LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL
A PROJECT OF THE AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE

NEWS RELEASE
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Lights On Afterschool Events Across the United States Are Showcasing the Fun, Educational STEM Activities Students Enjoy in Their Afterschool Programs

Washington, D.C. – From building solar bugs to creating and racing straw rockets to getting up close to a kangaroo, python, Eurasian eagle owl, and Siberian lynx, students around the country are engaging in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) activities for *Lights On Afterschool* this month. Now in its 24th year, *Lights On Afterschool* is the nation's only rally for afterschool programs, which keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give working parents peace of mind. It is organized by the Afterschool Alliance to celebrate the achievements of afterschool students and draw attention to the need for more afterschool programs to serve the millions of children across the country who are unsupervised and without opportunities to learn each weekday afternoon.

A million people are participating in some 8,000 events around the country for the *Lights On Afterschool* this year. NASA has invited programs and youth to join a virtual event with Thermal Blanket Technician Paula Cain, who is featured in the Surprisingly STEM video series. Youth will ask Cain questions, learn why items sent into space need to be protected by thermal blankets, and learn how two of Cain's passions – fashion design and Star Trek – are part of her career at NASA. The Surprisingly STEM series introduces youth to STEM careers, highlighting exciting, unexpected careers at NASA, from wind tunnel engineers to dive specialists. The live Q&A with Paula Cain will take place on October 26 at 4 PM ET.

Afterschool youth at 45 programs around the country will build model rockets, nebulas, and Webb telescopes thanks to the Center of Science and Industry (COSI), which is providing 3,000 free James Webb Space Telescope Learning Lunchbox STEM kits to afterschool programs for their *Lights On Afterschool* events. Created in partnership with NASA, the kits help young people learn about the Earth's atmosphere and discover why the Webb telescope was sent to space through hands-on activities. Each box features links to instructional videos and a Parent and Educator guide.

4-H has donated 350 Power Protectors challenge kits to help programs celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*. The kits, designed to spark interest in STEM, consist of three easy-to-use activities aligned with Next Generation Science Standards. Students can design a Superhero Hideout, which introduces renewable energy concepts and helps them assess their energy usage, use the Engineering Design Process to design and build a model of a sustainable energy source, and play Energy Island Adventure, a collaborative board game.

Everyday Superheroes: Women in Energy Careers is donating books and sending experts to talk to students about careers in STEM energy fields at afterschool programs in Charlottesville, Denver, Houston and at a U.S. military base in Mons, Belgium.

"We are so grateful to the generous partners who are joining *Lights On Afterschool* this year to give children and youth memorable experiences learning about STEM," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "With their focus on hands-on learning, afterschool programs are uniquely positioned to provide the STEM learning students need to prepare for the jobs of tomorrow. We need to create even more partnerships and invest even more resources to ensure that all students, no matter their family income, gender, or race, can access STEM in afterschool."

Other STEM-related *Lights On Afterschool* events include:

Denver, Colorado: Summer Wimberly, Colorado Dream Foundation, swimberly@coloradodream.org
To celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*, "Superheroes" from national laboratories will build solar bugs and share their energy careers with 4th, 5th, and 6th graders at Colorado Dream Foundation. Group14, a local consulting firm, is sponsoring the event to help energize future leaders to get into STEM. The event will take place on October 26.

Milledgeville, Georgia: Kenneth Daniels, The High Achievers Program, kenneth.daniels@gcsu.edu
On October 26, the High Achievers Program will host a *Lights On Afterschool* celebration at Lake Laurel on Georgia College & State University's East Campus. High Achievers is an afterschool program for high school students that focuses on leadership and personal development through STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) and mental/physical health activities. Participants will go on a hike and explore the native species found around the local pond. Students will also write personal statements, reflecting on the importance of the afterschool program.

Indianapolis, Indiana: Afterschool Ambassador Chrystal Struben, AYS – At Your School, cstruben@ayskids.org
For *Lights On Afterschool*, AYS is hosting a month-long "We Grow Better With the Lights On" project that features STEM activities related to agriculture. All 36 sites are collaborating with local community partners and artists for a week of academic and enrichment programming. On October 26, the sites will host a showcase event with students.

Baltimore, Maryland: Ellie Mitchell, Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST), emitchell@mostnetwork.org
For *Lights On Afterschool*, the Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST) will host its "Lights On Math in Maryland" forum on the morning of October 26 at the Earl G. Graves School of Business and Management at Morgan State University. The interactive forum, hosted in partnership with Maryland Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, will explore solutions for addressing math achievement as well as strategies to get students excited about math during and outside of the school day.

Lincoln Park, Michigan: Dawn Trueblood, Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency, dtrueblood@waynemetro.org
On October 26, Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency and Lincoln Park High School will host "Lights On at Boo Zoo," an exploration of America's forests, ecosystems, and wildlife. During the celebration, students and families will get an up-close view of animals such as a kangaroo, monkey, Eurasian eagle owl, Siberian lynx, large python, giant tortoise, tarantula, kinkajou, woodchuck, alligator, and Flemish giant rabbit. They will learn about the ecological balance needed to sustain these species and guests can create animal masks and take selfies at the "Haunted Forest" backdrop.

Honesdale, Pennsylvania: Amanda Masters, The Cooperage Project, amanda@thecooperageproject.org

On October 25, the Cooperage Project is hosting a *Lights On Afterschool* family night. Youth and families will join leaders from its Pop-Up Club, the program's STEAM-focused afterschool club, in playing, experimenting, and creating at activity stations. This free program is designed for families with third through fifth graders, but all are welcome. Stations will include fiddling with snap circuits, building challenges with Kiva blocks, creating and racing straw rockets, artistically designing agamographs and watching the images move, creating wearable light-up pins for trick-or-treating, and much more.

Houston, Texas: Ken Williams, GROW, ken@kenempowers.com
On October 26, GROW will host a literacy day at BakerRipley Gulfton Sharpstown Campus, a community center and elementary school, for *Lights On Afterschool*. Youth will engage in storytime, STEM education, and a book signing with local "energy superheroes" in one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the United States. This event promotes reading readiness and curiosity about STEM in afterschool.

Hampton, Virginia: Afterschool Ambassador Michelle Simpson, Alternatives World Changers, msimpson@altinc.org
To celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*, the Alternatives Hampton World Changers will conduct an "Are You Smarter Than A Fifth Grader" STEM experiment with 5th grade students at Mary W. Jackson Elementary School on October 26. The event will utilize James Webb Space Telescope Learning Lunchbox STEM kits donated by the Center of Science and Industry (COSI), created in partnership with NASA. Middle and high school students will pair up with 5th graders as buddies/mentors to execute the experiment. Students will also discuss the transition from elementary to middle school, giving the 5th graders an opportunity to ask questions, eliminate fears, and learn how to better prepare for the transition.

For the 17th consecutive year, the New York skyline will shine for afterschool on October 26th when the iconic Empire State Building is lit in yellow and blue to celebrate. Throughout the country, buildings and bridges, arenas and stadiums, and other landmarks will also be lit up for afterschool this week.

Some 24.7 million U.S. children not in an afterschool program would be enrolled, if a program were available to them, according to a survey of 1,500 parents commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted by Edge Research in 2022. That is the highest number ever recorded. Unmet demand for afterschool programs is significantly higher among Latino and Black children (at 60% and 54% respectively) than among children overall (49%). Cost is the top barrier to enrollment, cited by 57% of parents as a reason for not enrolling their child. Ninety percent of parents rate the quality of the afterschool program their child attends as excellent (51%) or very good (39%).

A representative sample of *Lights On Afterschool* events is here. To find more events, see this map.

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.