

Kids discover that music is fun during one of Ethos Music Center's afterschool programs.

Home Alone?

The Many Benefits of Afterschool Care Programs

by Emily Puro

It's 3:30 on a Thursday afternoon in May and the local recreation club bustles with activity. Kids are talking, eating, laughing and hugging friends as they arrive. After time for homework help, the crowd disperses throughout the center for entertainment and enrichment.

Some play sports in the gym while others create music CDs and work on digital photography in the technology lab. A group collaborates on a LEGO Robotics project; others participate in a cooking and nutrition class. The youngest play with blocks and books while the oldest play pool and foosball and hang out with friends in the teen lounge.

Sound like an elite club for affluent families? Actually, it's the Wattles Boys and Girls Club in southeast Portland's Lents neighborhood. Open to everyone between the ages of 6 and 18, the cost is a mere \$5 for unlimited access to afterschool activities throughout the school year.

The Boys and Girls Clubs of the Portland Metropolitan Area, celebrating their 60th anniversary this year, are among numerous organizations with longstanding traditions of providing accessible afterschool programs for local youth. And with more parents working outside the home in recent years – and less money for enrichment activities in public schools – supporting quality afterschool programming has become a priority for parents, educators, child welfare advocates and legislators nationwide.

Benefits for Every Child

Afterschool programming is a necessity for working parents with young children. Consequently, most local elementary schools arrange for afterschool care onsite or provide transportation to a nearby facility. But with public schools cutting programs like music, art and physical education, even children who might otherwise be home after school can benefit from programs that fill those gaps.

Quality afterschool programs also have been shown to increase school attendance, improve academic performance and enhance self esteem for many of the children who attend.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ETHOS

Shelly Deshazo is often home when daughters Sydney, 7, and Kennedy, 10, get out of school, but the two girls enjoy participating in programs run by Multnomah County's Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) at southeast Portland's Grout Elementary. Sydney is in the choir, taught by SUN partner Ethos Music Center. Kennedy is in the Ethos-led rock band as well as numerous other SUN programs. Kennedy "does it all," says Shelly. "Anything that's available, she'll do it."

SUN runs a wide range of afterschool programs – from academics and fine arts to sports and recreation – as part of a comprehensive package of services offered at local schools. The program currently runs 50 SUN Community Schools, including elementary, middle and high schools, in six local school districts. The programs are held at selected schools, but they're open to students countywide. Funding comes from county and city general funds as well as other local and national sources.

The Children's Investment Fund (CHIF) – a five-year levy passed by Portland voters in 2002 to provide funding for early childhood, afterschool, mentoring and child abuse prevention programs in low income communities throughout the city – supports a variety of afterschool programs as well. Areas covered include homework assistance, academic enrichment, mentoring, music, sports and fine arts. Many other organizations, including Ethos, Chess for Success, Mad Science and Girls Incorporated (offering academic and empowerment programs for girls) partner with SUN at some schools and provide programming directly to others by request. Transportation is available from some schools to a handful of off-site afterschool programs as well.

Where Are The Teens and 'Tweens?

When students reach middle school and high school, accessible afterschool programming becomes less consistent, possibly because the need is not as obvious. Legally, children 10 and



Chess for Success offers afterschool programs in many local schools.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHESS FOR SUCCESS



EXPERIENCE = MENTAL CURIOSITY²

Discover OMSI's Science Playground! This hands-on, interactive exhibit provides a colorful, vibrant, and safe atmosphere for youngsters 0-6 to start exploring the wonders of science with their caregivers. Visit today!

www.oms.edu

OMSI
OREGON MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY



Now Enrolling

Preschool &
Before & After
School Care
at
grandma's place

- AM and Full time Preschool
- Transportation for Before & After School Care * Call for schools served
- Extended hours and Saturdays available at Lloyd Place
- Serving NE Portland Families for 9 years

Lloyd Place
16th & Weidler
503 249-7533

Columbia Knoll
82nd & Sandy
503 517-8888

Is your child's school the best fit? Still thinking about next year?

The middle school years are an important transitional time in a child's education. The development of strong study habits, understanding their impact in society...building positive social connections. Does your school provide the best environment for your child to thrive and develop to their fullest potential? We offer you an opportunity to experience PNA for a day.

Call and set up a time for your child to experience first hand what makes PNA so special.

