



NEWS RELEASE  
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## ***Lights On Afterschool* Events Across the Country to Showcase Afterschool's Key Role in STEM Education**

From robotics and computer coding to pumpkin volcanoes and glowing slime, afterschool programs across the nation will showcase their STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programming as part of this year's [Lights On Afterschool](#) celebrations. Now in its 22nd year, *Lights On Afterschool* is the only national rally for afterschool, with thousands of events, both in-person and virtual, being held on or around Thursday, October 28.

The [Afterschool Alliance](#) organizes *Lights On Afterschool* to underscore the need to invest in afterschool and summer learning programs, which provide help with homework and academic support; healthy snacks and meals; robotics; computer programming; skilled mentors; art, dance and music; job and college readiness; opportunities to think critically, collaborate and communicate with peers and adults; sports and fitness activities; opportunities for hands-on, team-based learning; and more. As schools and afterschool providers weather the second year of the pandemic, *Lights On Afterschool* events look different than in previous years, but programs are finding creative, fun, and safe ways to showcase students' activities and shine a light on all the ways afterschool programs have adapted to support youth and families during this time.

“Afterschool programs are uniquely suited to provide STEM instruction because of their sleeves-rolled-up approach and their ability to accommodate hands-on projects that might not fit into the regular school day schedule,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “So it’s no surprise that STEM programming is a prominent feature of *Lights On Afterschool* rallies. Programs have become adept at creating fun activities that educate students in STEM skills today and make them want to learn more tomorrow. That work continues despite the pandemic. Last year, for example, many programs prepared STEM take-home kits for students attending virtually. We are already seeing similar creativity and energy this year.”

The Afterschool Alliance has teamed up with 4-H to bring the [4-H STEM Challenge](#) to afterschool programs around the country for *Lights On Afterschool*. Designed by Clemson University, the 2021 4-H STEM Challenge, Galactic Quest, focuses on the mysteries and adventures of space exploration.

This year, the [National Girls Collaborative Project](#) is donating 200 books on women in STEM to *Lights On Afterschool* sites for their use during the celebration and throughout the year. Separately, [STEMfinity](#) is donating gift cards to allow afterschool programs participating in *Lights On Afterschool* to cover the cost of engaging STEM activities and materials.

Additional STEM-focused activities taking place at *Lights On Afterschool* events around the country include:

- [Million Girls Moonshot](#), a transformative nationwide movement re-imagining who can be an engineer, a builder, an inventor, and a leader, is celebrating girls and women in STEM throughout the month of October for *Lights On Afterschool*. A suite of STEM resources, events, and activities for afterschool educators and programs to help students, especially girls and those under-represented in STEM careers, get excited about STEM is posted at [Million Girls Moonshot Toolkit](#).
- **Dallas, Texas:** The Voice of Hope Ministries will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* with a STEM showcase at its afterschool program sites, located at its main campus in Dallas and at Uplift Grand Preparatory School in Grand Prairie. Volunteers from local technology companies will lead hands-on STEM activities, share insights about their fields and how students can pursue careers in STEM. Students will also showcase coding and robotics projects they have worked on during Voice of Hope's afterschool programs.
- **Fairbury, Nebraska:** The FYI Center CASTLE Afterschool Program's *Lights On HallowSTEAM* event will feature a variety of hands-on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) activities, including a dissolving candy corn experiment, mini-pumpkin volcanoes, and the mysteries of glow slime.
- **Rhode Island (Statewide):** Seven afterschool sites in six cities across Rhode Island will mark *Lights On Afterschool* by showing how students use team-building skills and social emotional development to problem-solve together. Sites will use programming created by the Mystic Aquarium to teach STEM skills through environmental education. At one site, with parents, peers, and other community members in attendance, students will demonstrate a “get to know you” activity called “Human Robot,” during which students will pair up and then “program” their partners to move through obstacles toward a prize. Another activity will feature family members working together to build bird feeders using safe materials and resources. The seven sites are participating in the Rhode Island STEM Advantage, a statewide STEM initiative funded by the United Way of Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Foundation, and the Million Girls Moonshot.

During the pandemic, afterschool and summer learning programs have stepped up to provide virtual educational activities, deliver meals and enrichment kits, help families bridge the digital divide, check in with children to ensure their social and emotional needs are being met, connect families to social services, care for the children of essential workers and first responders, and much more.

The most recent [America After 3PM](#) household survey of more than 31,000 families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, finds that nearly three-quarters of afterschool parents (73%) report that their child's program offers STEM instruction, up from 69% in 2014. However, for every child in an afterschool program in the United States, three more are waiting to get in, so even as more afterschool programs are offering STEM, not nearly enough children are able to take advantage.

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

The New York skyline will again shine for afterschool for the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, as the iconic Empire State Building is lit up in yellow and blue for afterschool.

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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*