



NEWS RELEASE
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‘Energy Superheroes’ Join Afterschool Students to Mark *Lights On Afterschool* Today

Book-Signings, Mini-Turbine-Building Exercise Greets Students at Afterschool Programs in Boston, Chattanooga, Houston, Oklahoma City

Washington, DC – Local “Energy Superheroes” – so designated in a new book about women in the energy profession – are set to meet with afterschool students in four cities today, Thursday, October 20, to celebrate the 23rd annual *Lights On Afterschool*. The women will sign copies of the book, *Energy Superheroes: Women in Energy Careers*, then lead children in building model wind turbines – all part of 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. They will sign free copies of the book, share their experiences and answer questions from students, then lead an exercise in which students build tiny wind turbines on pencils. Events are scheduled for Boston, Chattanooga, Houston and Oklahoma County today.

These events result from a partnership between the Afterschool Alliance and the *Everyday Superheroes* book series, which aims to connect women leading the nation’s energy transition with the workers of tomorrow. The authors of the books and several energy companies have also donated nearly 600 books to afterschool programs around the country.

“I never thought to be a role model, but representation is what the world needs today, and especially representation in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) to help young girls believe in themselves and pursue careers to become scientists, engineers, or even meteorologists,” said Monica McDaniel, Senior Manager of Meteorology at Pattern Energy, a “superhero” who will join students at an event in Houston. “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.”

“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 in Houston. “These ‘superheroes’ are the real deal, even without capes! And they are outstanding role models for our students, allowing them 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.”

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 WiseInk, the book shares the relatable stories of energy industry role models, women working in science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) careers.

“Students need to see that there are exciting energy career paths that make a difference locally,” said *Energy Superheroes* co-author Erin Twamley. “By having real-life Energy Superheroes in their communities sharing the superpowers of wind and their stories, students are able to see and make that connection. We hope that the interest and confidence of students are sparked at these celebrations.”

“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 turbines, testing soil samples, shadowing health care professionals, or writing code, in afterschool programs across the country students are learning STEM by doing STEM. As the pandemic continues, it is more important than ever to ensure students have access to quality afterschool programs, which build their interest in learning and help them forge successful futures.”

The Superhero events are among thousands of *Lights On Afterschool* events on or around October 20 at afterschool programs around the nation. The four Superhero events include:

- In Houston, “superhero” Monica McDaniel of Pattern Energy Group will meet with students at the ACE 21st Century program, operated in partnership with the Greater Houston Area YMCA.
- In Boston, participating superheroes included Claudia Garcia of Enel North America; Becky Stebbins of First Light & Power; and Dr. Maggie Teliska of Enel Green Power joined students at an event at the Wang YMCA of Chinatown.
- In Oklahoma County, superheroes Michelle Rodriguez-Pico and Jennifer Hill, both from Oklahoma Gas & Electric, will join elementary students at the Boys & Girls Club of Oklahoma County in Memorial Park.
- In Chattanooga, *Energy Superheroes* coauthors Erin Twamley and Joshua Sneiderman visited with students at the Girls, Inc., afterschool program for a book-signing on October 18. The coauthors donated books to girls in the Tennessee River Valley area, recognizing the importance of early literacy in sparking interest in STEM topics. Sneiderman's own daughters attend Girls Inc. programming. Girls Inc.

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.

Sponsoring organizations for the Superhero events include Oklahoma Gas & Electric (Oklahoma City); Pattern Energy (Houston); FirstLight Power, KidWind, Siemens Energy, and Women's Energy Network Boston (Boston). In Chattanooga and in the other sites, the *Energy Superheroes* book series is contributing books for students.

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.

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