



NEWS RELEASE
May 17, 2011

CONTACT: Gretchen Wright
202/371-1999

Connecticut Education Leader Honored as an Afterschool Champion in Nation's Capital

*Parents, Educators, Students, Afterschool Leaders
Urge Congress to Increase Afterschool Funding, Help Expand Science, Technology,
Engineering and Math Programming*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Afterschool Alliance today honored Dr. Agnes Quiñones, Education Consultant for the Connecticut State Department of Education, for her support for afterschool programs at the “Breakfast of Champions,” a gala event in Washington, D.C. featuring FIRST Robotics founder Dean Kamen. Dr. Quiñones has helped to ensure that Connecticut has a sustained investment in science technology, engineering and math (STEM) during afterschool hours. She was one of just nine state champions from around the country honored at the Breakfast for supporting and working on behalf of afterschool programs. The Connecticut After School Network nominated her for the honor.

Dr. Quiñones’ work in the policy arena has significantly improved learning opportunities for young people, both during and after school. She was a driving force behind the creation of middle school and high school curricula for afterschool programs that focus on science, technology, engineering and math.

“Dr. Quiñones is a committed and capable leader who can take a good idea and make it great,” said Michelle Doucette Cunningham, Executive Director of the Connecticut After School Network. “Her expertise and ability to collaborate have made the critical difference in helping to ensure that afterschool students have opportunities to learn and get excited about the sciences and math.

The “Breakfast of Champions” is part of the tenth annual *Afterschool for All Challenge*, sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance, which brings together hundreds of parents, educators, children, program directors and advocates from around the country for a series of events and meetings with Members of Congress. Following the Breakfast, participants fanned out across Capitol Hill to meet with Members of Congress and talk to them about the importance of afterschool programs and expanding opportunities for kids to engage in STEM activities in those programs. This year is The Year of Science in Afterschool.

“Afterschool programs are a lifeline for working families, they keep kids safe and – most important – inspire them to learn. These programs are uniquely positioned to provide hands-on and real-world STEM learning opportunities,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive

Director Jodi Grant. “It’s no secret that our nation has some serious catching-up to do when it comes to math and the sciences. We know that afterschool programs are successful in getting children excited about the sciences. That excitement and interest has been shown to be a better predictor than good grades or test scores of who will pursue careers in the sciences. By offering children the opportunity to try robotics, CSI, rocket-building or constructing wind turbines, afterschool programs are developing future computer programmers, forensic scientists and engineers.”

Other state champions honored at the *Afterschool for All Challenge* are: Nancy Volpe, Consultant-Youth Programs/America’s Promise, CVS Consultant, Pathways to Pharmacy and President, Volpe Communications in Kansas; Kathleen Straus, Board Member, Michigan State Board of Education; R.T. Rybak, Mayor of the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota; Sherry Comer, Afterschool Services Director, Camdenton R-III Schools, Camdenton, Missouri; Vaughn L. McKoy, President, PSEG Foundation, New Jersey; Kyle Stewart, Executive Director, Alliance of New York State YMCAs, Inc.; Carmen M. Medina, Chief of the Division, Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Teaching and Learning, Division of Student Services; Mark H. Emery, Administrator for After-School Programs, Fairfax County Public Schools, Virginia.

The 2011 *Afterschool for All Challenge* is sponsored by: United States Tennis Association, Peavey Electronics, NAMM, Open Society Foundations, Cable in the Classroom, National AfterSchool Association, Clever Crazes for Kids, and Arnold and Sandra Grant. Additional funding is provided by the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, Time Warner Cable, the Noyce Foundation and jcpenny.

#

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.