



NEWS RELEASE  
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## **Nationwide Rally for Afterschool Shines a Light on Importance of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math**

### ***Lights On Afterschool Events Showcase Ways Programs Teach Math and Sciences***

Afterschool programs nationwide are getting children and youth excited about science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). By providing opportunities for hands-on experiences building LEGO DNA, programming computers, conducting science experiments, creating sturdy structures and more, afterschool programs are engaging children in the sciences and math and helping them obtain the skills they need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace.

“Afterschool programs are instrumental in preparing students in science, technology, engineering and math and are doing so in a way that makes learning come alive,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “As we celebrate the 13th year of Lights On Afterschool, we are pleased to showcase these quality programs and we applaud them for increasing students’ interest in and enthusiasm for STEM fields.”

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 the events that will highlight the ways afterschool programs teach STEM skills are:

**Chandler Unified School District, Arizona** which will hold an open house at which students will showcase the STEM and life skills activities they are learning through Kids Express.

**Science Night in Stockton Springs, Maine** where students from five different afterschool program sites and local 4-H clubs will display their science experiments alongside information stations. Tony Sohns, the “Bug Man,” will introduce families to an amazing world of insects, amphibians, reptiles and arachnids through an interactive presentation.

**Breakthrough Greater Boston in Cambridge, Massachusetts** where students will demonstrate a variety of activities they participate in, such as: LEGO DNA, chemistry, chess, spoken word and architectural design.

**The Ohio Afterschool Network and COSI (the Center of Science and Industry) in Columbus, Ohio** at the Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC) conference in Columbus where afterschool students from local COSI partner Godman Guild will showcase

STEM learning activities for conference participants. COSI's President and Chief Executive Officer David Chesebrough will discuss the importance of information science education; ASTC CEO Bud Rock will make the connection between afterschool and youth development. Afterschool Alliance STEM Policy Director Anita Krishnamurthi will attend and at the end of the program there will be a tree planting and dedication.

**Boys & Girls Club, Norwood Unit in Hulbert, Oklahoma** where activities will include reading with parents, math games, physical activities, SmartBoard, art, and Club TECH centers for parents and children to rotate through.

**Elementary Science Night in Panguitch, Utah** where students will conduct hands-on experiments, and the school Parent Teacher Organization, area Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts and local high school clubs will staff booths where they will showcase their afterschool offerings.

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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 for programs. In 2007, the No Child Left Behind Act authorized \$2.5 billion for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the chief federal funding stream for afterschool. Yet federal funding stands at less than half that today. Congress is currently considering legislation that would allow afterschool funds to be directed to other uses.

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

According to *Uncertain Times*, 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.

A significant body of research demonstrates that students who attend 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

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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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*