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CONTACT: Gretchen Wright
202/371-1999

18 Million Children Need – But Don't Have – Afterschool Programs, According to New "America After 3PM" Study

*Survey of 30,000 Households, Sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund,
Shows Marked Increase in Demand for Afterschool and
More Children Unsupervised in the Afternoons Now than in 2004*

Washington, DC – Despite an increase in the number of children attending afterschool programs over the last five years, today more than a quarter of the nation's schoolchildren are on their own in the afternoons, and the parents of 18 million children say they would enroll their kids in afterschool programs if programs were available. These are among the findings from a new survey of nearly 30,000 households across the United States conducted for the Afterschool Alliance and sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund.

America After 3 PM is the most extensive research on how America's children are spending their afternoons. It found that the number of children left alone after the school day ends has risen to 15.1 million children (26 percent of school-age children) – an increase of 800,000 children since the 2004 edition of the study. Thirty percent of middle schoolers (3.7 million kids) are on their own, as are 4 percent of elementary school children (1.1 million children). At the same time, Americans see afterschool programs as a solution: Nine in 10 adults surveyed agree that there should be "some type of organized activity or place for children and teens to go after school every day that provides opportunities to learn."

"The bottom line is that more children need – and don't have – afterschool programs today than five years ago," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "We have increased the number of children in afterschool programs over the last five years, but not enough to keep up with demand. Today in our country, too many parents are unable to enroll their kids in afterschool programs because they're not available, transportation is unworkable, or they can't afford the fees. As a nation, we need to increase our efforts to keep up with the rising demand and make sure that afterschool is available to all children who need it. Quality afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families."

The results of the study were released at a Department of Education event featuring U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in Washington, DC today. Next week, the Afterschool Alliance and the JCPenney Afterschool Fund will release survey data from all 50 states. Other key findings from *America After 3 PM*:

- **Americans believe afterschool programs work and support them.** The vast majority of parents of children in afterschool programs are satisfied with the programs their children attend, and overall public support for afterschool programs is similarly strong. Nine in 10 parents (89 percent) are satisfied with the afterschool programs their children attend. Eight in 10 parents support public funding for afterschool programs.
- **The availability of afterschool programs has improved in the last five years, and families are taking good advantage. But availability is not keeping pace with rising need and demand.** The number and percentage of children participating in afterschool programs has increased significantly in the last five years, with 8.4 million children (15 percent) now participating. That compares with 6.5 million children in 2004 (11 percent). But the parents of 18.5 million children (38 percent) not currently participating in an afterschool program would enroll their children in a program if one were available to them, a significant increase from the 15.3 million (30 percent) seen in 2004.
- **While African American and Hispanic children are more likely than others to be in afterschool programs, millions are unsupervised each afternoon and the unmet need is tremendous.** One in four African American and one in five Hispanic children attend afterschool programs, compared to 15 percent of all children in the United States. Yet 28 percent of African American and 21 percent of Hispanic children have no adult supervision after the school day ends. More Hispanic and African American parents say the economy is impacting their ability to pay for care for their children after school. Two in five parents overall (38 percent) would enroll their children if afterschool programs were available, as would 47 percent of Hispanic parents and 61 percent of African American parents.
- **The economy has taken a toll on participation in afterschool programs.** Nearly one in three households (31 percent) report that their children are spending more time in the care of a parent after school now than a year ago. The primary reasons include changes in work status (fewer parents are employed) and availability and affordability of care (some afterschool programs are cutting hours or closing, and parents are less able to afford fees). Parents cite a number of barriers to enrolling their children in afterschool programs with more than half of parents (52 percent) citing cost and more than one in four reporting hours of operation (26 percent) and availability of programs (27 percent) as reasons for non-participation.

As an update to the initial study released in 2004 – also funded by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund – research from the new America After 3PM study will provide supporters key measures regarding the current supply and demand as well as the public’s attitude towards afterschool programs.

“Access to afterschool programs continues to be a major concern for America’s families, which is especially important to our millions of customers who are seeking high-quality afterschool care for their children,” said Michael Theilmann, chief human resources and administration officer for JCPenney and chairman of the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. “Data from the *America After 3 PM* study is powerful evidence of the opportunity for our country to do even more to support the rising need and demand of afterschool programs. We look forward to continuing our

strong, long-term commitment to this issue and need others to join us in helping to provide children with life-enriching opportunities that foster their academic, physical and social development – preparing them for college, work and life.”

“With more than \$80 million contributed to afterschool programs over the past 10 years, JCPenney stands out among the nation’s corporations for helping to frame and solve the afterschool issue and increasing access to afterschool programs that provide meaningful activities for children in need,” Grant added

In conjunction with Lights on Afterschool events across the nation, the JCPenney Afterschool Round-Up program will kick off in JCPenney stores throughout the U.S. From Oct. 16 to Oct. 25, customers will have the opportunity to “round-up” their JCPenney purchases to the nearest whole dollar and donate the difference to afterschool programs in their local communities that provide life-enriching programs for children in need.

The *America After 3 PM* report and accompanying data are available online at www.afterschoolalliance.org, and state summaries will be posted on October 15.

Findings from *America After 3 PM* are based on 29,754 parent/guardian responses to survey questions about after school child care arrangements during the 2008-2009 school year. RTi, a market research firm, conducted the survey and analyzed the data for the Afterschool Alliance. The entire survey was sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. RTi also conducted the 2004 *America After 3 PM* household survey.

On October 22, at more than 7,500 sites across the nation, Americans will rally in support of afterschool programs, as part of the Afterschool Alliance’s tenth annual celebration of *Lights On Afterschool*. For more information or to find a local event, visit www.afterschoolalliance.org, or contact the Afterschool Alliance media office at 202/371-1999.

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is a charitable organization committed to providing children in need with access to life-enriching afterschool programs that inspire children to be smart, strong and socially responsible. To date, JCPenney and the JCPenney Afterschool Fund have contributed more than \$80 million to local afterschool programs in every JCPenney community through partnerships with the YMCA of the USA, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, National 4-H and FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology). For more information, visit www.jcpennyafterschool.org.

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