



Celebrate Afterschool!

outdoors in the Garden State

How to plan your event
conduct it
and publicize it like a pro!
Expanded for May 10-16, 2010





Table of Contents

Event Planning Guide	①
Publicity Guide	④
VIP invitation letter	⑥
Press release	⑦
Proclamation	⑧
Flyer	⑨

Event Planning Guide

Here's a step-by-step guide to plan and produce your event:

1) Assign someone to oversee the event

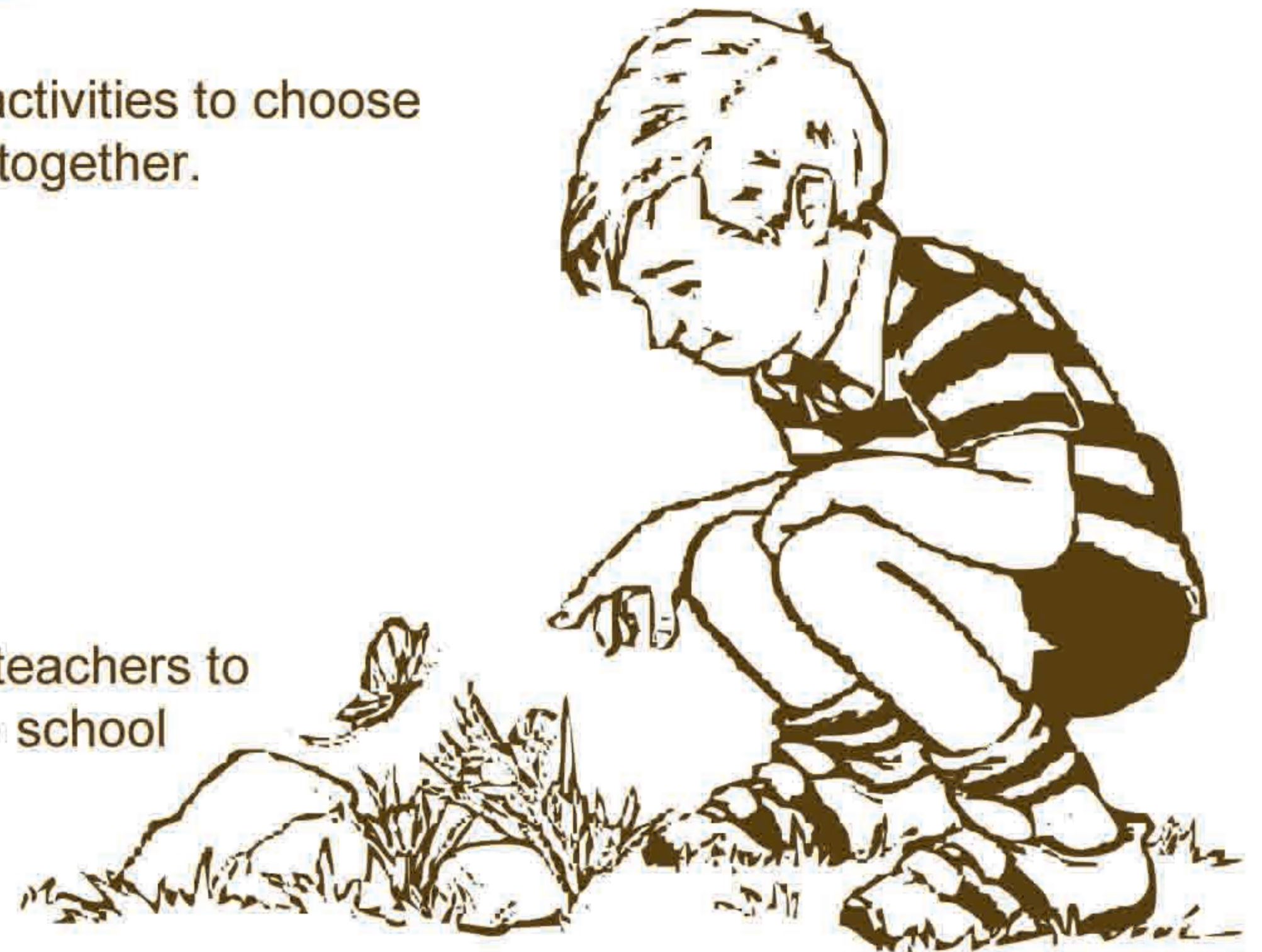
Events are run best when one person has overall responsibility. That person will depend on the support of other staff members to plan and implement the event.

