



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Today, the Lights Are On for Afterschool Programs Across The Country**

*24th Annual Rally for Afterschool Shines a Light On the Important Role Programs Play for Students, Families, Communities*

Washington, D.C. – In Arkansas, students are completing an obstacle course with members of their local fire department. In California, they are learning to weave baskets and performing songs and skits. In Maine, they are battling robots; in Delaware, exploring careers from landscaping to banking; in Georgia, identifying native plants during a hike; and in Illinois, collaborating with professional artists on paper mache sculptures. In Florida, students are competing in dodgeball against their parents and cooking a meal for their families. In Maryland, students are creating cards for local nursing homes and painting rocks with messages about kindness.

All of these activities, as well as student showcases, art displays, science projects, open houses, walks and runs, visits from lawmakers, and much more, are taking place as part of [Lights On Afterschool](#), the only national rally for afterschool programs. Some 8,000 events involving a million people are being held today, October 26, and throughout the month. Organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#), the 24th annual *Lights On Afterschool* includes events at schools, 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, parks, museums, community centers, libraries, and other places.

“Thousands of afterschool programs are showcasing the many ways afterschool programs support student success and well-being,” said Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance. “Afterschool programs keep kids safe and healthy, inspire them to learn, and give working parents peace of mind. They help students unlock hidden talents and reach their full potential. But the pandemic exacerbated both staff and funding shortages and sadly, unmet demand for afterschool is at an all-time high. *Lights On Afterschool* highlights the need for much greater investment in afterschool, so all students can benefit from the essential support afterschool programs provide.”

The New York City skyline will shine for afterschool tonight when the Empire State Building is lit in yellow and blue for *Lights On Afterschool*. Thanks to Clear Channel Outdoor, afterschool messages are being displayed on digital billboards, bus shelters, and poster spaces in 25 markets nationwide, including two jumbo billboards in New York City's Time Square. Other landmarks being lit up for afterschool this week include: the Caesars Superdome in New Orleans, Louisiana; the Governor's Executive Residence in Raleigh, North Carolina; the Lincoln Financial Field Eagles Stadium in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the South Street Station in Boston, Massachusetts; the Aloha Tower in Honolulu, Hawaii; and the Frederick Douglass Bridge in Washington, D.C.; and [many others](#).

STEM-related *Lights On Afterschool* events are being sponsored by NASA, which has invited programs and youth to join a special [virtual event with Thermal Blanket Technician Paula Cain](#); the Center of Science and Industry (COSI), which is providing free James Webb Space Telescope Learning Lunchbox STEM kits to youth at 45 programs; 4-H, which is providing [Power Protectors challenge kits](#); and [STEM Superheroes](#), which is donating [Everyday Superheroes: Women in Energy Careers](#) books and sending experts to talk to students about careers in STEM energy fields.

Other *Lights On Afterschool* events taking place this week, and next:

**Baltimore, Maryland:** Ellie Mitchell, Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST), [emitchell@mostnetwork.org](mailto:emitchell@mostnetwork.org)

For *Lights On Afterschool*, the Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST) is hosting its "Lights On Math in Maryland" forum on October 26 at the Earl G. Graves School of Business and Management at Morgan State University. The interactive forum, hosted in partnership with Maryland Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, will explore solutions for addressing math achievement as well as strategies to get students excited about math during and outside of the school day.

**Belington, West Virginia:** Carol Malcolm-Parsons, KidREACH Appalachia, [cmalcolm@worldvision.org](mailto:cmalcolm@worldvision.org)

On October 26, KidREACH Appalachia is holding *Lights On Afterschool* celebrations at each of its locations. Belington Middle School is hosting a positive relaxation event at which students learn about managing emotions and make sensory bottles. At Belington Elementary, students are enjoying a glow party, complete with glowing games, painting, play dough, and much more. At Junior Elementary, the site's STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) coordinator is leading a STEMing the Sun event. Students are learning all about the sun and building their own sundials.

**Bronx, New York:** Irene Rosario, New Settlement Bronx Helpers, [I.Rosario@newsettlement.org](mailto:I.Rosario@newsettlement.org)

On October 26, Bronx Helpers is hosting a *Lights On Afterschool* movie night and community engagement event. Middle schoolers in the afterschool program have collected donations for 200 self-care kits and posted flyers in local parks, encouraging people experiencing homelessness to visit the program on October 26 to receive a kit. The students are also watching a movie together, getting decked out in glow in the dark gear, and setting up tables outside New Settlement to distribute the waterproof personalized kits to people in need.

**Holloman AFB, New Mexico:** Rhonda Fowler, Holloman School Age Center,,  
[rhonda.fowler@us.af.mil](mailto:rhonda.fowler@us.af.mil)

To celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*, the Holloman School Age Center is hosting “Books of Wonder,” an open house event on October 26. Classrooms are being transformed into different children’s books, with themed activities as well as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) projects.

