

LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL

EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

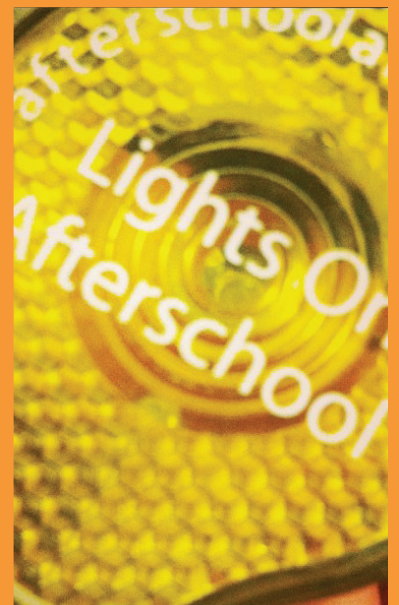
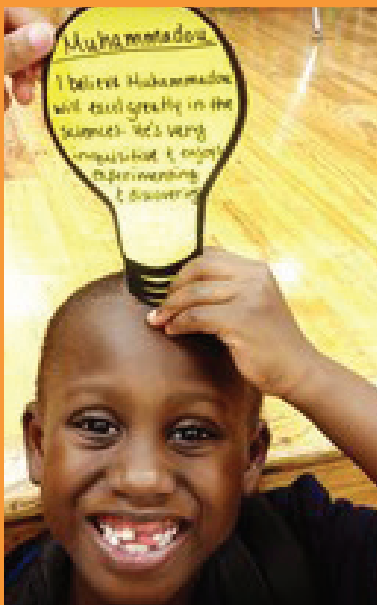


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Lights On Afterschool events, like afterschool programs, come in all shapes and sizes—from stadium rallies and town parades to open houses and program tours. The more events we have, the stronger our collective voice. Our goal is to make it as easy as possible for every afterschool advocate to participate.

Lights On Afterschool celebrations don't have to be elaborate—there are plenty of simple, creative ways to showcase the important opportunities available to kids after school.

Lights On Afterschool was created to help you promote your program and efforts, so feel free to use and adapt anything here to suit your needs. Our goal is simply to make it easier for you to participate, so that as many communities as possible help tell the afterschool story.

USE *LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL* TO:

- Get **parents, community leaders, elected officials, kids, members of the press, potential funders, volunteers** and others excited about afterschool.
- Showcase the **achievements of your program** and your students.
- Highlight your **local partners** and invite them to participate.
- Convey your message about afterschool: **celebrate your afterschool accomplishments and call for support to ensure that afterschool programs in your community and across the country thrive.**

**Every child should have
access to afterschool!**



Get Started...

Ask yourself Who, What, When & Where to start thinking about the goal of your event and what it might look like.

As you start planning how you'll celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*, ask yourself these questions:

Who?

Who are you trying to reach with your message? Parents? Educators? Funders? Policy makers? The media?

Who are the best people to deliver your message? Parents? Students? Principals? The mayor?

Who to invite to your event:

- Kids
- Educators and school personnel
- Parents, grandparents and extended family
- Business and community leaders
- Local partners
- Policy makers
- Media
- Youth organizations: sports teams, school bands, academic and service clubs, volunteers
- Local celebrities: tv news anchor, radio host, athletes the community

What?

What would you like to come out of your event? Media coverage? A stronger relationship with your mayor? More parent involvement? Impressing funders or potential funders? What message do you want to communicate? How can you demonstrate to your target audience that afterschool is key to kids' success? What is the value of your program from the perspective of the community, parents, funders, students and local businesses?

What to do:

- Showcase the achievements of local afterschool programs and students.
- Convey your afterschool message: Every child should have access to afterschool! Celebrate the benefits of afterschool and call for support to ensure that programs in your community and across the country thrive.
- Connect the afterschool message to any related current events.
- Educate your supporters on how they can talk to friends, family, neighbors and other community members about the importance of afterschool programs.

What activities can you include at your event?

- Student-created and led activities like skits, dance, music and poetry.
- Sell items to raise funds for your program.
- Student demonstrations of afterschool activities, for example: yoga, basketball, karate, mural painting, chess, debate.
- Ask attendees to show their support for afterschool by signing onto Afterschool for All or the national afterschool support petition "We Rely on Afterschool Programs - Don't Deny or Divert Afterschool Funds."
- Contests and competitions (kids versus adults or kids versus kids).

- Special guest speakers: parents, local elected officials, the superintendent, mayor, a member of Congress, local celebrities, etc.
- Presentations by youth about their afterschool experience.
- A healthy snack or dinner.
- Light bulb art decorations.

When?

When should you celebrate? Celebrating *Lights On Afterschool* between the hours of 3 and 6 p.m. is the best way to call attention to the needs of students during the hours after school. Celebrate during regular afterschool program hours, or during the evening when parents can participate.

When is the best time to reach your target audience? Be mindful of your target audience and **pick a time that best suits your goals**. If media is important, **remember that print reporters often need to file stories by late afternoon**. If it's important that elected officials or other community leaders attend, perhaps hold a breakfast or lunch reception.

Where?

Where is the best place to deliver your message? Your location should be the best place to bring your message home and be easily accessible to your guests and target audience:

- Your afterschool program facility, indoors or outdoors
- City hall
- Public library, park or recreation center
- Museum
- Places of worship
- School gymnasium or auditorium



BRIGHT IDEA

Use *Lights On Afterschool* to recruit new supporters by connecting the need for and benefits of afterschool programs to their interests and goals.

Remember to highlight your local partners and invite them to your event!

It doesn't need to take a lot of time, energy or resources to plan a successful *Lights On Afterschool* event.

But to help you be as effective as possible in raising community awareness about keeping the lights on after school, below is a basic checklist of the elements you'll need to help you plan in the weeks leading up to your celebration.



MEDIA

As you start planning your event, keep the media in mind. Some things to remember:

- The media—particularly television reporters and newspaper photographers—look for good visuals. Make sure your event has lots of color, action, and signs or banners with your program name and *Lights On Afterschool* prominently placed.
- Journalists need to file their stories during late afternoon hours, so plan the program for your *Lights On Afterschool* event as early as possible. If your event goes from 3 to 5 p.m., for instance, hold the program at 3:15 or 3:30 p.m.
- Compile a list of media to invite to the event.
- Draft and distribute a pitch letter to local television and radio talk show producers, including local cable access, about five weeks before your event.
- Follow up your pitch letter to radio and television (including cable access) talk shows with phone calls.
- 10 days before your event, distribute a media alert telling reporters of the event. Distribute another media alert to arrive two days before your event with updated information about speakers or notable attendees and any other last-minute changes of consequence.
- Begin radio and television interviews at least one week before to the event.
- A couple of days prior to the event call local media to “pitch” them on attending the event.
- Assemble components of a media kit for distribution at the event. The kit should include:
 - A fact sheet and/or other promotional materials about your program, including information on how to enroll students
 - A fact sheet about *Lights On Afterschool* and the state of afterschool
 - Your news release about the event
 - A copy of any proclamations from the governor, mayor, council or school board
 - Copies of prepared remarks by your speakers

- A list of upcoming afterschool events
- Letters from parents, volunteers or students describing why they support the program.

Fax or email your news release to your media list on the day of the event.

FOR ADVANCED MEDIA OUTREACH

Draft the script for a 60-second public service announcement (PSA) and distribute it to local radio stations about six weeks before your event. It should promote *Lights On Afterschool* and should be written so that it can be read by the stations' on-air talent.

Draft and send a pitch letter to the editorial page editor of a major daily newspaper about six weeks before your event requesting a meeting with the newspaper's editorial board.

- Follow up your pitch letter with a phone call to "make sure the letter arrived," and to see if the editor has decided whether to meet with your group.
- Meet with editorial board. An ideal timeframe for the meeting would be three weeks before your event, but take what you can get!
- About a month before your event, distribute an editorial memorandum to newspapers with which you're not able to schedule editorial board meetings. You might want to collaborate with other afterschool providers in the area.
- Draft and submit an opinion column to the major local newspaper or to several community newspapers about two weeks before your event.
- One week prior, draft and send unique letters to the editors of local newspapers promoting the event. Don't send one to any paper already considering printing an opinion column you submitted.



INVITATIONS

- Create your guest list of community members, media, and policy makers. Expand your guest list with friends, media, local dignitaries and celebrities as well as business people and other potential sponsors.
- Design a print and/or email invitation using *Lights On Afterschool* graphics. Be sure to include: date, time, location, RSVP instructions.
- Send out invitations about five weeks before the event.
- Update the list of RSVP'd guests daily in the weeks leading up to the event.

SPEAKERS, POLICY MAKERS & VIPS

- Invite guest speakers, including policy makers, at least two months before your event.
- Request a proclamation from your mayor or city council at least two months before your event. Once you have the proclamation, be sure to have it framed for the presentation at your event—keep in mind that it can take a couple weeks for professional framing.
- Make follow-up phone calls to confirm all VIP guests one month before your event.
- Two weeks before your event, reconfirm policy makers and key speakers' attendance.
- As soon as you have the program agenda finalized, share it with speakers; offer to provide talking points.
- At your event, assign people to look out for arriving VIPs.

LOGISTICS

- Finalize the time and location at least two months before your event. Remember to pick a backup date for outdoor events in case of inclement weather.
- If your event is off-site in a public venue find out if you need any permits. If it's a park, call the parks department. If a rally at the capitol, town hall or local government building is the plan, contact the building maintenance office or city manager's office. If you're asked for proof of insurance against property damage or personal injury, ask to apply for a waiver of this requirement. Timing of these processes can vary, so be sure to look into permits and other venue needs as soon as you've made a plan.
- Set a budget and reach out to potential partners who may be willing to sponsor your event.
- Determine and reach out to vendors and staff/volunteers that you may need for your event. Some of these vendors may have schedules that fill up quickly, so be sure to reach out to them as early as you can in your planning process; a good rule of thumb is two months' lead time. Reconfirm with them three weeks before your event. You may need:
 - Catering
 - Photographer
 - Audio/visual equipment
 - Seating
 - Greeters or ushers
 - Restrooms
 - First aid
 - Supplies
 - Decorations (flowers, signage, etc.)
 - Entertainment
- If necessary, arrange transportation for dignitaries and guest speakers.

- If your event is outdoors get a weather report a few days before your event. Make the call on whether or not to enact your rain backup plan.

At your event, be sure to have guests sign in. Consider having guests sign in using the afterschool petition.

- Have a program or agenda available at sign in, along with informational materials and fact sheets.
- Set up a separate press sign-in table where you'll give reporters a news release and media kit.

PLANNING TEAM

- First things first: form your event team. Assign leads for:
 - Event Chair
 - Logistics
 - Media and Public Relations
 - VIPs and RSVPs
- Ask partner organizations or other local afterschool providers about working together on a joint event so you can maximize resources. Set a meeting or conference call. Draw up a chart listing responsibilities and deadlines.
- Assign people to monitor local TV news shows on the day before, day of and day after the event. Tape all stories about your event. Keep those tapes to show at future fundraisers, orientations or meetings.
- At your event, assign people to look out for VIPs.
- Make sure someone is set to tape any television or radio news broadcasts covering your event.

