



NEWS RELEASE
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Washington D.C. Afterschool Program Wins National Award for Innovation from MetLife Foundation

Program Recognized for Innovation in Parent Engagement

The Afterschool Alliance and MetLife Foundation today honored Kid Power/VeggieTime in Washington D.C. with a 2012 Afterschool Innovator Award for training students to understand the current political, health and economic structures that influence their neighborhoods. Kid Power is a non-profit organization that inspires youth leadership by promoting academic advancement, social and emotional wellness and positive civic engagement in underserved communities throughout the District. Kid Power's VeggieTime program was one of only five programs in the country recognized for using innovative approaches to help middle school students succeed in the programs, school and life. Jim Donnellan, MetLife Vice President of Government Relations presented the award, which included \$10,000 for VeggieTime to expand its work, during a special event that was part of *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs.

"Children learn in a variety of ways and middle school is the perfect time to take advantage of a student's natural curiosity and interest in learning new things," said Dennis White, president and CEO of Met Life Foundation. "We are honored to join the Afterschool Alliance in recognizing Kid Power's VeggieTime program which represents some of the most exciting innovations in expanding horizons and helping middle school students achieve their full potential."

The goal of the program is to help students become strong and creative learners and agents of positive social change. VeggieTime builds literacy skills and allows students to study a wide-array of nutritional, health, environmental, and "good agricultural" practices. Currently, VeggieTime participants help maintain over 50 garden beds throughout the District. The project has a strong parent involvement component. Families are encouraged to participate in regular gardening and cooking activities to help develop healthy eating habits. Students and their families also operate a vegetable marketing business, where a portion of produce is distributed to participating households, and the remainder is sold at local markets. As emerging social entrepreneurs, students study financial literacy concepts, leadership models, and marketing and publicity techniques. Participants fund and implement nutritional classes, public service announcements on healthy eating, school "greening" initiatives, family and school-based cooking programs, environmental projects, activities with other farmers in the metropolitan area, and service trips to communities outside DC. Finally, students focus on DC's nutritional policy and seek to enact substantive changes in city and school food delivery systems. VeggieTime

participants are given the opportunity to act as true leaders in the fight against childhood hunger through growing and harvesting produce, designing policy initiatives (e.g., reinvention of school lunches) and involvement in city-wide political structures (e.g., DC Schoolyard Greening Committee).

“We are thrilled to be recognized by MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance for our VeggieTime program which provides the educational foundation and real-world opportunities for youth to make healthy changes in their lives and in their communities,” said Andria Hollis, Executive Director of Kid Power. “There is no question that VeggieTime is making a positive difference in the families and communities that we serve. The Afterschool Innovator Award is a true honor and a wonderful way to celebrate our youth’s accomplishments!”

VeggieTime will be featured in an Issue Brief on the Afterschool Alliance’s website on how parent involvement in afterschool programs benefit middle school students. The Afterschool Alliance’s Issue Brief series examines the role of afterschool programs in addressing a variety of contemporary issues facing youth, schools and communities.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, *Lights On Afterschool* includes more than 7,500 events being held across the country on and around October 18, providing children, parents, community leaders, educators and others an opportunity to come together to urge Congress not to divert funds from the afterschool programs that children and families need. 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 are terrific settings for innovation,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “In afterschool programs, directors and staff have the flexibility to try creative and unusual approaches to learning and building skills that can help kids succeed in school and in life. We’re so grateful to MetLife Foundation for working with us to highlight and recognize these outstanding programs.”

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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.

MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 to continue MetLife’s longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation’s commitment to building a secure future for individuals and communities worldwide is reflected in its dedication to empowering older adults, preparing young people and building livable communities. Since it was established, MetLife Foundation has provided more than \$530 million in grants and \$70 million in Program-Related Investments to nonprofit organizations addressing issues that have a positive impact in their communities. For more information visit www.metlife.org