



NEWS RELEASE

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***Lights On Afterschool* Events Across Country This Month Will Highlight Innovative Ways Afterschool Programs Boost Students' Physical and Mental Wellbeing**

Field days, free immunizations, mindful breathing and yoga, and glow-in-the-dark beach ball are among the many ways *Lights On Afterschool* events will showcase the critical role afterschool programs play in supporting student health and wellbeing this month. Now in its 25th year, *Lights On Afterschool* is the only national rally for afterschool programs. It is organized by the Afterschool Alliance to celebrate the essential support that programs provide youth and families and to highlight the need for more investment in afterschool.

More than a million people are expected to participate at some 8,000 events held on and around October 24 for *Lights On Afterschool*. Events will take place at schools, 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, parks, museums, community centers, and other places. Many will showcase the health and wellness activities and resources afterschool programs provide throughout the school year.

“Afterschool programs offer a safe place where students can get active, de-stress, build positive connections with peers and mentors, get healthy snacks and meals, and more. Many offer engaging activities designed to help students learn to manage difficult emotions,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “We are thrilled that so many *Lights On Afterschool* events this year are showcasing the critical life skills and healthy habits afterschool programs instill. Unfortunately, too many students are without these supports. We need to invest so all students have access to afterschool programs, which keep them safe and healthy, inspire them to learn, and give working parents peace of mind.”

Among the many health- and wellness-focused activities taking place at *Lights On Afterschool* events around the country:

Riverview, Florida: The Boys & Girls of Tampa Bay will host a Field Day at Giunta Middle School on October 26 to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*. Students will be divided into teams to compete in events such as a sack race, tug-of-war, egg spoon relay, and a water fight. The event will also feature cornhole and bumper balls.

Concord, North Carolina: The Kids: Plus program at Wolf Meadow Elementary will hold a Feelings Fair on October 18 for *Lights On Afterschool*. Students and their families will gather in the school gym for social and emotional learning activities addressing mood management, how to identify feelings, mindful eating, breathing techniques, and yoga poses.

Waubay, South Dakota: On October 24, Enemy Swim Day School will host a Toka Nuwan Wayawa Tipi *Lights On Afterschool* Health Fair. Activities will include a “How to Make a Monster Fruit Cup” station, a social and emotional learning escape room, the Scholastic Book Fair, a free immunization clinic, and much more. As a healthy alternative to a cake walk, the fair will include a salsa walk where participants win a bowl of fresh ingredients and a recipe card to make fresh salsa. Community partners include local ambulance services; nurses from Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate (SWO) Community Health, Day County Community Health, and IHS Public Health; SWO Tribal Opioid Response; Asnyapi Clinic; Bright Start; Roberts County Alive; SWO Tribal Education Department; and Sisseton Wahpeton Community College.

Harlingen, Texas: For *Lights On Afterschool*, on October 10 the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District ACE program, which operates on ten campuses, will light up Bogus Stadium and hold a health and wellness family event and rally. The event will feature performances, music, snacks, games, and activities including archery, bucket drumming, and an obstacle course. Representatives from community organizations will share information on local resources and services with families.

Appleton, Wisconsin: On October 22, YMCA School Age will hold a fitness glow party at Ferber Elementary in celebration of *Lights On Afterschool*. Students and their families will get moving with fitness dance routines, try their luck at glow-in-the-dark “minute to win it” stations, and enjoy games of glow-in-the dark beach ball.

This year, *Lights On Afterschool* comes as the federal pandemic relief that has helped afterschool programs meet rising costs and address growing needs winds down. The unmet need for programs is enormous. Today in the United States, for every child in an afterschool program, four more are waiting to get in. Nearly 25 million children not in an afterschool program would be enrolled, if a program were available to them, [according to a 2022 survey](#) of approximately 1,500 parents commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted by Edge Research. In

recent years, Congress has failed to significantly increase funding for 21st CCLC, the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs.

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 critical work and life skills such as problem solving, teamwork, and communications.

Capital One and Clear Channel Outdoor are generous sponsors of *Lights On Afterschool* this year.

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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.