For advanced planning and media outreach: Establish an editorial board team to prepare for an editorial board meeting with local newspapers.

PROGRAM/AGENDA

- As soon as you've invited speakers and a venue, outline your event program.
- About a month before your event, once you've confirmed speakers, write a minute-by-minute agenda to be sure you have time for all the speakers and elements in your plans.
- Update the agenda as you confirm speakers, VIPs, guests and activities.



PROMOTION

- About six weeks before your event: draft and distribute a short newsletter article promoting the event allied organizations websites and newsletters.
- Draft and distribute a calendar announcement to newspaper calendar sections, and local television and radio calendar editors.
- The month of your event, post signs and posters in public places.

MATERIALS

- If you don't already have materials about your program, develop a program fact sheet.
- Assemble components of a media kit for distribution at the event. The kit should include:
 - A fact sheet and/or other promotional materials about your program, including information on how to enroll students
 - A fact sheet about *Lights On Afterschool* and the state of afterschool
 - Your news release about the event
 - A copy of any proclamations from the governor, mayor, council or school board
 - Copies of prepared remarks by your speakers
 - A list of upcoming afterschool events
 - Letters from parents, volunteers or students describing why they support the program.
- Print out light bulb art for guests and students to decorate.

THE DAY OF LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL

- Fax or email your news release to your media list.
- At your event, be sure to have guests sign in. Think about having guests sign in using the afterschool petition.
- Have a program or agenda available at sign in, along with informational materials and fact sheets.
- Set up a separate press sign-in table where you'll give reporters a news release and media kit.
- Assign people to look out for arriving VIPs.
- Make sure someone is set to tape any television or radio news broadcasts covering your event.

THE DAY AFTER LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL

- Gather your light bulb art to deliver to Congressional district offices. Send the artwork with a personal note and information on your program, or arrange to hand deliver it. Consider making it a field trip for students.

- Make copies of any news articles or broadcast stories to send to your board of directors, funders, parents, volunteers and policy makers at all levels. Keep tapes to show at fundraisers, orientations or meetings you have in the future.
- Stay in contact with reporters who attended your event or produced stories. Contact them in May or June to see if they'd be interested in doing an end-of-school-year follow-up on your afterschool program. Or have the students in your program create a thank-you card. Maintaining that relationship after the event will help you the next time you are looking for publicity.
- Celebrate! You mastered the art of event planning, media relations and community outreach—and your afterschool program and the children you serve will benefit from your work.

Congratulate yourself and your team on a job well done!





Light Bulb Artwork

Use our reproducible **light bulb** to create a vibrant visual at your event and convey your afterschool message.

Turn the completed bulbs into a string of afterschool lights, use them to cover the walls of your hallway, or display them as a colorful backdrop for kids' presentations during *Lights On Afterschool*! These student-decorated light bulbs have become a hallmark of *Lights On Afterschool* nationwide, and provide a simple activity for your event. Tens of thousands of light bulbs are created and shared each year. Deliver your light bulbs to your local Congressional district office as a follow-up to your event!

Send the art directly to the Congressional district offices in your state. Use this opportunity to insert your own personal cover letter or, for a more powerful effect, arrange a meeting with the office to hand deliver the light bulbs. Law makers and their staff will see the creativity and energy of your students!

Remember, adults have an activity, too—ask them to support afterschool by signing on to *Afterschool for All* and joining more than 23,000 prominent individuals and organizations in calling for more quality afterschool programs.

BRIGHT IDEA

Think about delivering the art in person! See the Reaching Policy Makers section in our online Toolbox for tips on meeting with your senators and Congressional representative.

Find the contact info for your local district offices in the government section of your phone book, or go to afterschoolalliance.org and enter your zip code in the Contact Congress box



Involving Youth

Make the most of **young people's tremendous energy and enthusiasm** by engaging them in planning and promoting your *Lights On Afterschool* activities. **The youth in your program know firsthand why afterschool is important and the benefits it gives them.**

Tips for youth involvement:

- During your *Lights On Afterschool* celebration, give young people a time to speak publicly about their views on afterschool, learning, education and other related issues. Invite your mayor, school board members or city council members to come to your afterschool program to listen to what kids have to say.
- Have youth decorate light bulb art. If you are near a Congressional district office, arrange for your students to deliver the artwork themselves and meet with the Member of Congress or staff. If the offices are far away, work with students to make a project out of sending the box of artwork. The Congressional office should respond with a letter to your program. Use that as a second learning opportunity to discuss the role of elected officials.
- Work with the local newspaper to publish op-eds by kids that focus on their views of afterschool and how/when/where they have fun learning. Papers can also feature stories by kid reporters that cover issues including why afterschool programs help kids, what makes a great afterschool program and how to make learning fun.
- Organize an event at city hall or the state house in which young people speak publicly about their views on the issues in front of a large audience that includes policy makers, and then give the policy makers a chance to respond/acknowledge the young people's concerns.
- Organize a group of kids to go visit policy makers in your community. This could include the mayor, city council members, school board members, state legislators, the governor and Members of Congress. Work with the young people ahead of time to set up the meetings and develop a list of talking points for the meetings. Notify the press ahead of time so that they can cover the story of local young people being their own best advocates for learning and education.
- Work with young people to request a hearing on afterschool and education in your state legislative body. Ask the education committee to hold a special hearing at which kids can testify about the benefits they receive from afterschool programs and how afterschool engages them in learning.



Evaluate the level of involvement that is appropriate for the youth in your program. Be sure to set goals and determine how you will measure success—that is, everyone will know that your project made a difference. By taking these steps before you begin, you increase the likelihood that your event will be successful and that your students will have a sense of real accomplishment. A discussion of objectives, goals and measures can make an excellent preparation activity. Also important in preparation: creating a timeline, task list and budget. See the event planning checklist for ideas.

Level of Youth Involvement	Examples of Tasks
Youth-Led Rally	A youth committee designs the rally, assigns roles and implements the plan with guidance from adults.
Youth as Leaders	Youth work with adults to identify roles they could fill and then plan out the steps and fulfill each role, such as tour guides for site tours of the program, publicity team to make posters and signs, donation team to ask local business for donated snacks and goodies.
Youth as Contributors	Individuals volunteer to speak, help set up the event, write invitations, hang up posters, perform or provide a demonstration at the event, decorate the event location, etc.

Become a National Supporting Organization

The Afterschool Alliance invites all afterschool supporters to be part of *Lights On Afterschool*.

National Supporting Organizations are listed on our website and in event materials. As a supporter we ask that you help promote the event to your networks and affiliates, asking them to attend an event or hold their own local celebration. We've created Web banners, graphics, calendar announcements and more to help you promote your affiliation with Lights On Afterschool. Visit afterschoolalliance.org/loaNatPartners.cfm to learn how to become a National Partner and to see a list of other Partners.

National Supporting Organizations agree to:

- Be listed on public documents as a *Lights On Afterschool* supporter.
- As appropriate for your organization, promote Lights On Afterschool to members and networks (chapters, affiliates, programs) and encourage their participation as event hosts or attendees.
- As appropriate for your organization, promote the event in communications (e.g., newsletters, in-house publications, social media, website).

To become a National Supporting Organization, please send an email to ssimpson@afterschoolalliance.org or complete the information below and we will add your organization to the list of supporters for *Lights On Afterschool*.

Mail to: Sarah Simpson
Lights On Afterschool
Afterschool Alliance
1616 H Street, NW, Suite 820
Washington, D.C. 20006
Or Fax to: 202-347-2092

Name/Title _____
Organization _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Let us know how you plan to do to promote Lights On Afterschool. What tools would help you in this effort?

EVENT IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES

Provided below are **case studies of successful celebrations, including tips from organizers about what worked, ideas for event activities and themes,** and short descriptions of some past *Lights On Afterschool* events. We hope these are useful in your planning and help spark some ideas for your own event!

Case Studies:

- 'Day in the Afterschool Life of a Dallas Child' Event Forges New Relationships with Media and Policy Makers
- Cultural Event Opens Door to New Contribution
- Strengthening Ties to Stakeholders
- Achieving a Bigger, Higher-Profile through Collaboration
- Celebration Led by Youth Honors a Friend of Afterschool
- Battle of the Bands Draws Media, Local Officials
- Open House at a Faith-Based Program Impresses Local Leaders, Boosts Staff
- Creative Program Inspires Policy Maker Support
- Community Comes Together to Light Up the Sky

Case Study: 'Day in the Afterschool Life of a Dallas Child' Event Forges New Relationships with Media and Policy Makers

Where: Dallas, Texas

Who: More than 150 adult participants, including city council members, state and local elected officials, staff from federal elected officials' offices, business leaders, and representatives of local foundations.

Highlights: The Dallas AfterSchool Network hosted a bus tour of north and south Dallas afterschool programs for local dignitaries and community leaders, affording them a realistic look at "a day in the afterschool life of a Dallas child."

As a direct result of the bus tour, the local ABC television affiliate, WFAA, committed to doing a weekly segment on afterschool and Dallas AfterSchool Network Executive Director Tanya McDonald were able to establish relationships with federal and state representatives and to schedule follow-up meetings.

The Program: The Dallas AfterSchool Network organized two 90-minute driving routes taking participants to different afterschool programs across Dallas. Each bus stopped at three distinct afterschool sites: a school-based program, a community-based site and an afterschool program housed in a local apartment complex. The programs served a wide range of students and showcased programs of all shapes and sizes.

Each bus rider began the tour at the last stop (so that when the tour was over everyone would be back at their cars) where participants met and boarded buses. Buses departed promptly at 3:30 p.m. and drove to the first of three program sites. On the way, that site's program director gave brief remarks (about seven or eight minutes) on the status of the program and what bus riders would see students doing, and then answered questions. When the bus arrived at each site, riders headed into the classroom or recreation area to see the afterschool students at work or play. At each site, the students went about their scheduled activities as riders observed. McDonald and staff at each afterschool program served as de facto emcees, answering questions about afterschool, and then provided wrap-up remarks outside the last stop.

The Outcomes: WFAA-TV Executive News Director Michael Valentine and General Manager Mike Devlin attended the south Dallas bus tour and were so moved by the conditions in the community and the work done by the afterschool providers and staff that a few weeks after the event WFAA began airing two news stories each week on afterschool. See some of those stories [here](#).

In addition, another participant, a fashion designer, approached McDonald about the possibility of creating an afterschool program for students interested in fashion design. Prior to the event, McDonald had tried to get a meeting with members of Dallas' congressional delegation without success. But after the tour, she was able to schedule a time to meet with legislative aides to U.S. Sen. John Cornyn and U.S. Rep. Pete Sessions—a direct result of her *Lights On* success!

Overheard at the Event: "I am inspired by the work of these program leaders. They are doing incredible things for the children of south Dallas."

"Everyone should ride the bus! What an eye-opening experience to see how so many of our children live."

"We need to help more students like Lola (a student at one of the sites). She deserves the opportunity for a world-class education."

"I never knew that these issues existed so close to what many of us call home. I am stunned by what I have learned."

Keys to Success: Keep it simple! McDonald credits much of her success to the decision to show *Lights On* participants a typical afterschool day, rather than a special showcase event. Afterward, bus riders told McDonald how authentic the event felt because they were getting a genuine glimpse into the reality of students' afterschool activities.

