

NEWS RELEASE
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CONTACT: Danielle Baer for
School's Out Washington
206-323-2396
Wendy Malloy for
Pacific Science Center
206-443-2879

Seattle Turns the 'Lights On Afterschool'

T-Mobile USA, School's Out Washington, Pacific Science Center Host Gala & Awards Ceremony in One of Thousands of Rallies for Afterschool Today

Seattle, WA – Hundreds of students, parents, business and community leaders are coming together at Pacific Science Center here today to rally for more funding for afterschool programs. The *Lights On Afterschool* gala celebrates afterschool programs in Washington and honors some of the state's afterschool champions. It is one of 7,500 such events taking place across the nation and at U.S. military bases worldwide to emphasize the importance of keeping the lights on and the doors open for afterschool programs. Experts warn that tight budgets are endangering afterschool programs here in Washington and around the country, leaving many children and youth with no safe, supervised, educational activities after the school day ends. A 2004 survey from the Afterschool Alliance found that 31 percent of Washington's K-12 youth care for themselves after school.

T-Mobile USA is the presenting sponsor of the gala, which is hosted by School's Out Washington, Pacific Science Center and the Afterschool Alliance. The program includes youth performances and a ceremony honoring afterschool champions, who will join the state's Afterschool Hall of Fame. In honor of this event, Pacific Science Center is opening its doors to more than 400 children and youth in area afterschool programs for free. Educators, policy makers, funders, and other community leaders will join in the celebration which concludes with special after-hours access to the *Colossal Fossils* exhibit free of charge.

"T-Mobile is proud to support afterschool programs, which do so much to keep children safe, give them opportunities to learn and grow, and support working families," said Glenn Zaccara, T-Mobile senior manager, corporate responsibility. "We are so happy to be able to sponsor today's event, and give so many young people the chance to have fun and speak out for afterschool."

"Pacific Science Center is proud to participate in this valuable rally," said Bryce Seidl, president and CEO for Pacific Science Center. "Providing a safe, secure environment for children to learn and discover is a priority for Pacific Science Center and *Lights On Afterschool* is a way to build public awareness of the importance of quality afterschool programs."

School's Out Washington joined with SOAR, helping kids reach for the sky, and Seattle Public Schools to give awards to policy makers, educators, funders, business leaders, and community members. Those honored today are:

- State Senator Tracey Eide from the 30th legislative district, who has been floor leader since 2005. Senator Eide is a strong leader at both the local and state levels on education issues, and serves on numerous boards and key legislative committees.
- Mayor Dennis Hession, City of Spokane who serves on the Washington Afterschool Network Panel of 50 and has prioritized afterschool as key to supporting children and youth in his community.
- The Medina Foundation, which has created a diverse funding stream for afterschool programs.
- T-Mobile USA, which has created *T-Mobile Huddle-Up*, a company-wide community outreach program connecting kids, primarily from single-parent families in high-need, urban communities, to positive people, place and programs.
- Billie Young, whose vision helped create the School's Out Consortium which has grown into School's Out Washington, which today serves the afterschool field statewide.
- Rick George, Principal, Henkle Middle School, White Salmon School District for his leadership in bringing sorely needed resources into his community to provide afterschool opportunities that help his students succeed both in school and life.
- Wendy Bleecker, Spokane Public Schools for her passion, commitment, and spirit of collaboration that helps keep kids safe and learning during the out-of-school time hours.

“Each of these award winners is a true champion of afterschool who is helping give students in Washington a safe place to go afterschool,” said School's Out Washington Network Director Janet Frieling. “We are very proud to honor each of them today and to expand the number of leaders in our state recognized for their commitment to ensuring that all children and youth in our state have access to quality afterschool opportunities.”

Today's event is part of the eighth annual *Lights On Afterschool*, sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance. *Lights On Afterschool 2007* launches the 10th anniversary of the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, which has made afterschool programs available to hundreds of thousands of children across the nation. Still, funding has not kept up with demand, and millions of children are unsupervised each afternoon after the school days ends. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is Chair of *Lights On Afterschool* again this year.

“This is a wonderful event, and the Afterschool Alliance is proud to participate,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Seeing so many students enjoy the Pacific Science Center and explore the exhibits is a reminder of the many ways afterschool programs open new worlds to students.”

School's Out Washington provides services and guidance for organizations to ensure all young people have safe places to learn and grow when not in school. School's Out is dedicated to building community systems to support quality out-of-school time programs for Washington's 5-14 year olds through training, advocacy and leadership. More information is available at www.schoolsoutwashington.org.

Pacific Science Center (pacificsciencecenter.org) is an independent, not-for profit educational institution that inspires lifelong interest in science, math and technology by engaging diverse communities through interactive and innovative exhibits and programs in every county of Washington state and beyond.

Lights On Afterschool is a nationwide event to recognize the critical importance of quality afterschool programs in the lives of children, their families and communities. It is a project of the Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children have access to quality afterschool programs. More information on the Afterschool Alliance and Lights On Afterschool is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

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