2) Choose an activity or group of activities for your community event

Whether you plan a daily event or a week-long event, there are plenty of activities to choose from. Plan an event that students and members of the community can do together.

Here are some suggestions:

- Host a nature fair
- Organize a community scavenger hunt
- Create a nature art show
- Plant a garden
- Hold a kite-making workshop
- If your program is school-based and/or school-linked, partner with teachers to plan an activity that builds on what students are learning during the school day. Ask the teachers to help promote the event.



3) Assign students as nature ambassadors

Nature ambassadors can lead guests on a tour of the afterschool program and speak about the impact of the afterschool program on their lives.

They can post a “Nature Fact of the Day,” lead a nature walk or do a quick activity like making grass whistles (see “Nature Minutes” on page 4 of the *Activities & Resource Guide*).

4) Invite a guest speaker

Who you invite as your guest speaker is an important consideration. Whether it's the superintendent, mayor or congressman, that person will help to generate media attention and build public support for your program. Ask the speaker to play a role that makes sense for him or her. For example, a local politician can talk with students about how they can protect the environment in their town. A local author of a nature book can be invited for a roundtable discussion with students. A local celebrity with strong ties to environmental causes can lead a Q&A discussion on the importance of preservation.

Look for someone who is a prominent leader (e.g., the mayor, superintendent, leading educator, state representative) to speak on the subject of nature and how it can be an effective teaching tool. Someone who can talk about and interact with young people is a good choice.

Ask the speaker to sign on to the *Celebrate Afterschool!* campaign. Download the support letter from www.njsacc.org. Using a large copy of this letter makes a great photo op. You can also ask your mayor or education commissioner to issue a proclamation to be presented at the opening of the “*Celebrate Afterschool!*” event. A sample invitation and proclamation are included in this packet. Parents, staff and students can follow up the speech with additional words on the positive benefits of your afterschool program.

5) Put together an invitation list

Invite parents, school staff, local elected officials, the superintendent, the mayor, members of congress, local celebrities, senior citizens, and business leaders such as the Rotary, Chamber of Commerce and Kiwanis Club members.

6) Send out invitations

One month before the event, send emails and flyers to all invitees. Send individualized letters to important people and organizations. This kit includes sample flyers and a VIP letter that you can customize. (See pages 7 to 10). Send a reminder email the week before the event. You may want to post flyers at your local libraries and community centers as well.



Event Planning Guide (continued)

7) Invite the media

See the separate publicity guide on page 5 for detailed information on working with the media.

8) Use the web

Post information on your website and on your Facebook page if you have one. Use your online venues to invite people to your event, or just to spread the news.

9) Develop a timeline for the day

Write down each activity in sequential order. Make sure to include set-up time. The timeline will probably include the following:

- Welcoming remarks by the program director and introduction of the guest speaker
- Speech from guest speaker
- Follow-up discussions by VIPs, parents, staff and students
- Presentation of proclamation
- Program director answers questions from the audience
- Activity (see step 2)
- Refreshments
- Photo op
- Thank visitors

10) Create a nature-friendly environment

Think of how you can support the “outdoors” theme with the sights and sounds of nature. Hold a nature art show, play nature music, post nature facts and serve refreshments outside.

