Libraries Across the Country Will Help Turn the Lights On for Afterschool on October 26th

Since the very first Lights On Afterschool events were held 18 years ago, libraries across the country have been a vital part of the national rally for afterschool. This year will be no different, with libraries from coast to coast hosting and cohosting events that showcase the skills students gain and the talents they develop at their afterschool programs. More than a million people across the nation and at U.S. military bases worldwide are expected to participate in some 8,000 Lights On Afterschool events this year, on and around October 26th.

The Afterschool Alliance organizes Lights On Afterschool to shine a spotlight on the need to invest in afterschool programs, which provide homework help, mentors, healthy snacks, opportunities for sports and fitness, robotics, computer programming, art, dance, music, job and college readiness, and countless opportunities for team-based learning. For the 11th consecutive year, the iconic Empire State Building will be lit in yellow and blue on October 26th to celebrate Lights On Afterschool.

Among the 200 national Lights On Afterschool partners this year are the Young Adult Library Services Association and the Science-Technology Activities & Resources for Libraries (STAR_Net), a project of the Space Science Institute’s National Center for Interactive Learning that connects libraries and afterschool programs to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning through their library exhibits.

According to a 2017 survey, nearly three-quarters of afterschool programs work with local public libraries to provide engaging learning activities for kids, from literacy and book lending programs to STEM activities. These creative collaborations are being celebrated during this year’s Lights On Afterschool.

Flo Trujillo, an Afterschool Ambassador and the Youth Services Coordinator at the Farmington Public Library in New Mexico, has celebrated Lights On Afterschool at the library every year since 2000. She says the Lights On Afterschool Tailgate Party and Glow.in.the.Dark celebrations inspired Kidfest, which is now the biggest summer learning annual event with partners and collaborations for kids in the state. Due to Lights On Afterschool, Trujillo says, “the library has developed partnerships with the arts council, downtown association, museums, schools, community centers, daycare providers, and homeschool and youth organizations to promote reading during the summer months and develop lifelong library users.”

Jody DuRand, community engagement manager at the Omaha Public Library, runs middle school afterschool programs at eight sites in the city. Her library has partnered with Collective
Quality afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and give parents peace of mind that their children are safe and learning until they get home from work – and libraries are major contributors to quality afterschool programming,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “We are very proud that so many libraries participate in Lights On Afterschool, giving community members the chance to see the hands-on, fun, educational activities they offer students.”

The America After 3PM household survey of 30,000 families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, found that for every child in an afterschool program, 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.

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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.