



Kids' Community

4-H Is Missing Puzzle Piece for Louisiana Youth

(NAPSA)—Michael Joseph says he felt like there was something missing in his life. Then, he discovered 4-H and Youth Agent Marvin Young in Orleans Parish, LA. All at once, he found a mentor, role model and close friend.

The New Orleans teen had been in trouble. Picked up for multiple curfew violations, he was assigned by the court to a curfew center for a series of life skills classes. It was there where his life first started to change. One of the most successful class participants, Michael was referred to the parish's 4-H Teen Leadership Program, where he quickly became a star.

Michael admits that he had been going down the wrong path before he joined 4-H, but he just did not know how to change directions. He credits Young and 4-H with helping him discover his potential and putting him on the right track.

"I don't exactly have a father figure. Mr. Marvin took an interest in me. He always has time for you even though he's a busy, busy man. He said to me, 'I see something in you that's different,'" Michael said.

Michael noticed changes in himself in just the first few weeks after he joined 4-H. "My communication skills kept getting better and better. I changed my focus on life. It was a world outside of what I knew," he said.

Now in college, Michael emerged as a popular leader among his



Michael Joseph (L) with his mentor, 4-H and Youth Agent Marvin Young.

friends in the 4-H community. He was nominated vice president of the 4-H teen program, attended Louisiana 4-H Junior Leadership Conference and is a 4-H camp counselor and mentor to other kids.

"[Michael has] a quiet strength. When you're around him, you feel a desire to want to do better," Young said.

Although his life has not always been easy, he regrets little except that he did not join 4-H sooner. "I couldn't see my life as good as it is without 4-H," Michael said. "I was an incomplete puzzle that 4-H fulfilled."

To learn more about 4-H youth development clubs and programs anywhere in America, visit 4HUSA.ORG (www.4husa.org). You may find your own community of friends through 4-H.