

NEWS RELEASE
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**Governor Andrew M. Cuomo Proclaims October 17th New York's
Lights On Afterschool! Day
*14th Annual Lights On Afterschool! Nationwide Rally for Afterschool Will
Bring Together Parents, Students, Educators, Policy Makers and Others***

Today in New York State, children and families in 319 programs will celebrate the 14th annual *Lights On Afterschool* to rally for afterschool in their communities. Governor Andrew M. Cuomo has proclaimed October 17th as *Lights On Afterschool!* Day in recognition of the important role of afterschool programs in New York State.

In his proclamation, the Governor noted that “quality afterschool programs and opportunities provide safe, challenging, and engaging learning experiences which help improve children’s skills.” He also noted that “afterschool programs support working families by ensuring their children are safe and productive after the regular school day ends; afterschool programs also help build stronger communities by involving students, parents, business leaders, and adult volunteers in the lives of youth, and cultivating such cohesive relationships.”

“We thank the Governor for his leadership in highlighting the role of afterschool programs across New York State in supporting students’ personal growth and academic development. We know that regular attendance for several years at a high-quality afterschool program can help close the achievement gap in math for low-income students, develop students’ confidence and character, and open students’ eyes to exciting college and career possibilities,” said New York State Afterschool Network Executive Director Nora Niedzielski-Eichner.

Adding to the celebration, the iconic Empire State Building will be lit up in yellow this evening in New York City for the seventh year in a row in honor of *Lights On Afterschool*.

Lights On Afterschool is organized by the Afterschool Alliance to draw attention to the need to invest in afterschool programs, which benefit students by offering them opportunities to learn new things— such as robotics, Tae Kwon Do and art – and discover new skills. For years, the federal investment in afterschool has lagged far behind the need. The *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (the chief federal funding stream for afterschool) in 2007, yet funding stands at less than half that today.

According a study conducted by the Afterschool Alliance in 2012, nearly two in five afterschool programs (39 percent) report that their budgets are in worse shape today than at the height of the recession in 2008, and more than three in five (62 percent) report that their funding is down “a little or a lot” from three years ago.

“Now, more than ever, we need to ensure that we keep the doors to afterschool programs open for our kids and our communities,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant.

“Afterschool programs around the country are facing cuts, due to a lagging economy, federal sequesters, and competition for a shrinking pot of much needed funding. *Lights On Afterschool* is a terrific opportunity to remind our local and national leaders about the value of afterschool programs. Afterschool programs are structured to accommodate working parents’ schedules and give students an opportunity to learn through hands-on, creative, engaging activities that are both fun and educational. They can be the key to unlocking children’s hidden skills and aptitudes.”

A steady stream of afterschool evaluations reveals gains in academic achievement among children in these programs, as well as gains in safety, discipline, attendance and avoiding risky behaviors. In addition, researchers have found that afterschool programs encourage increased parental involvement, an important building block for student success. More than 15 million school-age children – more than one in four kids in the United States – are unsupervised after the school day ends. The parents of 18 million children say they would enroll their kids in afterschool programs – if programs were available.

Governor Cuomo called afterschool programs “a critical aspect of education initiatives, such as the Community School Initiative and Extended Learning Time Initiative; strong extra-curricular activities aligned with school programming enhance student engagement and achievement.”

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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.

New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) is a statewide public-private partnership dedicated to promoting young people’s safety, learning and healthy development by increasing the quality and availability of programs during non-school hours, by effectively linking to school-day practice, and by building a coordinated system that serves all children, every day, all year round. More information is available at www.nysan.org.