



NEWS RELEASE
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Thirteen Years of Keeping the *Lights On Afterschool*

***One Million Parents, Educators, Students, Policy Makers and Others
Call on Congress Not to Deny or Divert Afterschool Funds***

More than one million people are gathering today at more than 8,000 sites across the country and at U.S. military bases worldwide to participate in the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. At *Lights On Afterschool* events, students are conducting science experiments, showcasing artwork, performing on stage, learning about healthy eating, participating in sports tournaments, sprucing up parks and nature trails, and sending the message that millions more children need quality afterschool programs. The rally, now in its 13th year, is organized by the Afterschool Alliance. For the sixth year in a row, the Empire State Building in New York City will be lit up this evening in honor of the event.

Uncertain Times, a survey of afterschool programs released recently by the Afterschool Alliance, revealed that programs across the country are struggling to keep their doors open. At this year's *Lights On Afterschool* events, communities will rally behind these programs and urge Members of Congress to increase federal afterschool funding and reject efforts to divert funds intended for afterschool programs.

For years, the federal investment in afterschool has lagged far behind the need. The *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (the chief federal funding stream for afterschool) in 2007, yet funding stands at less than half that today. Congress is currently considering legislation that would allow other programs to compete for already-limited 21st Century Community Learning Centers funds. Forty-six governors are issuing *Lights on Afterschool* proclamations today.

“Even as we gather to celebrate all that afterschool programs do to keep students safe, inspire them to learn and help working families, we are mindful that not only are there not enough programs, but also that many existing programs are in jeopardy,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “*Lights On Afterschool* provides a fantastic opportunity to celebrate these programs and to increase awareness about how important they are to our children, parents, schools and communities. Now more than ever, we need to safeguard afterschool funding. There are still more than 15 million kids who are unsupervised after school and that is 15 million too many. We need to make quality afterschool programs available to every child, instead of diverting or denying federal funds for these essential programs.”

Among the *Lights On Afterschool* events happening today are:

- THINK Together in **Azusa, California** is holding the Gladstone Olympics from 4:00 to 6:00 PM. Students and parents will participate in games and activities at this family-night themed celebration and enjoy healthy treats. Contact: Vanessa Vazquez, gladstone@thinktogether.org.
- The Boys & Girls Club of South Park in **Fairplay, Colorado** is hosting a “Family Fun Fiesta” that includes a build-your-own-taco bar and a piñata, games, skits and an open game from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. Contact: Emily March, emilymarch@bgcsp.com.
- Educational Resources for Children (ERfC) in **Enfield, Connecticut** is holding its *Lights On Afterschool* event at the Enfield Square Center Court. Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman will be the keynote speaker. Other speakers will include U.S. Representative Joe Courtney, State Senator John Kissel, Chair of North Central Connecticut United Way Karen Jarmoc, and Enfield Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey Schuman. State Representative David Kiner and Mayor Scott Kaupin will be Masters of Ceremony and recognize afterschool providers for their exemplary service. Contact: Claire Hall, cchall@erfc.us.
- The YLC Afterschool Program in **Hialeah, Florida** is hosting a family event from 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM for *Lights On Afterschool*. Parents and students will team up to compete in a “Family Feud”-style game about the importance of afterschool programs and the types of activities that the students participate in at their local afterschool program. Contact: Sharon Dziedzic, sdziedzic@hialeahfl.gov.
- The Chicago Youth Centers-Rebecca Crown Center in **Chicago, Illinois** is holding a Peace and Unity day to commemorate *Lights On Afterschool* from 4:00 to 6:00 PM. Afterschool students, parents and community members will participate in activities that encourage groups to work together. They will have the opportunity to design a peace button and describe how to best promote peace on the “Peace Graffiti Wall.” Contact: Eddie Wilson, eddie.wilson@chicagoyouthcenters.org.
- The Maryland Out of School Time Network, Maryland Hunger Solutions, Share our Strength, The Capital Area Food Bank in collaboration with Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Department of Parks and Recreation and the Vansville Community Center are hosting an open house in **Beltsville, Maryland** featuring the At Risk Afterschool Meals program, which helps children get the nutrition they need. At the event, from 2:00 to 5:00 PM, young people will demonstrate a variety of afterschool activities and how the At Risk Afterschool Meals Program works. Contact: Michael Raymor, mraymor@mdoutofschooltime.org
- Breakthrough Greater Boston in **Cambridge, Massachusetts** is sharing research highlighting the success of students who participate in afterschool programming at their *Lights On Afterschool* event, beginning at 4:00 PM. Students will showcase science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) activities, such as LEGO DNA, chemistry, chess, spoken word and architectural design. Contact: Rupal Jain, rjain@breakthroughcambridge.org.

- South Shore School in **Seattle, Washington** is holding a “*Lights On Afterschool: Celebrating Science & Technology!*” event from 4:30 to 7:30 PM. The EdLab Group, the Afterschool Alliance, School’s Out Washington, Kids Co., and the King County Youth Development Network will host the event, which will feature booths from Pacific Science Center, the Pacific Northwest Girls Collaborative Project, Puget Sound Off, Yakima Valley/Tri Cities MESA and others. Guests will enjoy bilingual (English-Spanish) interactive science exhibits and attend a ceremony honoring some of School’s Out Washington’s Hall of Fame award winners: Norm Rice, the Seattle Foundation, and Susan Dibble, Executive Director of Page Ahead. Contact: Vicky Raya, vraya@edlabgroup.org
- Work-Family Connection in **White House Station, Wyoming** is hosting Senator Tom Kean, Jr., who will share his favorite book and answer questions from children. His visit caps off a week of activities, including a visit from an environmentalist from the Arboretum who brought birds to the program and helped the children build birdhouses on October 15 and organize a food drive on October 17. On October 19, students will be encouraged to bring a friend who is not currently enrolled in the program to participate at no charge. Contact: Cindy Caporaso, milton@workfamily.org.

To find an event in your area, visit <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loaEvents2012.pdf>.

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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.