



NEWS RELEASE
October 17, 2014

CONTACT: [Gretchen Wright](#)
202/371-1999

National Rally for Afterschool Programs to Shine Light on Physical Fitness

*Events Will Highlight the Unmet Demand for Afterschool Programs,
Which Has Increased to Nearly 20 Million Children*

Across the country, afterschool programs offer children and youth opportunities to participate in team sports and active play, improve their physical fitness, learn healthy habits, and in other ways get on the path to good health. To highlight those benefits, many programs will feature events focused on physical activity during the 15th annual *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool. This year, more than a million people are expected to participate in more than 8,000 events nationwide and on military installations overseas on or around October 23.

Among parents with kids in afterschool programs, 84 percent agree that programs should help students be physically active, according to the just-released [America After 3PM](#) household survey. But not enough children have access to these programs, according to the survey. For every child enrolled in a program, there are two more who are not and whose parents would enroll their child, if a program were available. In all, 10.2 million children participate in afterschool programs. The unmet demand for afterschool — parents who would enroll their child in a program, if one were available — totals 19.4 million children. Demand is especially high among low-income, African American and Hispanic families.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, *Lights On Afterschool* will bring people together at thousands of parks and recreation centers, state capitols, malls, community centers, science museums and other venues to learn more about the many ways afterschool programs support student success in school and in life.

Among the physical fitness-focused events that will be part of this year's *Lights On Afterschool*:

- On October 23, **Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation and Live Healthy Gwinnett in Georgia**, in partnership with JM Tull Y, Kidspllosion, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Gwinnett Public Library, Gwinnett 4 – H and Health and Human Services, will host A Walk Among the Stars *Lights On Afterschool* at Alexander Park. The Hollywood-themed event will include martial arts with Ninjas from "The Lego Movie," a Zumba party, and a walk around the park under the stars.

- On October 23, **Kama'aina Kids Waikoloa, in Hawaii** will host its annual *Lights On Afterschool Fun Walk*. Walkers will wear green *Lights On Afterschool* t-shirts and *Lights On Afterschool* bracelets and will be served a healthy snack to keep their energy up during the walk.
- On October 10 and 17, middle school students from the **Johnson County Park and Recreation District's Out of School Time Programs in Johnson County, Kansas** will participate in an Obstacle Course, Jumbo Soccer, Basketball, and other activities. They will also enjoy health snacks. The events will be held at The Theatre-In-The-Park. Students in programs run by the Shawnee Mission School District will celebrate on Friday, October 10 and students in programs in De Soto and Gardner-Edgerton will celebrate on Friday, October 17.
- On November 16, **Girls on The Run-Montgomery County in Bethesda, Maryland** will host a 5K run and *Lights On Afterschool* event at the Westfield Montgomery Mall. More than 5,000 runners are expected at this year's celebration.
- From October 20 through 24, the **Irving Recreation Center in Norman, Oklahoma** will host "Try It Week" for *Lights On Afterschool*. Youth throughout Norman will be able to participate in Irving's afterschool classes without charge. Activities include ballet, jazz dance, flamenco dancing and creative basketball dribbling. As many as 100 youth and community members are expected to participate throughout the week.

"Becoming and staying physically fit as children and teens is crucial to good health later in life," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Afterschool programs play a central role in ensuring that children and youth not only have opportunities to engage in physical activity, but also that they develop the habits of healthy eating and getting regular exercise."

For a complete list of national *Lights On Afterschool* partners, please visit <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loaNatPartners.cfm>.

To find an event in your area, please visit <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.