



NEWS RELEASE

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## **21<sup>st</sup> Annual *Lights On Afterschool*: Student Conversation with an Astronaut Will Be Among Virtual Events Celebrating Afterschool Next Week, as Thousands of Programs Host Local Events**

### ***National Events Amplify Youth Voices, Focus on STEM, Wellness, More***

Washington, D.C. – The Afterschool Alliance is hosting a week-long series of virtual events to mark the 21<sup>st</sup> annual [Lights On Afterschool](#) rally. The events will highlight the many ways afterschool programs serve children and families and will complement the thousands of celebrations sponsored over the course of the week by local afterschool programs.

National events will include activities for students, parents, educators and advocates. They include:

- Monday, October 19: **Engineer for the Week** is a coding activity led by Facebook Engineers who will help lead students through a *Lights On*-themed coding activity using Scratch.
- Tuesday, October 20: **Wings for Kids** will introduce educators and students to social emotional learning and the tips and techniques that bring it to life. The event will include opportunities for practice and play aimed at helping participants better understand each other, strengthen relationships, and identify personal strengths.
- Wednesday, October 21: **Young Entrepreneurs** promises to bring some sizzle to *Lights On Afterschool* with a youth entrepreneur pitch activity. Participants will join in a “Wacky Inventions” activity via Padlet, then log in for a live panel during which young entrepreneurs will discuss all things entrepreneurship.
- Wednesday, October 21: **Young Rembrandts** is an art activity for students and families. It features a live virtual drawing class for the whole family, no experience necessary! Young Rembrandts founder Bette Fetter will teach participants how to draw.
- Thursday, October 22 (*Lights On Afterschool Day*): This year’s *Lights On Afterschool* Centerpiece event is a **Youth Town Hall** at which four youth leaders from afterschool programs will share their afterschool experiences (pre- and during COVID), and discuss what youth need to thrive, and what our leaders need to do to make sure all youth can reach their full potential. The youth panelists are particularly interested in discussing the learning opportunities and mental health supports youth need, especially among BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities.

- Friday, October 23: **The Million Girls Moonshot and NASA**, in collaboration with the Afterschool Alliance, aim to provide afterschool youth with an out-of-this world *Lights On* experience. Students will speak live with astronaut Jasmin Moghbeli about her journey to becoming an astronaut, and answer questions about the Artemis mission to land on the moon.
- Friday, October 23: To wrap up the week, a session on **Mindfulness**, an opportunity to come together for a mindful moment and take stock of all the great learnings of the week. The session will focus on the power of expressing gratitude, even in the midst of so many resilience-taxing unknowns.

More information on each of the events is available at <http://afterschoolalliance.org/loaVirtualEvents.cfm>

“The response to COVID from afterschool programs has been remarkable,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant, “so this year’s events are designed to celebrate their incredible contributions and to highlight the need for more support for afterschool programs. The Afterschool Alliance’s [latest surveys](#) find that programs and parents are challenged by virtual learning and evolving school schedules. Programs are also constrained by budgets inadequate to address new safety protocols and students’ emerging needs. It’s time, first, to applaud afterschool programs and, second, make sure they get the support they need.”

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, the 21<sup>st</sup> annual [Lights On Afterschool](#) will be unlike previous national rallies for afterschool, with local programs hosting a mix of virtual and in-person events focusing on science, music and dance, sports and fitness, academics, community service, social and emotional wellness, and more. Local hosts include 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, parks, museums, community centers, and others, events will be mostly virtual in communities around the country.

For the 14<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, the New York skyline will shine for afterschool one night during *Lights On Afterschool* week when the iconic Empire State Building is lit in yellow and blue to celebrate. Afterschool supporters also are working with local officials to light up local landmarks and buildings around the country to show their support for afterschool programs.

The [Afterschool Alliance](#) organizes *Lights On Afterschool* to underscore the need to invest in afterschool programs, which in normal times provide help with homework; skilled mentors; art, dance and music; healthy snacks and meals; computer programming; opportunities to think critically, collaborate and communicate with peers and adults; job and college readiness; sports and fitness activities; robotics; and opportunities for hands-on, team-based learning. During the pandemic, programs have stepped up to provide virtual educational activities, deliver meals and enrichment kits, help families bridge the digital divide, check in with children to ensure their social and emotional needs are being met, connect families to social services, care for the children of essential workers and first responders, and much more.

The [America After 3PM](#) household survey of 30,000 families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, found that participation in afterschool programs has increased to 10.2 million students nationwide – but the unmet demand is great. For every child in an afterschool program today, two more are waiting to get in. Unmet demand is especially high in rural communities and communities of concentrated poverty. One in five students in the United States is unsupervised

after the school day ends. A new household survey on afterschool will be released in early December.

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.

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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).*