



## News Release

October 24, 2024

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## The Lights Are On for Afterschool Across the United States Today

*At 8,000 Events, the 25th Annual Rally for Afterschool Is Showcasing the Many Ways Afterschool Programs Support Students and Families*

Washington, D.C. – In Alaska, students and families are enjoying a festival with student art displays, a reading corner, and a Makers Station. In California, students are sharing the wiggle robots, paintings, and block builds they created. In Colorado, parents are jotting down their dreams for their children and putting them in a Dream Box. In Florida, students are sharing what they've learned about the migration of monarch butterflies. In Indiana, they're creating PSAs about how substance use has affected their lives. In Louisiana, they're learning to fix broken light switches. In Nebraska, they're holding a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) festival and touring a local TV station's weather van. In New Mexico, they're demonstrating traditional cooking, telling stories, practicing archery, and singing a Navajo song. In Tennessee, a month-long afterschool scavenger hunt is concluding this week.

Those are just a few of the more than 8,000 events that are taking place as part of the 25th annual [Lights On Afterschool](#), organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#). A million people in every corner of the country are joining, to show their support for the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give working families peace of mind that their children are safe, supervised, and learning after school. Events are taking place at schools, 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, parks, museums, community centers, and other places. Superstar Usher is Honorary Chair of *Lights On Afterschool* this year.

"Afterschool programs prepare youth to thrive in school and in life, and provide space for them to explore and grow. Youth get homework help, opportunities to get active, and access to healthy snacks and meals. They explore careers and engage in community service. They develop friendships and meet mentors. Through all of these activities, and more, afterschool programs help youth build the skills they need to succeed," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "During *Lights On Afterschool*, we celebrate all that programs do for young people. We are amazed at the creative, fun, educational events afterschool programs have planned."

"But there aren't nearly enough afterschool programs to meet the soaring demand," Grant continued. "For every child in an afterschool program, four more are waiting to get in. We need greater investments, urgently, from all sectors so all students can benefit from the essential supports afterschool programs provide."

From Niagara Falls to Honolulu, buildings and bridges, courthouses and capitols, and [other landmarks](#) are being lit up for afterschool this week. Clear Channel Outdoor is supporting *Lights On Afterschool* by donating some of its most prominent space to display afterschool messages on digital billboards, transit

shelters, and poster spaces in 25 markets around the country throughout October, including two Clear Channel digital spectacular screens in New York City's Times Square today, October 24.

NASA and the STEM Next Opportunity Fund kicked off *Lights On Afterschool* on October 16 with a live virtual Q&A for afterschool students with Charlie Blackwell-Thompson, NASA's first female launch director. The event is one example of the many partners, across an array of sectors, that are celebrating *Lights On Afterschool*, from Voices for Healthy Kids and the National Recreation and Park Association to Unidos and the National League of Cities.

A sampling of *Lights On Afterschool* events this year:

**Baldwin Park, California:** Samantha Farias, Think Together

Think Together is holding a *Lights On Afterschool* Literacy Night at Bursch Elementary. It celebrates "Kindness Through Fun" and features a book-reading session, word search, book swap, bookmark-activity, and a book podcast station. Students are also participating in a basketball workshop and showcasing their school spirit through cheer and dance performances.

**Apalachicola, Florida:** Nadine Kahn, The Nest at First United Methodist Church

The Nest is hosting a craft fair and family parade for *Lights On Afterschool*. The craft fair features items made by K-6 students, such as gemstone jewelry they created in their STEM Lab using a rock tumbler, as well as watercolors of various subjects, including monarch butterflies. The students have been studying the migration of these butterflies that fly through their community en route to Mexico. The event concludes with a family parade that passes City Hall.

**Brandon, Florida:** NaTasha McKeller, Boys & Girls Clubs of Tampa Bay

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Tampa Bay is holding "Wish You WELLness," a mental health celebration, for *Lights On Afterschool*. Youth are getting advice about stress management, learning strategies that can improve their mood and self-esteem, and participating in mental health friendly activities such as art, music, nature photography, physical fitness, and healthy food preparation.

**Jonesboro, Georgia:** Timothy Buchanan, Clayton County Schools

To celebrate *Lights On Afterschool*, Clayton County Schools and the Together Friends Organization are hosting a parent and grandparent appreciation night at Morrow Middle School. The event will feature the essays youth submitted about a meaningful experience they had with a parent or grandparent. Hundreds of students from all 15 district middle schools entered the essay contest.

