



News Release

September 10, 2026

Contact: [Magen Eissenstat](#), 202/609-9889

Communities in Every Corner of the Country Will Turn the Lights On for Afterschool on Thursday, October 22

27th Annual Rally for Afterschool to Feature 8,000 Events, 1 Million People

Washington, D.C. – Children and youth, parents, educators, lawmakers, community, business and faith leaders, and many others will turn the lights on for afterschool at more than 8,000 local events across the country on or around Thursday, October 22. Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, [Lights On Afterschool](#) is the only national rally for afterschool programs. This year, its 27th, there will be events in every state featuring student accomplishments and performances, community service, science fairs, family fun nights, academic contests, visits from state and local officials, awards ceremonies, sporting competitions, trunk-or-treat events, student art, and much more.

Buildings, bridges, monuments, and other landmarks around the nation will be lit in yellow and blue for *Lights On Afterschool* on October 22, as more than 1 million people gather at schools, Boys & Girls Clubs, Ys, 4-Hs, parks, community centers, museums, and other venues to celebrate the many ways afterschool programs help children, youth, and families. Afterschool programs [have been shown to](#) benefit students through hands-on learning, activities that build teamwork and other life skills, and quality time with peers and mentors. They provide homework help and academic support, robotics, computer programming, healthy snacks and meals, sports and fitness activities, job and college readiness, art, dance and music, opportunities to think critically and work in teams, access to caring adults and mentors, and much more.

Lights On Afterschool this year comes as [shocking new data](#) show vast unmet need for these programs. The parents of 29.6 million children want afterschool programs for them – but less than 7 million are enrolled. Cost and accessibility are the barriers many families cannot overcome. Ninety-five percent of parents with children in afterschool programs are satisfied with the program their child attends; and nearly nine in ten parents (89%) favor public funding for these programs.

“We know that *Lights On Afterschool* will again be a joyful event this year, showcasing the incredible skills students gain and talents they develop in their afterschool programs,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “These programs do so much to help students succeed in school and in life, and give them real-life experiences and alternatives to screen time. But every week, it seems, we learn about programs cutting back or closing their doors because of inadequate funding. In large part, that’s because Congress has failed to significantly increase funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the chief federal funding stream for

afterschool and summer learning programs, in many years – even as costs have skyrocketed. We need to change that and increase support from philanthropy, business, and local, state, and federal governments.”

Nine in ten parents of afterschool students (92%) say their child’s [program offers STEM learning](#) – a significant increase from a decade ago. “On October 22nd, we will celebrate the fact that these programs give children a safe place to connect and learn after the school day ends, boost their academic achievement, and engage with caring adults,” Grant continued. “They’re helping address chronic absenteeism and youth mental health struggles while giving working parents peace of mind that their children are safe and supervised after the school day ends. Our communities, our workforce, our economy, and our country will be stronger when every child has access to a quality afterschool program.”

A large and powerful body of evidence demonstrates improvements in grades, school attendance, behavior, and more among children who participate in afterschool programs. Researchers have also found that students in afterschool programs are more engaged in school and excited about learning, and they develop work and life skills such as problem solving, teamwork, and communications.

Clear Channel Outdoor is proud supporter of *Lights On Afterschool 2026*.

#

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.