A few of the PNA Advantages:

- Superior, comprehensive K-8 curriculum
- Small class sizes, individual attention
- Mentor relationships between students
- Exceptional after-school activities (Lego Robotics, Mad Science, art, chess)
- Organic hot lunch
- Structured, on-site after-school care



27960 SW Canyon Creek Road
North Wilsonville, OR 97070
CALL: (503) 582-8838

www.PacificNorthwestAcademy.org

Choosing An Afterschool Program: What To Look For

Unlike traditional childcare providers – which fall into the categories of Childcare Centers, Certified Family Homes, and Registered Family Childcares depending on the facility type and the number of children and staff – most afterschool arts, recreation and enrichment programs are not licensed by the state. (There are exceptions to this rule. For example, the State of Oregon Childcare Division certifies the childcare providers at each of the PPS elementary schools with afterschool programs.)

According to Kathleen Hynes, legal and compliance manager for the Oregon Department of Employment's Child Care Division, programs are excluded from childcare licensing rules if they provide "supervised child-focused training in a specific subject" such as dancing, drama, music, art or religion. Programs operated by school districts are not subject to state childcare licensure, nor are programs run by local political subdivisions such as a city or county.

Observing a program before you enroll your child, and asking questions such as those below, can help you choose a program that will be both safe and stimulating for your child:

1. Are all staff subject to state and/or federal criminal records background checks?
2. How does the program ensure that children leave only with authorized adults?
3. Are there any obvious safety hazards in the facility?
4. How does the program protect children from hazards? What is the protocol in the event of injury or emergency?
5. Are children supervised at all times?
6. Does the staff-to-student ratio meet the needs of all of the children?
7. Does the program support family involvement?
8. Do staff relate to youth and families in positive ways?
9. Do children generally relate to each other in positive ways?
10. Do the indoor and outdoor spaces meet the needs of the children?
11. Do activities promote the development of all youth in the program?
12. Are there sufficient materials to support program activities?

A comprehensive "Standards for Quality School-Age Care," as well as a pamphlet "Standards At a Glance," are available from the National Afterschool Association, www.naaweb.org. The above information was adapted from the "Standards at a Glance" brochure.

Home Alone? continued from page 18

older can be home alone or otherwise unsupervised. According to a recent survey titled "America After 3 PM" published by the Afterschool Alliance, 40 percent of American middle school children from working families are unsupervised in the afternoon.

This raises serious concerns as research confirms what most parents already know: Even older kids are better off when they're supervised. One study cited by the Afterschool Alliance "found that middle school students who spend three or more hours home alone during out-of-school time are significantly more likely to use drugs and alcohol, have high levels of stress and anger, experience more depression and behavior problems, possess lower self-esteem, and perform less well academically." Numerous studies have shown the period from 3 to 6 p.m. to be peak time for unsupervised teens to experiment with sex, drugs, tobacco and alcohol; be involved in car accidents; and commit crimes. In fact, in a 2002 survey of 1,178 law enforcement officials, more than 80 percent thought providing afterschool programs for school-age youngsters would have a greater impact on reducing youth violence and crime than hiring more police officers.

"It makes sense," says Mary Gay Broderick, CHIF communications director. "When kids that (otherwise) might be latchkey kids are in a safe, nurturing environment at a school or some type of community center," she explains, "they don't have the opportunity to be engaged in risky behaviors."

Reaching Older Students

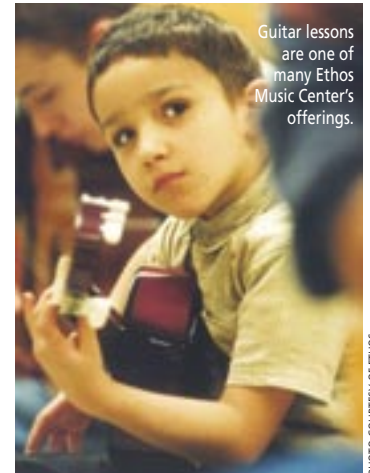
Cheryl Bland coordinates the federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant (part of No Child Left Behind) for David Douglas School District's secondary programs. Bland says that, while the need clearly exists, programming for middle school and high school students is especially challenging because "secondary students vote with their feet." If a program doesn't interest them, they won't attend. Creating high interest programs, she says, and allowing students to participate in developing and selecting programs are key to engaging older students.

According to the National Institute of Out of School Time, one-fifth of all kids aren't interested in the types of programming offered after school. That's not the case at David Douglas, where high school science clubs – from "Nucleus Conspiracy," where students use forensics to solve mysteries, to rocketry, edible insects and dissection classes – consistently run on a "standing room only" basis. It doesn't hurt that students can earn extra credit for attending.

