



NEWS RELEASE
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Afterschool Advocates from All Quarters Speak Out for Afterschool, Join National Rally

Advocates for afterschool programs come from all walks of life. It doesn't matter whether they are parents, students, teachers, legislators or CEOs; they all recognize the benefits that afterschool programs provide to families, communities and businesses. This month – from coast to coast and everywhere in between, they're supporting the Afterschool Alliance's eighth annual *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs.

New York: Speaking at a *Lights On Afterschool* event today at Roberto Clemente Elementary School in New York City, Brandi, a student in the Harlem RBI's REAL Kids Program said,

“REAL Kids is a place where you can be safe and stay off the streets, and your family doesn't have to worry about you for a couple hours because they know you're out of trouble if you're in REAL Kids.”

Harlem RBI's Real Kids Program is joining with Nike to host a *Lights On Afterschool* event and presenting Roberto Clemente Afterschool Hero Awards today in New York City.

Missouri: To celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*, St. Louis for Kids and partnering organizations held a Recognition and Awards Luncheon on October 16 at the McDonnell Planetarium at the St. Louis Science Center. It included a showcase of children's afterschool projects and a ceremony to honor outstanding youth workers, afterschool programs, and community supporters. Missouri Governor Matt Blunt issued a statement:

“Afterschool programs provide Missouri's students with a safe environment where they can grow academically, socially, physically and emotionally. We have increased funding to Missouri schools by more than a half a billion dollars in three years and expanded afterschool programs for students across the state. Missouri's participation in Lights on Afterschool is an excellent way for Missouri to take part in the national effort to expand afterschool programs to students and to continue our collaborative effort with local communities to provide growth opportunities for Missouri students.”

California: The Boys and Girls Club of East Los Angeles will hold its *Lights On Afterschool* event tomorrow at Reggie Rodriguez Park Community Center. The event will feature dance, music, sports, carnival games and prizes. In a statement, Toyota Financial Services, which helps to support the Boys and Girls Club of East Los Angeles, said:

“When Toyota Financial Services (TFS) first considered supporting the Boys & Girls Clubs of East Los Angeles, we were immediately impressed with the kids and certainly with the amazing work being done by Anna Araujo and her staff. Looking at the obstacles facing many of the youth in East Los Angeles, TFS recognized that if we were to make an impact, it would require a significant ‘social investment.’ We determined TFS could best support the Boys & Girls Clubs of East Los Angeles by providing a combination of financial assistance, transport vehicles, college scholarships, school supplies and volunteers... We believe that through our approach of integrated involvement under Anna Araujo’s direction, TFS will help provide area youth greater access to the Boys & Girls Clubs, increase the organization’s infrastructure as well as provide resources and guidance, thereby decreasing truancy, poor academic performance and drop out rates.”

Others who are joining the national rally include actress Rhea Perlman, who is the spokesperson for *Lights On Afterschool*, and comedian Wayne Brady.

Lights On Afterschool was launched in October 2000 with 1,200 events. A million people are expected to rally at 7,500 events this year to show their support for afterschool programs and to encourage lawmakers and others to make afterschool programs available to all students who need them. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is National Chair of *Lights On Afterschool*, a position he has held since 2001. For the first time ever, the Empire State Building in New York City will be lit with yellow floodlights on October 18 in recognition of *Lights On Afterschool*.

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.

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