

— News Release —

For Immediate Release
For News and/or Community and/or Religion Editor(s)

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Recruitment for Afterschool Mentoring on “*Children’s Day*”

• Historic Second Sunday in June Used as a Volunteer Tool

Batavia, Ill., May 18, 2009 (*The Religion Wire™*) —

Across America, millions of children are being mentored after school each day by churches and other non-profit groups. Still, according to a 2004 study by the

Afterschool Alliance, only 6.5 million K-12 children (11

percent of enrollment) participate in afterschool programs. An additional 15 million would participate if a quality program were available in their community.

The website www.nationalchildrensday.us (mirror www.childrensday.us), an advocacy website that promotes the support of a national “*Children’s Day*” on the *second Sunday in June* (this year: June 14, 2009), is also joining the cause for afterschool mentoring.

John Ross, founder of the website and an advocate for a national *Children’s Day*, notes, “It would be exciting to see each house of worship in America be involved in an afterschool mentoring program. Churches need to put more shoe leather to their faith and show community involvement at this important time. Today, some 50% of the country’s minority youth are dropping out of high school. Youth need a solid foundation of education to have a future, and mentoring is an important tool to help develop our children as tomorrow’s scholars. So on *Children’s Day*, let’s encourage one another and our places of worship to affirm afterschool mentoring.”

Children’s Day



Second Sunday in June

Add one — **Recruitment for Afterschool Mentoring on “*Children’s Day*”**

An example of afterschool mentoring exists in Aurora, Ill. Here, Urban Youth Ministry of Wayside Cross Ministries is involved with over 200 students in seven schools. UYM Director Scot Thurman stresses that “UYM’s mission is to prepare children for leadership. It is the mission of the church to mentor youth and prepare them for community and world leadership. What better investment exists.”

During his campaign for the White House, candidate Barack Obama pledged to double funding for the main federal support of afterschool programs. Known as 21st Century Learning Centers program, it would serve one million more children.

A recent press release from the *Afterschool Alliance* stated the following: “With millions of children unsupervised and at risk after schools close each afternoon, President Obama’s budget proposal is a deep disappointment. Flat-funding 21st Century Community Learning Centers at its current – grossly inadequate – level is a serious mistake that will result in millions of children having no safe, supervised, educational activities after the school day ends, and millions of worried working parents struggling to find care for their children.

“Current funding for 21st CCLC stands at just \$1.13 billion – less than half the \$2.5 billion authorized by the *No Child Left Behind Act*, which itself is just a fraction of what is needed to make afterschool programs available to all children who need them.”

Perhaps a renewed ***Children’s Day*** can focus our attention on the need to be active participants in mentoring programs— serving as volunteers; setting up more programs in churches and other non-profits (being careful, of course, to screen volunteers); and seeking additional funding from local, state, or federal government. Let’s do it!