NEWS RELEASE
October 16, 2026

CONTACT: Magen Eissenstat
202/609-9889

Lights On Afterschool Events Across Nation Are Celebrating the Ways America's Afterschool Programs Boost Children's Health and Well-Being

A "glow" run/walk. Writing poetry for self-expression. Creating teamwork through soccer. Gathering for a community cookout. Using dance challenges, artmaking, and music to learn about the benefits of exercise. These are just some of the ways afterschool programs are celebrating *Lights On Afterschool,* and the role programs play in supporting the health and well-being of youth this month. Now in its 27th year, *Lights On Afterschool* is the nation's only national rally for afterschool programs. It is organized by the Afterschool Alliance. Superstar USHER, an 8-time Grammy Award winner, is honorary chair again this year.

Lights On Afterschool will include a million people at some 8,000 events on or around October 22 to celebrate the essential support that programs provide youth and families and to highlight the need for more investment in afterschool. Events will take place at schools, 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, parks, museums, community centers, and other places.

"Afterschool programs keep kids safe, provide fun, engaging alternatives to screen time, and help protect youth from risky behaviors and exposure to negative influences. They offer an antidote to some of parents' top concerns for youth—and help young people thrive. In afterschool, young people have opportunities to be active, connect with peers and caring adults, gain confidence, and build skills that prepare them to succeed in school and in life. For many, the healthy snacks and meals offered at programs are essential," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "But too many kids are without access to these programs. The $17 billion in Meta settlement funds provide a huge opportunity to change that and invest in positive opportunities and support for young people. As a founding member of the Fund IRL Coalition, we're urging state leaders to use social media settlement funds to make afterschool and summer learning programs available to many more youth. Ensuring all our children and youth can access a quality program is more important than ever."

Three in four U.S. kids whose parents want afterschool programs for them are being left behind; the parents of 29.6 million children want afterschool programs for their children – but less than 7 million are currently enrolled. STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) learning is on the rise in afterschool programs, with nine in ten parents of afterschool students (92%) now saying 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 the program their child attends.

Among the many *Lights On Afterschool* events this month that will spotlight how afterschool programs boost health and well-being among children and youth:

Montgomery, Alabama: On October 22, the Cleveland Avenue YMCA will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* with a health fair from 4:30 to 5:30. Local nonprofits will promote healthy eating, dancing, and emotional skills. Guests will include local sororities, churches, and community members.

Miami, Florida: For *Lights On Afterschool*, Miami SCORES is hosting a free youth soccer and poetry festival on October 23 from 3:00 to 5:00 PM at Jesse J. McCrary Elementary School. The event will include youth soccer games, poetry and creative writing, and opportunities for students to share and celebrate their original poetry. Students and families will participate in soccer-related activities and connect with Miami SCORES staff, coaches, school leaders, and community partners. As many as 450 guests are expected, including Miami-Dade County Public Schools leaders and staff, community partners, families, and local community members.

New Albany, Indiana: On October 22, Family & Children's Place will celebrate Red Ribbon Week and *Lights On Afterschool* by hosting "Make A Difference. Be A Hero. Stay Drug Free!" at Hazelwood Middle School from 4:30 to 5:30 PM. Students will showcase their drug-free clay model superheroes and drug-free community awareness posters made in conjunction with Baptist Health Floyd's Tobacco Prevention Coalition. The event combines educational discussions, creative expression, and collaborative activities that encourage students to recognize the harmful effects of substance misuse while celebrating the protective factors that help youth succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

Terre Haute, Indiana: On October 22 from 6:00 to 7:30 PM, Camp Navigate is lighting up Terre Haute with a community-wide *Lights On Afterschool* glow run and cookout that spotlights all the local youth programs serving local kids and families during out-of-school time. The free event, sponsored by several businesses and organizations, brings together 12 youth organizations. Families can run, walk, and glow side by side under the night sky. Each organization will sponsor a table for families to discover programs, meet leaders, and find new afterschool, weekend, and summer opportunities for their kids.

Wildwood, New Jersey: Students at Wildwood Public Schools will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* on October 21 from 5:30 to 7:00 PM with an event featuring nutrition education provided by representatives from Rutgers University, a student-run talent show, and an interactive "critter display." Rutgers University will provide free groceries to attendees.

New Orleans, Louisiana: From 3:45 to 5:00 PM on October 22, Young Audiences Charter School will host "HeArts in Motion," a fun run and walk at their Adella Gautier Campus, for *Lights On Afterschool*. Some 250 students and family members will complete a 2-kilometer run, jog, or

walk around the campus, with music at the finish line. Students will learn to find and count their pulse to better understand how exercise makes their hearts stronger, before contributing to a heart mural. The event will include dance challenges, an obstacle course, and a photo booth.

Salisbury, Maryland: On October 23, the Boys & Girls Club at the Truitt Street Community Center will host "Emotions Through Art," a *Lights On Afterschool* event. Club members will practice expressing their feelings through artwork and nurturing their emotional intelligence. The event will start at 5:00 PM and as many as 90 members are expected.

Ahoskie, North Carolina: On October 22, The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Coastal Plains Hertford County Club will host a social and emotional learning event for *Lights On Afterschool* at its site at Bearfield Primary School. From 4:30 to 5:30 PM, members will learn about various de-escalation, self-regulation, and calming strategies and techniques while crafting sensory items like squishies, stress balls, and fidgets. Club members can also enjoy a "mindfulness lounge" featuring yoga and calming music. Free resources with tips and strategies on emotional regulation and navigating conflict will be available.

Allentown, Pennsylvania: On October 22, from 4:00 to 6:15 PM, the Boys & Girls Club of Allentown will host a *Lights On Afterschool* festival at its Sixth Street Clubhouse. Guests will participate in social and emotional art activities and cooperative games, including a "honey pot" station where members can fill in words about what makes a good and healthy friendship on a pot. There will be a self-portrait art table.

Barton, Vermont: On October 22, Barton Graded School will host an evening of health and wellness for afterschool students and families to mark *Lights On Afterschool*. From 3:30 to 5:00 pm, guests will get moving with activities including running club, dancing, and karate. The evening will end with a shared meal of butternut squash soup and sourdough bread.

A large and powerful body of evidence demonstrates that youth who take part in afterschool build confidence and communication skills, benefit from healthy social interactions, and are better protected from risky behaviors or negative influences.

Clear Channel Outdoor is a proud supporter of *Lights On Afterschool* this year.

# # # #

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.