Bland also runs special interest clubs, including a hip hop club at Ron Russell Middle School. On early release days she coordinates field trips that take middle and high school students behind the scenes at OMSI and the Oregon Zoo, and to wildlife preserves, bridge lifts and even underneath city fountains. "The topics of the trips sell themselves," she says.

Will Local Support Remain Strong?

Since funding began in 2003, CHIF-supported afterschool programs have served about 5,700 children each year. Organizers hope to find a way to extend the program beyond the June 2008 expiration date, but with so many social programs competing for voter support, CHIF's future



Guitar lessons are one of many Ethos Music Center's offerings.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ETHOS

Home Alone? continues on page 22



The Children's Hour Academy is a small, private, non-denominational Christian school that teaches an accelerated, comprehensive curriculum for children ages pre-kindergarten through elementary grades. Dedicated teachers motivate students to achieve their maximum potential. Small classes are instrumental to learning, allowing teachers to form personal connections with the student and family. The Children's Hour Academy has been Portland's premier education center since 1987.

Please call for availability.

14790 SW Boones Ferry Road
Lake Oswego, Oregon 97035
503.635.2139
www.childrens-hour.com



Christ Church Episcopal Preschool



Lake Oswego
Building educational foundations
with faith and love

- Classes for 2 1/2s, 3s, 4s, PreK
- Small classes with low student/teacher ratios
- Weekly Chapel & Daily Music
- Quality Curriculum preparing Children for Kindergarten & Beyond
- Spanish Language Instruction

For information: 503-675-9120
www.ccp parish.org/preschool

Renaissance

Childbirth & Postpartum
Professionals, LLC

Supporting families through the
transition of parenthood

- Trained & Certified Doulas
- Hospital & Home Birth Support
- Bed Rest Support
- Multiple & Preemie Specialist
- Breastfeeding Support
- Colic & Sleep Problem Solving
- Day, Evening & Overnight Care
- In-home Massage Therapist

503-493-7390

www.renshildbirth.com



Kindermusik.

don't let your child
grow up without it!

www.kindermusik.com

Time to register for Fall classes

Portland
Central Eastside
Anne Clark
282-1839

Sherwood
DeLyn Griffin
625-5343

Beaverton
Sherrie Wade
645-7013

N. Clackamas
Molly Beiningen
659-1343

Garden Home
Joan Wall
244-2286

Portland
Downtown NW
Ena Abel
286-7660

Franciscan Montessori Earth School & Saint Francis Academy

ENROLLING
NOW: PreK-8

www.fmes.org

Montessori Preschool ages 2 1/2-6
Montessori Elementary ages 6-12
Montessori Middle School ages 12-15

Religious Instruction Available
Gardening & Outdoor Experiences
Before & After School Care

14750 SE Clinton Street
Portland, Oregon 97236

(503) 760-8220

Call Now For an Appointment



Zenana Spa
and wellness center

focusing on pregnant & parenting families

spa services • boutique • wellness services
childcare • classes • lactation services

503.238.mama[6262]
2024 southeast clinton street

zenana-spa.com

Zenana\Zə-nā'nā\,n.Hindi, the part of the house reserved for the women

Resources for Finding Afterschool Options

Afterschool Childcare

For information about childcare offered at your child's school, contact the district or school staff.

For help locating other childcare providers in your area, contact the Childcare Resource and Referral Network. Visit www.oregon-childcare.org for contact information in your county.

The Oregon Department of Employment's Childcare Division Web site includes information for parents about finding quality childcare. Visit www.employment.oregon.gov/EMPLOY/CCD/For-Parents.shtml.

Afterschool Enrichment Programs

Locating afterschool programs in your area can be a challenge, but resources are available. Ask staff at your child's school for a list of programs held on the school site and those that provide transportation, and don't forget to ask other parents for recommendations!

Below is a sampling of local organizations providing afterschool programming. Many offer programs on school sites by request; fees vary.

