



NEWS RELEASE  
October 8, 2019

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## **20 Years of Fun and Learning After the School Day Ends: SpongeBob SquarePants and *Lights On Afterschool* Celebrate Two Decades Helping Kids**

The Afterschool Alliance and Nickelodeon are joining together to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Lights On Afterschool* and SpongeBob SquarePants' 20<sup>th</sup> year on the air. Organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#), [Lights On Afterschool](#) is the only national rally for afterschool programs. More than a million people are expected to participate at more than 8,000 events across the United States and at U.S. military bases worldwide this year. Many of these open houses, science fairs, fun runs, student showcases, academic contests, community service activities, sports competitions, and other events will be held on Thursday, October 24<sup>th</sup>.

To help youth celebrate, Nickelodeon has contributed special [SpongeBob art activities](#) that afterschool programs around the country will use at their *Lights On Afterschool* events this month. The activities allow students to explore color theory, design storyboards and flipbooks, create the illusion of texture, and much more. [P.S. ARTS](#), a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children by providing arts education to underserved public schools and communities, created the pieces in collaboration with *Lights On Afterschool* and Nickelodeon.

“Nickelodeon is thrilled to be part of the 20th anniversary celebration of *Lights On Afterschool*,” said Jean Margaret Smith, SVP Public Affairs. “As we commemorate SpongeBob SquarePants’ 20th year on-air, Nickelodeon is shining a light on afterschool programs and the fun, creative learning opportunities they afford kids across the country. SpongeBob will join kids from afterschool at the Empire State Building as it lights up in yellow and blue in honor of *Lights On Afterschool* on Thursday, October 24!”

“We are so grateful to Nickelodeon for generously supporting *Lights On Afterschool* during our historic 20<sup>th</sup> year,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Like us, they know that 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.”

“The arts can be a powerful vehicle to engage students and support their development, but tight budgets and the enhanced focus on testing has meant that many schools no longer offer opportunities for arts-related learning during the school day,” Grant continued. “That is one reason afterschool programs are so important, because they help students enhance their creativity by learning to draw, sculpt, write music, play instruments, and perform – while also offering homework help, mentors, healthy snacks, robotics and computer programming, job and college readiness, sports and fitness activities, and more.”

A few of the many art-focused activities to be featured at *Lights On Afterschool* events around the country this month include:

**Springdale, AR:** Organized by Afterschool Ambassador Ben Rediske, SOAR's *Lights On Afterschool* event will give visitors the chance to experience a glimpse of what it is like to attend SOAR by competing in the Amazing Shake; rocking the stage with the SOAR Dance team; watching performances from the SOAR Theatre Club, Cheerleading Club, and Dance Team; participating in STEM club; and more.

**San Francisco, CA:** Organized by Afterschool Ambassador Leslie Einhorn, Children's After School Arts (CASA) is holding *Afterschool Special: An Evening of Advocacy, Pizza & Entertainment*, which will feature a postcard writing campaign; an invocation by [The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence](#); a presentation by the supervisor for CASA's district; a screening of the 2019 CASA musical 'Escape to Llama Island' (an original musical created with professional writers, designers, directors and 200 CASA kids that explores growing up, friendship and identity); as well as a special surprise performance.

**Washington, D.C.:** Organized by Afterschool Ambassador Daniela Grigioni, After-School All-Stars DC (ASAS DC) will host *Lights On for Arts* at Leckie Education Campus. The showcase will focus on arts-centric activities offered to students by ASAS DC at Leckie. ASAS DC students will perform dance and poetry, provide healthy snacks from culinary arts class, present 'lightbulb' artwork created in mixed media class, and produce a fashion show using designs created in fashion design class. Representatives from Mayor Muriel Bowser's office will attend and councilmembers and the deputy mayor for education are invited.

**Santa Rosa, Florida:** The Boys & Girls Club of the Emerald Coast-South Walton will host its seventh annual *Lights On Afterschool* Talent Show. Students began rehearsing for the annual showcase in September. They will perform choreographed dances, sing songs, demonstrate gymnastics routines and more. More than 100 family members, community members and administrators are expected.

**Epworth, Georgia:** The Fannin County Boys & Girls Club will host a family engagement night to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*. Families will attend an art show featuring the art projects students completed this fall. Children and their family members will work together to paint and decorate pumpkins.

**Brooklyn, New York:** CAMBA will host a talent show for *Lights On Afterschool* that will feature students performing songs and showcasing their original step, dance and cheerleading routines. Students will also model their own t-shirts and bags describing why they love school.

**Buffalo, New York:** After School Rocks will place paper light bulbs, decorated by students, around the city to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*. In addition to coloring the paper light bulbs, students will glue them onto small rocks.

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.

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*, identifies the hours that are the “prime time for juvenile crime” and why afterschool programs are one of the nation's best crime prevention strategies.

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