



Arizona Center for **Afterschool** Excellence

NEWS RELEASE

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ARIZONA CENTER FOR AFTERSCHOOL EXCELLENCE WILL ADDRESS THE STATE'S GROWING NEED FOR QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS, ADVOCACY

New Board Being Organized; Lisa Rice Named Executive Director; 1st Year Goals Identified

PHOENIX, Ariz. (Jan. 25, 2007): Every day when school ends in Arizona, more than 328,000 K-12 students are left unsupervised or without structured activities.

They're among 8 million students nationwide left on their own from 2-6 p.m. when they are at "greater risk of being victims of crime or participating in anti-social behavior," according to the National Youth Prevention Center.

A new alliance, The Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence, will address the issue through comprehensive resources, professional development and advocacy for the state's afterschool programs, educators and supporters. The Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence, the only statewide organization focused on ensuring quality afterschool programs for students from elementary to high school, is a new organization created through the merger of the Arizona School-Age Coalition and the Arizona Out-of-School Time Network.

"Research shows that nearly three-quarters of American voters believe that Congress should increase funding for afterschool programs and nine in ten think all youth should have access to afterschool programs," said Lisa Rice, newly named Executive Director of the Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence. "Yet, two-thirds of the voters say it is difficult to find programs in their communities. Nothing is more important than ensuring the growth, safety and future of our children."

Rice said that among the organization's first-year goals are:

- clearly defining a public policy agenda
- creating an interactive, online database of afterschool programs

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- meeting with afterschool program directors statewide to determine professional development needs to create a system of training and technical assistance
- completing a statewide inventory of classes, training and workshops offered through Arizona colleges and universities for out-of-school time professionals and practitioners
- conducting an assessment of out-of-school time programming needs with an interested community
- hosting an annual statewide conference for out-of-school time professionals on Oct. 20, 2007
- hosting a *Lights On Afterschool!* event to call attention to the importance of afterschool programs for Arizona's children, families and communities. The event is part of the national *Lights On Afterschool* day in October, sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance.

“The Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence is designing an aggressive, proactive and comprehensive strategy to meet the growing demands of the state’s school-age population to ensure access to diverse, high-quality afterschool programs,” Rice said. “We are leveraging and expanding upon the foundation that has been put in place.”

JoAnne Hilde, Chair of the Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence Board of Directors and Former President of the Arizona State Board of Education, said the organization “is creating the mechanisms and strategies for the Center’s regional coalitions to effectively participate in the statewide effort to address the issue at every level from the legislature to the parents.”

Rice, the former Program Director for Child & Family Resources, Inc’s Afterschool Services in Tucson, said a new board of directors with statewide representation is being organized.

A new logo and identity package for the Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence was designed by Tempe-based graphic designer Julia Shea Flynn. A new website also will be created.

For more information, visit <http://www.azafterschool.org> or call (602) 279-7100.