

NEWS RELEASE
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Three Alabama Teens Win National Art Contest

Youth Designed This Year's Lights On Afterschool Poster



[Artwork created by three talented teens](#) from Baldwin County High School's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program in Bay Minette, Ala., was chosen to be the centerpiece of this year's [Lights On Afterschool](#) poster. Created by Maia Austin (age 17), Gabby Williams (age 17) and Marquez Drinkard (age 16), the art will be seen by more a million participants at some 8,000 [Lights On Afterschool](#) events across the country and at U.S. military bases worldwide on October 20th.

[Lights On Afterschool](#) is the only national rally for afterschool. It is organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#) to underscore the need to invest in afterschool programs, which provide homework help, healthy snacks, mentoring, sports activities, robotics, computer programming, art and music, job- and college-readiness, and opportunities for hands-on learning.

This year's student artists were inspired by the activities offered by their afterschool program, including dance teams, music and visual art projects. The finished product was a team effort; the poster is comprised of several separate drawings that were pasted together. It was selected from more than 400 contest submissions from afterschool students across the United States and at a U.S. military base in Japan.

"I love the program because it's something productive I can do after school," said Gabby Williams. "I really like the cooking classes, and being with my friends at the same time. My parents think the program is great, because it keeps me busy when I could be doing things that kids aren't supposed to do."

Baldwin County High School 21st CCLC Program Director Michele Hall said that, "as a teacher at the high school, I saw that we had a large number of students who were not involved after school and didn't have opportunities, partly due to our rural location. Now, the program is helping these kids grow academically and socially."

“We are very proud of the creative young artists at Baldwin County High School who produced the evocative artwork featured in our poster, and pleased to have the chance to share their work with people all across the United States,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Learning opportunities that happen outside of the traditional school day are vitally important for students of all ages. In afterschool programs like the one in Bay Minette, young people are discovering their passions and creating a strong foundation for their futures. We must make the quality afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families available to all children and youth – from elementary to high school.”

The Bay Minette 21st CCLC program received a case of syrups, courtesy of [Torani](#), for a shaved ice and soda party.

As part of *Lights On Afterschool*, the New York skyline will shine for afterschool on October 20th when, for the tenth consecutive year, the iconic Empire State Building will be lit up in yellow.

Among the more than 100 *Lights On Afterschool* partners this year are Boys & Girls Clubs of America, After-School All-Stars, Voices for Healthy Kids and Association of Science-Technology Centers.

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 United States today is unsupervised after the school day ends.

A large and growing body of evidence demonstrates improvements in attendance, behavior, academic achievement and more among children who participate in afterschool programs. Researchers have also found that afterschool programs encourage increased parental involvement – an important building block for student success.

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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.