



## News Release

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## **24<sup>th</sup> Annual *Lights On Afterschool* Set for Thursday, October 26**

*A Million People Expected to Join National Rally for Afterschool This Year*

Washington, D.C. – Students, parents, educators, community and business leaders, lawmakers, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) experts, and others in every corner of the country will turn the lights on for afterschool on and around Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup>. Again this year, *Lights On Afterschool* will include thousands of events, including academic contests, student art shows and performances, science fairs, family fun nights, community service activities, sporting competitions, and much more.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, [Lights On Afterschool](#) is the only national rally for afterschool. Some 8,000 events this year will amplify the voices of youth and showcase the many ways afterschool programs support student success and well-being by providing homework help and academic support; healthy snacks and meals; robotics; computer programming; mentors; art, dance and music; job and college readiness; sports and fitness activities; opportunities to think critically, collaborate, and communicate with peers and adults; and more.

This year, *Lights On Afterschool* will take place as the country celebrates 25 years since the launch of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC), the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs. 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC has grown from a small discretionary grant program serving approximately 40,000 students to an initiative reaching nearly 1 million students. Still, though, in the United States today, for every child in an afterschool program, [four more are waiting to get in](#). The [Afterschool Alliance](#) organizes *Lights On Afterschool* to underscore the need to invest in afterschool programs, so all students will have the chance to participate.

*“Lights On Afterschool is a time for schools and communities to come together to celebrate and support afterschool programs, which do so much to help students succeed in school and in life,”* said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. *“Lights On Afterschool events are rich in their diversity, but they all showcase the skills students gain and the talents they develop in these programs. We need quality afterschool programs now more than ever, as children and youth continue to re-engage and catch up after the pandemic. Afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give working parents peace of mind, but too many children are missing out. We need sustained investments and increased support, so all students will be able to benefit from the resources these programs provide. Every child deserves access to a quality afterschool program.”*

For the 17<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, the New York skyline will shine for *Lights On Afterschool* on October 26<sup>th</sup> when the iconic Empire State Building is lit in yellow and blue to celebrate. Afterschool supporters are also working with local officials to light up local landmarks and buildings around the country in support of afterschool programs.

The 24<sup>th</sup> annual *Lights On Afterschool* will include events at schools, 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, parks, museums, community centers, shopping malls, and other places.

The American Rescue Plan provided historic resources to expand access to out-of-school time programs. In 2022, the U.S. Department of Education launched the [Engage Every Student Initiative](#), a bold, historic call to action to school districts, cities, and states to use funds from the American Rescue Plan, as well as state and local funds, to ensure access to high-quality out-of-school time programs for every child. The Afterschool Alliance is one of five coordinating partners in this public/private partnership.

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 nearly 1,500 parents](#) commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted by Edge Research in May and June of 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 children overall (49%). Cost is the top barrier to enroll, cited by 57% of parents as a reason for not enrolling their child. Ninety percent of parents rate the quality of the program their child attends as excellent (51%) or very good (39%).

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.

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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*