program's new multi-million-dollar facility that was held in conjunction with *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. Urban Arts/Project Phoenix also received \$10,000 to sustain its work.

"The lessons young people learn in middle school stay with them for a lifetime," said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "It is important to take advantage of this unique time in young people's development to provide them with the tools they will need to be successful in high school, college and life. MetLife Foundation is pleased to partner with the Afterschool Alliance to recognize afterschool programs that are doing an outstanding job of teaching life lessons and skills and helping young people achieve their potential."

Urban Arts/Project Phoenix is one of only five afterschool programs nationwide to be named a 2011 MetLife Foundation Afterschool Innovator. It was highlighted in an [Issue Brief](#) on how afterschool programs benefit middle school students – part of an Afterschool Alliance series that examines critical issues facing youth, schools and communities, and the role that the programs play in addressing these issues. Other award categories and Issue Brief topics this year include: providing middle school students with opportunities for service learning, addressing bullying in middle school and supporting literacy for middle school students.

Urban Arts/Project Phoenix focuses on enhancing learning for Oakland's immigrant population. In the program, afterschool academic mentors meet with grade-level teachers monthly to identify struggling students and grade-level-specific routines and procedures that mentors can implement to help those students. While daytime teachers provide structured English intervention for struggling students, Urban Arts/Project Phoenix provides intervention in mathematics, aiding school-day teachers who lack the time to address all of the students' needs. The program also helps participants improve their English skills by giving them an opportunity to practice speaking in a more open and relaxed environment.

"It's a great honor for Urban Arts/Project Phoenix to be recognized by MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance for working to close the opportunity gap for middle school youth," said Mirella Rangel, the executive director of Oakland Leaf, the nonprofit that runs Urban Arts/Project Phoenix. "The extra support we provide can make all the difference for students

facing academic and cultural challenges. The Afterschool Innovator Award is marvelous reinforcement for the success of the program and the students.”

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, *Lights On Afterschool* includes more than 7,500 events being held across the country on and around October 20, providing children, parents, community leaders, educators and others an opportunity to come together to urge Congress not to divert funds away from the afterschool programs that children and families need. Events will 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 are a fundamental way to make sure that learning doesn’t stop when the school day ends,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “These programs utilize countless creative ways to help children expand their horizons and get the support they need for educational success. The MetLife Foundation Afterschool Innovator Awards honor programs that stand out in helping kids 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 to carry on MetLife’s longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation is committed to building a secure future for individuals and communities worldwide. Through programs focusing on empowering older adults, preparing young people and building livable communities, MetLife Foundation increases access and opportunities for people of all ages. Since it was established, MetLife Foundation has made more than \$500 million in grants and \$75 million in program-related investments. For more information, visit [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org).*