



News Release
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***Lights On Afterschool* Events Across the Country to Showcase the Fun, Innovative Ways Afterschool Programs Engage Students in STEM Learning**

A conversation with a NASA scientist. Paper roller coasters. A drone airshow. Glow-in-the-dark slime. Solar powered cars. Color-changing T-shirts. A boat-building and -racing competition. These are some of the fun, educational STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) activities taking place at [Lights On Afterschool](#) events across the country next month.

Now in its 23rd year, *Lights On Afterschool* is America's only national rally for afterschool programs, with thousands of events being held on or around Thursday, October 20. It is organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#) to underscore the need to invest in afterschool programs, which keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give working parents peace of mind that their children are safe, supervised, and learning after the school day ends.

“Afterschool programs are an ideal setting for students to explore STEM through hands-on, team-based activities,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Whether they’re building robots, testing soil samples, shadowing health care professionals, or writing code, in afterschool programs across the country students are learning STEM by doing STEM. We’re thrilled that so many *Lights On Afterschool* events this year are shining a light on the unique ways afterschool programs engage students in STEM activities. As the pandemic continues, it is more important than ever to ensure students have access to quality afterschool programs, which build students’ interest in learning and help them forge successful futures.”

The Afterschool Alliance is teaming up with [Energy Superheroes](#) to spark excitement about energy careers for *Lights On Afterschool* this year. The authors and sponsors of *Everyday Superheroes: Women in Energy Careers* are donating nearly 300 books to afterschool programs for their *Lights On Afterschool* celebrations and for use throughout the year. In addition, Energy Superheroes and trailblazers will sign donated books and build wind turbines with students at *Lights On Afterschool* events in Oklahoma City, Boston, Chattanooga, and Houston.

NASA will host a *Lights On Afterschool* event at its Washington, D.C. headquarters for middle school students on October 20.

Among the many other STEM-focused activities taking place at *Lights On Afterschool* events around the country:

Dallas, Texas: After-School All-Stars North Texas will hold a showcase for *Lights On Afterschool* on October 20 at Garcia Middle School in Dallas. To help “shine a light” on the free, comprehensive afterschool STEM program for middle schoolers, students will build and demonstrate miniature solar-powered cars. Texas State Representative Jessica Gonzalez will attend.

Durango, Colorado: The Boys & Girls Club of La Plata County will hold an open house for *Lights On Afterschool* with the theme “Lighting Up the Future, One Club Member at a Time.” More than 100 people are expected to attend. Parents will work alongside their students on hands-on STEM projects, including building and troubleshooting circuits using recycled file folders, repurposed Christmas lights, painters tape and batteries. Program leaders will also distribute glow sticks for safe trick-or-treating.

Lincoln Park, Michigan: The Accelerate to Great (A2G) afterschool program will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* on October 20 with an open house titled “Thrills, Frights, and Lights: An Evening of Spooky STEM.” It will feature hands-on, Halloween-themed STEM activities including creating lava lamps and glow-in-the-dark slime. The event will also include competitions, snacks, and a Halloween Tree decorated with positive messages from students about their experiences in the afterschool program.

Palm Beach, Florida: The Palm Beach Public Afterschool Program will hold a *Lights On Afterschool* event on October 20 featuring activities that incorporate both STEM and social-emotional learning. Students and their families will rotate between stations including planting, team boat-building and -racing, and creating ‘elephant toothpaste’ using dish soap, hydrogen peroxide and yeast. Approximately 50 families will attend.

Sacramento, California: The City of Sacramento's afterschool programs will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* with an event titled “Lights On in the Meadow!” on October 20 at the Sam & Bonnie Pannell Community Center. Parents and community members will tour the facility and learn about the STEM, arts, and other enriching activities students take part in during the program. Teens will showcase projects they created using the program’s new 3-D printing machine. Community organizations including Sacramento Area Bike Advocates, the Sacramento LGBTQ center, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, and the South Sacramento Mental Health Collaborative will connect students and their families to resources. At least 50 people will attend.

For the 16th consecutive year, the New York skyline will shine for afterschool on October 20th 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 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 among children overall (49%). A [household survey](#) released in summer of 2021 confirms that afterschool programs have been ramping up their STEM offerings, but students from low-income families are most likely to miss out. Seventy-three percent of parents report that their child's afterschool program offers STEM learning opportunities, up from 69% in 2014. Three in five parents of afterschool students (60%) report that their child participates in STEM in afterschool twice or more per week, up from 52% in 2014.

The American Rescue Plan provided historic resources to expand access to out-of-school time programs. In July, the U.S. Department of Education launched the [Engage Every Student Initiative](#), a bold, historic call to action 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 organizations in this historic new public/private partnership.

BellXcel, 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.