



NEWS RELEASE
September 1, 2011

CONTACT: Gretchen Wright
202/371-1999

Twelve Years of Lights On Afterschool!

Community Leaders, Educators to Join Parents, Kids and Others to Urge Congress Not to Divert or Deny Funds for Afterschool

Children, parents, grandparents, educators, community leaders, policy makers, celebrities and others across the country will come together at schools, community centers, parks, malls, state capitols and elsewhere on October 20 to participate in the 12th annual nationwide rally for afterschool. Since the Afterschool Alliance organized the first *Lights On Afterschool* in 2000, it has grown to include more than 7,500 events across the country and at U.S. military bases worldwide. *Lights On Afterschool* is the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs.

This year's rally will kick off at Capital Criterium, a championship bike race in Washington, D.C. on Sunday, October 2. The Afterschool Alliance is the Kids' Afterschool Initiative Sponsor of this professional cycling event, which is the final race of USA Cycling's exclusive 2011 national racing calendar. As professional cyclists race down Pennsylvania Avenue, children and youth will race on the same course and participate in cycling and bike safety events on the National Mall. The youth races will highlight the importance of physical fitness in the afterschool hours.

At *Lights On* events across the country this year, parents, children, educators, community leaders, business leaders and others will be urging Congress to take action to strengthen afterschool programs by supporting the Afterschool for America's Children Act (S. 1370), which would allow federal funding to support innovation in before school, afterschool and summer learning programs. They will also be urging their Members of Congress not to divert or deny funds for afterschool programs. For years, the federal investment in afterschool has lagged far behind the need. The *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (the chief federal funding stream for afterschool), yet funding stands at less than half that today. Congress is currently considering legislation that would allow other programs to compete for the already limited 21st Century Community Learning Centers funds.

"Every day across this country, afterschool programs are keeping kids safe, inspiring them to learn and helping working families," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Given the economy, it is more important than ever that we sustain the **quality** afterschool programs we have and support new ones. As we celebrate the 12th year of *Lights On Afterschool*, we are working to ensure that many more students have **fun, engaging** hands-on

learning opportunities after school -- building robots, producing music videos, planting community gardens, exploring college and career paths, and so much more.”

During *Lights On Afterschool* this year, the Afterschool Alliance, in conjunction with jcpenny, will release 50 state progress reports that examine how each state is helping keep the lights on for kids and families after school. The progress reports review state policies, funding and other activities that affect afterschool programs, examine the need in each state for these programs, offer tips to parents seeking afterschool programs for their children and suggest ways that all state residents can support afterschool.

More than a million people are expected to participate in the 2011 *Lights On Afterschool* rallies. The events give youth a chance to showcase the skills they learn and talents they develop at their afterschool programs, and to send the message that millions more kids need quality afterschool programs.

A significant body of research demonstrates that students who attend 21st CCLC afterschool programs regularly are more likely to improve their grades, tests scores and overall academic behavior. More than 15 million school-age children – more than one in four kids in the United States – are unsupervised after the school day ends. The parents of 18 million children say they would enroll their kids in afterschool programs – if programs were available.

#

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.