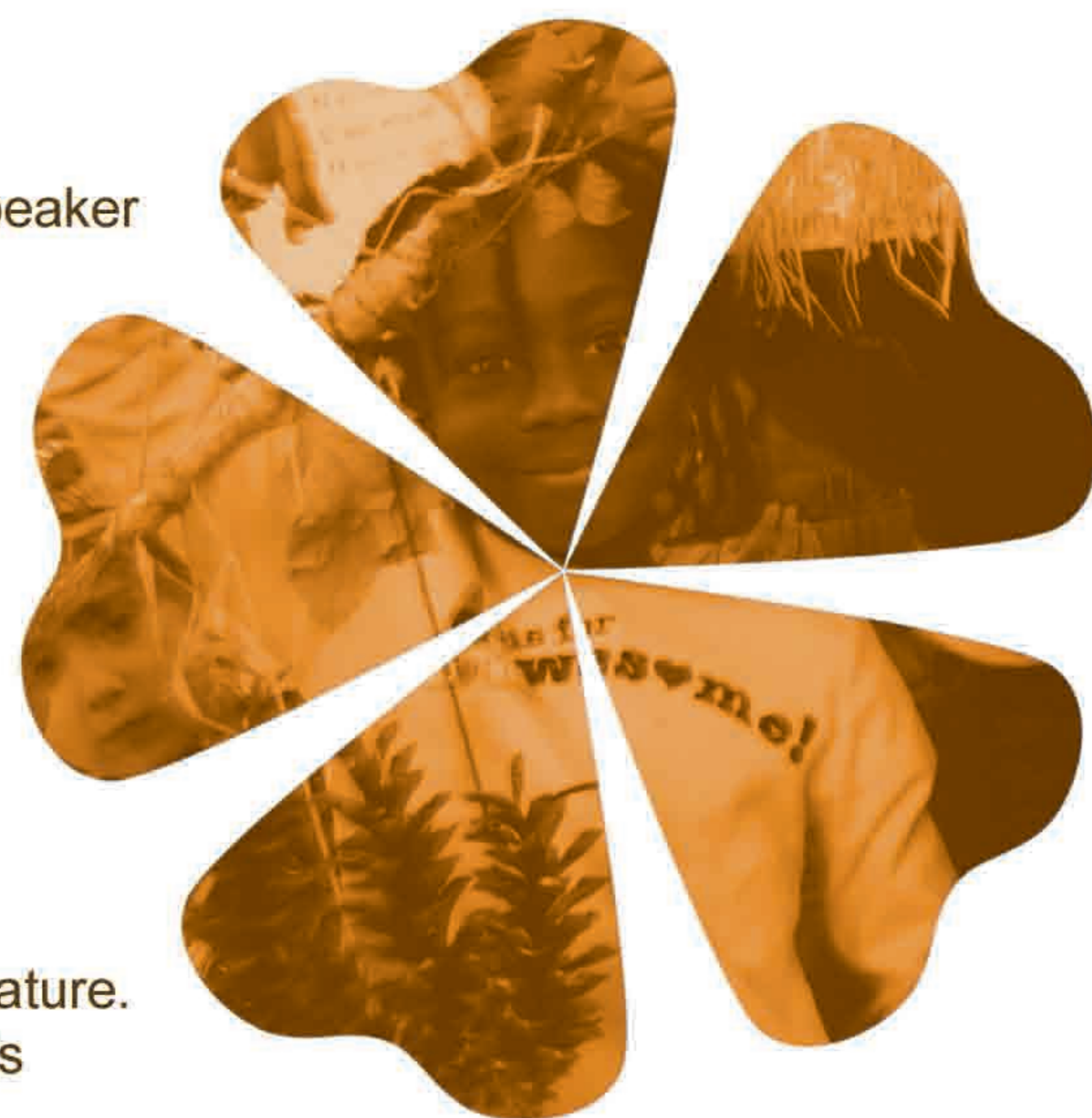
Also, be sure to have a camera on hand to take a photo with local VIPs. See the publicity guide for information on sending a photo and caption.

11) Download the Celebrate Afterschool! petition and fact sheets from www.njsacc.org

Help us collect 10,000 signatures to show our strength.

12) Order refreshments

A pizza dinner or snack will help create an inviting atmosphere that allows for conversation and networking.



Event Planning Guide (continued)

13) Communicate the importance of your program

Mingle with guests, thank them for coming and reinforce the importance of nature as a teaching tool in your afterschool program. Here are some points you may want to consider.

What is it?

Celebrate Afterschool! is part of a statewide campaign to improve and expand afterschool in New Jersey. Our goal is to build support for high quality, affordable afterschool programs.

Why outdoors?

Nature inspires creativity. It allows for students to grow intellectually, emotionally and socially.

- Studies show that outdoor educational programs lead to higher test scores and enhanced school achievement, particularly in science.
- Research proves that exposure to natural settings restores attention and helps reduce the symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children.
- Outdoor play helps children develop the capacities for creativity and problem solving which ultimately leads to a more expansive way of thinking.

What can you do?

