



NEWS RELEASE
October 20, 2020

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***Lights On Afterschool* Events Across the Nation Are Showcasing the Engaging, Fun STEM Education Afterschool Programs Provide**

A conversation with a NASA astronaut. A coding hackathon competition. An egg drop contest. Student-built catapults to launch candy pumpkins. Classes on discovering dinosaurs. Those are some of the educational, fun STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and STEAM (STEM plus arts) activities taking place at [Lights On Afterschool](#) events across the nation this week. Now in its 21st year, the only national rally for afterschool includes thousands of events, many of them virtual and many being held on Thursday.

Lights On Afterschool is organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#) to underscore the need to invest in afterschool programs, which keep students safe, improve their academic achievement, and support working families. This Friday, the [STEM Next Opportunity Fund](#), [Million Girls Moonshot](#), and [NASA](#) are collaborating with the Afterschool Alliance to provide afterschool youth with an opportunity to [speak live with astronaut Jasmin Moghbeli](#) about her journey to becoming an astronaut. Moghbeli will answer students' questions about the Artemis mission, which will land the first woman and next man on the Moon by 2024. NASA plans to use what it learns on the Moon to take the next giant leap, sending astronauts to Mars.

“At their afterschool programs, students of all ages learn how to plant gardens, build rocket engines, cure diseases, and keep our air and water clean,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “These programs create fun activities that educate students now and make them want to learn more later. That’s why afterschool programs have been so successful at STEM learning. We are delighted that so many *Lights On Afterschool* events are showcasing the ways afterschool programs engage children and youth in STEM activities this year, despite the challenges associated with the pandemic. Quality afterschool programs are essential to keeping students engaged and setting them up to succeed in school and life.”

Lights On Afterschool week kicked off with a national Engineer for the Week coding activity led by Facebook engineers on Monday evening. The engineers led students through a coding activity using Scratch. The Afterschool Alliance also teamed up with 4-H to bring the 4-H STEM Challenge to afterschool programs around the country for *Lights On Afterschool*. Students are working in teams at their programs or at home with their families on a Mars Base Camp STEM Challenge. The challenge, designed by Google and Virginia Cooperative Extension, helps students learn about Mars and explore what it takes to send a mission to the red planet.

Additional STEM-focused activities taking place at *Lights On Afterschool* events around the country include:

Fairbanks, Alaska: The Fairbanks North Star Borough School District will hold a drive/walk-through family event for *Lights On Afterschool* on October 22nd from 4:30 to 6:30 PM. The event will include the release of a collection of STEAM activities in a Guidebook, along with supplies to help students try them. Community partners including 4-H, the University of Alaska Museum of the North, and the University of Alaska Large Animal Research Station will contribute family resources and activities. Some 500 people are expected.

American Canyon, California: The Boys & Girls Clubs of Napa Valley - American Canyon Clubhouse will hold an event for students with STEM and art activities to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*. They will do various challenges using different batteries to test circuits and conductivity, as well as art projects on the theme of lights and electricity. The event will be on October 22nd from 3:30 to 6:30 PM. Up to 75 students are expected.

San Francisco, California: The California Academy of Sciences museum's Science Action Club (SAC) will hold a virtual event on October 22nd from 10:00 to 10:30 AM. The SAC is celebrating the resiliency and creativity of the out-of-school time space for *Lights On Afterschool*. SAC will lead a 30-minute virtual session that highlights ways to connect to nature anytime, anywhere. Participants only need their observation skills to find signs of birds in their neighborhoods. This event is designed to help engage youth with nature.

Detroit, Michigan: On October 22nd from 3:00 to 4:00 PM, 4th through 8th graders can participate in an hour of coding with Accelerate4KIDS™ to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*. Kids will have fun learning how to code with JavaScript programming language. The event is virtual.

Kansas City, Missouri: Stems on the Vines Kansas City Creators Clubs (SOTV KCCC) will hold a virtual open house to celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*. The open house will be held from October 22nd to October 30th. Events will include a coding hackathon competition, robotic football games, career exploration Zoom calls, Science SuperStars, a CAD/3D printing demo, virtual field trips, math games and a drone airshow. More than 100 students are expected.

Bridgewater, New Hampshire: Project Promise - Bridgewater-Hebron Village School (BHVS) will hold a *Lights On Afterschool* event on October 22nd from 3:00 to 5:30 PM. The event will be STEM-themed and will engage families with an egg drop contest. Families will work on an egg drop challenge at home, and students will bring their designs to the event. Students will also make catapults to launch candy pumpkins and measure the distance, and participate in a candy corn/toothpick tower STEM challenge.

Manhattan, New York: Snapology of Manhattan will hold a *Lights on Afterschool* Virtual STEM Series on October 22nd. Discounted Virtual LEGO-based STEM classes will be offered to bring awareness to the effectiveness of virtually learning STEM. In the Discovering Dinosaurs class, students will learn the word "paleontology" to begin to understand that scientists use fossils to learn about plants and animals of the past. In the Design Around Your Environment class, students will be challenged to consider how architects and engineers can use the landscape without destroying it. They will be challenged to design an environment and then build a sound structure around that environment. In the Science of Superpowers (Transform the Hulk) class, students will explore the importance of DNA and how a slight change in your DNA can change everything about how you interact with the world.

Winterville, North Carolina: The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Coastal Plain will host an in-person STEM learning event for *Lights On Afterschool* on October 22nd from 3:00 to 6:00 PM. Using the Mizzen by Mott app, students will participate in the “Cotton Catapults” activity, making their own catapults to compete in different tasks, including launching cotton balls the highest and the farthest and aiming them at specific targets.

Strawberry Plains, Tennessee: The Boys & Girls Clubs of Dumplin Valley-Strawberry Plains will hold a virtual science fair for *Lights On Afterschool*. The event is on October 20th from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM. Stations will offer science experiments that each last for ten minutes. The event is virtual and will be live on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter at Boys & Girls Clubs of Dumplin Valley.

In normal times, afterschool programs 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 unmet demand for afterschool programs 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.

Governments, parents, philanthropies, businesses, and others support afterschool and summer learning programs, but investments are under threat. Again this year, the Trump administration recommended eliminating dedicated federal funding for afterschool and summer learning programs in its budget proposal, although bipartisan majorities in Congress have made clear they will not do so. The Afterschool Alliance is asking Congress to provide a onetime \$6.2 billion boost in funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers – the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs – to ensure out-of-school-time programs can do more to help students and families during this difficult time.

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.

The New York skyline will again shine for afterschool this week when, for the 14th consecutive year, the iconic Empire State Building is lit up in yellow and blue for afterschool.

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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.