



NEWS RELEASE  
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## **At Congressional Ceremony, Afterschool Alliance Presents Champion Award To Tennessee's Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority**

### ***Nation's Leading Afterschool Advocacy Organization Honors Afterschool Program for Working to Boost Economy of Region Through Education***

WASHINGTON, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today presented its Afterschool Champion Award to Tennessee's Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority at a Congressional Breakfast in Washington, D.C. The award recognizes the program's work in providing intensive tutoring, counseling and academic enrichment activities to underachieving students. Parenting skills, career development and adult literacy services are also provided for family members. The award was presented to Cathy Kitts, the program's Project Director.

"We are proud to recognize the Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority for its commitment to improving student achievement and its efforts to improve the economy of the region through education," said Afterschool Alliance Interim Executive Director Jen Rinehart. "Providing programs for both students and their parents strengthens the learning environment and creates real opportunities for families to thrive."

"I am very pleased to accept this award on behalf of the Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority," Kitts said in accepting the award. "Our afterschool programs provide a vital service to our community by helping working families, keeping kids safe, and expanding educational opportunities for students and their parents. Our programs have made a tremendous difference in many lives."

With funding from the federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers initiative, the Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority operates afterschool programs in Grainger, Union, Cocke and Hamblen counties in eastern Tennessee, serving eight elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. Collectively, these programs serve 1,140 students throughout the region.

Each afterschool program provides intensive tutoring, counseling and academic enrichment activities to students free of charge. Other activities include art and music programs, character education, and recreational activities. Additionally, English Language Learning/English as a Second Language training is offered at program sites in Hamblen County. Volunteers, including parents, local high school Beta Club members, Girl Scout service learners, college students, and teachers, assist with program activities at each site.

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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 500 afterschool providers and advocates participated in the *Breakfast*, joined by more than a dozen Members of Congress. In addition to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Afterschool Programs operated by the Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority, the Afterschool Alliance honored Lilburn Elementary School in Lilburn, Georgia, and the Shoshoni Lights On! afterschool program in Shoshoni, Wyoming.

After the *Breakfast of Champions*, participants met with lawmakers to highlight the value of afterschool programs in their communities, and to urge them to support full funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers initiative, the federal government's chief funding stream for afterschool programs across the nation. The President has proposed allocating just \$991 million for the initiative in Fiscal Year 2006. If approved, the proposal would leave afterschool funding at less than half the level promised in the landmark *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, leaving millions of children without the afterschool care they need.

An Afterschool Alliance household survey, funded by the J.C. Penney Co., Inc., found that more than 14 million K-12 youth are responsible for taking care of themselves after school. 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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org)

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