- Afterschool programs need community support to be their most effective. Ask your local afterschool program how you can help.
- Join the statewide campaign and show your support. Visit: www.njsacc.org
- Collect signatures on a Celebrate Afterschool! petition (available at www.njsacc.org)

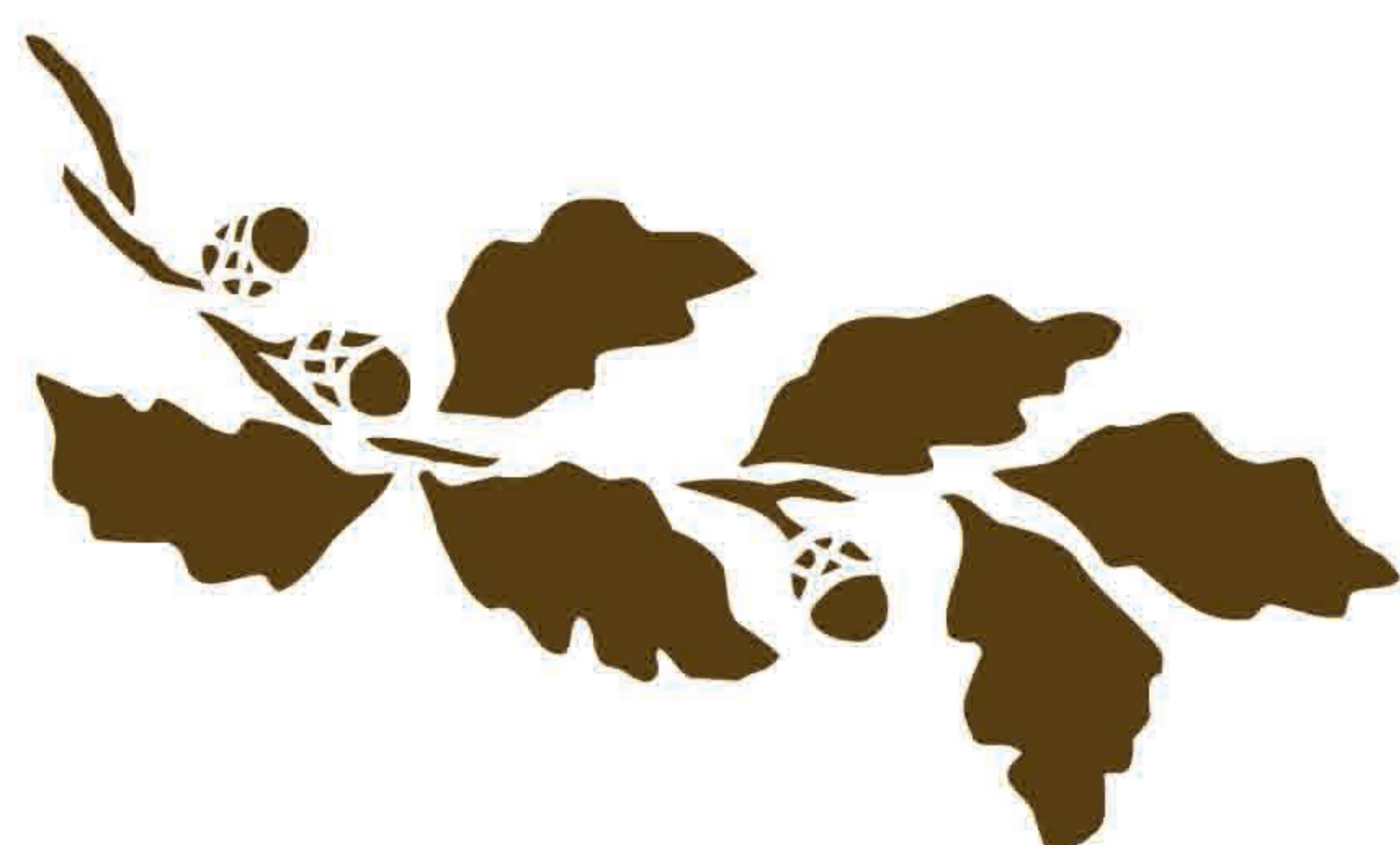
14) Follow up with attendees

Building community support for your afterschool program is an ongoing effort. There are several ways you can follow up with attendees. Call and thank them for attending.

Schedule a meeting or phone call to discuss ways they could help.

Here are some possibilities:

- Partner with community groups to develop ongoing outdoors programs
- Create a community advisory committee
- Ask policymakers for local funding for afterschool programs
- Identify in-kind resources
- Ask everyone to sign your petition supporting Afterschool For All



Publicity Guide

Follow these guidelines to publicize your *Celebrate Afterschool! Outdoors in the Garden State* event.

1) Make a list of the media outlets in your town

Jot down local newspapers, TV and radio stations, and websites. Regional outlets such as The Trenton Times, The Star Ledger, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Asbury Park Press or The Bergen Record should also be included. Don't forget alternative newspapers like the Independent Press and online news sources like New Jersey Newsroom (www.newjerseynewsroom.com). Many communities also have active local forums or local bloggers that attract many readers online, such as BaristaNet (www.baristanet.com) and Westfield Patch (<http://westfield.patch.com/>) -- try searching on Google to find a forum or blogs specific to your community.