Advice for Coordinators:

- Keep the event on a tight timeline.
- Respect bus riders' time by starting and ending on schedule!
- Leave them wanting more.
- Set a brisk pace to pique their interest.
- If bus riders want more information, set up another visit—a great way to keep them engaged.
- Send follow-up letters and thank riders for attending.

Case Study: Cultural Event Opens Door to New Contribution

Where: Camdenton, Missouri

Who: 550 participants: 350 students and 200 family members, school officials, political leaders and local residents

Highlights: Missouri's First Lady, Lori Hauser Holden, was the featured guest speaker. Media coverage of the event caught the eye of a local business executive, leading to a gift of \$20,000 in computer equipment.

Camdenton R-III's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program hosted a *Lights On Afterschool* celebration for the entire community at the Camdenton High School Little Theatre. Its primary focus was a multicultural presentation by Cultural Kaleidoscope that enabled students to learn about Russia and its culture. Funding for the program was made possible through a grant from the Missouri Arts Council.

"What made the event a success was the fact that students, parents and community members were introduced to the arts in a way that would never be possible for most of our students," explained Project PASS Director Sherry Comer, an Afterschool Ambassador. "Many of our youth will never travel outside of the United States or even out of the state of Missouri. To see what the culture of Russia is like through dance, music and numerous Russian artists was a phenomenal opportunity for our community. It was a great way to draw a crowd to share the importance of afterschool issues and demonstrate what programs do for the youth of our state and nation."

The Program: Missouri's First Lady, Lori Hauser Holden, was the featured guest speaker at the event. A resolution was signed and presented to Comer on behalf of the Missouri House of Representatives, and Mayor Kerry Shannon presented a proclamation declaring Oct. 9, 2003, *Lights On Afterschool* Day in Camdenton.

Other distinguished guests at the celebration included: State Rep. Daniel Moore, Chair of the Joint Committee on Out of School Time; Camdenton Mayor Kerry Shannon; State Department of Education Officials Jay Acock and Cindy Waibel; and numerous community and school leaders. On behalf of Project PASS, students Jacob Fordyce and Doug McDonald proudly presented keys to these officials to symbolize PASS's theme that "Afterschool is key to a student's success."

The event generated numerous local newspaper articles, one of which spurred the interest of an executive at the G-TECH Corporation. In the spring of 2004, the G-TECH Corporation established an office in Missouri and agreed to donate \$20,000 worth of computer equipment to the afterschool program—all because of the media coverage from the *Lights On Afterschool* event.

Leading up to the event, the afterschool programs built support and excitement among students through activities and studies that focused on Russia.

Keys to Success: Reach out to elected officials early in your planning. Comer began outreach to elected officials well in advance, encouraging them to participate in the event either in person or by issuing proclamations in support of *Lights On Afterschool*.

Hold the event at one key site. "The year before, I had a celebration at each site and it was impossible to get the legislators, mayor, other dignitaries and media to each location on time to read proclamations and participate in the activities." Comer also notes that it is important that speakers recognize that most of the audience members are young students and the speeches need to be short and engaging.

Advice for Coordinators:

- Start planning early.
- If possible, send invitations to key legislators, mayors and/or the governor the year before.
- Send several follow up letters.
- Tip: Pictures and personal notes from students work best.

Case Study: Strengthening Ties to Stakeholders

Where: Fort Worth, Texas

Who: 700 attendees, highlighting 45 programs district-wide

Highlights: Speakers included the Mayor Pro Tem, a staff member to a local Member of Congress and several school superintendents.

The Fort Worth Independent School District's (ISD's) 21st Century Community Learning Centers Programs' primary *Lights On Afterschool* event in 2003 was a rally in front of the JCPenney store in Fort Worth's Ridgmar Mall. Event organizer and Afterschool Ambassador Sue Matkin said the event, which drew more than 700 attendees, has helped cement relationships with key policy makers and stakeholders.

The Program: The event drew on the talents of children from 21st Century programs across the school district, featuring singing, cheers, ballet folklorico, poetry, hip-hop dance, steppers, Tae Kwon Do, a band performance, a fashion show and a Kung Fu presentation. Displays on various afterschool learning opportunities filled the mall walkways on two floors in front of the store, giving parents, the media and policy makers the chance to sample the programs' rich and diverse curricula. In all, groups from 45 schools participated in the performances and displays.

Speakers included the Mayor Pro Tem, a staff member to a local Member of Congress, and several school superintendents. Several local afterschool leaders and supporters received plaques, including an executive from Lockheed Martin for the company's ongoing support of Fort Worth afterschool programs.

The *Lights On* theme was emphasized with a five-foot light bulb, a number of smaller paper maché light bulbs and hundreds of paper light bulbs for students to decorate. A large "What I Like about Afterschool" banner was also on hand for students to sign.

Keys to Success: Matkin points to a number of keys to the program's success. First: include partners. "We tried to bring together various afterschool providers, because we felt very strongly that it shouldn't be just the Fort Worth ISD's programs that were recognized. We're just one piece of the provider community, so we had YMCA and others" she said.

Second, create buy-in. "At our first meeting we brought the decision makers of the various organizations together, and once they'd bought in to the program, we brought in site coordinators and people who work with the kids for a second meeting to get their ideas. The process was so democratic that my idea didn't get adopted!" Matkin says the planning committee met monthly for five months, and three times in the final month. One meeting was at a conference room at the JCPenney store that was the site of the event, Matkin says, to give

participating organizations tangible evidence of the store's commitment. Third, Matkin says, recognizing policy makers and corporate leaders who support afterschool in the community helped to solidify their long-term buy-in and to strengthen community members' personal relationships with key leaders.

Finally, one lesson she learned for the coming year is that, in addition to children's performances and fun activities, it's important to make sure that the event reflects the substance of afterschool programs and the breadth of activities they provide. That way, the audience will get a richer understanding of what kids are doing every afternoon, and how valuable afterschool is on several fronts.

Case Study: Achieving Bigger, Higher-Profile through Collaboration

Where: Columbus, Ohio

Who: Museum opens doors to 1,500 afterschool students

Highlights: Dynamic partnerships allowed organizers to put together a large-scale event and attract speakers such as Mayor Michael Coleman and former Ohio State University and Miami Dolphin football star Demetrius Stanley.

"Our event was very successful because it was truly a community event. Many organizations worked together to make it happen," said Karen Jackson, former state coordinator for Ohio's Out-of-School Time Project, Action for Children and a 2003-2004 Afterschool Ambassador.

"The most important thing is to be inclusive of all organizations—regardless of how much or how little they contribute. Also, have a firm budget and provide transportation."

The Program: COSI Columbus—a popular science museum—opened its doors to more than 1,500 students and adults from more than 40 programs for a fun-filled afternoon. Collaborative partners for the event included COSI, Communities in Schools, Cap City Kids, the Mayor's Office of Education, Action for Children, Children's Hunger Alliance and the YMCA of Central Ohio.

Mayor Michael Coleman and former Ohio State University and Miami Dolphin football star Demetrius Stanley spoke at the event.

Information booths highlighted activities at local programs. Guests were able to tour the entire center.

Step teams and other performing artists entertained guests, as did mascots from the local professional teams.

In addition to the large event at COSI Columbus, Jackson hosted a highly successful *Lights On Ohio Afterschool* kickoff on Oct 3. It was part of Ohio's two-day statewide Out-of-School Time professional development conference, "Building a Brighter Future."

Keynote speakers included Ohio First Lady Hope Taft, Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman, Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Judy Y. Samelson, State Sen. Ray Miller and U.S. Sen. Michael DeWine. Each dignitary received an "Ohio Educational Opportunities Advocate" recognition plaque on behalf of Ohio's Out-of-School Time Project and the Afterschool Alliance.

The conference energized the afterschool community and helped convince many providers to host their own *Lights On Afterschool* events.

Case Study: Celebration Led by Youth Honors a Friend of Afterschool

Where: Las Vegas, Nevada

Who: Numerous state officials, including a congresswoman, 1,200 participants and 35 event co-hosts.

Highlights: The Southern Nevada Afterschool Collaborative hosted a community-wide *Lights On Afterschool* event at Freedom Park in Oct of 2003. More than 1,200 people participated in the rally, organized by Afterschool Ambassador Susan Waters, who brought together more than 35 afterschool and community-based organizations to serve as co-hosts.

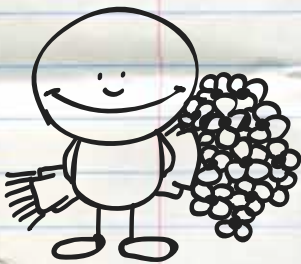
The rally was emceed by a high school student and featured student performances and comments on afterschool by both youth and local leaders. Event co-hosts provided information and fun activities for participants. An "Afterschool Hero" award was presented to the family of an afterschool staff person.

"The support from law makers was incredible, but there is no doubt that the stars of the program were the kids," Waters said. "A remarkable high school student served as the emcee. The closing act was a rap group of young people who called themselves The Academics. They turned the message of being successful in school into a rap. The crowd was on its feet!"

"For me, the most compelling statement of the evening came as the crowd was going home and I was packing things up," she continued. "A middle school boy came to me and said, 'Why can't we have afterschool programs at my school?' I can only hope that events like this one will help to make his request a reality."

The Program: For the rally, each co-host group provided information and fun activities, including face painting, balloons, a jump house, a table for decorating *Lights On Afterschool* light bulbs, a roving juggler, local mascots and more. Student performances included dancers, mariachi bands, singers and tumblers. Youth talked about what afterschool meant to them.

Rep. Shelley Berkley spoke to participants about the importance of supporting afterschool programs, staying for more than an hour. Aides to Gov. Kenny Guinn and Sens. John Ensign and Harry Reid addressed the crowd, as did Las Vegas City Councilman Gary Reese. Officials from the State of Nevada and the Cities of Henderson, North Las Vegas and Las Vegas presented proclamations. Rep. Jon C. Porter sent formal Congressional Congratulations.



The first annual "Afterschool Hero" award was presented to the family of Robbie Stroh, a City of Las Vegas employee who was a longtime afterschool staff member. Stroh was killed in an automobile accident just two weeks before the event.

Keys to Success: "This event and the planning process did a great deal to bring together organizations that historically have not worked well together," Waters said. "The key was pulling together a great organizing committee."

Waters' recommendation: "Bring together as many stakeholders as possible to plan an event that is both youth-focused and showcases the benefits of afterschool programs. Invite national, state and local officials. Try to get them or staff involved as participants in the event. Cultivate local media and plan events that have a unique story or photo opportunity. Plan for success, do a good job and make sure that as many people as possible hear your message."

Business support was strong. JCPenney store employees passed out flyers and wore *Afterschool for All* stickers the week leading up to *Lights On Afterschool*.

"As soon as the event was over," she reports, "organizing committee members began talking about bigger and better plans for next year."



Case Study: Battle of the Bands Draws Media, Local Officials

Where: Scranton, Pennsylvania

Who: Lt. Gov. Catherine Baker Knoll, the mayor, school board members and 1,000 parents and students.

Highlights: A "Battle of the Bands" event, built around the mayor's city pride initiative, attracted media attention and local policy makers, creating visibility for the program and strengthening relationships with officials.

