



NEWS RELEASE

October 17, 2024

CONTACT: [Magen Eissenstat](mailto:Magen.Eissenstat@afterschoolalliance.org), 202/609-9889

Youth Across the Country to Serve Their Communities and Speak Out at *Lights On Afterschool* Events Next Week

At many of the thousands of [Lights On Afterschool](#) events happening next week, students will take action to support their communities through service projects, sharing their perspectives with lawmakers, collecting donations for those in need, and much more. *Lights On Afterschool* is the only national rally for afterschool programs, which keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give working parents peace of mind. More than a million people are expected to take part in some 8,000 events across the country on and around Thursday, October 24 for the 25th annual *Lights On Afterschool*.

The [Afterschool Alliance](#) organizes *Lights On Afterschool* to celebrate the critical support that programs provide youth and families and to highlight the need for more investment in afterschool. Events will take place at schools, 4-Hs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, parks, museums, community centers, and other places. Usher is Honorary Chair of *Lights On Afterschool* this year.

Among the community service and civic engagement events being planned for this year's *Lights On Afterschool*:

Suwanee, Georgia: For *Lights On Afterschool*, more than 700 Right At School program students at 25 Gwinnett County elementary schools will show their afterschool pride by giving back to their community. From October 1 through October 24, each program site is collecting donations of canned food and winter clothes to donate to families in their community, as well as those nearby who have been harmed by recent natural disasters.

Rahway, New Jersey: On October 24, fitness instructor Evan Benjamin of EvanBeyondFitness will host an event at Destiny After School Haven (DASH) for *Lights On Afterschool*. The event will include fitness, challenges, games, dancing, and outdoor fun. As part of DASH's work to

encourage Acts of Kindness, attendees are invited to bring canned or packaged food and toiletry items for donation to local shelters.

Greensburg, Pennsylvania: On October 24, The Private Industry Council will hold *Lights on Afterschool* events at each of its six 21st Century Community Learning Center Afterschool Enrichment locations. The events will empower students to share their perspectives with elected officials. Students will create themed t-shirts, sign an Afterschool Alliance petition, and write letters and make drawings showing what they love about their afterschool program. These will be sent to local legislators to raise awareness about the importance of afterschool.

Sioux Falls, South Dakota: Pettigrew Community Learning Center will host its fourth annual *Lights On Afterschool* family dance party on Friday, October 18. The event will include videos showcasing the students' dance routines and songs, as well as a snack bar, photo booth, and much more. The celebration will also kick off the program's fall service project. This year, students will create holiday cards with uplifting messages and collect candy canes and small gifts for patients and their families at Sanford Children's Castle Hospital.

Tellico Plains, Tennessee: The Torch Club at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Ocoee Region Rural Vale Unit will host a haunted house at the Rural Vale Elementary School carnival on October 24 for *Lights On Afterschool*. The Torch Club is a group of student leaders who work together on community service projects, events, and Club programs. Students are organizing the haunted house to give back and provide fun and engaging activities for children in their community.

Green Bay, Wisconsin The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Bay & Lakes Region will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool* with a free family dinner event. The theme of the evening is "Lighting Up The World With Kindness." The event will spread awareness of the negative impacts of bullying and promote activities related to the theme of kindness and emotional wellness. Guests are encouraged to wear blue to represent their commitment to ending bullying.

"Afterschool programs across the country provide hands-on opportunities for students to support others, connect with their community, and learn how to be thoughtful, responsible citizens," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Our nation's youth have important perspectives and ideas about how to make our communities stronger, and in afterschool programs, they're learning how to translate those ideas into action. But because of lack of investment, too many students are alone and unsupervised after school, and missing out on these critical opportunities. That must change."

This year, *Lights On Afterschool* comes as the federal pandemic relief that has helped afterschool programs meet rising costs and address growing needs winds down. 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.

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.

#

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.