



NEWS RELEASE
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Afterschool Alliance, jcpenny Encourage Cities and Towns to “Light Up a Landmark” as Part of Nationwide Rally for Afterschool

On October 20, for the fifth year in a row, the Empire State Building will be bathed in yellow light in support of *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. In previous years, other iconic landmarks have also been lit up to commemorate the event. In 2010, Mount Rushmore was lit up for a special *Lights On* event featuring Lakota Indian dance and song and the Lindbergh Beacon atop Los Angeles’ City Hall was lit for the occasion.

This year, the Afterschool Alliance and jcpenny are holding a contest to encourage officials in cities, towns and villages across the country to “Light Up a Landmark” as part of their *Lights On Afterschool* events. One “Megawatt” and ten “Spotlight” winners will be announced on October 1. The “Megawatt” winner will receive \$5,000 and each “Spotlight” winner will receive \$1,000. More information about the contest is available on the Afterschool Alliance web site at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loalandmark.cfm>.

“Keeping the lights on for kids after school is one of the most important things a community can do,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “This year, we’re encouraging communities across the country to find a fun way to figuratively shine a spotlight on the benefits of afterschool while literally shining a spotlight on a local landmark or important symbol.”

More than a million children, parents, grandparents, educators, community leaders, policy makers, celebrities and others are expected to participate in the 12th annual *Lights On Afterschool* rallies. They will be urging Congress not to divert or deny federal funding for afterschool. For years, the federal investment in afterschool has lagged far behind the need. The *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (the chief federal funding stream for afterschool), yet funding stands at less than half that today. Congress is currently considering legislation that would allow other programs to compete for the already limited 21st Century Community Learning Centers funds.

During *Lights On Afterschool* this year, the Afterschool Alliance, in conjunction with jcpenny, will release 50 state progress reports that examine how each state is helping keep the lights on for kids and families after school. The progress reports review state policies, funding and other activities that affect afterschool programs, examine the need in each state for these programs, offer tips to parents seeking afterschool programs for their children and suggest ways that all state residents can support afterschool.

The events give youth a chance to showcase the skills they learn and talents they develop at their afterschool programs, and to send the message that millions more kids need quality afterschool programs. Since the Afterschool Alliance organized the first *Lights On Afterschool* in 2000, it has grown to include more than 7,500 events across the country and at U.S. military bases worldwide.

A significant body of research demonstrates that students who attend 21st CCLC afterschool programs regularly are more likely to improve their grades, tests scores and overall academic behavior. More than 15 million school-age children – more than one in four kids in the United States – are unsupervised after the school day ends. The parents of 18 million children say they would enroll their kids in afterschool programs – if programs were available.

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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.