



NEWS RELEASE
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**Manchester 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. – Six Manchester, New Hampshire, students 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 radio category in the 13 to 17 age group, and is one of six winning entries nationwide.

“What a great contest and how thrilling to see the future kids that can be on American Idol being so creative due to these terrific afterschool programs,” said Michael Orland, American Idol's musical director, band leader and arranger. Other contest judges included actors Danny DeVito and Rhea Perlman; television's Judge Glenda Hatchett; 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.”

Students in the “Girls Taking Control” afterschool program at the YWCA of Manchester developed a radio PSA to explain why they love the program. Group Facilitator Erikka Adams helped students Katelyn Lemay, Sarah Paris, Katelyn Sargent, Jessica Yule, Brittany Trefry, and Dominique Bessette highlight activities that make a positive impact in their community, such as planning fundraisers and being pen pals with seniors.

“I am so excited for our girls,” said Erikka Adams, Assistant Coordinator for the YWCA Teen Program. “This was a great opportunity for them to put into words the purpose of Girls Taking Control and why it is important to them. They value the program for the experiences they have gained in the community and for the relationships they have developed together. Their enthusiasm and sense of spirit really shows in their PSA.”

“Our ‘Girls Taking Control’ program offers girls in middle school, alongside members who continue their involvement throughout high school, a chance to learn and grow in a safe environment,” said

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Cat Allard, Program Coordinator of the YWCA Teen Program. “We’re proud of the richness of our program, which has been created by girls, for girls who want to be active community members. This award exemplifies the kind of creativity and hard work of which our girls are capable.”

“We wanted to get our name out in Manchester, so that other girls might get involved,” said Katelyn Sargent, a member of Girls Taking Control. “There are not many choices for girls-only programs. Our program is a good way for girls to bond, serve the community, and meet other people.” “We decided to write a PSA because we thought that talking about our afterschool program, from a fellow teen’s perspective, would have more of an impact instead of hearing it from an adult,” said Jessica Yule, a member of Girls Taking Control. “Even if just one person heard that and thought, ‘hmm, I’d like to go there and check this place out,’ I would feel that I have done my job in helping our community. Sometimes one person is all it takes to make incredible changes.”

“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 Bruce Royer Teen Advocates Animation Program in Fresno, California; the Alvord Unified Half-Time Program in Riverside, California; 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.