SUN Schools; 503-988-4222; www.sunschools.org

Boys & Girls Clubs of the Portland Metropolitan Area; 503-232-0077; www.bgcpportland.org

YMCA of Columbia Willamette; 503-223-YMCA; www.ymca-portland.org

Camp Fire USA Portland Metro Council; 503-224-7800; www.portlandcampfire.org

Local Parks and Recreation Departments. Many parks & rec departments offer classes during afterschool hours. Here is the contact information for many local "P&R" offices:

Beaverton; 503-645-6433; www.thprd.org (*Tualatin Hills Park Recreation District*); 503-526-2222; www.beavertonoregon.gov/departments/arts/ (*Beaverton Arts Commission*)

Clackamas County; 503-794-8002; www.co.clackamas.or.us/ncprdl
Gresham; 503-618-2485, www.ci.gresham.or.us/departments/des/parksandrec/

Hillsboro; 503-681-6120; www.ci.hillsboro.or.us/parksrec

Lake Oswego; 503-697-6500; www.ci.oswego.or.us/parksrec/

Portland; 503-823-PLAY (7529); www.portlandparks.org

Tualatin; 503-691-3061; www.ci.tualatin.or.us/parks/parks_index.htm

Vancouver; 360-619-1111; www.ci.vancouver.wa.us/parks-recreation/index.asp; (*serves all of Clark County*)

West Linn; 503-557-4700; www.westlinnparksandrec.com

Chess for Success; 800-285-7660, www.chessforsuccess.org

Ethos Music Center; 503-28-ETHOS, www.ethos-inc.org

Girls Incorporated of NW Oregon; 503-230-0054, www.girlsinitiative-network.org

Regional Arts and Culture Council; 503-823-5111, www.racc.org (click on Arts Education, Local Art Activities for Kids)

Oregon Music Teacher's Association (Portland area); www.omta-portland.org (directory of local music teachers)

Immigration and Refugee Community Organization; 503-234-1541, www.irco.org

Native American Youth Association; 503-288-8177, www.nayapdx.org

Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement; 503-228-4131, www.ocha-nw.org

General Afterschool Program Information & Statistics

Children's Investment Fund; www.childrensinvestmentfund.org

Oregon ASK (Oregon After School for Kids); www.oregonask.org

Afterschool Alliance; www.afterschoolalliance.org

National Afterschool Association; www.naaweb.org

Home Alone? continued from page 20

Students engage in a trust-building exercise as part of the Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement's Oregon Leadership Institute. Through the afterschool program, middle school students receive weekly mentoring from their high school peers to help them avoid at-risk behaviors.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL MCDERMOTT

is uncertain. SUN Schools funding is also in jeopardy after a recent vote by the Multnomah County Board of

Commissioners to decrease future support for the nationally acclaimed program. According to the Afterschool Alliance, if the No Child Left Behind Act were fully funded, Oregon communities could have double the number of afterschool programs giving nearly 23,200 children a safe place to go after school.

While the importance of quality afterschool programming continues to gain local and national attention – this past spring, for example, Governor Kulongoski convened a summit on afterschool issues – continued funding for quality afterschool programming is far from guaranteed.

The Results Are Clear

Advocates of afterschool programming point to consistently promising results as proof that continued – or, better yet, increased – support is in order. Eighty-four percent of the students participating in CHIF-funded programs during the 2004-05 school year, for example, attended school at least 90 percent of the time; 80 percent had no discipline or behavior referrals; and three of every four met or exceeded state benchmarks in reading and math.

SUN shows similar results in academics, attendance and behavior. In David Douglas schools, Bland notes increased science and math scores in eighth and tenth grades, as well as improved graduation rates at the alternative high school. "Is this specifically because of the grant?" she asks. "I don't know if we can say that specifically, but the grant funded program is definitely contributing."

Results are consistent across the nation. A comprehensive review of relevant research literature by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation indicated that students who participate in afterschool programs showed greater engagement in learning, higher academic performance and improved standardized test performance. Other reports indicate that quality afterschool programs reduce juvenile crime and violence; drug, alcohol and tobacco use; and teen sex and pregnancy.

Parents benefit, too. According the Afterschool Alliance, 87 percent of working mothers surveyed said they're most concerned about their children's safety during afterschool hours, and "parents with high Parental Afterschool Stress (PASS) are more likely to report high levels of job disruption, missed days of work, increased errors and decreased productivity."

Even parents like Maura Cronin – who doesn't worry that her boys, 12 and 15, will get into trouble when they're home alone – can appreciate the benefits of accessible, quality afterschool programming. "When they're home, they're watching TV," says Cronin, who lives in northeast Portland. "When they're at the Boys and Girls Clubs, they're moving around. They're talking to other people. They're learning. I feel much better when they're there."

Emily Puro is a Portland freelance writer and mom.