Molly Quinn Philbin's BEST (Building Educational Success Together) afterschool program in Scranton, Pennsylvania, hosted a musical *Lights On Afterschool* event in 2003. Philbin organized a "Battle of the Bands" at a newly opened high school and invited students from neighboring middle school afterschool programs to listen and dance.

The visibility the event gave the program and afterschool in general was invaluable. "I think it was memorable for the officials who were there, and that it helped make the point about how important afterschool is in the lives of our children," she says. "And that's going to stick with them, I know."

The Program: Each band performed its own arrangement of an original song called "Scranton, Come Back," commissioned by the BEST program to support the mayor of Scranton's "Restore the Pride" initiative.

Lt. Gov. Catherine Baker Knoll joined the mayor and several school board members at the event, along with representatives from the local JCPenney store, Junior Achievement and Good Schools Pennsylvania. Approximately 1,000 parents and students participated. The lieutenant governor's and the mayor's participation helped generate widespread media coverage.

Keys to Success: Philbin's advice for staging such events: Beware the volatile combination of different age groups, different schools and loud music. "I wasn't familiar with 'moshing'," she says, referring to a dancing trend that involves dancers jumping onto other dancers. "We had to keep that contained—and that made me feel a little old! I ended up dividing the dancing time by age group, and pressing teachers and afterschool providers into service to keep things from getting out of hand."

On the other hand, she says, "It was great that the bands took the message of the city and put together their own arrangements. I think that was a powerful message. And I appreciated that the bands were all respectful of one another, and that the middle school students had a chance to see that behavior modeled."

Case Study: Open House at a Faith-Based Program Impresses Local Leaders, Boosts Staff

Where: Baltimore, Maryland

Who: Maryland's State Superintendent of Schools, the Baltimore City Council president, and more than 300 students, parents and community members.

Highlights: An open house that featured activities from local afterschool programs impressed local leaders and gave afterschool staffers a well-deserved celebration.

The Program: The Door in Baltimore, Maryland, hosted an open house that featured activities from afterschool programs in the city. The Door is the first faith-based afterschool program in the state to receive a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant. Guest speakers included the Maryland State Superintendent of Schools and the Baltimore City Council president.

More than 300 students, parents and other community members were able to see firsthand the creative and diverse activities students participated in at their programs daily—from science experiments to computer programs to arts and crafts. Students from The Door, YMCA, Junior Achievement, Boys and Girls Club Living Classrooms, Chesapeake Center, and the afterschool marching band participated.

"One of the greatest outcomes of our *Lights On Afterschool* event was that local, state and federal elected officials and their staff who attended were so impressed by all that the programs offer that they are now more willing to support afterschool programs," said Kacy Conley, Director of Urban Services at the YMCA of Central Maryland and an Afterschool Ambassador. "It was a wonderful way to celebrate the great things afterschool accomplishes while also giving a boost to those who toil every day to help sustain the programs for students and their families in our community."

Advice for Coordinators:

- Involve a variety of stakeholders in planning and execution to build ownership.
- Develop a media plan.
- Make the event visually attractive.
- Secure a variety of afterschool programs to showcase their activities.
- Include several hands-on activities for youth during the event.
- Keep the program portion of the event short as the kids should be the focus.
- Employ afterschool students as hosts for the event. Many of the dignitaries at Conley's event remarked that they appreciated having youth tour guides with whom to share their experiences.
- Recruit partners with reach into the community to help promote your event. At least nine JCPenney stores in Maryland promoted *Lights On Afterschool* events by setting up afterschool info booths, encouraging shoppers to participate and wearing Afterschool for All stickers during the week of *Lights On Afterschool*.

Case Study: Creative Program Inspires Policy Maker Support

Where: Austin, Texas

Who: 160 afterschool programs held events in the Austin area that involved state leaders and special recognition for a Member of Congress.

Highlights: A main kick-off event with a student torch race to the state capitol. Students passed the torches on to legislators to call attention to the thousands of area children without afterschool programs. The creative event inspired a state policy maker to help find needed funding for afterschool.



Former Afterschool Ambassador Anna Land's 2003 week-long *Lights On Afterschool* event in Austin, Texas, drew on a broad coalition of organizations in the community.

Land says she can see the long-term impact, citing local politicians who participated who are now stronger advocates for afterschool. "We have one county commissioner who made a particularly fiery speech about how we have to do more for our kids. So after the event, we went back to him to ask for help, and in a time of stretched budgets, they've put aside important funding for afterschool."

The Program: Festivities began on Oct. 5—the Saturday before the Thursday, Oct. 10 celebration—with the official state kick-off event for *Lights On Afterschool*: a torch race to the state capitol aimed at raising awareness of the estimated 34,000 children in the greater Austin area without access to afterschool programs. Students carrying the torches were all winners of an essay contest on the importance of afterschool. Local athletes and dignitaries joined the students along the way. At the end of the run, students handed their torches to state legislators, who joined in a rally in support of afterschool. A local "Afterschool Hero"—a Member of Congress with a strong record of support for afterschool—was presented with an award.

Later that week, 160 afterschool programs held smaller *Lights On Afterschool* events at their facilities around the Austin area. The events included open houses, rallies, celebrations, student performances and demonstrations, and more. Land's own program, Heart House, a fixture in other communities in the state, used the occasion to celebrate the grand opening of its new Austin site.

Keys to Success: Secure a hero, like the awardee Member of Congress. "Look for someone with pull whose participation will make others in the community want to be involved. We had a detailed project plan which we could show people and it helped bring them on board."

Also, get early buy-in from partners. Determine which afterschool programs and organizations are most likely to participate, and invest them in the plan first. A number of community-based organizations—including Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, 4-H, and Boys and Girls Scouts—were particularly eager to join in, and their early participation helped generate enthusiasm that attracted other organizations to the effort.

Case Study: Community Comes Together to Light Up the Sky

Where: Evansville, Indiana

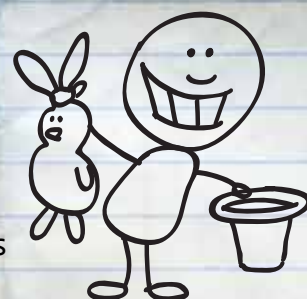
Who: More than 2,000 participants and 30 community agencies

Highlights: A unique coming together of the entire community—local businesses, community programs, area leaders, parents and youth—to organize, fund and celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*. The spirit of the event was captured in a 20-minute firework display.

"Afterschool is about opportunities, and *Lights On Afterschool* is a tremendous opportunity for youth, families and communities to come together in celebration," says Evansville Event Co-chair Dan Diehl. The Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation (E-VSC) and Evansville community *Lights On Afterschool* event in 2003 was a rally at Bosse Field, a historic baseball stadium in Evansville. The event highlighted the importance of afterschool programs in the lives of children, youth, families and communities, and served as the kick-off to Red Ribbon week activities. It drew more than 2,000 people.

The Program: Children and youth from area afterschool programs performed; more than 30 community agencies set up booths and provided games; and food, entertainment, and *Lights On Afterschool* t-shirts were provided free to everyone. The event culminated with a 20-minute fireworks display.

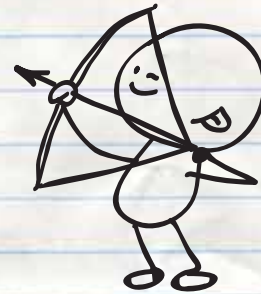
Opening ceremonies featured the Girl Scouts, Central High School Junior ROTC and Joshua Academy singing the National Anthem. Dr. McCandless, the E-VSC Superintendent, read a Mayoral Proclamation announcing *Lights On Afterschool* Day. Youth performances followed, including: Evans' Spirit Squad, Glenwood's and Harwood's African Drumming Ensemble, Delaware's Orff Ensemble, Carver's Touring Strings, Cedar Hall's Players with Pat Coslett, Dexter's Sign Language Choir, Howard Roosa's Spanish Club, Culver's Steppers, the African Elementary Choral Ensemble, and Lodge's Choir. Johnny Kincaid of Smokefree Communities provided a kick-off for Red Ribbon Week activities, and Deputy Williams of the Sheriff's Department and Mary Dunham of Newspaper in Education announced the drug-free slogan award winner. The Boy Scouts were featured in closing ceremonies.



The event was funded entirely by community donations, including those from The Evansville Courier and Press: Newspaper in Education, Vectren, Old National Bank, and the Evansville Otters. Area businesses donated door prizes that were given out throughout the event. Guests signed a drug- and alcohol-free pledge written on paper light bulbs, which were attached to railings at the baseball stadium. The *Lights On Afterschool* theme was emphasized with a banner, paper light bulbs throughout the stadium, t-shirts with the *Lights On Afterschool* logo, performances by students from afterschool programs and spotlights on kids sharing, "What afterschool means to me."

Keys to Success: Organizer Dan Diehl offers several keys to the program's success:

- **Celebrating the Community.** "We have broad community involvement. This is not a school event. It is a community event. We have made it a celebration of community."
- **Everyone Has A Role.** "Because it is a community event, there is a great deal of ownership in the process. Various youth-serving organizations make up the planning committee and help with volunteer recruitment, marketing, performance planning, and overall organization."
- **Youth Are Front and Center.** "The absolute, number one key to success is the youth performances. This is the very essence of why afterschool programs are important. The event gives our youth an opportunity to perform in front of thousands of people. This is an opportunity that they would never have without the event."



BRIGHTIDEA

Go Green with Lights On Afterschool

Consider making your *Lights On Afterschool* celebration **Earth friendly** by going **green**! Incorporate these tips into your *Lights On Afterschool* event and into your program every day after to ensure that your afterschool program takes steps toward a smaller carbon footprint.



For Program Providers

Go paperless. Send an email invitation or Evite to your guests instead of printing and mailing invitations. Have your guests register their support for *Lights On Afterschool* on our website rather than collecting petition signatures on paper.

Recycle your paper, plastic and aluminum items. Contact your local recycling agency to request recycle bins and have afterschool youth participants help sort items and learn about the importance of recycling as a *Lights On Afterschool* activity.

Reduce the use of paper and plastic products by serving finger foods or fruit and veggies on a stick. Serve ice cream sandwiches or popsicles to eliminate the use of plastic spoons and bowls.

Take a field trip to a local park to learn about environmental conservation efforts. Or take a trip to your local recycling center and learn about the different ways to reduce, reuse and recycle waste.

Post a 'Green Activity of the Day' and have students perform that activity their time at the program. Challenge them to incorporate the practice into their daily lives.

Become a Go Green Afterschool Program.

Use the energy efficient light bulb artwork. Instead of throwing them away after your event, mail some to your Congressional, state or local officials and use the rest as decoration for your program to show that your program went green for *Lights On Afterschool*.

Challenge program youth and staff to take the stairs to reduce the amount of energy used when taking the elevator. This saves energy AND promotes a healthy body!

Print using the "draft" option on your copier and use both sides of the paper.

Make your Lights On Afterschool event a community drop-off spot to recycle used toner and inkjet cartridges!

For Community Partners

Walk, ride a bike or use public transportation to your local *Lights On Afterschool* event.

Go paperless. Register your support for *Lights On Afterschool* online. Encourage others to do the same!

Bring your own mug or glass to refill your refreshments while attending a *Lights On Afterschool* event.

