



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**  
OF THE GULF COAST

## Press Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Lights On Afterschool Celebration** **Features Lighting Up the Biloxi Town Green** ***MS Gulf Coast Children, Parents, Community Leaders Join 12th Annual*** ***National Rally for Afterschool***

Gulfport, MS – The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast will sponsor a Lights On Afterschool Celebration on Thursday, October 20 from 5pm-6:30pm at the Biloxi Town Green. The celebration will be one of more than 7,500 such events around the nation that day, the 12th annual Lights On Afterschool, organized by the Afterschool Alliance. To show support, Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour signed a proclamation, naming October 20 *Lights On Afterschool Day*. This year the Biloxi Town Green will be “lit up” with over 200 luminaries and lighting effects to celebrate the achievements of afterschool students and draw attention to the need for more afterschool programs and activities to serve the millions of children nationwide who are unsupervised and at risk each weekday afternoon.

Several local afterschool programs and activity providers will be on hand to distribute information about their services and provide fun engaging activities for the youth that attend. Entertainment will be provided in a pep rally style by local cheer and dance groups, competing for the best “Lights On Afterschool” cheer award. The winning group will receive a pizza party donated by Domino’s Pizza.

Several businesses including jcpenny, Edgewater Mall, Biloxi, are donating items and snacks to make the event fun for the whole family.

In Mississippi, according to *America After 3PM* data released by the Afterschool Alliance in 2009, 11 percent of school-age children are in afterschool programs, while 25 percent are unsupervised in the afternoons and another 12 percent are in the care of brothers and sisters. According to the survey, the parents of 57 percent of children in the state who are not already in an afterschool program would enroll their children in one, if a program were available to them – an indication of the considerable unmet demand for afterschool programs in the state. For more survey results, visit <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM.cfm>.

“We are all very proud of our Club members,” said Dr. David Spinks, Executive Director for the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast. “There’s no reason that learning should stop at 3pm, particularly if the alternative is unsupervised time in front of a television set, or any of the dangerous or unhealthy behaviors that can ensnare children in the afternoons. Like so many other afterschool programs around the nation, ours is partially supported by funding from the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative. Since its creation, it has provided funding to allow millions of children to attend afterschool. However it is underfunded today and there is danger that some of its limited funds will be diverted to other uses. All who care about afterschool need to show their support for full funding for afterschool through the 21st Century initiative.”

In conjunction with *Lights on Afterschool* events nationwide, jcpenny is hosting “Pennies from Heaven” in its stores from Oct. 12-25. During this time, jcpenny customers will be invited to round-up their 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.

For additional information about the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast please contact Michelle Wilson at 228-896-3770 or visit our website at [www.bgcgulfcoast.org](http://www.bgcgulfcoast.org).

#### **About Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast**

In 2010, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast had approximately 2800 registered members and served 1500 youth through Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast New Hope Program, which is a school based therapeutic behavioral facilitation program. Our mission is to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.

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