



NEWS RELEASE

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Supporters of 10th Annual Nationwide Rally for Afterschool Reflect Diverse Activities Programs Offer

Children benefit from afterschool programs in myriad ways. In addition to having a safe, supervised place to go after the school day ends where they get help with homework, afterschool students are exposed to a variety of activities that help them develop new interests and skills. Afterschool programs across the country are offering students fun, interesting and exciting activities – from the chance to learn to play instruments, to help seniors, to learn to draw and sculpt, plant community gardens, play team and individual sports, conduct science experiments, be mentored, clean up our environment, and much more.

Those diverse activities are well-represented by the more than 200 national partners who are supporting the 10th annual *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, *Lights On Afterschool 2009* is supported by organizations as diverse as the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education Recreation & Dance; the American Music Conference; the Association of Science Technology Centers; Earth Force; and the USTA Tennis & Education Foundation.

This year, one partner, 4H Afterschool, is participating in *Lights On Afterschool* by featuring the National Science Experiment, “Biofuel Blast” at *Lights On* events. “Biofuel Blast” aims to raise awareness of – and spark an early interest in – science, engineering and technology programs during out-of-school time. It provides an opportunity for young people across the nation to examine one of the most important issues facing our nation today – energy – as they learn about alternative fuels.

“The time children spend in afterschool programs is invaluable, and *Lights On Afterschool* gives them the opportunity to showcase the amazing things that they’re learning and doing,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Our 2009 *Lights On Afterschool* partners represent not only diverse people and issues, but also diverse interests – whether those interests run to the sciences, the arts, community service, sports or the environment. We are proud to have so many innovative and dedicated partners who share our goal to give all this nation’s children access to the quality afterschool programs that keep them safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families.”

Lights On Afterschool 2009 will include student performances, runs and walks, open houses, art and essay contests, art displays, tree lightings, carnivals, and much more. They are organized by afterschool providers – 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs as well as those affiliated with 4-H Afterschool, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, YMCA of the USA, Junior Achievement, The After-School Corporation, Young Rembrandts and others.

A list of 2009 partner organizations is available online at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loaNatPartners.cfm>

At *Lights On Afterschool* rallies throughout the country on and around October 22nd, Americans will urge leaders to increase support for the afterschool programs that children and families need.

In support of the event, the Empire State Building will be lit up for the third year in a row and this year, for the first time, thanks to Woodcraft Rangers, city officials in Los Angeles will light the historic Lindbergh Beacon atop City Hall that evening, so that national landmarks on both coasts will be lit up in celebration of afterschool.

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.

In advance of *Lights On Afterschool* this year, the Afterschool Alliance will release the second *America After 3 PM: 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, the original study was released in 2004. It found that 14.3 million kindergarten through 12th graders took care of themselves after the school day ended. At the time, just 6.5 million children were in afterschool programs – but the parents of another 15.3 million children said their children would participate if an afterschool program were available.

The 2009 study, designed to measure progress over the last five years, is also sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund and includes updated information on afterschool participation nationally and in all 50 states. The Afterschool Alliance and JCPenney Afterschool Fund will release it on October 6 at an event at the U.S. Department of Education. State data will be featured a few weeks later at *Lights On Afterschool* events around the country.

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.