



News Release

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The Lights Are On for Afterschool from Coast to Coast Today

With 8,000+ Events, the 26th Annual Rally for Afterschool Is Demonstrating the Many Ways America's Afterschool Programs Support Students, Families, Communities

Washington, D.C. – In Alabama, students and families are mixing pre-Halloween thrills with science skills at a spooky science lab with hands-on experiments, eerie activities, and hair-raising fun. In California, families will enjoy a Dia de los Muertos celebration to honor culture, community, and the power of afterschool programs with a book giveaway, food trucks, arts and crafts, and student performances. In D.C., guests will view afterschool classes focused on poetry, visual art, step, performance art, and public speaking. In Idaho, students are visiting an orchard to pick apples for a local food bank and taking a free bag of apples to their own families. In Massachusetts, middle- and high-school students will help younger children at a Read-a-Thon, and decorate paper light bulbs for a mural. In Tennessee, families are joining a festival and rally at the Cleveland Street Baptist Church with spoken-word poetry, performances by AfricaNashville dancers and drummers, and remarks from a state senator.

Those are just a few of the more than 8,000 events taking place for the 26th annual [Lights On Afterschool](#), organized again this year by the [Afterschool Alliance](#). A million people in every corner of the country are joining, to show their support for the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give working families peace of mind that their children are supervised and learning after the school day ends. Events are taking place at schools, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, 4-Hs, parks, museums, community centers, and other places.

Superstar USHER is Honorary Chair of *Lights On Afterschool* again this year.

“The *Lights On Afterschool* events around the country this year are remarkable, and they reflect the powerful work afterschool programs do to engage and educate students and help them succeed in school and in life,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “These programs give children and youth a safe place to connect and learn after the school day ends, boost their academic achievement, and help them engage with their communities. They provide homework help, mentors, healthy snacks and meals, exposure to STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and other skills, college and career prep, and more. They’re making a difference for youth mental health and chronic absenteeism and making it possible for parents to support their families. But three in four kids whose parents want afterschool programs for them are being left behind because their families cannot afford or access programs. We need more funding from government at all levels, businesses, and philanthropy to change that. Every child deserves access to a quality afterschool program.”

From Niagara Falls in upstate New York to the Frederick Douglass Bridge in Washington, D.C. to Caesars Superdome in New Orleans, and in many other places, buildings, bridges, and other [landmarks will be lit](#)

[in yellow and blue](#) for afterschool this week. [Clear Channel Outdoor is supporting *Lights On Afterschool*](#) by donating some of its most prominent space to display afterschool messages on digital billboards, transit shelters, and poster spaces in 25 markets around the country throughout October. On October 23, Clear Channel will feature afterschool messages on two jumbo billboards in New York City's Times Square and will illuminate Boston's South Street Station in honor of *Lights On Afterschool*.

STEM Next has curated [a list of free STEM resources and activities](#) for programs to use at their *Lights On Afterschool* events and beyond that give youth opportunities to build, invent, and explore. And STEM Superheroes is sparking excitement about energy careers for *Lights On Afterschool*, donating copies of "Everyday Superheroes: An Energy Coloring & Activity Book" to several afterschool programs. This interactive resource empowers afterschool kids to build, color, and doodle their way to discovering energy careers.

A sampling of *Lights On Afterschool* events this year:

Fort Wright, Kentucky: Julie Muehlenkamp, Partners for Change
Partners for Change is bringing community stakeholders, including legislators and school board members, on a *Lights On Afterschool* bus tour. They will visit Newport Intermediate School, Ludlow High School, and Covington High School. The tour will include testimonials and student success stories, and each school will showcase a different aspect of afterschool programming, including academic support, art, and STEM.

Omaha, Nebraska: Afterschool Ambassador Nicole Everingham, Collective for Youth
1,000 students, parents, and business and community leaders joined a *Lights On Afterschool* parade and exhibition at University of Nebraska Omaha's campus. Mayor John Ewing highlighted students, afterschool providers, businesses, and community groups that support afterschool programs. Students paraded to the Sapp Fieldhouse for interactive stations set up like the TV show "Survivor;" they included rock climbing, first aid and survival skills, skateboarding, pickleball, STEM activities, and archery.

