



**Afterschool Alliance**

**MetLife Foundation**

**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **San Antonio 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 the SA Youth afterschool program with an Afterschool Innovator Award, recognizing the program's success in teaching youth the value of a healthy lifestyle. MetLife Agency Sales Director Rick Gomez presented the award at a special event that was part of *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. SA Youth 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 SA Youth program, which is addressing the needs of middle school students and placing them on the path to success."

SA Youth is one of only six afterschool programs nationwide to be named a 2010 Afterschool Innovator. It will be highlighted in an Issue Brief on health and wellness for pre-teens and teens, 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.

Participants in SA Youth engage in at least 45 minutes of structured activities each time they visit, including karate, dance, swimming, cheerleading/tumbling and rock-climbing. The curriculum gives middle school youth the tools they need to be aware of and knowledgeable about health and nutrition in order to make healthy lifestyle choices. SA Youth educates students about the dangers of tobacco, alcohol and drugs and the importance of abstaining from their use. The program also offers weekly 'Boot Camp' classes for families to help parents learn more about creating healthy habits within their families. SA Youth has tracked and found a significant decrease in the BMIs of the youth they serve. Healthy snacks and meals developed by a full-time certified dietician are also provided daily.

"It's a great honor to be recognized by MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance for our work encouraging youth to adopt healthy lifestyles," said Cynthia Le Monds, CEO of SA Youth. "Too many of our young people are adopting sedentary lifestyles and bad eating habits, which will haunt them the rest of their lives. Our students are gaining a lifelong appreciation of physical fitness, an active lifestyle and healthy eating habits. They are also learning not only what kinds of behaviors to avoid, but also the deleterious impact that smoking, alcohol and drugs can have

on their health and well-being. We are proud of our students and delighted to receive this award in recognition of their successes and our efforts.”

The *Lights On Afterschool* event included remarks from several dignitaries, an impromptu Zumba lesson, and the opportunity for visitors to participate in sack races, three-legged races and other games.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, *Lights On Afterschool* is the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. The San Antonio 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).*