



NEWS RELEASE  
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## **Turning the Lights On for Afterschool across the Globe**

### **Nationwide Rally for Afterschool Draws One Million Parents, Educators, Students, Policy Makers and Others Today**

At more than 7,500 sites across the country and U.S. military bases around the world, a million people are coming together today to rally for the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families. At *Lights On Afterschool* rallies and celebrations, students are conducting science experiments, learning about healthy eating, cleaning up neighborhoods, helping senior citizens, and discussing the importance of afterschool programs with lawmakers, business and community leaders, and others. The Empire State Building in New York City and the Lindbergh Center atop the Los Angeles City Hall will be lit up this evening in honor of the event.

Forty-nine governors issued proclamations for *Lights On Afterschool* this year, and the United States Senate passed a bipartisan resolution introduced by Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT) supporting *Lights On Afterschool* by unanimous consent.

In advance of the events, the Afterschool Alliance released *America After 3PM: A Household Survey on Afterschool in America*, the most in-depth study ever to explore how America's children spend their afternoons. Sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund, a charitable organization committed to inspiring children to be smart, strong and socially responsible, it finds that despite an increase in the number of children attending afterschool programs over the last five years, more than a quarter of the nation's schoolchildren are on their own in the afternoons. The parents of 18 million children say they would enroll their kids in afterschool programs, if programs were available. Data from all 50 states were released on October 15.

*Lights On Afterschool 2009* includes a Facebook rally that gives those with busy schedules a way to participate – no matter where they are. People with Facebook profiles can join it at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Afterschool-Alliance/24777553348>.

“The range of activities taking place for *Lights On Afterschool* are as varied and exciting as the activities that engage children in afterschool programs every day,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “But the sad truth is that too many children have no access to afterschool programs. Our new household survey reveals that more than 15 million kids in this country are unsupervised each afternoon after the school day ends. We need to do better and provide more programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families.”

Among the *Lights On Afterschool* events happening today are:

 Sitting atop Red Mountain in Birmingham, **Alabama** is the world's largest cast-iron statue and symbol of Alabama's history at the Vulcan Park and Museum. Tonight, the iconic landmark will host students and guests to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* with a Light Bulb Art Exhibit. Guests will view the artwork and get information about afterschool programs. Parents and community members, school officials, school board members, and superintendents are invited to the event.

 The Yellow Jacket Youth Center in Lakeside, **Arizona** will host the fire department when it gives children safety presentations. Local anti-drug groups and other nonprofit organizations will attend the event at the youth center to promote safety while raising awareness about the importance of afterschool programs.

 The Drop-In Learning Center in New London, **Connecticut** will host a fashion show to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*. Youth participants in grades K-7 will dress as who they would like to be when they grow up.

 United Cerebral Palsy of Broward County's Unlocking Children's Potential After-School Program in Fort Lauderdale, **Florida** will host its 4<sup>th</sup> annual "Behind Our Eyes" art exhibit showcasing works of art by children with disabilities. The exhibition will be on display through October, but the opening will be a celebration of *Lights On Afterschool* at ArtServe Gallery. Participants will mingle with the young artists and see the children's artwork on display.

 At the Aliamanu Youth Center at Fort Shafter, **Hawaii** children will participate in a mini *Lights On Afterschool* parade, which will feature a performance from the youth center's dance club. Children will wave "Afterschool for All" signs on the street outside of the youth center in support of afterschool programs. Earlier this month, the Center organized a mini carnival, in conjunction with Kids Day, at which more than 100 parents and students participated in fun carnival activities, including games, face-painting, competitions and refreshment booths.

 BUILD's Humboldt Park *Lights On Afterschool* Family Night Event in Chicago, **Illinois** will take place at St. Mary of Nazareth's gymnasium. Students, families and the community will enjoy basketball, relay races, a dodge ball game, arts and crafts, and more.

 The Fort Riley School Age Services at Fort Riley, **Kansas** will host a carnival event for *Lights On Afterschool* that will feature a balloon release. The balloons will contain the school's name and number, so that they serve as "messages in a bottle." Whoever finds the balloons can call and ask for more information about afterschool programs and the *Lights On Afterschool* celebration.

 The **Maine** Afterschool Network will hold a state-wide *Lights On Afterschool* event in Portland. The Network will bring people together during the lunch hour to watch performances and listen to speakers and distinguished guests, including: Maine First Lady Karen Baldacci, Police Chief James Craig, Lauren Sterling from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program, Director of the Maine Arts Commission Donna McNeil and Co-Chair of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

Justin Alford. Afterschool programs will be showcased with performances and exhibitions. At an awards ceremony, an Exemplary Program Award will be presented to an afterschool provider, an “Afterschool Champion” will be named.

 The Boys & Girls Club of Western **Nevada** in Carson City will hold a special event that will include light bulb coloring contests, a bounce castle, other arts and crafts projects, face-painting, games, and a popcorn machine. There will also be a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the facility’s new outdoor basketball courts. A D.A.R.E. officer will attend the event to hand out information and prizes to students and parents. New York Life Insurance Company will conduct a child ID program for members of the surrounding communities and club families, and Partnership Carson City will hand out information about some of its prevention programs.

 A breakfast at the Drew Wellness Center in Columbia, **South Carolina** will raise awareness about afterschool programs for *Lights On Afterschool*. The keynote speaker will be Emmy Award-nominated television host, chef and author Marvin Woods, who is well-known for his work combating childhood obesity by teaching students in afterschool programs to prepare and eat healthy food. Winners of the 2009 *Lights On Afterschool* student essay contest will read their essays. The afterschool winners of a ‘tablemat’ contest will be recognized, and a middle school ensemble choir will perform.

 School’s Out Washington in Seattle, **Washington** will partner with Youngstown Cultural Arts Center, the Afterschool Alliance and the JCPenney Afterschool Fund to host its annual *Lights On Afterschool* event at the Youngstown Cultural Arts Center. The theme this year will be the importance of arts in the lives of young people, and the role afterschool and youth development programs play in fostering creativity and exposing youth to arts. This event will include not only great information on the importance of programs, but also performances by youth artists of all disciplines who will showcase their passion and talents. The event will be hosted by Eddie Francis from radio station KUBE93 FM. There will also be an opportunity to tour Youngstown’s facility. At the event, Torani Syrups will host an Italian Soda bar.

Actress Rhea Perlman is a spokesperson for *Lights On Afterschool* and California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is Founding Chair, a position he has held since 2001.

As part of this year’s *Lights On Afterschool* celebration, Bright House Networks will air a new documentary on the benefits of afterschool, featuring the personal stories of youth and families across the country.

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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).*