



NEWS RELEASE

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***Lights On Afterschool* Events Across the Nation This Month Are Showcasing the Ways Afterschool Programs Support Student Health and Wellbeing**

From color runs to cooking classes to substance abuse education, many of the thousands of *Lights On Afterschool* events being held on and around October 26 are highlighting the diverse ways afterschool programs keep children and youth safe and healthy and promote their mental and physical wellness. Now in its 24th year, *Lights On Afterschool* is the nation's rally for afterschool programs, which keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give working parents peace of mind. It is organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](https://afterschoolalliance.org) to send the message that demand for afterschool programs is high, too many students are without programs, and the pandemic exacerbated both staff and funding shortages.

"The healthy habits and life skills afterschool programs instill can last a lifetime," said Jodi Grant, Executive Director of the Afterschool Alliance. "Afterschool programs across the country provide fun, engaging activities that build confidence and life skills, positive connections with peers and mentors, nutritious meals and snacks, and opportunities to move and get active. For many, programs are a place they can de-stress and feel connected. This month, *Lights On Afterschool* events are shining a light on these and other powerful ways afterschool programs support student wellbeing. Many of our nation's youth are facing a mental health crisis, and the supports afterschool programs provide are more important than ever."

More than a million people are expected to participate in some 8,000 *Lights On Afterschool* events this month at schools, 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, cities, parks, museums, community centers, and other places. Among the many health- and wellness-focused activities taking place at *Lights On Afterschool* events around the country:

Dinuba, California: On October 26, students, parents, and community members will join Monson-Sultana Elementary School and the Fuel Afterschool Program in a color run for *Lights On Afterschool*. The event will start at 5:30 PM at the elementary school and families will have fun running through all the colors of the rainbow. The local sheriff's office and fire department will join the expected 150 attendees.

Fargo, North Dakota: YMCA of Cass and Clay Counties and 23 host sites will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* on October 18 and 19 with a mile run and dance party. The students will start the day with a mile run and walk at the Schlossman YMCA location. After the run, the students will participate in glow-in-the-dark dance parties at their school sites. More than 200 students will participate.

Riverview, Florida: The Boys & Girls Club of Tampa Bay partnered with Where Love Grows to hold a family dinner night for *Lights On Afterschool* on October 6. Throughout the semester, the Club's students have participated in culinary classes that taught them how to prepare meals they could cook at home. The students prepared a dinner for peers and families to enjoy, highlighting the value of gathering and spending time together. The 25 culinary students prepared 150 meals and were presented with a class completion certificate. More than 100 people attended.

Las Vegas, Nevada: On October 15, Greater Youth Sports Association held a Basketball Recreational Game Day event for *Lights On Afterschool*. Local fitness motivation coach Dorian Warmasley led students through warm-ups and various practice drills before they participated in a series of friendly scrimmage games with their peers. Students had a chance to showcase their skills in an inclusive, non-competitive environment where encouragement and positive words from local coaches and trainers reinforced the importance of physical activity. More than 300 students attended.

Mountain Top, Pennsylvania: Starry Knights Learning Center will hold an event from October 23 through October 26 for *Lights On Afterschool* and Red Ribbon Week. Starry Knights will partner with multiple anti-substance use education organizations to help provide education and resources for students on the dangers of substance abuse and the physical harm vaping causes. On October 24, a drug collection truck will park outside the Center for community members to safely drop off and dispose of any old prescriptions.

For the 17th consecutive year, the New York skyline will shine for afterschool on October 26th when the iconic Empire State Building is lit in yellow and blue to celebrate.

Some 24.7 million U.S. children not in an afterschool program would be enrolled, if a program were available to them, according to a survey of 1,500 parents commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted by Edge Research in 2022. That is the highest number ever recorded. Unmet demand for afterschool programs is significantly higher among Latino and Black children (at 60% and 54% respectively) than among children overall (49%). Cost is the top barrier to enrollment, cited by 57% of parents as a reason for not enrolling their child. Ninety percent of parents rate the quality of the afterschool program their child attends as excellent (51%) or very good (39%).

Capital One and Clear Channel Outdoor are generous sponsors 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.