



NEWS RELEASE
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Hundreds of *Lights On Afterschool* Events Across the Country This Month Will Promote Healthy Eating and Lifestyles

New Report from the Food Research & Action Center Finds Gains in Afterschool Supper Participation and Identifies Strategies to Reach Even More Children

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Over the next few weeks, [Lights On Afterschool](#) events will be held at schools, community centers, public parks, recreation centers, shopping malls, state capitols and other venues to demonstrate the many ways afterschool programs keep kids safe and healthy, inspire them to learn and give parents peace of mind that their children are safe, supervised and learning after the school day ends. Organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#), this year's *Lights On Afterschool* is set for October 25th. It will include more than 8,000 events across the country and at U.S. military bases worldwide. A million people are expected to participate in the 19th annual nationwide rally for afterschool.

Lights On Afterschool is being held as the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) releases a powerful new study that finds significant gains in afterschool supper participation. More than 1.2 million low-income children benefited from afterschool suppers on an average weekday in October 2017, it concludes – an increase of 11 percent from the previous year. But despite the increase, [Afterschool Suppers: A Snapshot of Participation](#) finds that just one child received an afterschool supper for every 19 low-income children who participated in the National School Lunch Program that month. The FRAC report identifies the shortage of afterschool programs as a barrier to greater engagement in the federal suppers program, since demand for quality afterschool programming far outstrips supply.

“Afterschool programs do a tremendous amount to support children academically, as well as to address challenges like hunger and food insecurity that their families may face,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “If we increase our investment in afterschool programs that are based in low-income communities, participation in the afterschool suppers program will grow and fewer children in this country will be hungry.”

“The healthy habits afterschool programs instill in children and youth can last a lifetime,” Grant continued. “This week and throughout October, *Lights On Afterschool* events are showcasing how afterschool programs promote health and wellness, from serving nutritious snacks and meals to inspiring students to move and get fit.” Many programs have implemented the National AfterSchool Association’s Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Standards, which provide

evidence-based, healthy eating and physical activity (HEPA) standards that foster the best possible nutrition and physical activity outcomes for kids attending out-of-school time programs.

Many of this year's *Lights On Afterschool* events will shine a spotlight on the many ways afterschool programs teach healthy eating and offer opportunities for students to get and stay active. Among the health-focused events being planned for this year's *Lights On Afterschool*:

Sacramento, California: The Peter Burnett Elementary ASES afterschool program will host a health and wellness celebration on October 25th for *Lights On Afterschool*. The event will feature an obstacle course, a smoothie stand, and a photo booth. As many as 90 children and their families are expected.

Visalia, California: On October 25th, the Future Unique Enthusiastic Leaders (FUEL) Expanded Learning Program will host its 2nd annual *Lights On Afterschool* Color Run. The event will feature an opening ceremony led by the FUEL afterschool student leadership team. Afterward, students will participate in a color run. Once each student has completed the run, she or he will join a powder throw. Some 200 people are expected.

Kanehoe Bay, Hawaii: The Marine Corps Community Services Kulia Youth Center afterschool program will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* on October 25th. The Provost Marshall's Office will provide a presentation on Halloween safety, and a dance teacher will lead students in a Zumba exercise class. Healthy snacks will be served.

Covington, Kentucky: On October 25th, the Ninth District Elementary School Family Resource Center will host a health fair for *Lights On Afterschool*. Community partners will promote healthy living for students and their families. The FreeStore Food Bank will coordinate a "Produce Pop Up" with a truck with free fruits and vegetables. Students will participate in jump rope, hula hoops, balance beams, tennis ball tosses, line dancing, Zumba and more. Families will receive healthy recipe cards and free samples. Nursing students from Northern Kentucky University and school district nurses will provide health screenings, including height and weight measurements, body mass index (BMI) calculations, and blood pressure readings. Generation Rx will provide information on safe medication practices and Quit for Good Covington will provide information on smoking cessation. Some 100 families are expected.

