

## **Laconia School District Office of Extended Learning Joins the Call to “Light Up a Landmark” for “Lights on Afterschool”**

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**Laconia** – The Laconia School District, in partnership with the Historic Belknap Mill, will “**Light up a Landmark**” on October 24<sup>th</sup> to draw attention to the need for more afterschool programs to serve the millions of children nationwide who are unsupervised and at risk each weekday afternoon. The partnership between the Office of Extended Learning and the Belknap Mill has included afterschool programming such as First Robotics, and Art Lessons with Artist in Residence Larry Frates, with more in the works.

In addition to the Light up a Landmark event, hundreds of children, parents, business and community leaders will come together on October 24th at Laconia schools to celebrate the achievements of afterschool students. These events will be just some of the more than 8,000 such events across the nation emphasizing the importance of keeping the lights on and the doors open after school.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, *Lights On Afterschool* has been celebrated annually since 2000. This year, more than one million Americans will demonstrate their support for afterschool by taking part in the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs.

A newly released national poll illustrates that the high level of support for afterschool shown by those joining *Lights On* celebrations extends to the overall population. The poll, released in conjunction with *Lights On*, shows that nearly nine in ten adults (89 percent) say they believe afterschool and summer programs are important to their communities. That includes majorities of Democrats and Republicans. The poll also finds strong backing of public funding for afterschool and summer learning programs, with two in three adults saying they want their federal, state and local leaders to provide funding for afterschool and summer programs.

Yet, demand for afterschool programs continues to far outpace the supply of existing programs. Data from *America After 3PM*, the research series on afterschool commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, shows a vast unmet demand for afterschool programs nationwide. In New Hampshire, 17% of children participate in an afterschool program, yet 36% more would be enrolled if a program were available. 96% percent of New Hampshire parents are satisfied with their child’s afterschool program, 93% agree that afterschool programs give working parents peace of mind, and 67% agree that afterschool programs help children gain workforce skills.

The Office of Extended Learning opened in 2002 with a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant from the U.S. Department of Education. It now serves 873 children in Laconia, providing academic assistance, mentoring, tutoring, and classes and clubs in sports, recreation, mathematics, chess, and dozens of other subjects. The Office of Extended Learning's MISSION is to supplement and extend the Laconia School District's engagement of students in partnerships within the community to provide individualized learning experiences through varied pathways, to develop curious, confident lifelong learners who will be active in their community. Programs include Project EXTRA (Enriching Extensions to Raise Achievement) at the elementary schools, the REAL (Relevant Experiences Advancing Learners) Initiative at the middle school, and ELOs (Extended Learning Opportunities), Freedom Found, and other clubs at Laconia High School.

Senator Jeanne Shaheen says: "The Laconia REAL Initiative is so important for students as well as the future of our workforce. This program gives young people a chance to experience and pursue opportunities in career fields and hobbies that appeal to them. It builds their confidence and develops their skills. It pairs them with insightful mentors who can lend proper guidance. And it provides a pathway for them to thrive in the workforce or in higher education."

"In 2017, the Belknap Mill staff sponsored the first REAL Collaborative in partnership with our Student Leadership Team where statewide and local educators, leaders, community/business professionals and students work together on strategies to strengthen workforce development. Since then, Belknap Mill has evolved to be one of our greatest community supporters balancing their progressive style of community engagement while honoring their building's rich history.", remarked Christine Gingerella, the Director of the Office of Extended Learning.

Superintendent Steve Tucker states: "The Laconia School District has a long history of afterschool programming that allows for students to receive academic support and engage in a wide-variety of engaging activities based on their interests."

If you are a community member who wishes to become more involved with helping young people become more active in their community, please contact us at 524-5710.