



NEWS RELEASE

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***Lights On Afterschool* Events Across Country This Month Will Showcase the Fun, Creative Ways Afterschool Programs Engage Students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math**

A neon jump rope contest. Entomology displays. Bench building. Virtual reality simulations. 3-D printing. Interviews with a vampire bat. These are some of the educational, fun STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) activities taking place at [Lights On Afterschool](#) events across the nation this month as the only national rally for afterschool programs celebrates its 20th anniversary. More than a million people are expected to participate at more than 8,000 *Lights On Afterschool* events, which are organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#). Many will be held on Thursday, October 24th.

“Afterschool programs are an ideal place to engage students of all ages in hands-on STEM learning,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “They can study how airplanes fly, why grass grows, and how pollution affects our environment while having fun and gaining skills that prepare them for jobs. We’re delighted that so many *Lights On Afterschool* events are showcasing the ways afterschool programs engage children and youth in STEM activities again this year. Quality afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help give working parents peace of mind that their children are safe and learning during the sometimes-perilous hours after the school day ends and before parents get home from work.”

At *Lights On Afterschool* events across the country, afterschool students will use computer science to create games, solve problems and engage with topics they’re passionate about as part of the **4-H 2019 National Youth Science Day** challenge, Game Changers. Designed by Google and West Virginia Extension Service, Game Changers uses physical activity and puzzles to teach kids important computer science concepts and problem-solving skills, creating real-world connections between computer science and civic engagement, healthy living and agriculture.

Additional STEM-focused activities to be featured at *Lights On Afterschool* events around the country include:

Tallahassee, Florida: In collaboration with Boys & Girls Clubs of the Big Bend, STEMS4Girls will host a STEM Expo for *Lights On Afterschool*. Community partners will engage students, parents, and community members with STEM activities and demonstrations. The National Magnetic Lab will facilitate hands-on activities, the Tallahassee Community College STEM Center will provide a robotics demonstration, the FAMU 4-H AgriSTEM Team will host an entomology display, and Youth Services at Leon County Main Library will showcase a telescope. The City of Tallahassee Community Redevelopment Agency provided funding for the Expo and Publix, Sam’s Club and Lucky’s Market donated to the event.

Dawson, Georgia: Positive Directions Youth Center will hold a carnival for *Lights On Afterschool*. Parents and community members will enjoy food and games and learn about what students in the afterschool program have been working on. Students will display posters explaining various STEM activities they've completed, and the robotics team will showcase its work. Local policymakers are expected to attend.

Chicago, Illinois: BUILD, Inc. will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* with events at all four of its afterschool sites, as well as its headquarters. Each event will feature hands-on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) activities. Students will build neon necklaces and bracelets; participate in a neon jump rope contest; draw, paint and sculpt; build a bench from scratch and present it to their school; build cars and rockets; and more. More than 250 students, parents and community members are expected.

Lovington, New Mexico: Organized by Afterschool Ambassador Melinda Franco, Lovington Youth Center will host a STEM-themed open house. Community organizations will set up booths and present information along with a STEM activity to engage families. The Lovington Youth Center will invite guests to its state-of-the-art STEAM lab and invite families to use the 3D printer, tinker with the Makey Makey, and learn the basics of flying a drone. Lovington's mayor and police chief will be among the speakers who discuss the importance of afterschool programs at the event.

Greenville, Texas: Organized by Afterschool Ambassador Johanna Friedel, the Greenville Independent School District Afterschool Center of Education program's *Lights On Afterschool* event will include a rally at the Hunt County Courthouse, seven open houses, and a "Lights! Flight! And Fright!" event featuring all things STEM. The 50-minute guided tour of the afterschool STEM building will feature augmented reality, electrical engineering, a botany exhibit, math games with life-sized iPods, a robotic black light obstacle course, a cinematography studio featuring an interview with a vampire bat, a mad science center with exploding materials, and a homemade planetarium highlighting the autumn sky. Greenville Mayor David Drieling, Police Chief Ramon Rodriguez, elected officials, parents and students will be among those who speak at the event.

South Salt Lake City, Utah: Promise South Salt Lake will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* by holding a grand opening for its state-of-the-art Best Buy Teen Tech Center, in addition to an open house for its longest-standing community program, the Hser Ner Moo Community and Welcome Center, run by Afterschool Ambassador Kaylee Milliner. Mayor Cherie Wood will make remarks and issue a special proclamation about afterschool, followed by a speech from the director of Promise South Salt Lake. Activities will include 3-D printing, demos of the recording studio, virtual reality simulations, green screen photography and much more. This is one of 13 events Promise will host for *Lights On Afterschool* in the City of South Salt Lake.

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 – but the unmet demand is great. For every child in an afterschool program today, two more are waiting to get in. Unmet demand is especially high in rural communities and communities of concentrated poverty. One in five students in the United States is unsupervised after the school day ends.

Governments, parents, philanthropies, businesses and others support afterschool programs, but investments are frequently under threat. For the third year in a row, the Trump administration recommended eliminating federal funding for afterschool and summer learning programs. While Congress has rejected the call to eliminate afterschool funding, any cuts would mean that these essential programs are available to fewer students, more children and youth are unsupervised after the school day ends, and more working parents are without the assurance that their children are safe and supervised until they return from their jobs.

The New York skyline will again shine for afterschool on October 24th when, for the 13th consecutive year, the iconic Empire State Building is lit up in yellow and blue for afterschool. [Wonderopolis](#) has joined the celebration for the 20th Lights On Afterschool and in a recent [Wonder of the Day](#), explored the history of the Empire State Building and discovered the number of lights it takes to illuminate the tower and how the colors will change to shine for afterschool on October 24th. Afterschool supporters also will light up landmarks and buildings around the country to show their support for afterschool programs.

On October 16, a new report from the more than 5,000 sheriffs, police chiefs, and prosecutors of the organization Fight Crime: Invest in Kids will spotlight abundant, powerful research documenting positive outcomes for children and teens who participate in high quality afterschool programs. The report, being released in conjunction with *Lights On Afterschool*, shows that the hours immediately following school remain the “prime time for juvenile crime,” which is why afterschool programs are proving to be one of the nation's best crime prevention strategies and an effective way to guide young people toward success in school and readiness for productive careers.

Nickelodeon and KIND are generous sponsors 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.