



NEWS RELEASE
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CONTACT: Gretchen Wright
Christie Constantine
202/371-1999

**Fresno Students Produce
Winning Public Service Announcement for National Contest**

*Afterschool Alliance Names Youths' PSA Promoting Afterschool
One of Six Best in Nation*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Students in Fresno, California, have been selected by a panel of celebrity judges as winners of the Afterschool Alliance's *Don't Be An American Idle* contest, which challenged kids aged 9 to 17 to devise public service announcements (PSAs) promoting afterschool in radio, television, and print formats. The PSA won the contest's television category in the 13 to 17 age group, and is one of six winning entries nationwide.

“Here are some talented, creative kids hanging out in afterschool making movies about hanging out in afterschool. You can't beat that!!” said contest judges Rhea Perlman and Danny DeVito. Other contest judges included television's Judge Glenda Hatchett; Fox's American Idol Musical Director Michael Orland; Youth Speaks Executive Director James Kass; H2Ed Vice President Patricia Wang; and themusicedge.com's Laura Johnson, among others.

“All the entries we received were amazingly creative and clever,” said Afterschool Alliance Interim Executive Director Jen Rinehart. “Afterschool programs help kids channel their energy and creativity and achieve remarkable things. Our contest winners are more evidence of the great benefits of afterschool.”

Last June, students led by Central High School senior Jane Chakhlyan produced an animated PSA showing that afterschool programs lead to success while protecting kids from negative influences. The PSA was created as part of a two-day animation workshop conducted last June by Royers Studios, Inc., a local production company that partners with a variety of schools on educational video and animation projects. Due to the program's success and popularity among students, this year 34 schools and afterschool programs in Fresno County have incorporated the program into their curricula.

“Afterschool is a must in the Fresno area,” said Vince Wesson, a coordinator with the afterschool program at the Fresno County Office of Education who organized the workshop. “We try to

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provide creative activities like this project, where students can set and meet goals, and perhaps develop an interest in a future career path.”

“Being at an afterschool program is really fun, and you learn valuable things, like music, sports, or how to work with other people,” said Chakhlasyan, who hopes to attend Fresno Pacific University next year. “It’s so much better than being home, alone, doing nothing.”

“As the name of the contest suggests, kids in afterschool programs engage in constructive, educational activities when the school day ends, as opposed to being idle, or engaged in a variety of inappropriate behaviors,” added Rinehart. “By keeping kids safe, afterschool programs provide peace of mind to millions of working parents who would otherwise worry about their children each afternoon.”

The other contest winners are from the YMCA of Greater Erie in Erie, Pennsylvania; the Alvord Unified Half-Time Program in Riverside, California; the “Girls Taking Control” afterschool program at the YWCA of Manchester, New Hampshire; the LIFE After School program at John W. Price Elementary School in Lancaster, Pennsylvania; and the Goff Community School in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. All winning programs received digital video cameras.

In November 2000, the Afterschool Alliance joined with the Advertising Council and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to launch a highly successful series of PSA campaigns promoting public support for afterschool programs. Print and broadcast PSAs from the third phase of the campaign began running in mid-2004 – humorous spots contrasting the mischief bored children can get into when unoccupied in the afternoons with the constructive and fun activities in afterschool programs.

Research conducted for the Afterschool Alliance has found that more than 14 million kindergarten through 12th-graders take care of themselves after the school day ends, including almost 4 million middle school students in grades six to eight. Studies show that this is precisely the time of day when juvenile crime, drug and alcohol abuse and other risky behaviors by youth increase.

As part of its ongoing youth engagement campaign, the Afterschool Alliance is also sponsoring a youth essay contest, in which students ages 9 to 17 write essays describing why afterschool programs have provided them with “Something Way Better to Do.” Top prizes of \$1,500 will be awarded to the winning essay for students in two age groups – grades 5-8 and grades 9-12. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

Winning PSAs can be viewed at www.afterschoolscene.com.

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The Afterschool Alliance is 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 the year 2010. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.