

**PRESS RELEASE
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Governor Andrew M. Cuomo Proclaims October 22nd New York's *Lights On Afterschool Day*

October 22, 2015- Today in New York State, children, families, and staff in 373 programs will celebrate the 16th annual Lights On Afterschool in their communities. Governor Andrew M. Cuomo has proclaimed October 22nd as Lights On Afterschool Day in recognition of the important role of afterschool programs in New York State.

In his proclamation, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo asserted that “quality afterschool programs provide safe, challenging, and engaging learning experiences that help children develop social, emotional, physical, and academic skills” and “quality afterschool programs are key to helping our children become successful adults.” 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 young people, thereby promoting positive relationships among youth, families and adults.”

“We thank the Governor for proclaiming his support for afterschool programs across New York State. These programs play an important role in the lives of students and parents by helping to close the achievement gap for low-income students in math, develop confidence and character in students, and improve the attendance of students during the regular school day. We are grateful for Governor Cuomo’s support of these initiatives for New York’s children and families,” said Kelly Sturgis, Executive Director of AfterSchool Works! NY: the New York State Afterschool Network.

New York City will also be recognizing *Lights On Afterschool* in all Department of Youth and Community Development afterschool programs. “Ten years after New York City launched its afterschool initiative, COMPASS is the nation’s largest afterschool system, keeping the ‘lights on’ for more than 97,000 young people in over 900 programs across the City,” said NYC Department of Youth and Community Development

Commissioner Bill Chong. “The organizations funded by DYCD offer a diverse selection of high-quality and safe enrichment activities that support the growth and development of young people. Lights On Afterschool is the perfect opportunity for us to recognize the thousands of staff members, parents and young people who share a commitment to quality afterschool programming. DYCD is proud to partner with our community-based organizations to bring even greater awareness to free afterschool opportunities in all five boroughs.”

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

Lights On Afterschool is organized by the Afterschool Alliance to highlight 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.

“Quality afterschool programs help students hone their skills and discover their passions, preparing them to succeed in school and in life,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Lights On Afterschool events give children and youth the chance to showcase the talents they develop at their afterschool programs, which offer hands-on, engaging activities that are both educational and fun. But too many afterschool programs are without the resources they need to serve all the children in their communities who need them – and families, schools, communities and the country suffer as a result.”

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 16 million school-age children in the United States –one in five kids – 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.

“New York State supports the goals of this observance and all initiatives that seek to improve, supplement, and expand learning opportunities for youth”, proclaimed Governor Cuomo.



To find a *Lights On Afterschool* event in your area, visit the *Lights On Afterschool* webpage at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/loaFindEvent.cfm>

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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

AfterSchool Works! NY: the New York State Afterschool Network (ASW:NYSAN) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the capacity and commitment of communities, programs, and professionals to increase access to high-quality programs and services beyond the traditional classroom. More information is available at www.nysan.org.