



NEWS RELEASE
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**At Congressional Ceremony, Afterschool Alliance Presents
Champion Award to South Carolina's Richland County
School District One After School Programs**

***Nation's Leading Afterschool Advocacy Organization Honors Afterschool
Program for Contributions to Afterschool Programming***

WASHINGTON, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today presented its Afterschool Champion Award to South Carolina's Richland County School District One After School Programs at a Congressional Breakfast in Washington, D.C. The award recognizes the program's efforts to establish, expand and improve educational afterschool programs at each of the district's elementary and middle schools. Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Judy Y. Samelson presented the award to Kerry Abel, Director of Afterschool Programs at Richland County School District One, and parent Donyale Robinson and her 4th grade son, Christopher Robinson, who participates in the program.

"We congratulate everyone at Richland County School District One After School Programs for their deep commitment to improving student achievement and for setting such high standards for their afterschool programs in Columbia," Samelson said. "Richland County offers a mix of afterschool programs that give students a wide array of enriching activities that help them reach their full potential. We're proud to recognize the program for its efforts."

"I am honored to receive this award on behalf of Richland One After School Programs, but I am even prouder of our programs' accomplishments," said Abel in accepting the award. "Our afterschool programs provide a vital service to our community by helping working families, keeping kids safe and, best of all, expanding children's educational opportunities after school."

The Richland One Office of After School Programs is responsible for supervising the district's before-school and afterschool initiatives, including child-care programs at 28 elementary schools, athletic tutorial programs at nine middle schools and seven high schools, and comprehensive remediation afterschool programs at 28 elementary and nine middle schools. The district's commitment to quality programs was demonstrated by its creation of the Office of After-School Programs as a part of the division of Student Support Services in 2000.

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The Afterschool Champion Award was presented during the Afterschool Alliance's annual *Breakfast of Champions*, part of its Afterschool for All Challenge on Capitol Hill. More than 300 afterschool providers and advocates participated in the *Breakfast*, joined by more than a dozen Members of Congress. In addition to Richland County School District One After School Programs, the Afterschool Alliance honored: Nortel Networks; Time Warner; the 21st Century Afterschool Program at Geary County Schools in Junction City, Kansas; and the Farrell and Sharon School District 21st Century Community Learning Centers C.O.O.L. (Children's Opportunities for Outside Learning) Program in Pennsylvania.

After the *Breakfast of Champions*, participants fanned out across Capitol Hill to urge lawmakers to support full funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, the federal government's chief funding stream for afterschool programs across the nation. The President has proposed freezing afterschool funding at \$1 billion for the fourth consecutive year. If approved, the proposal would leave afterschool funding at just half the level promised in the landmark "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001." Full funding for afterschool at the authorized \$2 billion level would create afterschool opportunities for an addition 1.4 million children. Millions more children who need afterschool programs do not have access to them.

A new Afterschool Alliance household survey, funded by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund and released this week, found that more than 14 million K-12 youth are responsible for taking care of themselves after school, and these children spend an average of nearly seven afternoon hours per week unsupervised. Afterschool programs offer young people safe, enriching, fun and engaging places to go once the school day ends. Research shows that afterschool programs are a good investment. Youth who participate have been shown to perform better in school and to hold greater expectations for the future, while children who are unsupervised during the afternoons are at greater risk of becoming involved with crime, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy.

The event is sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization supported by a group of public, private, and nonprofit entities working to ensure that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010. Information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org

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