List the editor or director at local media outlets, such as weekly newspapers.
List the person who covers education for larger media outlets.

Each entry should include:

- Media outlet
- Contact name
- Phone number
- Email address
- Street address

2) Customize the press materials

Fill in your own information on the sample press release included in this packet (see page 7). Also, create a fact sheet that contains relevant information about your program. It will include:

- the number of students you serve
- the programs and activities you offer
- any evaluation results you have

Download fact sheets about afterschool and about children and nature from the NJSACC website.

3) Make your event photo-friendly

Make a giant version of the petition for people to sign. Work as a group to build an enormous outdoor sculpture in an unexpected place. Remember that a great picture is worth a thousand words.

4) Send the press release and fact sheet to the people on your media list

Most reporters prefer to receive information via email.

5) Post the press materials on your website.

6) Follow up.

A couple of days after you send the release, call your media contact to make sure it was received and to answer any questions. The editor may not have your email handy so be sure to refer to it during your call and offer to resend the release if necessary.

If you don't reach your media contact, leave a brief voicemail message reminding him/her about the event. Be sure to leave your phone number for more information. This is another opportunity to promote your event, so practice before you speak.

If you want reporters to attend your Celebrate Afterschool! event, send a reminder email the day before the event.

7) Send a photo and caption after the event

Take a photo of the VIPs at your event to send to reporters who can't attend. Write a caption below the photo in one or two sentences. Make it catchy and engaging, exactly the way you hope to see it in the paper. Be sure to include the names of the people in the photo. Follow up on the photo and caption the same way you followed up on the press release.



Publicity Guide (cont'd)

8) Consider using social media to help promote your event

Using social media tools like blogs, Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter is an easy way to help promote your event (and your program!) to media outlets and your community. If you have never tried using social media before, this is the perfect opportunity to start.

Blogs

A blog is a great way to promote your program's events online. There are many free blog services such as Wordpress (www.wordpress.com), Typepad (www.typepad.com) or Blogger (www.blogger.com). If you have a blog, post event information, photos, and videos to your blog.

Twitter

Twitter (www.twitter.com) is a "micro-blogging" service that allows users to send and receive short messages called "tweets", which are limited to 140 characters. Tweets appear on your user page and are sent to your subscribers or "followers". Many people tweet and receive tweets on their cell phones. Be sure to seek out parents, local media and other community members and follow them. You can use Twitter from your computer or cell phone to share quick updates, links and photos with your followers. Try sending a tweet a day about your event for the week before it happens. You can even tweet about it while it is going on.

YouTube

YouTube allows users to post videos online. If you have any videos about your program, this is where to post them so everyone can find them. Once your video is uploaded to YouTube, you can easily share it on Facebook, a blog, or send out a link in an email newsletter. You can learn more about how nonprofits can effectively use YouTube by visiting www.youtube.com/nonprofits

Facebook

Joining Facebook is free and relatively easy for nonprofit organizations. Creating a Facebook profile will allow you to easily post videos, photos, and other information related to your event. Once your page is up and running, begin to search for the parents in your program, local media outlets, and others in your community. Be sure to search for NJSACC on Facebook!

More info and training on Social Media Tools:

- Common Knowledge: www.commonknow.com
- The Case Foundation: <http://www.casefoundation.org/social-media-tutorials>
- Nonprofit Technology Network: <http://www.nten.org/join>

Sample Materials

On the following pages you will find:

- VIP invitation letter
- Press release
- Proclamation
- Flyer

Copy these materials and customize them for your event.

Contact NJSACC for advice and assistance!



NJSACC
231 North Avenue West, #363
Westfield, NJ 07090

www.njsacc.org

The Network for New Jersey's
Afterschool Communities



Dear _____:

NAME afterschool program invites you to join us as a special guest at our Celebrate Afterschool! Outdoors in the Garden State event, DATE, TIME TO TIME. This event will bring together our community, from business and civic leaders to educators and environmentalists, to learn about the benefits of afterschool programming and celebrate the connections between children and nature.

Celebrate Afterschool! will be both fun and educational, with hands-on activities for all ages. It is our opportunity to share some of the wonderful programs children participate in at our program. We would be honored to have you speak with our students and guests, issue a proclamation and take part in a special photo session.