Map your carbon footprint to find out how your daily activities effect the environment. Seek ways to lower your carbon dioxide output. Before you toss that glass bottle into the trash can consider this: the energy saved from recycling one glass bottle can power a laptop for 25 minutes!

Replace the light bulbs at your organization or at home with energy efficient ones. Maybe stop by the drug store and pick some up after helping kids color the energy efficient light bulb artwork at the *Lights On Afterschool* celebration.

Recycle your toner and inkjet cartridges as well as old cell phones!

Lights On Afterschool as a Fundraiser



10 Tips for Getting (and keeping) Sponsors

Lights On Afterschool presents a great opportunity to raise money for your program or organization. Your event can offer sponsors valuable exposure to the media, to families and to current and potential customers. **It also gives sponsors a chance to show that they care about and are involved in the community**—a trait that directly translates into consumers' likelihood to purchase their products. We've created tools and tips to help you maximize *Lights On Afterschool* funding opportunities.

1. Don't be afraid to ask

The #1 reason why groups or businesses don't participate and give money is that no one ASKED them. Nine out of 10 groups you approach may say "no," but it's that one "yes" that counts!

2. Don't be discouraged by a "No"

Play detective and investigate if "no" means "not right now." This could be an opportunity to start building a relationship with a potential future funder to find out more about their philanthropic objectives, policies and the key gatekeepers with whom you need to stay in touch.

3. "Pitch" to the bottom line

When compiling your sponsorship levels, remember you are not just asking the sponsor to cover the cost of your event's budgeted items such as t-shirts, banners, etc. Rather, you are selling a sponsorship package that is worth much more—a direct affiliation with the community; the greatest and most in-demand resource for a corporate sponsor. When possible, specify the projected number of attendees and emphasize the anticipated number and types of impressions that the sponsorship will achieve for the sponsor. For example, if your event draws 500 participants, the sponsor can anticipate 500 impressions by placing its logos on the event programs.

4. Plan ahead

Most businesses and groups have a finite grant/sponsorship budget that they distribute according to a set giving cycle. You should also remember that your organization is most likely competing with other organizations for those funds. It pays to plan ahead before your *Lights On Afterschool* event will take place to confirm the potential sponsor's giving cycle in order to meet the set deadlines.

5. Band together

Lights On Afterschool is a great opportunity to team up with other local organizations to compete for sponsorships or grants. This team approach will benefit both you and the sponsor: lower costs for maximum exposure.

6. What's in a name?

Attract potential sponsors with creative media-savvy ways to publicize a partnership with your organization and to increase the number of impressions for sponsors. See our list of 32 Ways to Give Sponsors Exposure at your *Lights On Afterschool* Event.

7. Do the leg work

Offer to do the leg work to generate media i.e. press releases for print, radio and TV to publicize your sponsor's role. Visit the Afterschool Alliance's website for media outreach tools: www.afterschoolalliance.org/loaMediaMain.cfm

8. Don't forget your thank-yous

Be sure to personalize your thank-yous! For example, instead of just sending a thank you card, create an "afterschool champion" award ceremony to honor your sponsor's corporate citizenship and include your organization's children in the award presentation ceremony. Or, have the children create their own thank you cards for the sponsor.

9. Always stay in touch

Be sure to keep the door open for future asks by sending your sponsor periodic updates on your organization.

10. Ask again!

32 Ways to Give Sponsors Exposure at your Lights On Afterschool Event



1. Print sponsor names on all clothing (i.e. on the back of t-shirts).
2. Print sponsor names on invitations and event materials. You can use a self-inking stamp on your invitations.
3. Print sponsor names on all promotional materials (i.e. save the date cards, entry or registration forms, posters, tickets, etc.).
4. Include displays encouraging attendees to support or frequent the sponsor's business.
5. Print sponsor logos on banners and podium signs.
6. Set up tables for sponsor product samples/materials at your event.
7. Give the sponsor the opportunity to distribute coupons for products.
8. Lend sponsors time at the podium to talk about their company's commitment to afterschool.
9. Distribute sponsor advertising materials to participants as inserts in programs or newsletters.
10. If hosting a reception, offer the sponsor the opportunity to name a table.
11. Display sponsor logos on your organization's website.
12. Add a link from your organization's Web pages to sponsor websites.
13. Include photos of participants, staff, etc. wearing sponsor logos in media packets.
14. Include sponsor names in an advertisement in your local or community newspaper inviting the community to join you both for *Lights On Afterschool*.
15. Display a poster or flier about the event with sponsor logos on bulletin boards in your organization's entryway or offices.
16. Print sponsor logos on event giveaways such as cups, medals and ribbons—or let the company produce them and hand them out.
17. Print sponsor logos on name badges.
18. Promote sponsor names and products on the PA system during the event.
19. Lend sponsors use of event photos for their own publications and promotions.
20. Include sponsor names or logos in your organization's newsletter article about the event.
21. Set sponsorship levels whereby sponsors at higher levels have additional distinct benefits and visibility.



22. For high levels of giving, offer a sponsor category exclusivity guaranteeing that you will not recruit any of their competitors as sponsors.
23. Adapt any of the ideas here as part of long-term sponsorship package that launches at *Lights On Afterschool* and is carried out for the next year via visibility in your publications, on your website or at events.
24. Develop an award ceremony as part of your event and honor sponsors for their leadership. Issue a press release about the award and be sure to send a picture of the company representative receiving the award to your local papers.
25. Include a number of tickets or seats at tables for your *Lights On Afterschool* event as part of your sponsorship package.
26. Acknowledge the sponsors in all media materials—like media advisory and press releases—about the event.
27. For higher donors or “Presenting Sponsors” of the event, include a quote from the company in your news release.
28. Develop a way for the sponsor’s product to be used at your event.
29. Give sponsor products, coupons or discounts away as a door prize to give the sponsor exposure in the community.
30. Bring sponsors up on stage and present them with a giant thank you card decorated by children; be sure to get a photo for your publications, website and to send local media.
31. Make sponsor contributions to your program the focus of your event or program and news release.
32. Members of your organization can participate in the sponsor’s own promotional activities i.e. the sponsor can feature the youth and parents served by your afterschool program as “special guests” at company board meetings and other appropriate events to profile their community giving.

Reaching Out to Policy Makers

Inviting Policy Makers to Your *Lights On Afterschool* Event



Policy makers are critical allies in expanding the resources available to support afterschool programs. Not only do policy makers need to understand that afterschool programs keep kids safe, help working families and improve students' academic achievement, but they can also help identify additional resources for expanding the availability afterschool programs. **Use the sample invitation to invite policy makers to join your *Lights On Afterschool* event. Whether or not they can attend, ask your policy maker to issue a proclamation in support of *Lights On Afterschool*.**

(on your letterhead)

Dear [Policy Maker]:

On [date of event] our afterschool program will be participating in *Lights On Afterschool*, a nationwide celebration of afterschool programs. We will be one of more than 9,000 sites across the nation sending the message that afterschool is key to children's success, and that we must keep the lights on and doors open after school. We have invited parents, media, employers, neighbors, school officials and others to help us rally support for safe, stimulating afterschool programs.

We would like you to be part of our local celebration, scheduled for:

[Date and time]

[Place]

[Address]

[Give a short description of what your celebration will include, as well as how you would like the policy maker to participate. An example below:]

Our program is going to include a half hour ceremony and we would be honored to have you as our keynote presenter. Your role would include:

- A 15-minute statement of the benefits of afterschool
- Presentation of the proclamation to the program director

The benefits of quality afterschool programs are clear. They support working families by ensuring that children are safe and productive when the school day ends. Quality afterschool programs make our communities stronger by involving students, parents, business leaders and volunteers. Quality afterschool programs give children the opportunity to discover hidden talents as they grow academically and socially.

I look forward to having you join us for *Lights On Afterschool*. I will call you next week to confirm your availability. We hope that you will help us keep the lights on after school, and give our children a brighter future.

Sincerely,
[your name]

Requesting a Proclamation from a Governor or Mayor

Many communities and states have had success getting their mayor or governor to issue a proclamation in support of *Lights On Afterschool*. In fact, nearly every governor in the country signs a proclamation every year. This gesture is a simple way for elected officials to show their support, and gives you something to show off and announce at your event.

Requesting a Proclamation from an Organization, Institution or Other Official

More than just mayors and governors can issue proclamations—a school board, park and recreation department, your own governing board, or your partners can also issue proclamations for *Lights On Afterschool*. You can use this as an opportunity to tell them about your program successes and to thank them for their support.



A sample of these proclamations can be found on the next page.

Keeping the Lights On After School: A Proclamation

WHEREAS, the citizens of [Name of town/city/district/state/community] stand firmly committed to quality afterschool programs and opportunities because they:

- Provide safe, challenging, and engaging learning experiences that help children develop social, emotional, physical and academic skills.
- Support working families by ensuring their children are safe and productive after the regular school day ends.
- Build stronger communities by involving students, parents, business leaders and adult volunteers in the lives of young people, thereby promoting positive relationships among youth, families and adults. Engage families, schools and community partners in advancing the welfare of our children.

WHEREAS, [Name of Program] has provided significant leadership in the area of community involvement in the education and well-being of our youth, grounded in the principle that quality afterschool programs are key to helping our children become successful adults.

WHEREAS, *Lights On Afterschool*, the national celebration of afterschool programs held this year on October xx, 20xx, promotes the importance of quality afterschool programs in the lives of children, families and communities.

WHEREAS, more than 28 million children in the U.S. have parents who work outside the home, and 15.1 million children have no place to go after school.

WHEREAS, many afterschool programs across the country are facing funding shortfalls so severe that they are being forced to close their doors and turn off their lights.

Whereas, the [state/city] is committed to investing in the health and safety of all young people by providing expanded learning opportunities that will help close the achievement gap and prepare young people to compete in the global economy.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that I, [Name of Governor/Mayor] do hereby proclaim October 11, 2011, as “Lights On Afterschool Day”; AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this [governor/mayor] enthusiastically endorses Lights On Afterschool and commits our [state/community] to engage in innovative afterschool programs and activities that ensure the lights stay on and the doors stay open for all children after school.

Keeping the Lights On After School: A Proclamation

WHEREAS, [Name of Organization, Institution or Location] stands firmly committed to quality afterschool programs and opportunities because they:

- Provide safe, challenging, and engaging learning experiences that help children develop social, emotional, physical and academic skills.
- Support working families by ensuring their children are safe and productive after the regular school day ends.
- Build stronger communities by involving students, parents, business leaders and adult volunteers in the lives of young people, thereby promoting positive relationships among youth, families and adults.
- Engage families, schools and community partners in advancing the welfare of our children.

WHEREAS, [Name of Program] has provided significant leadership in the area of community involvement in the education and well-being of our youth, grounded in the principle that quality afterschool programs are key to helping our children become successful adults.

WHEREAS, *Lights On Afterschool*, the national celebration of afterschool programs held this year on October xx 20xx, promotes the importance of quality afterschool programs in the lives of children, families and communities.

WHEREAS, more than 28 million children in the U.S. have parents who work outside the home, and 15.1 million children have no place to go after school.

