



NEWS RELEASE
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The Lights Are On for Afterschool Programs Across America Today

23rd Annual Rally for Afterschool Spotlights the Programs that Support Students & Families

In Alaska, students are balancing spiders on webs they created with marshmallows and toothpicks, and enjoying Polynesian dance. In California, they are doing “Will It Float?” exercises. In Florida, they are creating elephant toothpaste from dish soap, hydrogen peroxide and yeast; in Indiana, celebrating Hispanic heritage; in Maryland, studying financial literacy; and in Michigan, holding a Supreme Chef challenge. In Montana, students are introducing the community to their goats, chickens, and hedgehog. In New York State, students are making calm-down jars and taking a challenge to improve their health.

All that, along with student performances, academic contests, hikes, food drives, debates, open houses, and much more are taking place at afterschool programs across the country today for [Lights On Afterschool](#), the national rally for afterschool organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#). The 23rd annual *Lights On Afterschool* includes events at schools, 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, parks, museums, community centers, and other places. It kicked off with a celebration in Oakland, California last week.

“Thousands of local programs are showcasing the skills students hone and talents they develop at their afterschool programs,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “The Afterschool Alliance organizes *Lights On Afterschool* to celebrate the many ways these programs help students succeed in school and in life, and to underscore the need to invest in afterschool programs, which keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give working parents peace of mind. But too many children and families are missing out. There aren’t nearly enough afterschool programs, and many are facing major challenges. We urgently need greater investments in afterschool, so all students will be able to benefit from the academic and well-being supports these programs provide.”

The New York City skyline will shine for afterschool tonight when the Empire State Building is lit in yellow and blue. New afterschool billboards with the tag, Freedom to Explore, are running in 25 markets nationwide thanks to Clear Channel Outdoor, as well as on jumbo screens in Times Square. Other landmarks being lit up for afterschool this week include: Tropicana Field in Tampa, Florida; the Caesars Superdome in New Orleans, Louisiana; South Street Station in Boston, Massachusetts; the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation in Flint, Michigan; the Ocracoke Island Lighthouse in North Carolina; City Hall in Charleston, South Carolina; the Korean Veterans Memorial Bridge in Nashville, Tennessee; and the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge in Washington, D.C.

Also today, NASA is hosting a virtual event, plus several in-person gatherings, featuring a pre-recorded interaction with actress Keke Palmer of Disney’s *Lightyear* posing questions from afterschool students around the country to International Space Station astronaut Jessica Watkins. The event is hosted by NASA, the Afterschool Alliance, and STEM Next Opportunity Fund’s Million Girls Moonshot.

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona is sharing a message during Think Together’s virtual *Lights On Afterschool* celebration.

To spark excitement about energy careers, the authors of *Everyday Superheroes: Women in Energy Careers* are donating books to afterschool programs for *Lights On Afterschool*. Energy Superheroes and trailblazers are signing donated books and building mini wind turbines with students at afterschool programs in Oklahoma City, Boston, Chattanooga, and Houston this week. Other *Lights On Afterschool* events today, this week, and next:

Kenai, Alaska: Shanette Wik, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Kenai Peninsula, swik@bgckp.com

On October 29th, the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Kenai Peninsula will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* with a Trunk or Treat carnival, including a cake walk, face painting, pumpkin golf, tombstone toss, a photo booth, captain hook ring toss, and more. There will be a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) station where kids make their own ice cream, sensory bottles, and catapults.

Hallandale Beach, Florida: Afterschool Ambassador Nicole Carter, City of Hallandale Beach-Hepburn Center, ncarter@cohb.org

The City of Hallandale Beach is hosting a week-long *Lights On Afterschool* celebration with *Lights On Afterschool* lightbulbs decorating the breezeway at city hall. Yesterday, the city commissioner issued a proclamation in support of *Lights On Afterschool*. Today, the City is hosting a *Lights On Afterschool* Rally with music, games, food, a STEAM (science, technology, arts, engineering and math) demonstration, and a social and emotional wellness session by Mentally Fit.

Atlanta, Georgia: Rachel Alterman Wallack, VOX Atl, rachel@voxatl.org

At 5:30 PM, VOX ATL is hosting a youth-led event for *Lights On Afterschool*. The program features the release of results from a statewide survey of more than 500 teens across Georgia, exploring their needs, values, and how they spend their out-of-school time. The interactive event will feature digital teen self-expression stations focused on the 2022 election and voting, as well as teen mental health.

Jackson, Mississippi: Afterschool Ambassador Monique Ealey, Mississippi Children's Museum (MCM) Launch into Learning Afterschool Program, monique@mcm.ms

To mark *Lights On Afterschool*, the Mississippi Children's Museum Launch into Learning program held a Play, Eat, Learn event for the community on October 18th. Activities included dinner, arts and crafts, a display of afterschool student work, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) demos, and a session on how to support children experiencing anxiety and stress.

Alliance, Nebraska: Mara Andersen, ARC AfterSchool, mara@alliancerecenter.com

ARC AfterSchool and UNL Extension office are hosting a *Lights On Afterschool* open house and family STEM night. Students and their families are participating in a Mars Landing challenge where they will work in teams to guide their rover to Mars before time runs out. There is an escape room where families work together to solve clues, as well as arts and crafts activities.

Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico: Rhonda Fowler, Holloman School Age Center, rhonda.fowler@us.af.mil

The Holloman School Age Center is celebrating *Lights On Afterschool* with an open house. This year's theme is "Around the World and their Cultures." Visitors are touring the program and learning about the programs and services offered. Rooms at the center will focus on a specific country and include activities pertaining to that culture. Parents will work on "make and take" crafts with their children.

Brooklyn, New York: Monique Jarvis, LEAP Presents Lights On Afterschool Youth Festival mjarvis@leapnyc.org

Youth from LEAP Educational Arts center are hosting an event after PS100 won the *Lights On Afterschool* poster art contest with their creation: "We Stand Create Play Together." The event will include LEAP student performances, face painting, murals, Zumba and more!

Ocracoke, North Carolina: Afterschool Ambassador Nancy Leach, Hyde 21st Century Community Learning Center, nleach@hyde.k12.nc.us

Students and families on Ocracoke Island are marking *Lights On Afterschool* by parading from their afterschool program site to the historic Ocracoke Lighthouse, which will be lit up for the occasion. On their walk, students will wear glow-in-the-dark bracelets and carry flashlights and candles. Prior to the walk, students will read a lighthouse story and then, with their families, create art based on the story.

Salt Lake City, Utah: Afterschool Ambassador Angel Gomez, YouthCity, a Division of Youth & Family, Salt Lake City, Angel.gomez@slcgov.com

All seven YouthCity afterschool sites will come together on October 28th to mark *Lights On Afterschool* at the *Difference-Makers Service Project Lights On Day of the Dead Carnival*. The service-oriented event at the Sorenson Unity Center includes a campus cleanup project, after which food will be provided for students and families, along with carnival games.

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.

The [Afterschool Alliance](#) organizes *Lights On Afterschool* to underscore the need to invest in afterschool programs. 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%). 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 list of [local Lights On Afterschool events is here](#). To find other events in your area, see [this map](#).

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.