



NEWS RELEASE
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America Rallies for Afterschool Programs

***Lights On Afterschool* Events Draw 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, cleaning up neighborhoods, helping senior citizens, and discussing the importance of afterschool programs with Members of Congress, governors, mayors, business and community leaders, and others. The Empire State Building in New York City will be lit in yellow this evening in honor of the event.


The ninth annual *Lights On Afterschool* is organized by the Afterschool Alliance. The event has gone green this year, with the Afterschool Alliance updating its symbol by replacing the standard incandescent light bulb with a compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL). Actress Rhea Perlman is a spokesperson for *Lights On Afterschool* again this year.


Lights On Afterschool 2008 includes an online rally that gives those with busy schedules a way to participate – no matter where they are. Celebrity Chefs Tyler Florence and Joey Altman are among those “attending” the online rally. People with Facebook profiles can join it at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Afterschool-Alliance/24777553348>.


“Today we are celebrating the many ways that quality afterschool programs help children, families and communities,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “But at the same time, we recognize that more than 14 million kids in this country are unsupervised each afternoon after the school day ends, and the federal investment in afterschool programs hasn’t nearly kept up with the need. We need to do much more to make afterschool programs available to all children.”


This year’s *Lights On Afterschool* concludes a year-long celebration of the 10th anniversary of 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), the chief federal funding stream for afterschool programs. It has helped make afterschool programs available to millions of children over the last decade. For this anniversary and *Lights On Afterschool*, the Afterschool Alliance launched America’s Afterschool Storybook to give afterschool alumni and students, business leaders, parents and program staff and volunteers a place to share stories about the ways afterschool programs have affected their lives. America’s Afterschool Storybook is at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/storybook/gallery.cfm>.


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


 Fairbanks North Star Borough School District in Fairbanks, **Alaska** will light trees to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*. Schools, businesses, community organizations, afterschool providers and faith-based organizations will light up different trees with low wattage holiday lights that signify each organization's support for afterschool programs. The trees will stay lit throughout the winter.


 Eureka Kids will host *Lights On Afterschool* in Harmon Park in Eureka Springs, **Arkansas** with an "Afterschool for All Art Car." The "Art Car" is designed and maintained by afterschool students and features Jackson Pollock-style paint, flashing light bulbs, and youth. It placed fourth in the Eureka Springs Art Car Parade and now travels around the state promoting afterschool.

 The Wesley House Family Services and Boys & Girls Clubs of the Keys will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* with a march and celebration at Bayview Park in Key West, **Florida**. Children will march to the Harvey Government Center with light bulbs, and local dignitaries and parents will discuss the importance of quality afterschool programs. Activities will include a bounce house, face painting, snow cones, relay races, student entertainment and a tree planting ceremony. The first annual *Lights On Afterschool* award will be presented.


 DeKalb County School System in **Georgia** is celebrating *Lights On Afterschool* all month with a focus on cyber safety. The DeKalb County School System is partnering with Georgia Tech Research Institute, Georgia Department of Education, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Georgia Emergency Management Agency, Homeland Security, Georgia Chamber of Commerce, and the Public Schools Foundation to develop cyber safety trainings for students, staff members, parents and the community about cyber safety. Schools and their partners will provide "Lights On, Logged On" training to students, staff members, parents and community members.


 Roxbury Weston C.A.T.C.H Afterschool Program in Boston, **Massachusetts** will host a "Harvest Time" open house to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*. Parents and students will explore the different uses of fruits and vegetables that are harvested in the fall. Children also will participate in arts and crafts and create Dream Catchers.


 Grand Rapids Public Schools, L.O.O.P. afterschool program in Grand Rapids, **Michigan**, in partnership with the upcoming "Walking with Dinosaurs" exhibit at the Van Andel Arena, will sponsor a *Box-osaurus* event for *Lights On Afterschool*. Students will showcase their cardboard dinosaurs and other afterschool activities, and lead tours at the new Dickinson Elementary School. Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell, State Senator Mark Jansen, and the local board of education president will speak.


 The Eureka County School District and 21st Century Community Learning Centers in Eureka, **Nevada** will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* with a potluck dinner at Eureka Elementary School. A representative from the Mount Wheeler Power of Rural Electric Cooperative will provide tips on how to conserve energy and answer questions about recycling. Students will

present a “Reader Theater” and display artwork. Program leaders will provide a presentation of the afterschool program’s field trip to the Salt Lake City Science Museum.

 Children enrolled in the Barnard After Care Program in Tulsa, **Oklahoma** will walk to Veterans Park to meet parents, and participate in activities including daffodil planting, face painting, light bulb cookie decorating, and more. Following the reading of a *Lights On Afterschool* proclamation, students will create Tulsa’s largest light bulb – an area on the soccer field will be outlined with white lights and then students will fill in the light bulb.

 The Hardling CHAMPS Program will organize a parade around Harding Elementary School in Erie, **Pennsylvania** and then participate in a tree and flower planting ceremony to symbolize the organization’s growth. Parents and community members will have the chance to view student displays and ask questions about the afterschool program. Student-made cupcakes will be served.

 The 21st Century Project Archive in San Antonio, **Texas** will host a *Lights On Afterschool* open house emphasizing energy conservation and recycling at Hirsch Elementary School. Each grade will participate in a different environment-friendly activity. Kindergarteners will do an arts and crafts activity with a “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle” theme, third graders will create crafts using recycled materials, and fourth and fifth graders will create an ABC Energy Conservation book.

 Community Connections in Montpelier, **Vermont** will host a *Lights On Afterschool* event on the State House lawn. Afterschool programs from eight sites will gather to show the range of activities taking place during the after school hours. The theme of the event is: “What is Your Dream? Afterschool helps get you there!” Participants will create a giant mural where they can share their dreams. High school students from the afterschool program will create a documentary of the event, and interview students about their dreams.

San Francisco kicked off *Lights On Afterschool* this year with a T-Mobile Huddle Up event on October 2 at the Whitney Young Child Development Center. More than 150 T-Mobile employees spent the morning revitalizing the Center and then joined an afternoon rally at the Center in support of afterschool programs.

The United States Senate has passed a resolution designating October 16 as *Lights On Afterschool* Day again this year. This designation was made possible when the Senate approved a resolution introduced by Senators Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and John Ensign (R-NV), co-chairs of the Senate Afterschool Caucus. Representative Nita Lowey (D-NY), who co-chairs the House Afterschool Caucus, introduced a similar resolution in the House of Representatives.

Lights On Afterschool was launched in October 2000 with 1,200 events across the country. This year, a million people are expected to participate. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is National Chair, a position he has held since 2001.

A list of 2008 *Lights On Afterschool* events is available at
<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loaFindEvent.cfm>.

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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.

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