NEWS RELEASE
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Lights On Afterschool Events Across Country This Month Will Showcase the Many Ways Afterschool Programs Prepare Students for Careers By Building Their STEM and Other Skills

An immersive star show inside a portable planetarium. A student-run farmer's market with youth-grown produce. An augmented reality design workshop. An advanced manufacturing apprenticeship program showcase. Those are a few of the hands-on, real-world activities that help students build skills and explore careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and other fields that *Lights On Afterschool* events across the country are showcasing this month.

Now in its 27th year, *Lights On Afterschool* is the nation's only national rally for afterschool programs. Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, it will feature 8,000 events on and around October 22, all designed to shine a spotlight on the critical role afterschool programs play in preparing students to succeed in school and in life – and the need for many more programs.

"Each afternoon, students in afterschool programs solve real-world problems, gain exposure to potential career paths, engage in hands-on STEM exploration, and build skills like collaboration, communication, and problem-solving. Those activities will be on display at thousands of *Lights On Afterschool* events this month," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant.

"Afterschool programs keep students safe and engaged after the school day ends, provide alternatives to unproductive screen time, and help build their confidence and sense of belonging," Grant added. "But millions of students are missing out because we haven't invested nearly enough in afterschool. That's why we're working with state lawmakers across the country to encourage them to use funds from the Meta settlement to make afterschool and summer learning programs available to many more students. Ensuring all our children and youth can access a quality program is more important than ever."

STEM learning is on the rise in afterschool programs. Nine in ten parents of afterschool students (92%) say their child's program offers STEM learning – a significant increase from a decade

ago. Large majorities of parents of middle and high schoolers in afterschool programs say they are satisfied with the college or career opportunities (68%) and work-based learning experiences (64%) their child's program provides. But for every child in an afterschool program, three more are missing out; the parents of 29.6 million children want afterschool programs for their children – but less than 7 million are currently enrolled.

Among the many STEM and workforce-preparation focused activities taking place at *Lights On Afterschool* events this month:

Pine Bluff, Arkansas: On October 22, Pine Bluff Community Center is hosting a *Lights On Afterschool* celebration for Boys & Girls Club members and their families. This year's theme is Outer Space/STEM, combining a fun, high-energy celebration with interactive STEM activities. The event will feature an outer space-themed dance party along with several interactive activities and gaming stations, including a magnetic STEM challenge, a Lunar Exploration Station using kinetic sand, space-themed games and challenges, and other hands-on STEM activities. Approximately 150 guests will attend, including local elected officials, volunteers, and community members.

Berkeley, California: Scientific Adventures for Girls (SAfG) will host a Peres Elementary Family STEM Night on October 22 for *Lights On Afterschool*. Families will explore activities including slime making, LEGO builds, and experiments demonstrating how static electricity can make objects move. Guests will have the chance to step inside a portable planetarium with immersive star shows and the chance to explore the wonders of space. The evening will open with student dance performances, celebrating the creativity and talents of Peres students and highlighting the ways afterschool programs support student learning and self-expression.

Chicago, Illinois: To celebrate *Lights On Afterschool,* the Gary Comer Youth Center will host an interactive open house on October 20. From STEM and arts to college and career readiness, athletics, and leadership development, visitors will discover how afterschool programs help young people build skills, confidence, and connections that prepare them for bright futures. The event will include a networking reception catered by the program's Culinary Arts Team, a fireside chat with program alumni, a tour of the Best Buy Teen Tech Center, and a showcase of the program's youth-run Farmer's Market.

Detroit, Michigan: On October 15, Code 313 will host "Reality Remix," a family night and hands-on technology experience at its headquarters to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*. Participants will explore the exciting possibilities of augmented reality and discover how digital effects transform what they see and experience. Then they will learn about digital design and creative technology by designing their own interactive filter.

Hattiesburg, Mississippi: The Going Beyond Apprenticeship's *Lights On Afterschool: The Soundtrack of Success* event will be held on November 2 at Spirit Park. This family-friendly celebration will highlight the impact afterschool programs have in helping students discover their voices, develop their talents, and build pathways to future success. The event will include information displays on the career and technical education apprenticeships the program offers, including Advanced Manufacturing, Esthetician Services, Barbering, and Early Childhood Education – and its community partnerships. A DJ will provide music throughout the event.

Santa Fe, New Mexico: For *Lights On Afterschool*, STEMarts Lab is hosting the statewide, partner-led initiative, REIMAGINE SPACE: NEW MEXICO, presented in conjunction with World Space Week. It is bringing together youth, educators, scientists, artists, cultural leaders, and community organizations for educational events throughout October. On October 9, REIMAGINE SPACE: Global Showcase Livestream connected New Mexico youth and communities with scientists, artists, educators, cultural leaders, and international partners to explore new ways of thinking about space and humanity's future. Additional events will include discussions with scientists and science communicators to explore the relationship between space exploration and other disciplines including art, culture, and indigenous knowledge, as well as interactive experiences such as stargazing and augmented reality technology.

Cleveland, Ohio: On October 22, Open Doors Academy will mark *Lights On Afterschool* with an engaging, action-oriented community conversation with local political, corporate, and nonprofit leaders about how out-of-school time programs, employers, and community partners can work together to expand young people's exposure to careers and strengthen Northeast Ohio's talent pipeline. This free, public event will be held at Tucker Ellis LLP.

Houston, Texas: To mark *Lights On Afterschool*, the Consumer Energy Education Foundation is hosting Energy Day, Houston's largest free family STEM festival on October 17 at Sam Houston Park. The event aims to inspire curiosity, showcase STEM careers, and connect STEM ideas to everyday life. There will be learning stations with engaging activities, demonstrations, and exhibits that bring STEM lessons to life. Activities include Pedal Power: Hop on a bike and see how your own energy can generate electricity; Hydration vs. Reaction: Put science to the test with an interactive experiment exploring hydration and reaction time; Stay Cool, It's a Gas: see roses, graham crackers, and marshmallows turn into ice right in front of your eyes; and much more.

A large and powerful body of evidence demonstrates that students who take part in afterschool do better in school, attain higher levels of education, and gain skills that last a lifetime such as problem solving, teamwork, and communications.

USHER is the Honorary Chair and Clear Channel Outdoor is a proud supporter 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.