



NEWS RELEASE
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**National *Lights On Afterschool* Virtual Events Begin This Week,
as Thousands of Programs Across U.S. Rally for Afterschool**

Virtual Events Include Special Viewing of River City Drumbeat Film Tonight; National Youth Town Hall with Greeting from U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona Thursday

Washington, D.C. – The Afterschool Alliance is hosting three national virtual events to mark the 22nd annual [Lights On Afterschool](#) and highlight the many ways afterschool programs are serving children and families during the pandemic. The [national virtual events](#) complement the thousands of rallies and celebrations being organized over the course of the week by local afterschool programs across the country.

National events will include activities for students, parents, educators and advocates:

- ***River City Drumbeat, Monday, October 25 at 6 PM EDT:*** A special viewing of excerpts from the documentary, which is being shown on PBS stations around the country, followed by a discussion of the film and the program’s impact. The documentary is about the Louisville-based River City Drum Corp afterschool program, which has inspired youth by connecting them with the art and cultural traditions of their African ancestors. Learn more and [register here](#).
- ***National Youth Town Hall, Thursday, October 28 at 6 PM EDT:*** U.S. Secretary of Education Dr. Miguel Cardona will kick off the event with a taped message. A panel moderated by radio personality Ally Lynn will feature young people sharing reflections about the role afterschool programs play in their lives, their perspectives and hopes for the future. The Town Hall will include recognition of afterschool program staff. Learn more and [register here](#).
- ***Pilot, Astronaut, Leader! Oh My!: Q&A with NASA Deputy Administrator and Astronaut Pam Melroy, Monday, November 8 at 3 PM EDT:*** Students are invited to a special live Q&A with NASA Deputy Administrator Pam Melroy, as the STEM Next Opportunity Fund, Million Girls Moonshot, NASA, and the Afterschool Alliance team up to celebrate STEM afterschool learning. Melroy, a former Air Force test pilot and astronaut, is second in command at NASA and one of only two women to command a space shuttle. Learn more and [register here](#).

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, the 22nd annual [Lights On Afterschool](#) will feature local afterschool programs hosting a mix of virtual and in-person events focusing on science, music and dance, sports and fitness, academics, community service, social and emotional wellness, and

more. Local hosts include 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, parks, museums, community centers, and others.

For the 15th consecutive year, the New York skyline will shine for afterschool Thursday night when the iconic Empire State Building is lit in yellow and blue to celebrate. Afterschool supporters also are working with local officials to light up local landmarks and buildings around the country to show their support for afterschool programs.

The [Afterschool Alliance](#) organizes *Lights On Afterschool* to underscore the need to invest in afterschool programs, which in normal times provide help with homework; skilled mentors; art, dance and music; healthy snacks and meals; computer programming; opportunities to think critically, collaborate and communicate with peers and adults; job and college readiness; sports and fitness activities; robotics; and opportunities for hands-on, team-based learning. During the pandemic, afterschool and summer learning programs have expanded hours and services, provided in-person and virtual educational activities, delivered meals and enrichment kits, supported students during remote learning, checked in with children to ensure their social and emotional needs are being met, connected families to social services, and much more.

The most recent [America After 3PM](#) household survey of more than 31,000 families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, finds that for every child in an afterschool program in the United States, three more are waiting to get in. The families of 24.6 million children — more than ever before — are unable to access a program. Many report cost as a barrier. There are significant inequities, with Black and Latinx children unable to access the afterschool programs their parents want for them.

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.

BellXcel, Capital One, and Clear Channel Outdoor are generous sponsors of *Lights On Afterschool* this year. Learn more about *Lights On Afterschool 2021* [here](#).

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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.