



NJSACC, the Network for New Jersey's
Afterschool Communities

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**NJSACC, THE NETWORK FOR NEW JERSEY'S AFTERSCHOOL
COMMUNITIES, PLANTS SEEDS FOR LEARNING
Campaign To Improve Afterschool Programs Uses Nature
As A Teaching Tool**

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY November 14, 2009 – NJSACC kicks off their newest campaign – Celebrate Afterschool! Outdoors in the Garden State -- and it captures the attention of afterschool providers and policy makers across the state. They join for a special event and reception Friday, November 14th at The Marriott Princeton Hotel and Conference Center at Forrestal.

Led by a public-private partnership that includes the Department of Education, the Department of Human Services, Department of Children and Families and the Secretary of State and NJ After 3, the campaign is building public, private and political support for high quality affordable afterschool programs.

By highlighting children and nature, The Celebrate Afterschool campaign will act as a catalyst to forge new alliances with environmental organizations, parks and child advocacy groups and strengthen traditional partnerships with schools, businesses, community organizations and policymakers.

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

NJSACC is part of a growing national movement to rethink afterschool programs. Educators and policymakers fear that implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act has led to more focus on academic test scores and less focus on creativity which ultimately leads to a more expansive way of thinking. In order for students to achieve long-term goals and objectives, they strongly urge everyone to think beyond the traditional school day

Lucille E. Davy, New Jersey Education Commissioner agrees. "In order to prepare students to be successful, productive citizens in the competitive 21st Century global economy, we need to provide them with rigorous academic programs and opportunities to develop social and problem-solving skills. For many children, the school experience alone does not fill all those needs, and afterschool programs play a critical role in their lives" said Commissioner. Davy.

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.

During the week of May 11, 2009, Celebrate Afterschool! will showcase afterschool in action with a week of outdoor activities that introduce communities to their local afterschool programs. Children in New Brunswick will plant a traditional ethnic vegetable garden. In other communities, children may build fairy houses, create environmental art and make their own kites. Activities will be open to the public

"People assume that bringing kids outdoors teaches them to be better stewards of the environment, but it does much more. Kids learn about biology by playing with bugs. They use geometry to plant flowers. They learn to work as teams to tackle large scale projects that might not fit inside. We want to demonstrate the enormous potential of afterschool to help children learn in fun and nontraditional ways," says Genco.

Genco hopes that the campaign will increase interest in a support for high quality afterschool programs. NJSACC is also planning events to involve legislators and business leaders in the campaign.

For more information, visit www.njsacc.org.

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About Celebrate Afterschool

Celebrate Afterschool! Outdoors in the Garden State is NJSACC's campaign 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.

About NJSACC

NJSACC, the Network for New Jersey's Afterschool Communities, is a statewide organization that offers technical assistance, training, and support to help New Jersey's afterschool community thrive. Founded in 1982, NJSACC works locally and statewide.

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