



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

For Immediate Release

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Y School-Age Enrichment Centers Turn the Lights on Afterschool

Pittsburgh Steeler Wide Receiver Antonio Brown Guest Speaker

Erie, PA - This **October 20**, more than 7,500 communities and 1 million Americans will celebrate the 12th annual Lights On Afterschool, a nationwide rally for afterschool programs organized by the Afterschool Alliance. Last year, more than 900 Ys across the country, including the YMCA of Greater Erie, participated.

The Y's celebration is open to the public and will be held at the **Downtown Y, 31 West 10th Street, from 4-7 p.m.** The event will focus on youth-centered activities and networking with invited lawmakers, business and community leaders to raise awareness of the importance of afterschool. *Event highlights include a visit from Pittsburgh Steeler Wide Receiver Antonio Brown and County Executive Barry Grossman.*

"Pennsylvania trails the nation and has a long way to go in making afterschool programs available to all families that need them," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "The data tell us that the great majority of Pennsylvania parents who want their kids in afterschool programs aren't able to find them, usually because programs aren't available, they can't afford the fees, or transportation issues make it impossible. These are all barriers we can and should overcome. Quality afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families. Every Pennsylvania family that needs an afterschool program should have access to one."

At the Y, financial assistance is available for all Y programs, including afterschool care, to ensure that all kids can come to the Y. In fact, 57 percent of children enrolled in YMCA programs receive financial assistance from the Y.

Afterschool programming at the Y not only provides learning opportunities outside the classroom, but also provides a safe environment where kids and teens can learn, grow and thrive.

It is important that our youth have safe out-of-school experiences that complement what they learn during the day – it's essential to their personal development. We believe that when we nurture the potential of our youth, we make a significant difference in their lives.

As the largest provider of youth development programs in Erie County, the Y's afterschool programs promote healthy living, service and character development. Afterschool program participants also develop important social skills necessary to interact with peers. Youth are learning the importance of healthy living and healthy eating; spending less "screen time" with television indoors; and are connecting with positive role models.

In addition to afterschool programs at schools and at the Y's four membership branches, for the past 10 years, the Y has provided afterschool programming for the Erie Housing Authority's John E. Horan Garden Apartments and Erie Heights. It's in these programs that the Y is serving Erie's most at-risk, underserved youth.

At the Teen Centers, located at the Downtown and Glenwood Park Ys and James Parker Middle School, teens are offered a safe place to socialize, provided a wide selection of teen fitness and healthy living programs and supported by Y staff with homework help and self-esteem building activities.

About the Y

The Y's Mission: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

The Y's Cause: At the Y, strengthening community is our cause. Every day, the Y works side by side with our neighbors to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

The Y, founded in 1860, is one of Erie's leading nonprofits (501 c-3), committed to strengthening our community in the areas of youth development, healthy living and social responsibility:

Youth Development: Nurturing the potential of every child and teen.

The Y believes that all kids deserve the opportunity to discover who they are and what they can achieve. That's why, through the Y, thousands of Erie's youth today are engaged in programs that encourage Y core-values – character, honesty, respect and responsibility. Unique community partnerships with the City of Erie and the Erie Housing Authority serve Erie's most at-risk, underserved kids and teens directly in their neighborhoods. In our membership and program centers, award-winning childcare, before & after school care, summer camp, youth sports, swimming, youth fitness, leadership, mentoring and volunteerism, are all Y programs that are helping Erie's kids and teens reach their full potential.

Healthy Living: Improving health and well-being.

Through advocacy and leadership, the Y is a leading voice on health and well-being. With a mission centered on balance, the Y brings families closer together, encourages good health and fosters connections through fitness, sports, fun and shared interests. As a result, thousands of Erie's youth, adults and families are receiving the support, guidance and resources needed to achieve greater health and well-being for their spirit, mind and body.

Social Responsibility: Giving back and providing support to our neighbors.

Across Erie County, the Y helps people give back and assist our neighbors by offering them opportunities to volunteer, advocate and support programs that strengthen

community. At the Y, we are volunteer-founded, volunteer-led organization. Volunteers are found at every level of the Y – in childcare, health & wellness, youth mentoring, board leadership and more. Through the Y's We Build People annual scholarship campaign, the Y provides financial assistance and income-based membership rates so that everyone can benefit from Y programs and membership. Additionally, the Y partners with other area non-profits enabling our members to support the community through donations and volunteerism.

Involvement at the Y: The Y strives to engage more people in the communities it serves whether it is as a member, volunteer, supporter or advocate. Each YMCA association is an independent, autonomous organization with its own governing board, professional staff and assets.

The Y By the Numbers:

The Y has 4 membership branches: the County Y located in Edinboro, the Downtown, Eastside and Glenwood Park Ys. Eighteen award-winning childcare centers provide care to children as young as six weeks. Unique community partnerships with the City of Erie and the Erie Housing Authority serve Erie's most at-risk, underserved kids and teens directly in their neighborhoods.

30,000 people of all ages, incomes, backgrounds and abilities are served by the Y and Y programs. Financial assistance is available for all Y memberships and programs.

To learn more about the Y, www.ymcaerie.org.