



Kids' Community

Youth Act Out To Prevent Risky Business

(NAPSA)—4-H teens in Maricopa County, Arizona, are taking to the stage to prevent some risky business among their peers through an imaginative program called Teen Interactive Theater Education or "TITE."

The theater skits are about everyday risk behaviors, including sex, drugs, suicide and violence. Teens are mentored by college students as they write skits and perform them at schools and youth clubs.

The teens have played the roles of abusive boyfriends, drug addicts, HIV positive teens and many others. They learn to play off each other to maximize their creative potential. "We sit down and collaborate and figure out what to say," says Phillip Pitre, age 15.

The teens also learn the basics of theater through team-building activities and acting games. Sometimes the performances even take a personal angle when the youth have written skits based on their own experiences or experiences they have heard about.

The 4-H teens are receiving good reviews from audiences, who almost always participate in interactive discussions on risk prevention after the performances.

Tiffany Radick, 19, an instructional specialist with TITE, sees how much the youth who attend the performances gain from their peers. "I think they know things now that they didn't know before, and that can help them make better decisions in the future," Tiffany says.



Acting out on stage to prevent problems in real-life.

The teens are also producing a film together under the guidance of college students with fine arts experience, giving them a chance to explore different performance avenues. "I think a lot of the kids have talent in something they never thought they did before; maybe they are inspired and would like to do it again," said Jeremy Martinez, 20, one of the instructional specialists guiding the teens.

The ten-year-old 4-H After-school program has continued to evolve with the encouragement of their adult leader Ruth Carter, a family and youth development 4-H agent. It is sponsored nationally by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund.

"TITE has been a program that hard-to-reach kids respond to," Carter says. "We work with kids who haven't been successful in life so far, but can become a star through our program."

To become a member of the 4-H community of young people across America and become your own star, visit www.4HUSA.org.