We are one of many afterschool programs throughout the state celebrating this "Outdoors" theme, designed to enrich the quality of afterschool in all of New Jersey. Your attendance will confirm the importance of nature as a teaching tool. More importantly, it will show your support for afterschool in our town.

We look forward to seeing you on DATE. I will call next week to see if you can attend.

Sincerely,

Program Director



NJSACC
231 North Avenue West, #363
Westfield, NJ 07090

www.njsacc.org

The Network for New Jersey's
Afterschool Communities



CONTACT: Name
Phone/email

NAME OF PROGRAM
CELEBRATES AFTERSCHOOL! OUTDOORS IN THE GARDEN STATE

New Campaign Connects Children with Nature

TOWN -- On DATE, NAME afterschool program will host Celebrate Afterschool! Outdoors in the Garden State. Students will become nature ambassadors as they lead guests on a tour of their afterschool program. Families and community members will participate in hands-on environmental activities. ADD DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ACTIVITIES HERE. Special guest VIP NAME will shed some light on nature as a teaching tool, a topic that's recently received statewide attention.

ADD A QUOTE FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF OUTDOOR PLAY AND THE VALUE OF AFTER SCHOOL, OR USE THE QUOTE BELOW.

"Nature plants the seeds for learning," says NAME afterschool program director, _____. He/She adds, "We want everyone to see the enormous potential of our afterschool program because community resources and civic engagement will help our students achieve even greater results."

ADD A PARAGRAPH ABOUT THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF YOUR PROGRAM. IF YOU HAVE GOOD EVALUATION RESULTS, INCLUDE THEM.

Higher levels of attendance in out-of-school-time programs have been linked to scholastic achievement, improved school attendance, quality homework time and better student behavior. Beyond academics, a ten-year study conducted by the Harvard Family Research Project reported that participation in afterschool programs is associated with increased self-esteem and lower levels of depression and anxiety.

Researchers study the benefits. Children prove them right. ADD A QUOTE FROM THE STUDENT ABOUT WHY THEY LIKE THE PROGRAM AND WHAT THEY LEARN AT IT.

PROGRAM NAME event is part of a statewide campaign to build support for high-quality affordable afterschool programs. The campaign is led by a public-private partnership that includes the Department of Education, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Children and Families.

By highlighting children and nature, the Celebrate Afterschool! campaign will forge new alliances with environmental organizations, parks and child advocacy groups and strengthen partnerships with schools, businesses, community organizations and policymakers.

"Too often, afterschool programs are seen as babysitting by parents and policymakers. That way of thinking misses an enormous opportunity to help students grow intellectually, emotionally and socially," says Diane Genco, executive director of NJSACC.

* * *

About Celebrate Afterschool!

New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition (NJSACC) is the guiding force behind the Celebrate Afterschool! Outdoors in the Garden State campaign. Their purpose is to build lasting public support for affordable, high-quality afterschool programs across New Jersey. Led by a public-private partnership and funded in part by the Charles Stuart Mott Foundation, the campaign builds public awareness and support; offers guidance for parents, providers and advocates; strengthens relationships with policymakers, funders, practitioners and parents; and shares best practices.

###



NJSACC
231 North Avenue West, #363
Westfield, NJ 07090
www.njsacc.org
The Network for New Jersey's
Afterschool Communities



PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS students who participate in outdoor afterschool programs benefit in all areas—academically, socially, physically and intellectually.

WHEREAS afterschool programs that use nature as a teaching tool help students learn in fun and nontraditional ways.

WHEREAS students engaged in the outdoors become better stewards of the environment.

WHEREAS afterschool students have better outcomes when community members provide real-world learning environments to help them reach their full potential.

WHEREAS (NAME OF PROGRAM) is committed to linking children with nature so that they can develop the skills they need to become productive adults in the 21st century workforce.

WHEREAS the community of (NAME) is proud and privileged to Celebrate Afterschool! Outdoors in the Garden State.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that I (NAME, TITLE) do hereby proclaim Monday, May 10th Celebrate Afterschool! Outdoors in the Garden State in (NAME OF PROGRAM).



Celebrate Afterschool!

outdoors in the Garden State

EVENT:

DATE:

TIME:

LOCATION:



Combine nature and learning for family fun!
SUPPORT EXCELLENT AFTERSCHOOL IN YOUR COMMUNITY!



CONTACT US
www.njsaacc.org
Phone: (908) 789-0259
231 North Ave West #363
Westfield, NJ 07090