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FOR: PEOPLES' SELF-HELP HOUSING
YOUTH EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

FOR: IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Community Invited To 'Lights On After School' Celebration
on Thursday, October 22nd In Paso Robles**

The Youth Education Enhancement Program (YEEP) at Peoples' Self-Help Housing's Canyon Creek Apartments will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* on Thursday, October 22, 2009, 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. at the program location, 400 Oak Hill Road, Paso Robles.

Lights On Afterschool is celebrated every October in communities nationwide to call attention to the importance of quality after-school programs for America's children, families and communities. *Lights On Afterschool* was launched in October 2000 with celebrations in more than 1,200 communities nationwide. The event has grown from 1,200 celebrations in 2001 to more than 7,500. This October, more than one million children, parents, community leaders and others are expected to participate in events across the country.

Civic leaders, school personnel, volunteers, parents, and the community are invited to the Paso Robles event which will feature youth dance performances (4:30 p.m.), arts and crafts (4:45 p.m.), student play (5:10 p.m.) and carnival games (5:30 p.m.), according to Kim Gaspar, YEEP Educator and Center Director.

Peoples' Self-Help Housing is the lead agency for the five-year 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program grant which provides a free quality after school program, focused on literacy, math, and homework assistance, for children from Bauer/Speck, Georgia Brown, Virginia Peterson, and Winifred Pifer Elementary Schools in the Paso Robles Joint Unified School District. Other collaborative partners include the PRJU

School District, Paso Robles Library and Recreation Services, Cuesta College Community Program, Paso Robles Police Department, and Heritage Oaks Bank.

Lights On Afterschool is a project of the Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that all children have access to quality, affordable afterschool programs. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has served as Chair of *Lights On Afterschool* since 2001. The Alliance salutes the many *Lights On Afterschool* partners and programs who make this event a success, in particular the After-School All-Stars, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, 4-H Afterschool, Junior Achievement, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Young Rembrandts, and the YMCA of the USA.

"We are so pleased to showcase the wonderful talents of afterschool students by using a poster designed by one of them for *Lights On Afterschool* this year," said YEEP Center teacher Kim Gaspar. "On October 22, all across the country, we will send the message that Americans want to keep the lights on for children - and we'll do it in an energy-conscious way. Afterschool programs give children safe places to go with educational, enriching activities after the school day ends," Gaspar added.

"At *Lights On Afterschool* events, Americans will send the message that families need quality afterschool programs, especially during tough economic times like these."

For more information on Peoples' Self-Help Housing or its Youth Education Enhancement Program call Kim Gaspar at (805) 226-0136 or visit: www.pshhc.org.

Facts about Afterschool Hours in America

- More than 14 million school age children (25%) are on their own after school. Among them are more than 40,000 kindergarteners. (*America After 3 PM, May 2004*)
- The parents of more than 28 million school-age children work outside the home. (*U.S. Department of Labor*)
- Only 6.5 million K-12 children (11%) participate in afterschool programs. An additional 15 million would participate if a quality program were available in their community. (*America After 3 PM, May 2004*)
- The hours between 3p.m. and 6p.m. are the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and sex. (*Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2002*)

- 9 in 10 Americans want all children and teens to have some type of organized activity or safe place to go after school. (*Election Eve Poll, November 2004*)
- More than half of voters (55 percent) think that there are not enough afterschool programs available for children in America today. (*Afterschool Alliance Poll, September 2003*)

Afterschool Programs Benefit Youth, Families & Communities

- Teens who do not participate in afterschool programs are nearly three times more likely to skip classes than teens who do participate. They are also three times more likely to use marijuana or other drugs, and they are more likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and engage in sexual activity. (*YMCA of the USA, March 2001*)
- Parents in New York City said that their child's afterschool program helped them balance work and family life (*Policy Studies Associates, Inc., February 2001*):
 - 60 percent said they missed less work than before because of the program.
 - 59 percent said it supported them in keeping their jobs.
- Students in a statewide program in California improved their standardized test scores (SAT-9) in both reading and math by percentages almost twice that of other students and also had better school attendance. The program cut high school drop out by 20%. (*University of California Irvine, May 2001 and March 2006*)
- Boys and girls in the Quantum Opportunities afterschool program were half as likely to drop out of high school and two and one half times more likely to go on to further education after high school than their peers. (*Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2000*)
- A Brandeis University study estimates that decreased worker productivity due to stress and absenteeism caused by issues related to afterschool care arrangements costs employers \$496.00 to \$1,984.00 per employee, per year, depending on the employee's annual salary. (*Community, Families and Work Program at Brandeis University, 2004*)
- Students (pre-k through 8th grade) in The After-School Corporation (TASC) supported afterschool programs improved their math scores and regular school day attendance compared to non-participants. High school level afterschool participants

passed more Regent exams and earned more high school credits than non-participants. (*Policy Studies Associates, July 2004*)

- Eighty-seven percent of Citizen Schools' eighth grade participants were promoted to tenth grade on time, while only seventy-four percent of non-participants achieved that objective. This is critical, since earning promotion to tenth grade on-time is a key predictor of high-school graduation (i.e., preventing drop-out).

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