Natick, Massachusetts: To celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*, the Natick Recreation and Parks Teen Center will host a field day on October 25th. The event will feature an open gym, yard games, field sports, Flamenco dance instruction and a tie-dye activity. Members of the Natick community services and police departments may attend.

Brooklyn Park, Minnesota: North View Middle School Afterschool Programs will host a Glow-in-the-Dark Dodgeball game on October 24th for *Lights On Afterschool*. Each student will decorate a shirt to play dodgeball in, using glow-in-the-dark markers. Parents and instructors will also participate. The activity will take place at North View Middle School. Approximately 150 people may attend.

Marlborough, New Hampshire: On October 26th, the Project Edventure Marlborough Afterschool and Summer Program will host a Fall Festival to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*. There will be activities for students, including STEM challenges, minute-to-win-it games, a zombie run, and more. The Fall Festival is held at Marlborough Elementary School. Approximately 250 people are expected.

Rochester, New Hampshire: The Rochester Child Care Center will hold eight *Lights On Afterschool* celebrations at different sites on October 25th. Events will include a Halloween Party, a Mindfulness Party, an open house, a Kindness Center, and a yoga event. The Mindfulness Party will showcase a “mindful minute,” zones of regulation, and sensory bottle crafts. The yoga event will feature the community yoga studio, which works with students in the afterschool program. More than 50 people are expected.

Stokesdale, North Carolina: On October 25th, the Operation Xcel afterschool program will host a *Lights On Afterschool* celebration in partnership with the Cooperative Extension North Carolina A&T Try Healthy program. Parents, students and community members will discuss how to make healthy eating choices, make a healthy snack dip and nutritious smoothies, and complete an art activity. Stokesdale’s mayor, North Carolina A&T University Chancellor Harold Martin Sr., and North Carolina State Representative Amos Quick may attend.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: The Pittsburgh Housing Opportunities Unlimited Youth Enrichment Program will host a Fall Festival for *Lights On Afterschool* on October 25th. There will be corn hole games, pumpkin painting, lawn games, and a Zumba fitness class. In addition, community partners including Future Makers/ School2Career, the Story Mobile, and the Corner Community Center will host tables. Some 70 people are expected.

The [America After 3PM](#) household survey of more than 30,000 families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, found that participation in afterschool programs has increased to 10.2 million students nationwide, up from 6.5 million in 2004. But the unmet demand for afterschool programs has increased as well. Today, for every child in an afterschool program, there are two more whose parents say they would participate, if a program were available. Unmet demand is especially high in rural communities and communities of concentrated poverty. One in five students in the country is unsupervised after the school day ends.

Governments, parents, philanthropies, businesses and others support afterschool programs, but investments are frequently under threat. Two years in a row, President Trump has proposed a budget that would have eliminated federal funding for afterschool and summer learning programs. While Congress has rejected the call to eliminate afterschool funding and included modest increases in FY2018 and FY2019, threats of cuts continue to loom.

The New York skyline will again shine for afterschool on October 25th when, for the 12th consecutive year, the iconic Empire State Building is lit up in yellow and blue for afterschool.

[Peachjar](#) helps afterschool programs connect with families and is a generous sponsor of *Lights On Afterschool* this year.

KIND snacks joined forces with the Afterschool Alliance and Nickelodeon's Worldwide Day of Play to support *Lights On Afterschool* this year by feeding healthy appetites. KIND has provided more than 400,000 KIND Kids™ bars as complimentary snacks for guests at *Lights On Afterschool* events around the country.

Among the more than 200 diverse national, state and local *Lights On Afterschool 2018* partners are 4-H Afterschool, After-School All-Stars, Association for Science-Technology Centers, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, Camp Fire, Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), Girls Inc., National Association of Police Athletics/Activities Leagues (PAL), National League of Cities, National Recreation & Park Association, Think Together, the YMCA of the USA and others.

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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.