



NEWS RELEASE
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**Denver Afterschool Program Wins National Award
from MetLife Foundation**

Program is one of six nationwide recognized for innovation and excellence.

MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance today honored The Bridge Project afterschool program in Denver with an Afterschool Innovator Award, recognizing the program's success in teaching middle school students about science and technology. MetLife Managing Director Robyn Lewis-Oglesby presented the award at a special event that was part of *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. The Bridge Project also received \$5,000 to sustain its work.

"Middle school is a pivotal point in young people's development," said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "We are pleased to join the Afterschool Alliance in recognizing The Bridge Project's model, which is addressing the needs of middle school students and placing them on the path to success."

The Bridge Project is one of only six afterschool programs nationwide to be named a 2010 Afterschool Innovator. It was highlighted in an [Issue Brief](#) on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) in middle school, part of a series developed by the Afterschool Alliance with funding from MetLife Foundation, examining critical issues facing youth, schools and communities, and the role that the programs play in addressing these issues. The briefs describe a variety of benefits that afterschool programs provide, including opportunities for community involvement; leadership development; pathways to higher education and careers; health and wellness; and STEM learning.

At The Bridge Project, middle school students learn about renewable energy through hands-on science experiments and then make short films explaining how different types of renewable energy work and describing the benefits of sustainable living. Experiments, including building a solar oven and wind turbine, help students understand how renewable energy operates. For the technology component, students work with state-of-the-art movie-making and editing equipment to create a film, which is then shared with the wider community. The program allows students to learn about science and technology and gives them a tangible outcome that can be shared with others. A rigorous evaluation process showed that participants have increased school attendance, improved grades and raised graduation rates. Participating students also have shown significant improvements in school engagement, family support and parental support for educational and behavioral expectations at school.

"It's a great honor to be recognized by MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance for our work teaching youth and pre-teens about science, technology and renewable energy," said Molly Calhoun, Executive Director of The Bridge Project. "We know that STEM literacy is critical to the future success of our students and we believe that by making these disciplines fun and

engaging we are laying the groundwork for potential careers in these important and growing fields. We are proud to receive this award, but even prouder of the amazing work The Bridge Project students do every day.”

The *Lights On Afterschool* event included a science fair during which students demonstrated how a windmill they had built worked, followed by a video written, directed and produced by the students about their solar oven and windmill projects.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, *Lights On Afterschool* is the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. The Denver event is one of more than 7,500 being held across the country at which children, parents, community leaders, educators and others come together to urge leaders to increase support for the afterschool programs that children and families need. The 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 pick up where the school day leaves off,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “They provide children with unique opportunities to broaden their horizons and receive the support, experiences, and exposure they need to achieve success. The Afterschool Innovator Awards honor programs that have developed and are using promising practices to help children and youth excel.”

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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 by MetLife to carry on its longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. In youth development, MetLife Foundation funds initiatives that promote mentoring and provide safe places and constructive activities for young people, particularly during out-of-school time. For more information, visit www.metlife.org.