



NEWS RELEASE
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At Congressional Ceremony, Afterschool Alliance Presents Champion Award to Wyoming's Shoshoni Lights On!

Nation's Leading Afterschool Advocacy Organization Honors Afterschool Program for Its Commitment to Keeping Kids Safe and Inspired

WASHINGTON, DC – The Afterschool Alliance today presented its Afterschool Champion Award to the Shoshoni Lights On! afterschool program at a Congressional Breakfast in Washington, D.C. The award recognizes the program's work in providing safe, educational afterschool opportunities for many of the rural community's students. The award was presented to Program Coordinator Linda Manchester, Assistant Coordinator Stephanie Logan, Outdoor Instructor Bryan Sage, and students Jenny Sage, age 17, and Dusty Britain, age 12.

"We are proud to recognize Shoshoni Lights On! for providing students with diverse learning opportunities in a secure setting after the school day ends," said Afterschool Alliance Interim Executive Director Jen Rinehart. "Programs like Shoshoni's keep kids safe, help working families, and inspire children to learn."

"On behalf of Shoshoni Lights On! and our community partners, we are so honored to receive this affirmation of the hard work and dedication that has gone into building quality programs for our youth," Manchester said in accepting the award. "Our afterschool programs provide a fun, secure and structured learning environment before and after school, exposing our students to opportunities they might not otherwise experience. By fostering students' desire to learn and explore while giving parents peace of mind that their children are safe, our programs have made a tremendous difference in our community."

Rural Shoshoni, Wyoming, has a population of approximately 1,200, including the surrounding farms and ranches. The Shoshoni Lights On! program provides programming to 89 percent of Shoshoni's elementary school students and 62 percent of its junior high and high school students.

"Study Buddies," one of the program's most successful initiatives, pairs elementary students with high school student-tutors who mentor them while also providing homework assistance. Other programs, geared toward a variety of age groups and interests, include: robotic Legos; pottery; sewing; archery; fly fishing; tumbling; technology boot camp; women's self defense; and others.

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Administrators say the success of Shoshoni Lights On!, which is funded through the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, comes from its partnerships with other programs in the community such as the School District, Shoshoni Recreation District, Boys & Girls Club of Central Wyoming, Shoshoni Public Library, Outdoor Recreation Educational Opportunities (OREO) of the Wyoming Game and Fish, and the Shoshoni Senior Center.

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 Shoshoni Lights On! program, the Afterschool Alliance honored Tennessee's Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority and Lilburn Elementary School in Lilburn, Georgia.

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 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, the federal government's chief funding stream for afterschool programs across the nation. The President has proposed allocating \$991 million for the program 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. Just seven percent of children in rural working families attend afterschool programs. Parents of these children are more likely than parents of urban or suburban families to say the program their child attends is the only one available.

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

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