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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GRASA Applauds Governor's Proposal to Increase Funding for After-School Programs

ROCHESTER — The Greater Rochester After-School Alliance (GRASA) applauds Gov. Andrew Cuomo's bold vision in calling for robust after-school programs statewide and proposing that 80% of the state's casino revenues be used to support these efforts starting in 2015-16.

The research is clear that high-quality, after-school and summer programs not only keep children safe and allow parents to work, but also help close the achievement gap for low-income students and support the development of critical thinking and social skills needed for long-term success in the workplace and in life.

"Every child should have the opportunity to participate in a high-quality, after-school program. Governor Cuomo's proposal to fully fund these critically important programs will help close the opportunity gap between urban and suburban children and create a more equitable community," says Jennifer Leonard, president and CEO of Rochester Area Community Foundation. "GRASA and the New York State Afterschool Network partners will continue to engage every available resource in the pursuit of the best possible experience for our children and their families."

Cuomo's proposal initially would almost triple the state's current investment in after-school programs and promises to continue to grow support for these crucial programs over five years. New York has historically been a leader in after-school programming, and, with the governor's new proposal, the state looks poised to take another giant step forward.

Meeting the needs of the 21st Century workforce is a crucial challenge for New York, and increasing access to after-school programs is a cost-effective approach for families and for students.

“New York has a tremendous foundation of high-quality programs that can be quickly scaled up under the governor’s proposal to reach more than 100,000 students who currently have no access to after-school experiences,” says Nora Niedzielski-Eichner, executive director of GRASA’s partner, the New York State Afterschool Network. “These new programs have the potential to change lives for children all across the state as they have the opportunity to explore new interests, develop healthy relationships, and receive academic support — all components of high-quality programs that have been shown to increase the chances that students will stay in school and out of trouble.”

GRASA is a volunteer committee comprised of funders, policymakers, researchers, and family and provider representatives. An initiative of the Community Foundation, GRASA’s mission is to strengthen the quality, quantity, and accessibility of out-of-school-time programs in Monroe County for school-age youth through community collaboration. GRASA’s vision is that every school-aged youth in our community (who chooses) participates in high quality, out-of-school-time programming.

To learn more about GRASA, visit www.racf.org/GRASA.