



NEWS RELEASE
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America Will Turn the Lights On for Afterschool October 23rd

15th Annual Nationwide Rally for Afterschool Will Include Students, Educators, Parents, Community Leaders, Policy Makers and Others

People all across the United States and at U.S. military installations worldwide will turn the lights on for afterschool this October by joining the only national rally for afterschool programs. More than a million people in thousands of communities are expected to participate in *Lights On Afterschool* on and around October 23rd, attending science fairs, rallies, fun runs, community service events, music and dance performances, open houses and other events at schools, community centers, malls, parks and recreation centers, museums, state capitols, and other settings. All these events will celebrate the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families.

Lights On Afterschool is organized by the Afterschool Alliance to underscore the need to invest in afterschool programs, which offer students the chance to hone their skills and discover their passions. These programs provide homework help, mentoring, sports and physical fitness, robotics, computer programming, community service opportunities, art and music, and other hands-on learning opportunities. For years, the federal investment in afterschool has lagged far behind the need. The chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer programs is 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC). In 2007, the *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion for CCLC – but funding stands at less than half that today.

“When afterschool programs struggle without enough resources to meet the needs of children and families, schools, communities and the country suffer,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Quality afterschool programs keep students safe and supervised, provide opportunities for them to learn and grow, offer nutritious snacks and meals, prepare youth to succeed in school and in life, and help them expand their horizons through hands-on, engaging activities that are both educational and fun. These programs are often the key to unlocking children’s hidden skills and aptitudes. Every penny invested in an afterschool programs pays dividends for years to come.”

Last year, a million people participated in more than 8,000 *Lights On Afterschool* events; the Afterschool Alliance expects the same level of participation this year. 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 children and youth need quality afterschool programs.

A large and growing body of evidence demonstrates improvements in attendance, behavior, academic achievement and more among children who participate in afterschool programs. Researchers have also found that afterschool programs encourage increased parental involvement – an important building block for student success.

In advance of *Lights On Afterschool 2014*, the Afterschool Alliance will release new data from the nation's most comprehensive longitudinal survey of how America's children are spending their afternoons. "America After 3PM," a survey of more than 30,000 families, will provide new information on how participation and demand for afterschool have changed over the last decade and how they vary by state, income level, ethnicity, and more. For the first time, "America After 3PM" will include detailed data on STEM (science, technology, education and mathematics) and physical activity in afterschool. The forthcoming "America After 3 PM" report is funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Wallace Foundation and the Noyce Foundation, with additional support from the Heinz Endowments, The Robert Bowne Foundation and the Samueli Foundation.

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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.