



NEWS RELEASE
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Year of Science in Afterschool Celebrated at Rallies Nationwide

***Lights On Afterschool* Events Feature Robotics Competitions, Chemistry Experiments and Opening of a New Center for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Activities**

Afterschool programs provide unique opportunities for students to gain an appreciation and understanding of the sciences through valuable hands-on learning experiences. In recognition of that, the Afterschool Alliance, National AfterSchool Association and National Summer Learning Association proclaimed 2011 The Year of Science in Afterschool, and this year, many of the *Lights On Afterschool* events are showcasing the science skills their students have mastered. Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, *Lights On Afterschool* is the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs.

“Increasingly, experts are pointing to STEM – science, technology, engineering and math – education as a crucial element in equipping young people to compete globally, and afterschool programs are stepping up to the plate,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “As we celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* for the 12th year, we are proud to see so many programs taking this opportunity to show their communities how afterschool programs are helping young people learn – and learn to love – STEM.”

More than a million people across the country and at military bases overseas are expected to participate in more than 7,500 *Lights On Afterschool* events this year. Among them will be participants in events at:

Peterson Air Force Base Youth Center at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado where students will conduct science experiments, including cauldron bubbles, “flubber” and putty. For more information, contact Victoria Reid, 719-556-7220

Next Steps Youth Entrepreneur Program in Atlanta, Georgia for the grand opening of the program’s Atwood Community Gardens site, a new science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) outdoor garden and training facility. For more information, contact Dana Harris, 678-570-0398.

Safe Harbour/Michigan City Area Schools in Michigan City, Indiana, where students will lead science demonstrations, including a lego robotics competition. For more information, contact Herb Higgin, 219-873-2026.

Project PASS in Camdenton, Missouri which will host a science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) luncheon for afterschool providers and youth at which students in the afterschool robotics and master naturalist classes will lead a youth forum. For more information, contact Sherry Comer, 573-346-9233

In September, the Afterschool Alliance [released a new report](#) assessing the impact of STEM learning in afterschool programs. “STEM Learning in Afterschool: An Analysis of Impact and Outcomes” found that the nation’s urgent need for students to learn science, technology, engineering and math skills can get a significant boost from afterschool programs. The report is available [here](#).

For information about other *Lights On Afterschool* rallies planned across the country, visit <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loaFindEvent.cfm>.

The children, parents, grandparents, educators, community leaders, policy makers, celebrities and others expected to participate in the 12th annual *Lights On Afterschool* will be urging Congress not to divert or deny federal funding for afterschool. 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 the already limited 21st Century Community Learning Centers funds.

During *Lights On Afterschool* this year, the Afterschool Alliance, in conjunction with jcpenny, will release 50 state progress reports that examine how each state is helping keep the lights on for kids and families after school. The progress reports review state policies, funding and other activities that affect afterschool programs, examine the need in each state for these programs, offer tips to parents seeking afterschool programs for their children and suggest ways that all state residents can support afterschool.

A significant body of research demonstrates that students who attend 21st CCLC afterschool programs regularly are more likely to improve their grades, tests scores and overall academic behavior. 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.

For the fifth year in a row, the Empire State Building will be bathed in yellow light in support of the nationwide rally. This year, the Afterschool Alliance and jcpenny are holding a contest to encourage officials in other cities, towns and villages across the country to “Light Up a Landmark” as part of their *Lights On Afterschool* events.

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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.