Brooklyn, New York: Afterschool Ambassador Ghiles Jackson, After-School All-Stars
After-School All-Stars is hosting a red-carpet premiere of an original short film created by and about the students of Excel Upper School in Canarsie, Brooklyn. *Voices of Canarsie: Life After the Bell* is an inspiring film that captures the voices, experiences, and creativity of Excel Upper School's youth while highlighting the meaningful impact of its afterschool program through student stories, parent testimonials, and reflections from school leadership. Acclaimed actor and producer Marc John Jefferies is the keynote speaker.

Cleveland, Ohio: Daa'iyah Rahman, Open Doors Academy
Open Doors Academy is hosting an evening of conversation at the City Club of Cleveland to bring together thought leaders, educators, and decision-makers to highlight how afterschool programs unlock opportunity for youth, support working families, and strengthen communities. The conversation will include Ohio's Lt. Governor Jim Tressel, Mansfield City School Superintendent Stan Jefferson, and Open Doors Academy CEO Dorothy Moulthrop.

Columbia, South Carolina: Afterschool Ambassador Julius Scott, School District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties and Zelda Quiller Waymer, South Carolina Afterschool Alliance
Approximately 2,000 students, families, and afterschool programs came to Segra Park for the third annual South Carolina STEM Extravaganza in celebration of *Lights On Afterschool*. Students took part in

hands-on STEM activities, live demonstrations and interactive exhibits. Demonstrations included robotics, rocket launches, coding activities, and student-led projects.

Midvale, Utah: Dyana DelRio, Midvale Boys & Girls Club

The Midvale Boys & Girls Club is presenting “Cans of Chaos,” a haunted house event. Admission requires a donated can of food, and guests will experience the creativity and acting skills of the Club’s Torch Club and Keystone teen group, who have designed every scare, decorated every hallway, and worked to bring the “castle” to life. All cans will be donated to a local food pantry.

Clintwood, Virginia: Porchia Fletcher, Ridgeview Middle School

Lights On Afterschool! Carve a Brighter Future is a community event for middle and high school students and their families. Guests will explore booths including Virginia Career Works, Pine Mountain Music, Health Wagon, Kinship Navigator, and Dickenson County Department of Social Services. NARCAN training will be available. Student artwork will be showcased. Culinary arts students will provide homemade treats. Participants are encouraged to commit to stay vape- and tobacco-free.

Cody, Wyoming: Afterschool Ambassador Tiffany Wutzke, Youth Clubs of Park County

An open house is showcasing the activities and projects afterschool students have worked on this fall. CounterDrug is bringing its Hidden in Plain Sight mobile trailer for parents, teachers, and others to explore. The trailer educates parents about how to spot signs of substance use through an interactive escape room design and helps them have conversations with teens about substance abuse.

Lights On Afterschool this year comes as federal funding for afterschool is uncertain. A massive public outcry in July led the Trump Administration to release – rather than withhold – the FY2025 funds Congress had appropriated for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs. But the Administration has recommended defunding the program in this fiscal year; Congress has yet to finalize the FY2026 budget.

According to [a 2025 study commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance](#), the parents of 29.6 million children, more than half the school-age kids in the country, want afterschool programs for their children – but less than 7 million are currently enrolled. Another 22.6 million children would attend an afterschool program if it were available. That means three in four kids whose parents want afterschool programs for them (77%), including many in middle- and low-income families, are being left behind. Cost and accessibility are the barriers many families cannot overcome. It’s no wonder that 89% of parents favor public funding for these programs. Ninety-five percent of parents with children in afterschool programs are satisfied with the program their child attends.

This year’s [Lights On Afterschool poster](#), displayed at events all over the country, was designed by sixth grader Arya Bhatt. Her drawing features two students meditating in a garden with four heart-shaped flowers symbolizing core values that afterschool programs help students develop: honesty, caring, respect and responsibility. Bhatt drew from her experiences in the Raritan Valley YMCA afterschool program at Spotswood Elementary School in New Jersey to design the poster.

A large and powerful body of evidence demonstrates improvements in grades, school attendance, behavior, and more among children who participate in afterschool programs. Researchers have also found that students in afterschool programs are more engaged in school and excited about learning, and they develop work and life skills such as problem solving, teamwork, and communications.

A representative sample of [Lights On Afterschool events around the country is here](#). To find more events, see [this map](#).

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The Afterschool Alliance is 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.