



News Release

For Immediate Release

October 1, 2004

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Region VII After School Programs Host *Lights On Afterschool!* Rally

On October 14, 2004, after-school programs in Region VII (Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, Mariposa and Tulare Counties) will be participating in the fifth annual national *Lights On Afterschool!* rally. Events will take place at with more than 6,000 sites across the nation. They are designed to help send the message that after-school programs are key to a child's success, and that we must keep after-school's lights on and doors open.

"I am delighted *Lights On Afterschool!* brings much needed attention to the many fine after school programs," says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. "In our region alone, there are exceptional programs providing students with a learning environment that is both safe and enriching." Local parents, media, employers, artists, neighbors, school officials and others have been invited to help us rally support for safe, stimulating after-school programs. The fifth annual *Lights On Afterschool!* is a project of the Afterschool Alliance. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is the National Chair of *Lights On Afterschool* again this year.

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Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

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In May, the Afterschool Alliance released *America After 3 PM*, the most in-depth study ever to explore how America's children spend their afternoons. It found that 14.3 million kindergarten through 12th graders care for themselves after the school day ends. The parents of more than 15 million children say their children would participate if an after-school program were available.

The J.C. Penney Afterschool Fund supported *America After 3 PM*. *Lights On Afterschool!* was launched in October 2000. That year, more than 1,200 events were held across the country. By last year, more than half a million people rallied at more than 5,000 events in all 50 states as well as Guam, Japan and South Korea to show their support for after school programs. Organizers expect this year's event to be even larger.

For more information or to arrange interviews for events in Region VII, please contact one of the listed programs on the attached sheet.

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National Presenting Sponsor of *Lights On Afterschool!* is the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is a National Sponsor of the event and additional support is provided by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Open Society Institute.

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010. More information on *Lights On Afterschool!* is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

A listing of 2004 *Lights On Afterschool* events is online at http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loa_2004/find.cfm.

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