



News Release

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Superstar USHER Is Honorary Chair of *Lights On Afterschool* 2026

*A Million People Will Join 8,000 Local Events
When Country Rallies for Afterschool on October 22*

Washington, DC – Eight-time Grammy winning singer and performer USHER is supporting the drive to increase access to afterschool programs by serving as Honorary Chair of *Lights On Afterschool* this year. It is the third consecutive year he has served in that role. Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, [Lights On Afterschool](#) is the nation's only national rally for afterschool programs. Now in its 27th year, it will feature events in cities and towns across the country, all designed to shine a spotlight on the critical role afterschool programs play in preparing students to succeed in school and in life – and the need for more resources for these programs.

This year, [Usher's New Look](#) created a Spark Lab Studio at the [Michigan Central Boys & Girls Club](#) in Detroit to give youth high-production, hands-on work experience with industry experts. A 10th grader at that Club used the Spark Lab Studio to create the artwork that [Clear Channel Outdoor](#) will feature on nearly 2,000 *Lights On Afterschool* digital billboards across the country throughout October. Usher's New Look is a non-profit he founded in 1999, along with his mother, Jonetta Patton, which works to improve the lives of children and adolescents in underserved communities.

Bridges, monuments, buildings, and other landmarks across the country will be lit in yellow and blue for *Lights On Afterschool* on October 22, as more than 1 million people gather at schools, parks, community centers, museums, 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, and other venues to celebrate the many ways afterschool programs help children, youth and families. *Lights On Afterschool* events will feature student performances, science project displays, academic contests, family fun nights, student art shows, visits by lawmakers, community service activities, sporting competitions, and much more.

USHER credits his childhood experience at an afterschool program in Tennessee with helping him find the spark that ignited his wildly successful career. "My afterschool experience at the Boys & Girls Clubs in Chattanooga, Tennessee is where I found my spark for music – a passion that became my career," USHER said. "That experience is where I found my purpose, which motivated me to start USHER's New Look, an afterschool program that has been empowering youth for more than 25 years. Every child should have a place that sparks their interests and helps them find their

passions and purpose. As Honorary Chair of *Lights On Afterschool* again this year, I hope my voice can help drive home the need to close the gap for the millions of children and youth who are without afterschool programs.”

“We are thrilled to have USHER serving as honorary chair of *Lights On Afterschool* again this year,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “His support for afterschool programs is deep, unwavering, and truly inspiring. We are incredibly grateful that he is using his platform to help bring attention to the thousands of *Lights On Afterschool* events that will showcase the skills students gain and the talents they develop in their afterschool programs – and the unfortunate fact that millions of children are missing out. With USHER’s help, we will send the message that every child deserves access to a quality afterschool program.”

Afterschool programs provide homework help and other academic support, healthy snacks and meals, sports and fitness activities, computer programming, robotics, job and college readiness, art, dance and music, opportunities to think critically and collaborate, and much more.

Lights On Afterschool this year comes as [alarming new data](#) show vast unmet need for these programs. The parents of 29.6 million children want afterschool programs for them – but less than 7 million are enrolled. Cost and accessibility are the barriers many families cannot overcome. Ninety-five percent of parents with children in afterschool programs are satisfied with the program their child attends; and nearly nine in ten parents (89%) favor public funding for these programs.

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* this year.

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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.