WHEREAS, many afterschool programs across the country are facing funding shortfalls so severe that they are being forced to close their doors and turn off their lights.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that [Name of Organization, Institution or Official] urges the citizens of [Name of Community or County] to ensure that every child has access to a safe, engaging place where the lights are on after school; AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this [Title of Official] enthusiastically endorses *Lights On Afterschool* and is committed to innovative afterschool programs and activities that ensure that the lights stay on and the doors stay open for all children after school.



Getting & Working with Press

Lights On Afterschool provides a wonderful opportunity to generate positive news coverage of your afterschool program and to remind policy makers and community

members of the need to provide sufficient funding to meet the growing demand for afterschool programs that serve children and families. Reporters seek out stories that affect the community—they will want to tell readers, viewers and listeners about threats to afterschool programs. So plan your *Lights On Afterschool* activities with the media in mind. These 10 simple steps can make your event more newsworthy and help you reach more people with your message.

1. Create a Media List

If you don't already have a list of reporters, editors, columnists, photo editors and producers who cover education, children and families, parenting, workplace, and feature stories in your media market, this is a good time to create one. United Ways sometimes have media guides that are available to community agencies for a nominal fee, and the public relations offices at community colleges are often willing to share their media lists with other education agencies.

To build your own media list, make a list of:

- Local TV and radio stations (including college and university-affiliated stations)
- Daily and weekly newspapers (including ethnic, community and other specialty papers)
- Wire services
- Magazines
- Websites with a local focus
- Newsletters and bulletins from interested community- and faith-based organizations.

Call and ask for the name and contact information (phone number, fax and email) of the editor, reporter, columnist or producer who covers education, children and families, parenting, workplace, and features. Media lists should be updated twice per year, as journalists tend to shift beats and jobs fairly often.

2. Invite the Public to Your Event

Once you've designed your event, use the media to encourage people to come. Send an announcement to everyone on your media list in the middle of September. Be sure to include your name and daytime phone number in case there are any questions.

3. Identify Your Key Messages

Develop key messages for your *Lights On Afterschool* rally. These messages should be integrated into all your media materials and be the focus of remarks by your spokespeople. If possible, narrow your key messages to three and keep them simple, clear and concise. The following is an example of messages; be sure to tailor yours to reflect what afterschool programs mean to your community and the unique challenges facing afterschool programs in your state.

DON'T FORGET

All tools and sample materials are available
for download at [afterschoolalliance.org/
loaMediaMain.cfm](http://afterschoolalliance.org/loaMediaMain.cfm)

- [Name of program] keeps kids safe and healthy, inspires students to learn, and helps working families. Children who come to our program every afternoon have a safe place to go, a range of fun and challenging activities, and supervision by adults who help them learn and stay out of trouble. Afterschool is key to kids' success.
- Afterschool programs need more resources and more support. Funding shortages are denying too many kids the opportunities that afterschool programs offer. Too many afterschool programs are being forced to cut back or even close because of budget cuts, or because they were unable to secure enough funding in the first place. We ask law makers, business and community leaders, parents, and others to do more to make afterschool available to every family that needs it.



4. Structure Your Event with Media in Mind

Some things to remember:

- The media—particularly television reporters and newspaper photographers—look for good visuals. Make sure your event has lots of color, action, and signs or banners with your program name and "*Lights On Afterschool*" prominently placed.
- Journalists need to file their stories during late afternoon hours, so plan the program or presentation portion of your *Lights On Afterschool* event as early in the day as possible. If your event goes from 3 to 5 p.m., for instance, hold the program at 3:15 or 3:30 p.m.
- Choose two or three spokespeople to speak. They might include your program director, a mayor or other prominent official who supports the afterschool program, or an articulate student who participates. Make sure the spokespeople know your key messages and are familiar with all aspects of your *Lights On Afterschool* event.
- Be sure you have parental permission for any students who will talk to journalists, on- or off-camera.
- Sign in reporters and identify them with badges or nametags of a specific color when they enter your event so everyone knows who they are. You might want to assign volunteers to stay with reporters, introduce them to people, explain activities and answer questions.

5. Appeal to the Press

A few days before your event email, mail or fax a media alert (see sample on page 55) to everyone on your media list. It serves as an invitation to reporters to cover the event. An alert is very basic and gives journalists information on who, what, where, when and why the event is important to the community. It is not a news release and need not include quotes or give great detail. A media alert should never exceed one page. If you have a wire service in your community (Associated Press, United Press International, Reuters or a local City News Service), fax a copy of the alert to the Daybook Editor there. She or he publishes a calendar of newsworthy events for other reporters to check each day.

The week of your event, update the media alert you sent the previous week by adding new speakers or more information about student activities, and email or fax it again first thing in the morning. Over the next few days call everyone on your media list to make sure they received your media alert and to ask if they (or someone from their media outlet) will be covering the event. If they are unable to make it, plan to email or fax them a news release (see step 6) during or immediately following the event. Many news outlets may be willing to write a story from a press release if they are unable to send a reporter. If you call a talk show producer, ask about booking your afterschool program director as a guest on a future show to discuss the benefits of afterschool and the harm that would come from budget cutbacks.

6. Issue a News Release



A few days before your event, write a news release. A news release is written like a news story, but has the advantage of being written from your point of view. It contains quotes from important people, background on your afterschool program and *Lights On Afterschool*, and features your key messages. It should not exceed two pages. It is essential that it list a contact person with daytime and evening (or cell) phone numbers. Because the news release will be distributed in the press kits (see step 7) at your event, it should be written in the past

tense. You should also fax it to journalists who do not come to your event.

7. Develop Press Kits

Assemble press kits to distribute at your event—enough for all the journalists you expect will come, and then a few extra. The kits can be assembled in plain folders with a label from your afterschool program on the cover or, if you want to be creative, have students decorate the covers and write “press kit” prominently under the drawing. The kits should contain:

- Your news release
- A one-page background sheet on your afterschool program
- A one-page fact sheet on afterschool programs with data added on your state or community
- Copies of speaker remarks

They may also contain:

- Letters from parents, volunteers or students describing why they support the program
- A proclamation from your mayor or governor declaring "*Lights On Afterschool Day*"
- Notable facts—for example, how has your program grown since inception, how many students are on your waiting list, the number of program volunteers, etc.
- A page describing your program's upcoming events

8. Manage Media at Your Event

At your event, set up a media sign-in table. It should be easily recognizable to reporters and be placed at the entrance to the room or area where your *Lights On Afterschool* event will take place. Assign a staff person or volunteer to the table throughout the event to assist journalists. Have a sign-in sheet with columns for: "name of reporter," "media outlet," "phone number" and "email." Each reporter who signs in should be given a press kit and verbal information about your rally. If something special is happening in half an hour, make sure to tell him/her. Give each reporter a badge or nametag to wear so everyone at the event can easily identify press people. Do not be surprised if journalists (photographers and camera crews in particular) "take over the room" briefly by setting up special lights for cameras, clipping their microphones to the podium or putting tape recorders on the podium. Be prepared to help them, as long as their needs do not disrupt your event.

9. Event Management

Don't let the story end on the day of your event. Make copies of any articles or broadcast stories about your *Lights On Afterschool* event that appear and circulate them to your board of directors, funders, parents, volunteers and policy makers at all levels. Assign people to monitor local TV news shows and tape any stories about your event. Keep those tapes to show at future fundraisers, orientations or meetings.

Stay in contact with reporters who attend your event or produce stories. Contact them in May or June to see if they'd be interested in doing an end-of-the-school-year follow-up on your afterschool program. Or have the students in your program create a thank you card to send the week after *Lights On Afterschool* in appreciation for a good story. You might even contact the reporter to see if he or she would host a group of kids from your program, so they can see what it's like to work in a newsroom. Maintaining that relationship after the event will help you the next time you are looking for publicity.

10. Celebrate!

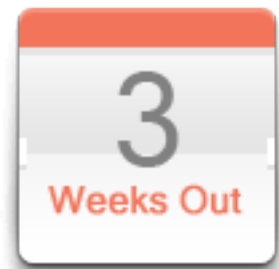
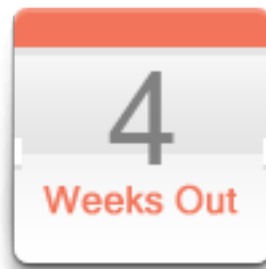
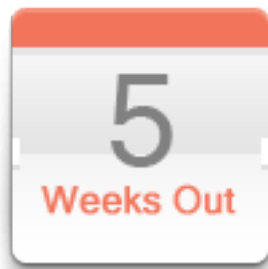
Be sure to collect clips from local newspapers in the days after your event. Then, relax. You mastered the fine art of media relations, and your afterschool program and the children you serve will benefit from your work. Congratulate yourself and your team on a job well done!

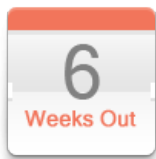
Lights On Afterschool

Media Timeline

In order to maximize media coverage of your *Lights On Afterschool* event, **it is wise to develop and follow a deliberate media outreach timeline.** In the same way that preparing a budget forces you to develop a management plan for your afterschool program, a media outreach timeline will force you to develop and—if you're committed to attracting attention—stick to a media plan.

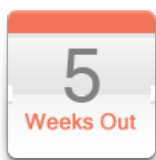
Following is a list of all the elements you may wish to include in your plan. Your plan will differ, of course, depending on how much outreach you are able to conduct and what outreach your event will support.





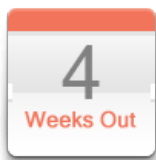
Six Weeks Before the Event

- Draft and send pitch letter to editorial page editor of the major daily newspaper requesting a meeting with the newspaper's editorial board. The one-page letter should briefly describe why the issue is important to readers, list the afterschool participants you would bring to the proposed meeting (no more than four), and specifically request a meeting in a given date range.
- Draft the script for a 60-second public service announcement (PSA) and distribute to local radio stations. It should promote *Lights On Afterschool* and should be written so that it can be read by the stations' on-air talent.
- Draft and distribute a short article promoting the event for the websites and newsletters of allied organizations.
- Draft and distribute a save-the-date announcement to be sent to newspaper calendar sections, as well as local television and radio calendar editors.



Five Weeks Before the Event

- Draft and distribute a pitch letter to local television and radio talk show producers, including public access, to arrange an appearance for your spokesperson the week of your event.
- Follow up pitch letter to editorial page editor with a phone call to "make sure the letter arrived" and to see if the editor has decided to meet with you.



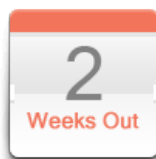
Four Weeks Before the Event

- Distribute editorial memorandum to newspapers with which you're not able to schedule editorial board meetings. This is a two-to-three-page memorandum to editorial writers making the case for an editorial about afterschool's importance to the community and calling for more funding from local, state and federal governments, as well as from business, foundations and others. You might want to collaborate with other afterschool providers in the area.
- Follow up pitch letter to radio and television (including cable access) talk shows with phone calls.
- Meet with your team to prepare for the editorial board meeting.



Three Weeks Before the Event

- Meet with editorial board of major local newspaper.



Two Weeks Before the Event

- Draft and submit an opinion column to the major local newspaper or to several community newspapers.