**New Albany, Indiana:** Theresa Thompson, Family & Children's Place

Family & Children's Place is holding a "Lights, Camera, Action" open house at Hazelwood Middle School, in a joint celebration of Red Ribbon Week and *Lights On Afterschool*. Students are filming and presenting public service announcements (PSAs) about what being drug-free means to them and how substance use has affected their lives, walking a red carpet, taking selfies with friends and family, and showcasing their "Drug-Free Hall of Fame."

**Crete, Nebraska:** Afterschool Ambassador Joel Bramhall, Cardinal Community Learning Centers, Crete Public Schools

A *Lights On Afterschool* family engagement night at Crete Intermediate School features community partners leading STEM learning stations, including the KOLN/KGIN Channel 10/11 Weather Shield. Some

700 parents, educators and community members are expected. Students are showcasing the recently launched Cardinal Academies at Crete High School, with engineering demonstrations and presentations.

**Farmington, New Mexico:** Afterschool Ambassador Teahonna James-Belin, Navajo Preparatory School Navajo Preparatory School is hosting a *Lights On Afterschool* culture night. Students and alumni are leading a panel discussion, and guests can visit workshop stations offering traditional cooking demonstrations, storytelling, archery, and painting. The event concludes with a Navajo song and traditional social dancing.

**Cleveland, Ohio:** Afterschool Ambassador Kasey Morgan, MyCom  
To mark *Lights On Afterschool*, MyCom students are creating a compilation of video vignettes about what afterschool means to them, and presenting it to families, policymakers, and community members. The video highlights the voices of younger children and the workmanship of the older students. In addition, a panel of experts, including youth, are discussing the importance of afterschool programs, offering hands-on art and technology demonstrations, and more.

**Pawtucket, Rhode Island:** Carlene Fonseca, Rhode Island Afterschool Network and Afterschool Ambassador Elliot A. Rivera, Youth In Action  
The Rhode Island Afterschool Network (RIAN) is hosting a *Lights On Afterschool* breakfast at the Boys & Girls Club of Pawtucket. It includes workshops on restorative justice practices, intergenerational leadership opportunities in programs, apprenticeships, STEM engagement, partnership-building with colleges and universities, and more. Governor Dan McKee is attending.

**Knoxville, Tennessee:** Afterschool Ambassador Sindy Dawkins-Schade, SHADES of Development For *Lights On Afterschool*, SHADES of Development has hosted a month-long community scavenger hunt. More than 40 programs participated in the app-based scavenger hunt, with challenges that include interviewing a child about why afterschool is meaningful to them, a parent about how afterschool affects their family, and public figures about why they support afterschool programming.

**Solon Springs, Wisconsin:** Julie Fromm, Solon Springs School District  
The Solon Springs School District is holding a Family and Community Engagement Night for *Lights On Afterschool*. Students and families are gathering in the Solon Springs School cafeteria to paint pumpkins (grown in the school garden) to look like their favorite book characters. The painted pumpkins are being displayed in the school library with their matching books.

This year, *Lights On Afterschool* comes as funding for programs across the nation, provided from federal pandemic relief, winds down. These funds have helped afterschool programs meet rising costs and provide support for millions of youth. The unmet need for programs is enormous. 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 recent years, Congress has failed to significantly increase funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs.

In addition, the number of students receiving afterschool suppers and snacks has not returned to pre-pandemic levels, according to [a study this week from the Food Research & Action Center \(FRAC\)](#). It finds a slight increase in the number of students receiving afterschool suppers and snacks from October 2022

to October 2023, but still just one in every 16 children who received free or reduced-price school lunch in October 2023 was served by the afterschool supper program. “Afterschool programs provide healthy snacks and meals, opportunities to be active, and a safe place for youth to learn and grow — all of which are essential for youth to thrive. Now is the time to recommit to supporting afterschool programs and the children they serve,” Grant said.

This year’s [Lights On Afterschool poster](#), displayed at events all over the country, was designed by RAD ART afterschool program participants Sofia Espinoza and Elizabeth Figueroa, who are fourth and fifth graders. RAD ART is a key component of the Houston Healthy Hip-Hop initiative.

A large and powerful body of evidence demonstrates that children in afterschool programs make gains in grades, school attendance, behavior, and more. Researchers have also found that students in afterschool programs are more engaged in school, more excited about learning, and develop critical work and life skills such as problem solving, teamwork, and communication.

A representative sample of [Lights On Afterschool events around the country is here](#). To find more, see [this map](#).

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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*