

Program will teach kids to turn those lights off

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The Athens County Kids on Campus program hosts the annual Lights On Afterschool event tonight at Chauncey Elementary and The Plains Elementary, during which student attendees will be educated on sustainability and environmental consciousness.

Lights On Afterschool is a nationally recognized celebration organized by the Afterschool Alliance whose goals are to "keep kids safe, help working families and inspire learning" through afterschool programs, the Afterschool Alliance Web site states. About one million Americans are expected to take part in this year's rallies.

The 2009-10 school year marks the 10th anniversary of the Lights On Afterschool events. To celebrate this year's event, the Athens County Kids on Campus invited all parents and community members to observe tonight's activities while emphasizing the special "Go Green" theme.

Similar to all Kids on Campus events, students will spend time after school completing homework and spending time at LeapFrog technology stations and enrichment stations, but tonight will also include a hands-on Go Green activity.

Kids on Campus program coordinator Jamie Sullivan said sustainability issues are important in Athens County because in a time of economic crisis, topics such as conserving

water and energy are important for kids to understand and will help save their families money at home.

"Children at Kids on Campus have been learning about their carbon footprint and how different aspects of their lives affect that footprint," Sullivan said. "On the night of Lights they will be making homemade ice cream from Snowville Creamery Milk, since this is a local and sustainable company, the footprint of this ice cream will be considerable smaller than that of buying other ice cream from the store."

The Kids on Campus program is a "a rural partnership that empowers undeserved, at-risk children and their families in the realization of their full potential through educational, nutritional and recreational opportunities," the Kids on Campus Web site says.

It is comprised of mostly Ohio University student volunteers who work with elementary-level, often underprivileged students. Other volunteers include teachers, principals and community members.

With five programs operating this school year, The Plains Elementary School is the most recent school to join the Kids on Campus partnership during the 2007-2008 school year, and it is one of two schools hosting the Lights On Afterschool event tonight.

Plains Elementary principal Kacey Cottrill is a co-coordinator of the homework room at his school and a self-proclaimed "avid supporter" of the Kids on Campus program, he said.

"What I've seen is just really close rela-

tionships between the OU students and the students from my building," Cottrill said. "You can really see the OU students get involved in their life, wanting to know more, and it's just a really nice relationship for those students to have an adult presence in their life."

Kids on Campus typically accepts about 400 students in the program each year, but Cottrill said there is a waiting list, and he is always getting phone calls from parents who request their children be involved in the program or ensuring their student gets re-enrolled.

"Our goal is to serve 50 students per program per day," Sullivan said.

Sullivan added that each current program has about 55 enrolled students. "If a child qualifies for free [or] reduced lunch, they are eligible for your program economically. If a child receives special-education services or it is reported by their teacher that they are one or more grade level behind their current grade in either reading or math the child is eligible academically."

Eighty five percent of parents agreed that their child performs better in school when they attend the Kids on Campus Afterschool Program, the Kids on Campus Web site says.

The Lights On Afterschool "Go Green" event will take place from 3:55 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. today at Chauncey Elementary School and The Plains Elementary School.

All community members are invited to attend, and participate in all of the stations, including the opportunity to make their own ice cream.