



## NEWS RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **JACKSONVILLE RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR 2011 LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL PARADE AND RALLY**

**JACKSONVILLE, Fla. Oct. 20, 2011** –Today, approximately 500 children joined the Jacksonville Children's Commission, the Afterschool Alliance and jcpenny in showcasing Jacksonville's highly successful after-school programs at the 12th Annual *Lights On Afterschool* celebration.

This year's *Lights On Afterschool* event featured a parade of 500 children from Jacksonville after-school programs along the Southbank Riverwalk, culminating with a rally at Friendship Fountain. The celebration included a drumline, cheerleading performances, a step team, testimonies from students, remarks from local leaders and a proclamation from Education Commissioner Dr. Donnie Horner.

"We are setting an example for after-school programming right here in Jacksonville," said Linda Lanier, executive director of the Jacksonville Children's Commission. "These programs teach children to love to learn, empower them with knowledge and keep them safe after school, and they are key to supporting the mayor's vision for a world-class school system in our city."

Friendship Fountain was one of several landmarks across the nation, including bridges, hot air balloons, monuments, a battleship and the Kennedy Space Center rocket garden, lit up today as part of the "Light Up a Landmark" contest. These lightings add to the list of past landmarks that have been lit for *Lights On Afterschool* including the Empire State Building, Mount Rushmore and the Lindbergh Beacon atop Los Angeles' City Hall.

This year, Jacksonville was awarded a \$5,000 "Light Up a Landmark" award from jcpenny for its creative plans to shine a spotlight on the after-school programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families as part of *Lights On Afterschool*. Additionally, the Afterschool Alliance released "2011 State-by-State Afterschool Progress Reports and Consumer Guides," at the event. In the report, sponsored by jcpenny, Florida earned a rating of four out of a possible five. Just nine states received a four; no states earned a five. View a copy of the Florida Progress Report [here](#).

"Afterschool programs provide a safe, supervised place for kids to get homework help, hands-on learning opportunities and more after the school day ends," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Shaped around local needs and reflecting the culture and uniqueness of their communities, these programs look different from one community to another, much like the *Lights On Afterschool* celebrations selected as winners of our 'Light Up a Landmark' contest."

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*Lights On Afterschool* is celebrated nationwide on Oct. 20 to call attention to the importance of after-school programs for America's children, families and communities. The initiative is a project of the Afterschool Alliance, a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring that all children have access to quality, affordable after-school programs.

The parents of 28 million children work outside the home. The amount of after-school programs available today meets only half the demand among elementary and middle school parents. The lack of after-school care causes parents to miss an average of eight days of work each year. After-school programs help relieve the stress on working families.

Jacksonville is one of 7,500 communities hosting a special *Lights On Afterschool* event this year. More than a million people across the country and at military bases overseas are expected to participate.

Recently, Jacksonville was recognized nationally for the priority it has placed on high-quality out-of-school programming. The National League of Cities, in partnership with The Wallace Foundation, has chosen Jacksonville as one of 27 cities they consider to be the most advanced in their out-of-school-time system building efforts, based on a number of criteria.

For more information on TEAM UP or community-based after-school programs, visit the Jacksonville Children's Commission at [www.jaxkids.net](http://www.jaxkids.net).

For more information on *Lights On Afterschool*, visit [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).

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To view and download photos following this event, visit the city's photo sharing site on Flickr. All photos are public documents.



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