**Lincoln Park, Michigan:** Dawn Trueblood, Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency, 313-399-4473, [dtrueblood@waynemetro.org](mailto:dtrueblood@waynemetro.org)

On October 26, Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency and Lincoln Park High School are hosting “Lights On at Boo Zoo,” an exploration of America’s forests, ecosystems, and wildlife. During the *Lights On Afterschool* celebration, students and families will get an up-close view of animals such as a kangaroo, monkey, Eurasian eagle owl, Siberian lynx, large python, giant tortoise, tarantula, kinkajou, woodchuck, alligator, and Flemish giant rabbit. They are learning about the ecological balance needed to sustain these species and guests will create animal masks and take selfies at the “Haunted Forest” backdrop.

**Shelbyville, Kentucky:** Tammy Simpson, Shelby County Public Schools Daycares, Spartan Academy, [tammy.simpson@shelby.kyschools.us](mailto:tammy.simpson@shelby.kyschools.us)

To mark *Lights On Afterschool*, Shelby County Public School Daycares and its seven daycare centers are partnering with local farmers and businesses for a week-long celebration. On October 23, families picked up free pumpkins donated by area farms and carving kits donated by local businesses and took them home to carve using the theme, “What We Love About Our Afterschool Program.” On October 26, families are bringing their carved pumpkins to their program to be displayed in the evening at a rally. At 6:30 PM, participants are gathering at Stargazer Plaza to show legislators and voters how important afterschool programs are to the community. Shelby County Judge Executive Dan Ison is lighting up the courthouse in blue to demonstrate support for afterschool and Simpsonville Mayor Ronnie Sowder and Shelbyville Mayor H. Troy Ethington are lighting up their city halls in blue. More than 150 people are expected.

**Skowhegan, Maine:** Afterschool Ambassador Dawn Fickett, REACH After School,  
[dfickett@msad54.org](mailto:dfickett@msad54.org)

The Town of Skowhegan will partner with the REACH After School program to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* with a community-wide open house celebration on October 28th. The open house will offer a snapshot of the afterschool programming offered at all three REACH sites. The middle school program will showcase all its club offerings, with the cooking clubs catering food, the art club providing face painting, and the robotics club offering demonstrations and a mock battle. In addition, the adventure clubs, in partnership with Skowhegan Outdoors, will offer an obstacle course, the Civil Rights Team will showcase its Day of Welcome, and the theater and dance club will offer a dance jam for the whole family. The Margaret Chase Smith site will host rotating interactive STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) activities in partnership with 4-H. The Bloomfield Elementary site will provide a play-based learning lab.

*\*\* This event may be postponed due to the active shooter in Maine.*

**Terre Haute, Indiana:** Afterschool Ambassador Eleanor Remseier, Camp Navigate, Inc.,  
[eleanor@campnavigate.org](mailto:eleanor@campnavigate.org)

One of Camp Navigate's four focus areas is choosing healthier lifestyles, so for its *Lights On Afterschool* event, the program is hosting a community walk/run on Saturday, October 28. The event will kick off at ISU Memorial Stadium and is being held in partnership with the VCSC Coordinated Health Program and Indiana State University. Participants are encouraged to wear "spooktacular" Halloween costumes. Mayor Duke Bennett will be among the speakers. For every registered participant, Camp Navigate will donate \$1.00 to 14th and Chestnut, a nonprofit youth organization that works with children in high-need areas.

Some 24.7 million U.S. children not in an afterschool program would be enrolled, if a program were available to them, according to a [survey of 1,500 parents](#) commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted by Edge Research in 2022. That is the highest number ever recorded. Unmet demand for afterschool programs is significantly higher among Latino and Black children (at 60% and 54% respectively) than among children overall (49%). Cost is the top barrier to enrollment, cited by 57% of parents as a reason for not enrolling their child. Ninety percent of parents rate the quality of the afterschool program their child attends as excellent (51%) or very good (39%).

This year, *Lights On Afterschool* is taking place as the country celebrates 25 years since the launch of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC), the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs. 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC has grown from a small discretionary grant program serving approximately 40,000 students to an initiative reaching nearly 1 million

students. Still, though, in the United States today, for every child in an afterschool program, [four more are waiting to get in](#).

The federal American Rescue Plan provided \$122 billion to school districts through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund. A [new study](#) from the Afterschool Alliance – the first ever to examine how school districts are using those funds for afterschool and summer programming – found that eight in ten school districts are investing pandemic relief funds in afterschool and summer learning, but the overall investment is small and the focus is primarily on tutoring. Just one in five school districts are investing ESSER funds in afterschool programs that provide both academics and enrichment.

The number of students receiving afterschool suppers dropped significantly from October 2021 to October 2022, according to [a new study from the Food Research & Action Center \(FRAC\)](#), released this week. It finds that 339,383 fewer students are receiving these essential meals – a decline of 23% and the first drop in participation since afterschool suppers became available in 2010. Afterschool Alliance’s Jodi Grant called the drop “alarming,” adding “we need to increase the number of students who can access afterschool suppers and we can only do that if we invest in afterschool programs, which provide a lifeline for youth and families.”

This year’s [Lights On Afterschool poster](#) was designed by Lydia Ireland, a seventh grade student from San Antonio, Texas. Ireland’s drawing was selected in a national contest held earlier this year. It has been printed on 50,000 posters and will be seen by more than a million people at *Lights On Afterschool* events across the country

Capital One and Clear Channel Outdoor are generous sponsors of *Lights On Afterschool* this Year.

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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).*