



NEWS RELEASE
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Contact: [Janie Bostic-Gibson](#)
713-903-6714

Houston ‘Energy Superhero’ Joins Afterschool Students to Mark *Lights on Afterschool*

Book-Signing, Mini-Turbine-Building Exercise Greet Students at YMCA of Greater Houston’s Ridgemont Elementary School Program

Houston, Texas – Houston-based “Energy Superhero” Monica McDaniel – so designated in a new book about women in the energy profession – visited the YMCA of Greater Houston’s ACE 21st Century Community Learning Center afterschool program at Ridgemont Elementary School this afternoon to sign copies of *Energy Superheroes: Women in Energy Careers*, and to lead children in building tiny wind turbines. Her visit was part of the 23rd annual *Lights On Afterschool*, the nationwide celebration of the impact afterschool programs have on children’s lives.

The mission of the “energy superheroes” is to spark excitement among students in energy careers. McDaniel signed free copies of the book, met with students to share her experiences and answer questions, then led an exercise in which students built wind turbines on the back of a pencil.

Her participation is the result of a partnership between the Afterschool Alliance and the *Everyday Superheroes* book series, which aims to connect local women leading the nation’s energy transition with the future workforce. At the event, student speakers also discussed the important role that afterschool programs play in their lives.

“We’re absolutely delighted to be able to bring this opportunity to our students,” said Janie Bostic-Gibson, Director of ACE 21st Century Programs at Ridgemont Elementary. “These ‘superheroes’ are the real deal, even without capes! And they are outstanding role models for our students, allowing our kids to imagine career paths for themselves in expanding fields critical to the nation’s economy and security. Today, the kids just know that they’re having a blast with a really neat exercise and some cool engineers and scientists. But the lasting impact for them will be that their horizons are broader, their sense of what’s possible expanded, their futures better in focus.”

Houston-based Pattern Energy, one of the world’s leading renewable energy companies, sponsored the books and wind turbine models for the event. Pattern Energy employees helped the kids build mini wind turbine models, answered questions about renewable energy, and generated excitement about STEM careers.

“I never thought to be a role model but representation is what the world needs today, and especially representation in STEM to help young girls believe in themselves and pursue careers to become scientists, engineers, or even meteorologists,” said McDaniel, Senior Manager of Meteorology at Pattern Energy. “If you can see it, you will start to believe it, and that’s the truth. I’m thrilled I can be a part of this amazing opportunity to help spark excitement of STEM careers in the minds of the future generation.”

As featured in the award-winning multicultural nonfiction children’s book series, *Everyday Superheroes*, “energy superheroes” are real-life women with energy careers who are leading the energy transition to clean power. Published by Wiselink, the book shares the relatable stories of energy industry role models, women working in science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) careers.

Similar celebrations with other local superheroes are scheduled in Chattanooga, Tenn., Boston, Mass., and Oklahoma City, Okla. Copies of *Energy Superheroes* and wind turbine kits for the Houston event were contributed by Pattern Energy and STEM Superheroes Erin Twamley, co-author of the book.

ACE 21st Century Programs partners with the YMCA of Greater Houston to provide quality afterschool programming. With funding from the federal Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, the partnership allows access to a wide range of resources that are available to students and families. The YMCA’s Mission is to put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

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. 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 science, technology, engineering, and math (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.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance and launched in October 2000, *Lights On Afterschool* is the only nationwide event celebrating afterschool programs and their important role in the lives of children, families and communities. The effort has become a hallmark of the afterschool movement and generates media coverage across the country each year. Thousands of afterschool programs across the nation will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* on or around October 20, with open houses, rallies, parades, and more. BellXcel, Capital One, and Clear Channel Outdoor are generous sponsors of *Lights On Afterschool* this year.

Pattern Energy’s operational portfolio includes 35 renewable energy facilities that use proven, best-in-class technology with an operating capacity of nearly 6,000 MW in the United States, Canada, Japan, and Mexico. Pattern Energy is guided by a long-term commitment to serve customers, protect the environment, and strengthen communities. For more information, visit <https://patternenergy.com>.

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