



NEWS RELEASE

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Elmhurst Ninth Grader Wins National Art Contest

*Queens School of Inquiry's Sarah Ramírez Designed This Year's
Lights On Afterschool Poster*



South Asian Youth Action (SAYA) afterschool program participant Sarah Ramírez designed the winning artwork for this year's *Lights On Afterschool* rally. The design will be printed on 50,000 posters and displayed at thousands of *Lights On Afterschool* events held in every state on and around October 22. The Elmhurst ninth grader's design features illuminated hands on a desk surrounded by art supplies, crafts, and a basketball, shining a light on the diverse range of activities students pursue in afterschool programs.

Lights On Afterschool is the only national rally for afterschool programs. Now in its 27th year, it is organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#) to celebrate the impact afterschool programs have on children,

families, and communities, and to highlight the need for more investment in afterschool. Some 8,000 *Lights On Afterschool* events will take place across the country at schools, parks, community centers, museums, 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, and other venues. Usher is the honorary chair of *Lights On Afterschool* for the third consecutive year.

Ramírez, a ninth grader at Queens School of Inquiry, drew from their experiences in the SAYA afterschool program to create their winning design. SAYA is a youth development organization

providing holistic, impactful, year-round programming to underserved New York City youth. Ramírez first joined the program's art club as a sixth grader and is now in their third year as a participant. They are currently part of SAYA's ARISE program, which teaches young people to become advocates for their communities.

"My afterschool program serves as a vital third space for teens, providing food, technology and games, books, art supplies, and more," Ramírez said. "Spaces like these are critical for young people to grow and thrive, ensuring we have access to every opportunity available to learn about ourselves and express our interests. I wanted to highlight those opportunities in my *Lights On Afterschool* poster design. My teachers and mentors at SAYA have truly helped me grow as an artist, and I'm proud to use those skills to send the message that every student should have access to a quality afterschool program."

"Sarah's design skillfully illustrates the power of afterschool programs to unlock students' potential," SAYA Senior Director of Programs Griselda Estevez said. "At SAYA, we work every day to help students find their voices and grow into leaders, and we are incredibly proud of Sarah's accomplishment. Our whole SAYA community is thrilled that their powerful work will be showcased in communities all over the country as the nation comes together to call for more investment for afterschool programs. No student should be without a safe, supportive place to explore their interests and connect with mentors and peers when the school day ends."

"Sarah's fantastic artwork shines a powerful light on the myriad of opportunities for hands-on exploration that afterschool programs provide. Those opportunities will be on full display at thousands of *Lights On Afterschool* events this October," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and give working parents peace of mind. Demand for these programs is enormous, but because we haven't invested nearly enough in afterschool, millions of students are missing out. That's why it's so critical to celebrate all the ways afterschool programs support students and communities, and rally for more support, so every student can access a quality program."

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.

Clear Channel Outdoor is a proud supporter of *Lights On Afterschool 2026*.

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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.