One Week Before the Event

- Draft and send unique letters to the editor of local newspapers.
- Distribute media alert telling reporters of the event.
- Begin radio and television interviews.
- Begin assembling components of the media kit for distribution on the day of the event. The kit should include:
 - a fact sheet about your program
 - a fact sheet about *Lights On Afterschool*
 - a fact sheet about afterschool programs
 - your news release about your event
 - a copy of any proclamations received
 - a brochure or other promotional material about your program
 - copies of prepared remarks by your speakers
 - information on how to enroll students in the program
 - a list of upcoming afterschool events if there are any
 - letters from parents, volunteers or students describing why they support the program



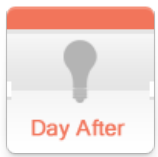
Two Days Before the Event

- Distribute updated media alert to arrive today. Update with new information about who will attend or speak and any other important last-minute changes.
- Call local media to pitch them on attending the event.



Day of Event

- Distribute news release and media kit in person to reporters who attend
- Distribute news release by fax or email to local reporters who do not attend



Day After the Event

- Send a letter to the editor of newspapers responding to their coverage, or lack of coverage, of *Lights On Afterschool*.
- Send a thank-you email to anyone who wrote or broadcast about the event.

Sample Materials, Fact Sheets and Promo Items Order Form

Sample Cover Letter to Send with Light Bulb Artwork	54
Light Bulb Artwork	55
Sample Media Alert	56
Sample News Release	57
Sample Radio Announcer Copy	61
Sample Event Invitation	62
Sample Newsletter Text	63
Sample Calendar Announcement	64
<i>Lights On Afterschool</i> Fact Sheet	65
Afterschool Fact Sheet	66
**Note: Adapt this fact sheet to create your own with community- or state-specific data by going to: www.afterschoolalliance.org/researchAmerica3PM.cfm	
Sample News Release for Partnering Organizations	68
<i>Lights On Afterschool</i> Order Form – Buttons, Awareness Bracelets and More!	69

Sample Cover Letter to Send with Light Bulb Artwork

[Insert Address - Visit <http://capwiz.com/afterschool/home/> to obtain your member's district office address. DO NOT SEND TO WASHINGTON, D.C., OFFICE]

Dear [Insert Member of Congress],

On October [Insert date of your *Lights On Afterschool* event], we celebrated *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide event recognizing the critical need for quality afterschool programs. We are enclosing light bulbs that were decorated by youth and families participating in our program. We hope that these light bulbs will serve as a reminder of the importance of afterschool programs like ours—programs that keep kids safe, inspire learning and help working families.

In addition to our local event, more than 9,000 programs participated in *Lights On Afterschool* this October—all seeking to illustrate the benefits of afterschool programs and the pressing need for additional programs. Unfortunately, 15 million children in this country have no safe, supervised place to go when the school day ends.

At [Insert name of afterschool program], we are a [Insert one-paragraph program description including details about sites, kids served, any evaluation findings, etc. Be sure to mention if you receive federal funding like 21st CCLC or CCDBG]

Afterschool programs are critical to our kids' development, and are necessary to help keep our communities safe and our kids safer, stronger and smarter. Please continue to 'help keep the lights on' after school and help us serve the children and families of [Insert City/Town Name].

Sincerely,

[Insert Name]
[Insert Organization]
[Insert Return Address]

Email Us Your LOA Photos (be sure to include program/event name, City & State on the subject line):

LightsOn@afterschoolalliance.org



@afterschool4all
#LightsOnAfterschool



www.facebook.com/
afterschoolalliancedc



Lights On
Afterschool
Support Afterschool Programs!



NAME:

PROGRAM:

www.afterschoolalliance.org

Also called Media Advisories or News Advisories, Media Alerts are one-page announcements of an upcoming event. They are designed not for the public, but for journalists. Their purpose is to inform reporters of an upcoming event and convince them that **this event is a genuine news story that is worthy of coverage.** Get inspired by looking at this media alert from an earlier *Lights On Afterschool* event. Send your alert to all journalists in your media market who might be interested in covering your event, and don't forget wire services (like Associated Press), which frequently produce "daybooks" of newsworthy events.

Some tips about media alerts:

- Media alerts are excellent tools to use to attract media to your afterschool events. If a newsmaker like your mayor, governor, state or federal senator, or Member of Congress is attending, make sure to emphasize it.
- Media alerts can be written in narrative form, like the example that follows. Or they can be written in bullet form, answering the questions: What, When, Where, Who and Why. Regardless of the format, a media alert must announce an upcoming event or press availability.
- A media alert should say when an event is, where it is, and what and whom reporters will find there. It should also offer a compelling reason for media to attend.

Sample Media Alert

(on your letterhead)
MEDIA ALERT

October XX, 20xx

Contact: [your program/rally contact]
[daytime phone number] (day)
[evening phone number] (eve)

[Your program name] to Hold *Lights On Afterschool* Rally October [XX]

7,500 Rallies Nationwide Aim to Make Afterschool Programs Available to All

The [your program name] afterschool program will sponsor a *Lights On Afterschool* rally on [date and time of event]. The rally will be one of more than 7,500 such events around the nation that day, *Lights On Afterschool*, organized by the Afterschool Alliance. Speakers in [your city/town] will call for expanding afterschool opportunities so that every child who needs a program has access to one, and discuss the harm that results from budget cuts and freezes to these programs. At the event, parents and supporters will sign a new petition that urges lawmakers not to deny or divert funding for afterschool programs.

Participants in the *Lights On Afterschool* rally include [list high-profile guests by name, like the mayor, city council members, local business leaders, educators and other officials]. The event will highlight three of the significant contributions that afterschool programs make to [your city/town/district]: keeping kids safe and healthy, inspiring them to learn, and relieving working parents of worries about their children's activities during the afternoon hours. Hundreds of parents, supporters and community members are expected to attend.

- What: [your program or city name] *Lights On Afterschool* Rally
- When: [date and time]
- Where: [location, address]
- Who: Mayor [your mayor's name], School Board Chair [your school board chair], local business leaders, parents and supporters of afterschool

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is Founding Chair of *Lights On Afterschool*, a position he has held since 2001.

[Amend the following section to the specifics of your program]

The [your program name] opened in [year opened] with a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant from the U.S. Department of Education. It now serves 250 children, providing homework assistance, mentoring, tutoring, and classes and clubs in sports, recreation, mathematics, chess, and dozens of other subjects. The program is a collaboration between the school system, YMCA, Museum of Arts and Sciences and three local colleges.

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children have access to quality afterschool programs. More information on *Lights On Afterschool* is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

#

Sample News Release

Adapt this sample news release for your own event. **Be sure to insert the latest data on afterschool supply and demand in your state** in the fifth paragraph, using data from the landmark America After 3PM study. For more inspiration view this news release written by an afterschool program from a past *Lights On Afterschool* event.

(on your letterhead)

NEWS RELEASE
October [XX], 20xx

Contact: [your program/rally contact]
[daytime phone number] (day)
[evening phone number] (eve)

[Your program name] *Lights On Afterschool* Rally Features Mayor, Business Leaders

[Your city] Children, Parents, Community Leaders Join the National Rally for Afterschool

[your city] – Hundreds of children, parents, business and community leaders came together today at a *Lights On Afterschool* rally at [location of event] to celebrate the achievements of afterschool students and draw attention to the need for more afterschool programs to serve the millions of children nationwide who are unsupervised and at risk each weekday afternoon. The gathering was one of 7,500 such events across the nation emphasizing the importance of keeping the lights on and the doors open for afterschool programs. Speakers at the rally warned that tight budgets are endangering afterschool programs here in [your city] and around the country, forcing many to cut back or even close their doors. As at other *Lights On Afterschool* rallies across the nation, [your city] supporters of afterschool signed a new petition that urges lawmakers not to deny or divert funding for afterschool programs.

[Add event specifics, similar to the following]: [your city] *Lights On Afterschool* participants saw students conduct scientific experiments and perform music, while [insert names of any leaders in attendance, such as your mayor, school officials, business leaders], parents and students discussed the importance of afterschool programs. More than one million Americans took part in the nationwide rally to support afterschool programs.

[Add here a quote from a notable participant, similar to the following]: “*Lights On Afterschool* celebrates the remarkable work being done by students who attend our afterschool programs,” [Name of notable] told the crowd. “It is a powerful reminder that afterschool programs keep children safe, inspire them to learn, and relieve working parents of worries about how their children spend their afternoons. Unfortunately, we don’t have enough afterschool programs, and too many kids are home alone in the afternoons or out on the streets where they can be exposed to crime or at-risk. We must open more programs and refuse to let tight budgets endanger the programs we have. I am personally committed to doing all I can to ensure that, in the very near future, every [your city] child who needs an afterschool program has one.”

In [your state], according to America After 3PM data released by the Afterschool Alliance in 2009, [click to find number for your state] percent of school-age children are in afterschool programs, while [click to find number for your state] percent are unsupervised in the afternoons and another [click to find number for your state] percent are in the care of brothers and sisters. According to the survey, the parents of [click to find number for your state] 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 www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM.cfm.

[Add specific quotes, names, similar to the following]: "We are all very proud of our afterschool students," said [your program director]. "There's no reason that learning should stop at 3 p.m., 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 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 woefully 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."

[Add specifics about your afterschool program, similar to the following]: The [you program] opened in 1999 with a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant from the U.S. Department of Education. It now serves 250 children, providing homework assistance, mentoring, tutoring, and classes and clubs in sports, recreation, mathematics, chess, and dozens of other subjects. The program is a collaboration of the school system, YMCA, Museum of Arts and Sciences and three local colleges.

Former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is the Founding Chair of *Lights On Afterschool*, a position he has held since 2001. *Lights On Afterschool* is organized by the Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children have access to quality afterschool programs. More information on the Afterschool Alliance and *Lights On Afterschool* is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

[Add a two-sentence description of your program with the url]

Sample Radio Announcer Copy

Take this public service announcement (PSA) to your radio stations and ask if they will read it on the air to **let the community know about your *Lights On Afterschool* event.** Edit the text as needed.

Afterschool Programs - Live Announcer Copy:

If you could give a child a safe place to go after school, would you? What about helping kids get better grades and go on to college? Or giving them time to explore new worlds and discover hidden talents?

You can help—we all can—by showing support for afterschool programs in [insert your town]. Attend a *Lights On Afterschool* event on October xx in your community.

In America today, 15 million children are alone after school. [Replace this national figure with data about your state from the America After 3 pm Study].

Help give them a place to go.

Go to afterschoolalliance.org to find a *Lights On Afterschool* event in your community. Even the Empire State Building is lighting up to call for more *Lights On Afterschool*. October xx. That's Thursday. Mark it down and look it up at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

A public service message from the Afterschool Alliance and this station.

Sample Invitation



NOTE: **Consider using photos from your program, past events or artwork by afterschool students.**

[FOR EMAIL] Subject: Come Celebrate
Lights On Afterschool Oct XX

You're invited to a celebration!!

Join [organization/program name] and the Afterschool Alliance to celebrate the importance of afterschool programs on [date].

Lights On Afterschool!

In communities today, 15.1 million children take care of themselves after the school day ends. Afterschool programs keep kids safe, help working families and inspire learning. Join us, along with 7,500+ afterschool programs nationwide, in celebrating our afterschool programs.

