



NEWS RELEASE
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CONTACT: [Gretchen Wright](#)
202/371-1999

As 13th Annual *Lights On Afterschool!* Approaches, Many Afterschool Programs Struggle to Survive

Communities Nationwide Gear Up to Show Support for Afterschool Programs that Help Working Families, Keep Kids Safe and Inspire Students to Learn

Every October since 2000, children, parents, grandparents, educators, community leaders, policy makers, celebrities and others nationwide have come together to show their support for afterschool programs. On October 18, they will once again gather at schools, community centers, parks, malls, state capitols and elsewhere to rally for the programs that help working families, keep kids safe, and inspire them to learn as part of the 13th annual *Lights On Afterschool*. Since its inception, this nationwide rally for afterschool has grown to include more than 7,500 events across the country and at U.S. military bases worldwide. *Lights On Afterschool* is the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs.

Last month, *Uncertain Times*, a survey of afterschool programs released by the Afterschool Alliance, revealed that programs across the country are struggling to keep their doors open. At this year's *Lights On* events, communities will rally behind these program and urge Members of Congress to increase federal afterschool funding and reject efforts to divert funds intended for afterschool programs.

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) in 2007, yet funding stands at less than half that today. Congress is currently considering legislation that would allow other programs to compete for already-limited 21st Century Community Learning Centers funds.

According to *Uncertain Times*, nearly two in five afterschool programs (39 percent) report that their budgets are in worse shape today than at the height of the recession in 2008, and more than three in five (62 percent) report that their funding is down "a little or a lot" from three years ago.

"We are living in uncertain times and students, families and communities have a tremendous amount to lose if afterschool programs cut hours or activities, or close their doors," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Parents, community members, educators and students are worried about what happens when programs are forced to reduce their hours, cut their rolls, or worse. Now, more than ever, we need to ensure that our children and youth have opportunities to engage in fun, hands-on learning opportunities during hours where they would otherwise be home alone. Whether they are building robots, growing gardens, or perfecting their

tennis backhand – children in afterschool programs are gaining skills that will help them succeed in life.”

More than a million people are expected to participate in the 2012 *Lights On Afterschool* rallies. 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.

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.