

4-H Youth Fit For The Future

(NAPSA)—Concerned by the rising number of overweight youth, high school student Kelcie Thomas decided to combine her interest in health and wellness with the skills she learned at 4-H to improve her community.

An avid dancer, Thomas realized she could help youth understand the important role fitness plays in a healthy lifestyle. She founded an organization called Creating a Healthier You to show youth new ways to be fit and stay healthy.

Through fundraising campaigns, an online contest and help from businesses, she raised enough money to buy equipment for physical education classes. Thomas also taught dance and nutrition and distributed jump ropes and nutrition pamphlets to schools.

Her passion for health and wellness is not uncommon among 4-H'ers. In fact, according to recent findings from Tufts University, 4-H youth are engaging in positive healthy living behaviors more often than youth who do not participate in the organization.

The *4-H Study of Positive Youth Development*, conducted by the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts, found 4-H'ers, regardless of their background, thrive through the healthy living education and experiences they get from 4-H programming.

When compared to other youth, these young people are:

- More likely to spend time exercising or being physically active;
- Two times less likely to engage in drug use;
- Two times less likely to use cigarettes or drink alcohol.

“With nearly 2.7 million youth enrolled in 4-H healthy living programs, the findings from the Tufts study underline 4-H’s unique ability to make a significant impact on the health and wellness of many of our nation’s future lead-



Kelcie Thomas and other 4-H'ers are living healthy lives and are working to spread the wellness among their communities.

ers,” said Donald T. Floyd, Jr., president and CEO of National 4-H Council. “Working with the White House *Let’s Move!* campaign, 4-H’s extensive healthy living programs equip youth with the knowledge and skills that will prepare them to meet the challenges of the 21st century.”

The programs work to address issues of nutrition, physical fitness, substance abuse, safety and social and emotional wellness.

So far, Thomas and her foundation have reached nearly 250,000 elementary school kids with new equipment, dance training or information about healthy eating and exercise habits. Now a student at Utah Valley University, Thomas is pursuing exercise science and, much like her fellow 4-H'ers, plans to turn her passions into a career and hopes to make a positive dent in the well-being of her community.

Stories like this are taking place all across the nation due to the activism and ingenuity of 4-H youth through *Join the Revolution of Responsibility*, which tells today’s 4-H story through the amazing achievements of its young people. Visit www.4-h.org/ revolution for more information.