



NEWS RELEASE
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October 17 Will Mark 14th Annual *Lights On Afterschool!*

Nationwide Rally for Afterschool Will Bring Together Parents, Students, Educators, Policy Makers and Others

This October, more than a million people in thousands of communities nationwide and at military installations overseas will come together to celebrate the 14th annual *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool. They will attend science fairs, rallies, sports, performances and other events in schools, community centers, malls, parks, science museums, recreational centers, state capitols, and a variety of other settings to celebrate the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families.

The event is organized by the Afterschool Alliance to draw attention to the need to invest in afterschool programs, which benefit students by offering them opportunities to learn new things – such as robotics, Tae Kwon Do and art – and discover new skills. 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.

According a study conducted by the Afterschool Alliance in 2012, nearly two in five afterschool programs (39 percent) report that their budgets are in worse shape today than at the height of the recession in 2008, and more than three in five (62 percent) report that their funding is down “a little or a lot” from three years ago.

“Now, more than ever, we need to ensure that we keep the doors to afterschool programs open for our kids and our communities,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Afterschool programs around the country are facing cuts, due to a lagging economy, federal sequesters, and competition for a shrinking pot of much needed funding. Lights on Afterschool is a terrific opportunity to remind our local and national leaders about the value of afterschool programs. Afterschool programs are structured to accommodate working parents’ schedules and give students an opportunity to learn through hands-on, creative, engaging activities that are both fun and educational. They can be the key to unlocking children’s hidden skills and aptitudes.”

Last year, more than a million people participated in more than 8,000 *Lights On Afterschool* events. Organizers expect the same level of participation this year. The events give youth a chance to showcase the skills they learn and talents they develop at their afterschool programs, and to send the message that millions more kids need quality afterschool programs.

A steady stream of afterschool evaluations reveals gains in academic achievement among children in these programs, as well as gains in safety, discipline, attendance and avoiding risky behaviors. In addition, researchers have found that afterschool programs encourage increased parental involvement, an important building block for student success. More than 15 million school-age children – more than one in four kids in the United States – are unsupervised after the school day ends. The parents of 18 million children say they would enroll their kids in afterschool programs – if programs were available.

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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.