- Who: [Lucky Kids Afterschool Program]
- What: [An open house event with food, fun and entertainment]
- When: [Thursday, Oct. xx, 20xx – 3 pm until 5 pm]
- Where: [Johnson Elementary School, 1234 Main Street]
- Why: [Come and experience first hand what fantastic activities the Lucky Kids Afterschool program is providing the youth of Johnson Elementary. The children will showcase their talents for art, dance and reading by providing participants with an art show of recent projects completed in the afterschool program; provide a talent show featuring African dance and ballroom dance; and read original stories entitled "What Lucky Kids Has Done for Me".]
- RSVP: [If you want people to rsvp for the event, be sure to tell them how and by what deadline]
- [Lucky Kids] would like to thank the following for making this event a great success!

[Corner Pizza Store]
[ABC Party Supplies]

Sample Newsletter Text

Participate in *Lights On Afterschool!*
October xx, 20xx

Join more than 7,500 communities and 1 million Americans in celebrating afterschool programs at the Afterschool Alliance's *Lights On Afterschool!* This nationwide event calls attention to the importance of afterschool programs and the resources required to keep the lights on and the doors open. [Your organization] is proud to be a *Lights On Afterschool!* National Supporting Organization.

Too many children—15.1 million—are missing out on afterschool opportunities. Participate in *Lights On Afterschool!* and help call attention to this important issue.

To learn more about *Lights On Afterschool!*, register an event, access event planning tools, or to find out what's going on in your area on October xx, visit afterschoolalliance.org. Those who register will receive free *Lights On Afterschool!* posters to help promote their event, and their events will be promoted to media and the public by the Afterschool Alliance. *Lights On Afterschool!* is a project of the Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that all children have access to afterschool programs.



Sample Calendar Announcement

To promote your event, **send a calendar announcement to the calendar editor at print and broadcast outlets including newspaper calendar sections, local television, cable and radio calendar editors.** To identify the calendar editor, call the outlet and ask for her/his name and email address. If you are sending a hard copy of the announcement, you can just address the envelope to "Calendar Editor" at the outlet and mail it. Try to send your announcement a few weeks in advance of the event.

Oct. xx, 20xx

CONTACT: [Your Name]
[Your phone #]

Calendar Announcement:
Lights On Afterschool Rally, October xx
[Location]

On October xx, [Name of your program] will hold a science fair as part of *Lights On Afterschool*, a nationwide rally for afterschool programs that is expected to include some 7,500 events this year. In all, one million Americans are expected to join in events across the country to draw attention to the need for more afterschool programs. At the event, parents and supporters will sign a new petition that urges lawmakers not to deny or divert funding for afterschool programs.

[Name of program]'s *Lights On Afterschool* event will be at [location] at [time]. [Brief description of event and activities]. Special guests will include [mayor, school superintendent, local celebrity, etc]. [Name of program] currently serves [number] youth in [your community/the neighborhood], providing them a safe place to go after the school day ends.

[All community members] are invited to attend. For further information about the event, please contact [your name] at [your phone/email address]. For more information about *Lights On Afterschool* or about afterschool programs in general, visit www.afterschoolalliance.org.

Afterschool programs keep kids safe, help working families and inspire learning. According to data from the Afterschool Alliance, 15.1 million children are without adult supervision in the afternoon hours.

Lights On Afterschool

Fact Sheet

Lights On Afterschool is celebrated nationwide to call attention to the importance of afterschool programs for America's children, families and communities.

In America today 15.1 million children are alone and unsupervised after school. Afterschool programs keep kids safe, help working families and inspire learning. They provide opportunities to help young people develop into successful adults.

Lights On Afterschool was launched in October 2000 with celebrations in more than 1,200 communities nationwide. The event grew in 2001 to more than 3,600 events, and more than 9,000 in 2012. This October, more than 1 million Americans will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*!

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.

The Afterschool 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.

Afterschool Essentials: Research and Polling

The Afterschool Hours in America

More than 15 million school-age children (26 percent) are on their own after school. Among them, more than 1 million are in grades K-5. (Afterschool Alliance, 2009)

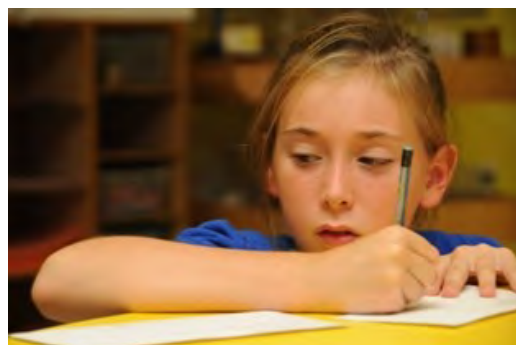
More than 27 million parents of school-age children are employed, including 23 million who work full time. (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012)

Only 8.4 million K-12 children (15 percent) participate in afterschool programs. An additional 18.5 million would participate if a quality program were available in their community. (Afterschool Alliance, 2009)

The hours between 3 and 6 p.m. are the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and sex. (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2003)

During the summer months, first time use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs peaks among kids 12 to 17. (SAMHSA, 2012)

Eight in 10 Americans want all children and teens to have some type of organized activity or safe place to go after school. (Afterschool Alliance & Lake Research Partners, 2008)



Afterschool Offers a Range of Benefits to Youth and their Families

Early childhood education expert James Heckman concludes that a complement of early education and participation in afterschool programs can reduce initiating drug use among youth by nearly 50 percent. (University of Chicago, 2006)

An analysis of 68 afterschool studies concluded that high quality afterschool programs can lead to improved attendance, behavior and coursework. Students participating in a high quality afterschool program went to school more, behaved better, received better grades and did better on tests compared to non-participating students. (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010)

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 are more likely to drink, smoke and engage in sexual activity. (YMCA of the USA, 2001)

Parents miss an average of five days of work per year due to a lack of afterschool care. Decreased worker productivity related to parental concerns about afterschool care costs businesses up to \$300 billion per year. (Catalyst & Brandeis University, 2006)

Afterschool Supports Student Success

The Promising Afterschool Programs Study found that regular participation in high-quality afterschool programs is linked to significant gains in standardized test scores and work habits as well as reductions in behavior problems among disadvantaged students. (University of California at Irvine, 2007)

Annual teacher-reported performance data from 21st CCLC grantees across the country demonstrate that students attending 21st CCLC programs raise their Math grades (37 percent) and English grades (38 percent), while also improving their homework completion and class participation (72 percent) and their behavior in class (67 percent). (Learning Point Associates, 2011)

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University concluded that two-thirds of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth results from unequal access to summer learning opportunities. (American Sociological Review, 2007)



Afterschool Programs Are Seen as Critical and In Demand

A 2011 NAA/Champions survey found that 82 percent of school superintendents from across the country agree that afterschool programs are important.

A 2008 Afterschool Alliance election eve poll revealed that 3 in 4 voters (76 percent) say afterschool programs are “an absolute necessity” for their community.

According to a 2004 Public Agenda survey, low-income and minority parents are much more likely than higher-income and white parents to say they have trouble finding high-quality, convenient and affordable activities for their children.

Eighty-three percent of National School Board Association members surveyed in 2003 asserted that it is essential or very important that afterschool programs are maintained in their district.

A 2012 Afterschool Alliance election eve poll found that 92 percent of working mothers believe that afterschool programs are “very important” given that kids in afterschool programs are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as criminal activity and drug or alcohol use.



Afterschool Meets a Variety of Needs

A 2010 Afterschool Alliance election eve poll found that more than half (52 percent) of likely voters agree that afterschool, before-school and summer learning programs are the best way to expand learning opportunities for students in order to help them do better in school, motivate them to stay on track and prepare them for the future. Comparatively, only 30 percent agreed that extending the school day was the best way to help the nation’s students.

Afterschool programs are serving a high need population. 2012 data from the American Institutes for Research revealed that an average of 73 percent of kids regularly participating in afterschool programs qualify for free/reduced price lunch and a 2006 report by Learning Point Associates found that 16 percent are Limited English Proficient and 8 percent have special needs/disabilities.

A 2007 study by the Black Alliance for Educational Options found that low-income and working class African-American parents express a strong need for afterschool programs and feel hopeful that these programs will improve their children’s life chances.

Funding is a Major Concern For Families and Programs

A 2012 Afterschool Alliance election eve poll found that more than three-quarters of Americans (76 percent) believe federal, state and local leaders should increase funding for afterschool programs given the current challenging economic environment.

According to a 2003 Fight Crime: Invest in Kids poll, 9 in 10 working mothers agree with the statement: “America could greatly reduce youth violence if Congress expanded prevention efforts like after-school programs.” Further, when asked which strategy would be more effective in reducing school and youth violence, 7 out of 10 mothers choose investments in afterschool programs over investments in security measures like metal detectors.

The Afterschool Alliance’s 2009 *Roadmap to Afterschool for All* reports that the federal government contributes only 11 percent of the cost of afterschool, while on average, parents pay more than three-quarters (76 percent) of afterschool costs through tuition and fees.



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Sample News Release for Partnering Organizations

[Partner Letterhead]

NEWS RELEASE
October XXX, 20xx

CONTACT: [Name]
[Phone]

[Organization] Joins *Lights On Afterschool*

[Youth/Family/Education Leader] Becomes a National Supporting Organization, Joining the Afterschool Alliance in Sponsoring Thousands of Afterschool Rallies on October xx

[Dateline] -- [Spokesperson] of [organization] today announced that the [organization] will partner with the Afterschool Alliance and dozens of other national organizations on October xx in organizing more than 9,000 rallies around the country in support of afterschool programs. *Lights On Afterschool* will be the largest nationwide rally for afterschool ever held.

"We are delighted to join these rallies, which are sending a powerful message about the urgent need for more afterschool programs," said [spokesperson]. "We've arrived at a critical juncture. The unmet need for afterschool programs is enormous, and funding is tight. Too many afterschool programs have been forced to cut back hours or services, or close entirely, because of inadequate budgets at the federal, state and local levels. With *Lights On Afterschool*, Americans are saying they want the lights on after school for our kids."

Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant welcomed [organization]'s support. "We're grateful to be partnering with [organization]. They have a proven track record of [providing afterschool services/supporting afterschool programs], and they make *Lights On Afterschool* even stronger. We share with [organization] the conviction that afterschool programs are essential because they inspire children to learn, keep them safe, and help working families. On October xx, we'll join together with thousands of other organizations and more than a million Americans in speaking out for afterschool programs."

Still, funding has not kept up with demand, and more than 15 million children are alone and supervised after the school days ends.

Lights On Afterschool was launched in October 2000 with celebrations in more than 1,200 communities nationwide. The event grew in 2001 to more than 3,600 events, and more than 7,500 in 2008. This October, more than one million Americans will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* across the United States and at military bases around the world.

[Add paragraph about what form your organization's partnership will take – how many events, affiliates, children served, etc.]

[Insert boilerplate description of your organization]

Lights On Afterschool is a project of the Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

Lights On Afterschool Promo Items

See the *Lights On Afterschool* **promotional items order form for some SWAG** to help kids, parents and the community get amped up about *Lights On Afterschool*.

Include these items in gift bags, leave on tables or give away as prizes to shine the light on your program and bring awareness to the great things your program is doing to keep kids safe, help academic success and inspire learning.

