



NEWS RELEASE  
October 5, 2004

CONTACT: Gretchen Wright  
202/371-1999

## **Afterschool Programs Poised to Help Battle Childhood Obesity**

### ***Many Lights On Afterschool Rallies This Month Will Stress Fitness, Nutrition***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Afterschool Alliance submitted a letter to Members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee today in support of the bipartisan *Childhood Obesity Reduction Act* (S. 2552), which addresses one of the greatest risks facing our nation’s youth – childhood obesity.

“We applaud the HELP Committee for holding a hearing today to draw more attention to effective ways to reduce childhood obesity,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Judy Y. Samelson, “and for recognizing that public private partnerships, such as afterschool programs, are uniquely poised to help ensure that today’s children grow up to be strong and healthy. Afterschool programs give young people opportunities for sports and exercise, and teach them how to make good nutritional choices that can improve their health. Furthermore, many afterschool programs are located in communities with children at great risk of being overweight or obese.” Afterschool programs also provide healthy snacks and some offer dinners for students.

Many of the 6,000 *Lights On Afterschool* rallies that are taking place across the country this month will highlight the fitness activities that afterschool programs provide. The national rally for afterschool kicked off Sunday in Los Angeles when some 4,000 children participated in aerobics and soccer, raced on obstacle courses, learned dance routines and tried their hand at a 30-foot climbing wall. At that event, California Governor and *Lights On* National Chair Arnold Schwarzenegger urged the children to “get mentally and physically fit” and “say yes to education, yes to sports, yes to life and yes to hope.”

*Lights On Afterschool* will culminate on October 14 with, among other activities: a rally and awards ceremony at USA Swimming’s national headquarters at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado; a parade followed by student-organized games and a bowling tournament in Portland, Oregon; and a three-on-three basketball tournament and skateboard competition at a new, world-class concrete skate park in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

*Lights On Afterschool* was launched in October 2000 with some 1,200 events across the country. By last year, more than half a million people rallied at more than 5,000 events in all 50 states as well as Guam, Japan and South Korea to show their support for afterschool programs. Organizers expect this year’s event to be even larger.

more

## Add One

More than 150 organizations have already joined *Lights On Afterschool* 2004 as national supporting organizations. They include After-School All-Stars; American Alliance for Health, Physical Education Recreation and Dance; American Association for Health Education; National Association of Police Athletic Leagues; National Recreation and Park Association; USTA Tennis and Education Foundation; and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's VERB Campaign.

The 2004 National Presenting Sponsor of *Lights On Afterschool* is the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the JCPenney Afterschool Fund is a National Sponsor of the event. The David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Open Society Institute are providing additional support.

*The Afterschool Alliance is 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 the year 2010. More information is available at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*

*The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, established in 1926 in Flint, Michigan, by an automotive pioneer, is a private philanthropy committed to supporting projects that promote a just, equitable and sustainable society. More information is available at [www.mott.org](http://www.mott.org)*

*JCPenney Afterschool is committed to helping provide children with high-quality, affordable after-school programs to help them reach the "power of their potential." The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization. JCPenney Afterschool has contributed more than \$34 million during the past five years to five of America's leading after-school advocates. JCPenney Afterschool's support helps provide safe, fun and educational after-school programs and raise awareness of the need for more such programs across the country.*

# # # #