



NEWS RELEASE
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Students, Educators, Community Leaders Across U.S. to Rally on Thursday, October 28 for 22nd Annual *Lights On Afterschool*

A million people in every part of the country will turn the lights on for afterschool on and around Thursday, October 28th. Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, [Lights On Afterschool](#) is expected to include thousands of virtual and in-person events again this year, including a virtual National Town Hall featuring youth voices on October 28th. The focus of many events will be the many ways afterschool programs are helping youth recover from the pandemic and forge successful futures. Events are expected to include student showcases, science fairs, fun runs, academic contests, community service, sports competitions, and more at schools, 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, parks, museums, community centers, and other places. Now in its 22nd year, *Lights On Afterschool* is the only national rally for afterschool.

For the 15th consecutive year, the New York skyline will shine for *Lights On Afterschool* when the iconic Empire State Building is lit in yellow and blue on October 28th. Afterschool supporters also are working with local officials to light up local landmarks and buildings around the country that evening to show their support for afterschool programs.

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 the pandemic continues, programs also are providing virtual educational activities, helping families bridge the digital divide, delivering meals and enrichment kits, checking in with children to help meet their social and emotional needs, connecting families to social services, and much more. Many *Lights On Afterschool* events are expected to honor the afterschool staff who have done so much to support families during the pandemic.

“During the pandemic, afterschool programs are proving once again how essential they are, stepping up to provide a host of services to students and families who are struggling,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Lawmakers recognized that by including significant one-time funding for afterschool and summer learning programs in the American Rescue Plan. But we will need to sustain that investment. We need quality afterschool programs now more than ever because they help children and youth recover and re-engage, so they can succeed in school and in life. For *Lights On Afterschool* this year, programs are finding innovative ways to showcase the skills students gain and the talents they develop in their afterschool programs. Every child deserves access to a quality afterschool program.”

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.

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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.