



NEWS RELEASE
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National Rally to Focus Attention on the Many Ways Afterschool Programs Promote Physical Fitness

Many of the more than 8,000 *Lights On Afterschool* events across the country next week will focus on the ways afterschool programs help children and youth get on the path to good health by participating in sports and active play, learning about healthy eating and nutrition and more. Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, the 16th annual nationwide rally for afterschool will be October 22nd. More than a million people are expected to participate this year and the Empire State Building will again be lit up in yellow to celebrate the event.

Lights On Afterschool events will be held at schools, parks and recreation centers, state capitols, malls, community centers, sports fields, science museums and other venues to spotlight the many ways afterschool programs support student success in school and in life. Several hundred sites will be doing [Worldwide Day of Play](#) activities as part of *Lights On Afterschool* this year.

“Providing all children and youth with opportunities to become and remain physically fit is essential if they are to enjoy good health later in life,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “With time for gym and recess being reduced or eliminated in many schools, afterschool programs play a critical role in giving students opportunities to engage in physical activity and to develop the habits of healthy eating. Afterschool programs are, appropriately, appreciated for keeping kids safe, inspiring them to learn and being a lifeline for working parents. But they also are helping them get and stay healthy and instilling healthy habits that can last a lifetime.”

According to the [America After 3PM](#) household survey, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, 84 percent of parents with children in afterschool programs are satisfied with both the amount and the variety of physical activity offered. Most of these parents (72 percent) report that their child’s program provides beverages, snacks and/or meals, and 81 percent are satisfied that the food served is healthy. Low-income and minority parents are especially attuned to the role afterschool programs play in promoting health and wellness, the survey found.

Among the physical fitness-focused events that will be part of this year’s *Lights On Afterschool*:

Sacramento, California: Nicole Cartwright, Higher Learning Academy ASES

The Higher Learning Academy will host a community event on October 22nd featuring a talent show, scholastic book fair, flash mob, and booths. As part of First Lady Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move” campaign, students and teachers in the flash mob will perform the “Let’s Move” dance routine to spread awareness about the need to combat childhood obesity. In addition, afterschool programs will sponsor health-focused booths, including a California Champions booth that will inform families about healthy living and a Health Education Council booth that

will feature kids dressed up as fruits and vegetables. Participants will also enjoy face painting, carnival games and raffles.

Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Robert Hill, YMCA of South Florida

The YMCA of South Florida will hold *Lights On Afterschool* events at two Broward County sites on October 22nd. For the first, the YMCA will team with Children's Services Council of Broward County and the Parks and Recreation Department of Broward County for an outdoor carnival at Franklin Park. Students from several YMCA afterschool sites will perform dance routines, play carnival games and enjoy healthy snacks, as well as YMCA's YFit program activities. The second event, the flagship event of the Children's Advocacy Center, will be at Castle Hill Elementary School and will feature YFit program activities as well. Parents will visit activity centers with information on science, literacy, nutrition, social skills and arts. The night will end with a student dance performance.

Jackson, Mississippi: Tye Tripp, Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Mississippi, Walker Unit

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Mississippi will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* at the Walker Unit with "Healthy You," an event to promote healthy eating habits. A nutritionist will speak with students and parents about meal preparation, healthy snacks and portion control; a chef will conduct a cooking demonstration to show how to cook healthy meals. The event is on October 22nd.

Fargo, North Dakota: Kari Langberg, YMCA of Cass and Clay Counties

Students from across Fargo will participate in the YMCA of Cass and Clay Counties 1K Youth Run on October 22nd. Before the race, the children will decorate motivational signs and lightbulbs to place along the route. The kids will wear silly outfits and do a "crazy" warm-up before they start running, and afterwards each site will take a group picture. The run will take place at Island Park with as many as 1,200 children.

Houston, Texas: Kia Reddix, Houston Independent School District - Sharpstown International School

On October 22nd, Sharpstown International School will collaborate with the Girl Scouts and Dairy MAX's Fuel Up to Play 60 to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* with a family event focused on physical activity and nutrition. Fuel Up to Play 60 empowers students to lead their schools in fueling up with nutrient-rich foods and getting active at least 60 minutes every day. There will be an obstacle course and other sporting events in the school's gymnasium throughout the event.

Somerset, Wisconsin: Cheryle Nelson, S.A.C. Somerset

In celebration of *Lights On Afterschool*, S.A.C. Somerset will hold a family dinner and play night on October 22nd at Somerset Elementary School. Families will compete in a basketball shoot-out, an obstacle course, a beanbag toss and other active games in honor of Nickelodeon's Worldwide Day of Play. There will also be tables with science activities like experiments about motion, a food knowledge quiz, make your own slime and more.

The *America After 3PM* survey also 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. One in five students in the country today is unsupervised after the school day ends.

For a complete list of national *Lights On Afterschool* partners, visit <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loaNatPartners.cfm>. To find an event in your area, please visit <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loaFindEvent.cfm>.

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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.