LIGHTS ON AFTERSCHOOL
A PROJECT OF THE AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE

News Release
October 22, 2026
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8,000 Events. 1 Million People. The Lights Are On for Afterschool Across the United States Today.

27th Annual Rally for Afterschool Is Showcasing the Many Ways Afterschool Programs Support Students, Families, Communities, and Our Workforce Readiness

Washington, D.C. – In Virginia, afterschool students are playing "Kickball with Cops." In Texas, Fort Worth students are climbing into fire trucks, construction equipment, emergency vehicles, SWAT trucks, and more for MEGA MACHINE TAKEOVER, and meeting the people who operate them to learn about their careers – and in Dallas, students are designing extraterrestrial life forms adapted to a specific alien world and building landing crafts and communities that meet their needs. Rhode Islanders are enjoying *Lights On, Plates Full: A Month of Dining for Rhode Island Youth* at Track 15, with restaurants serving signature *Lights On* plates created with youth nonprofits and donating $1 for each plate sold to afterschool programs. In Wisconsin, 500+ students joined a *Lights On Afterschool* rally followed by a tour of the State Capitol led by Lt. Governor Sara Rodriguez.

Those are just a few of the more than 8,000 events taking place for the 27th annual *Lights On Afterschool*, organized again this year by the Afterschool Alliance. A million people in every corner of the country are joining to show their support for the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, provide alternatives to screen time, and give working families peace of mind that their children are supervised and learning after the school day ends. Events are taking place at schools, Boys & Girls Clubs, Ys, 4-Hs, parks, museums, community centers, and other places.

Superstar and 8-time Grammy Award winner USHER is Honorary Chair of *Lights On Afterschool* again this year.

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

"Across the country, programs are holding *Lights On Afterschool* events that showcase the transformative work afterschool programs do to help students succeed in school and in life," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Research shows that youth who take part in afterschool programs do better in school, achieve higher levels of education, and land better jobs with higher incomes as adults. These programs give children opportunities to be active, connect with peers and caring adults, gain confidence, boost academic skills, and build communications, problem solving, and teamwork skills. They provide productive alternatives to screen time, including homework help, exposure to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), college and career prep, and more. For many, the healthy snacks and meals programs provide are essential."

"But three in four kids whose parents want afterschool programs for them are being left behind," Grant added. "The $17 billion in Meta settlement funds provide an opportunity to change that, so we're urging states to use social media settlements to make afterschool and summer learning programs available to many more youth. We need greater investment in afterschool from government, philanthropy, and businesses. Every child deserves access to a quality afterschool program."

From Alabama to Alaska, and many places in between, buildings, bridges, and other landmarks are lighting up for afterschool this week. Today, Clear Channel Outdoor is featuring afterschool messages on two jumbo billboards in New York City's Times Square and illuminating Boston's South Station, as part of its month-long campaign to support *Lights On Afterschool*. The billboards feature artwork created by Evelyn Daniel, a 10th-grader at Cass Technical High School in Detroit, who worked on the billboard as part of Usher's New Look programming at the Michigan Central Boys & Girls Club Spark Lab. Usher's New Look gives youth high-production, real-world work experience with industry experts.

A sampling of the thousands of *Lights On Afterschool* events this year:

Tuscaloosa, Alabama: Afterschool Ambassador Lindsey Blevins, Tuscaloosa City Schools
Tuscaloosa City Schools is celebrating *Lights On Afterschool* with a district-wide focus on student voice, advocacy, and the role afterschool programs play as safe havens. Throughout the semester, students participated in the "Safe Haven in Afterschool" service-learning and advocacy campaign. They are turning their findings into advocacy projects – including posters, digital PSAs, student stories, announcements, and other outreach. Sites are hosting family engagement activities, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and literacy events, cultural celebrations, student showcases, and more. Today, the City of Tuscaloosa will light City Hall, a downtown parking garage, and a city fountain blue to shine a light on all those who make afterschool possible.

Irvine, California: Edith Toledo, Catalyst ExpandEd Learning
Catalyst ExpandEd Learning is celebrating *Lights On Afterschool* with a student art show initiative that brings together programs to lift student voices and highlight the transformative impact of expanded learning opportunities. Programs are hosting student art galleries featuring works inspired by themes such as "My Future Shines" and "What Lights Me Up." These themes invite students to reflect on their hopes for the future, the people and experiences that bring them joy and inspiration, and the ways they can make a meaningful difference in their communities.

Columbia, Maryland: Candice Brown, Boys & Girls Club at Howard Community College
The Boys & Girls Clubs of Metropolitan Baltimore at Howard Community College (HCC) is celebrating *Lights On Afterschool* with "Lighting the Path to What's Next," which is amplifying youth voices while highlighting the unique opportunities made possible by having a Boys & Girls Club on a college campus. Youth, families, HCC partners, and community members will engage in hands-on activities highlighting academic success, college and career readiness, leadership, healthy lifestyles, and the arts. Through interactive stations, a youth showcase, and partners, the event demonstrates how programs provide safe spaces, caring mentors, meaningful opportunities, and pathways to brighter futures.

