



News Release

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Usher Sparks Call to Expand Afterschool Opportunities, Announces Role as National Voice for Afterschool at Detroit Tour Stop

Detroit, Michigan – Marking the 25th anniversary of his afterschool initiative, Usher’s New Look, R&B superstar Usher has joined forces with the Afterschool Alliance to lend his voice to the call for more afterschool programs nationwide. As part of that work, Usher will serve as Honorary Chair of *Lights On Afterschool* this October. Now in its 25th year, *Lights On Afterschool* is the nation’s only national rally for afterschool programs.

Usher will discuss his new role when his tour comes to Detroit tomorrow, Thursday, thrilling local youth at an Afterschool Expo at the Boys & Girls Club of Southeastern Michigan on September 12th and 13th. Usher will share his powerful afterschool story at the event, held in partnership with the Michigan Afterschool Partnership and the Afterschool Alliance. Nearly 1,000 youth will have the opportunity to explore careers in technology, fashion, entertainment, music, and healthcare industries; attend a session led by Usher’s New Look to discover their “spark;” join in health and wellness activities from roller skating to painting to petting therapy dogs; and more.

[*Lights On Afterschool*](#) is celebrated nationwide to bring attention to the critical role afterschool programs play and the need for more resources for programs. This year, it will involve one million people at more than 8,000 local events taking place at schools, Boys & Girls Clubs, 4-Hs, YMCAs, museums, public parks, community centers, and other sites in every part of the country. Most *Lights On Afterschool* events will be on or around October 24. Many will feature academic contests, science project displays, student performances, family fun nights, student art shows, visits by lawmakers, community service activities, sporting competitions, and much more.

“My afterschool experience at the Boys & Girls Clubs in Chattanooga, Tennessee is where I found my spark for music – a passion that became my career,” Usher said. “That experience is where I found my purpose, which motivated me to start Usher’s New Look, an afterschool program that has been empowering youth for the past 25 years. Every child should have a place that sparks their interests and helps them find their passions and purpose. Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan is a powerful example of the innovation and transformational impact occurring every day at afterschool organizations across the country. As this year’s Honorary Chair of *Lights On Afterschool*, I hope my voice can help amplify the need to close the gap for the 25 million youth who still need afterschool services.”

In addition to making a Public Service Announcement (PSA) about the importance of afterschool programs, Usher is hosting afterschool students at stops on his current concert tour, giving them the chance to learn about various career opportunities in the entertainment field.

“We are absolutely thrilled to have Usher serving as honorary chair of *Lights On Afterschool* this year,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “His powerful, personal, heartfelt support for afterschool programs will help bring attention to the thousands of *Lights On Afterschool* events that will showcase the skills students gain and the talents they develop in their afterschool programs – and the unfortunate fact that tens of millions of children are missing out. We need to change that. With Usher’s help, we will send the message that every child deserves access to a quality afterschool program.”

“For 25 years, Usher has shown a commitment to impacting the lives of youth after school, and I can’t think of anyone else who has the credibility and demonstrated dedication in this space,” said Shawn H. Wilson, president and CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan.

Today in the United States, for every child in an afterschool program, four more are waiting to get in. Nearly 25 million children not in an afterschool program would be enrolled, if a program were available to them, [according to a 2022 survey](#) of approximately 1,500 parents commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted by Edge Research. In Michigan alone, 750,000 children are missing out on afterschool opportunities.

“Afterschool programs across Michigan are helping students and families thrive,” Erin Skene-Pratt of the Michigan Afterschool Partnership said. “But we are far from meeting the need. Our kids, families, and communities – as well as our state economy – can’t afford to miss out on afterschool supports. We can do better.”

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 they develop critical work and life skills such as problem solving, teamwork, and communications.

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.