Pittsfield, Massachusetts: Maria Rundle, Flying Cloud Institute
For *Lights On Afterschool*, the Flying Cloud Institute, in partnership with the Berkshire STEM Pipeline and the Berkshire Museum, is hosting a free, hands-on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) event for students grades K-8 and their families. Families are gathering at the Berkshire Museum

to explore, tinker, and create together through engaging science and art activities. Museum staff and community partners are leading hands-on projects, including robotics, hieroglyphics, and printmaking.

Omaha, Nebraska: Afterschool Ambassador Nicole Everingham, Collective for Youth
On October 17, Collective for Youth hosted *a Lights On Afterschool* celebration at Benson High School, centered around this year's high-energy theme: *Lights On, Let's Glow!* The event kicked off with an informational stakeholder and media briefing featuring Omaha Public Schools administrators and local officials highlighting the critical impact of afterschool programs. Then more than 1,200 students and family members cheered on their schools during dozens of free, hands-on activities, including sports, arts, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) projects, games, and inflatables. This event showcased how quality afterschool programs empower youth to learn, play, and thrive.

Las Cruces, New Mexico: Enrique Garcia Peralta, BOOST Network
As a tri-state regional intermediary, the BOOST Network is celebrating *Lights On Afterschool* with three events. Festivities kicked off on October 17 at the El Paso Public Library with a glow-in-the-dark party featuring Halloween costumes, a haunted house, a gaming truck, a youth market, silent disco, and more. The celebration continues today at the Boys & Girls Club of Las Cruces with a "Thriller" party featuring costume contests, a haunted house, photo booths, and carnival-like activities. Festivities will conclude on October 24 at La Rodadora in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico – the second largest children's interactive museum in Latin America. Guests will enjoy afterschool activities, a battle of the bands, folklorico performances, a children's choir, and more.

Providence, Rhode Island: Beth Cunha, Center for Dynamic Learning
For *Lights On Afterschool*, the Center for Dynamic Learning is hosting *Lights On, Plates Full: A Month of Dining for Rhode Island Youth* at Track 15, Providence's food hall at historic Union Station. Throughout the month, Track 15's seven restaurants are each serving a signature *Lights On* plate. Every dish was created with a local youth nonprofit and inspired by its mission. For every signature plate sold, the restaurant donates $1 to afterschool programs. The celebration is showcasing seven nonprofits: Academy Players, the Empowerment Factory, the Play for Peace Tour, Providence Promise, the Trades Up Initiative, the Women's Fund of Rhode Island, and Center for Dynamic Learning.

Dallas, Texas: Afterschool Ambassador Angelica Portillo, Dallas Afterschool
On October 21 and 22, Dallas Afterschool is celebrating *Lights On Afterschool* by highlighting STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) learning opportunities at three middle and high school programs: After-School All-Stars, Jubilee Park and Community Center, and Wesley Rankin Community Center. Students are participating in Alien Explorers, a hands-on STEM and community-building project where they design aliens adapted to Europa's unique climate zones, build communities to meet their needs, and adapt their designs to welcome other aliens. The experience culminates in student showcases where youth share their creations with staff, board members, and community leaders.

Fort Worth, Texas: Heather Knight, Castleberry Independent School District
For *Lights On Afterschool*, Castleberry Elementary is holding its 2nd annual MEGA MACHINE TAKEOVER. From fire trucks and construction equipment to emergency vehicles, SWAT trucks, and more, there will be something exciting on every corner of the school's parking lot. Students will climb inside and explore incredible machines, meet the people who operate them, and discover the careers that keep the community moving. Students from Castleberry High School's Career and Technical Education pathways will showcase their programs and share the opportunities students explore in high school.

Purcellville, Virginia: Tina Cote, Loudoun Valley Community Center
For *Lights On Afterschool*, the Loudoun Valley Community Center and the Purcellville Police Department have invited community members to join officers for "Kickball with Cops." Children can team up with officers for a friendly game of kickball while families enjoy a meal, ask questions, and connect with members of the police department. BetterALife, a local nonprofit, is providing refreshments.

Madison, Wisconsin: Eileen Otis, Madison Metropolitan School District
On October 19, more than 500 elementary school students, 80 afterschool staff members, and dozens of community supporters gathered at the Wisconsin State Capitol for a *Lights On Afterschool* rally. Attendees heard remarks on the importance of afterschool programming from Wisconsin Lt. Governor Sara Rodriguez, Madison Metropolitan School District Superintendent Dr. Joe Gothard, and Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul. The celebration featured games and activities on the Capitol lawn and Lt. Governor Rodriguez led a guided tour of the Capitol building.

A 2025 study finds that the parents of 29.6 million U.S. children want afterschool programs for their kids, but less than 7 million students are currently enrolled. Cost and accessibility are the barriers most families cannot overcome. Ninety-two percent of parents of afterschool students report their child's program offers STEM learning – a significant increase from a decade ago. Ninety-five percent of parents with children in afterschool programs are satisfied with their child's program, and 89% of parents favor public funding for these programs.

Sarah Ramírez, a South Asian Youth Action (SAYA) afterschool program participant in Queens, New York, designed this year's *Lights On Afterschool* poster, which was displayed at events all over the country. The Afterschool Alliance printed 50,000 posters with the Elmhurst ninth grader's design. It features illuminated hands on a desk surrounded by art supplies, crafts, and a basketball, shining a light on the diverse activities students pursue in afterschool 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 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.