



Kids' Community

4-H Teens Are Hot Shot Entrepreneurs

(NAPSA)—Nectarine salsa may sound like an exotic recipe from a hip New York restaurant, yet this concoction of sweet fruits and spicy peppers is the brainchild of youth who produced it through their 4-H Afterschool program.

In the Green Teen Community Gardening Program, at-risk youth ages 14 - 19 in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., develop a unique product while learning gardening, nutrition, business and leadership skills. The hands-on program gives teens the knowledge to develop local food sources and teach their urban neighborhood—which doesn't have a supermarket that sells fresh produce—about healthy eating habits.

Hot Shot Nectarine Salsa is the group's most recent success. The teens were involved in every step of making the low-sodium, all-natural salsa. First, they researched the food business climate and worked with a Culinary Institute of America chef to create their recipe. After testing it at the local farmers' market, a business specializing in food products helped them learn regulations and design the salsa's packaging.

The teens grew the fresh fruits and vegetables with seeds they cultivated to thrive in the native climate and limited space at the downtown center. Then they prepared, processed, cooked and bottled 1,300 jars of salsa. When the teens marketed it at the farmers' market and retailers, it was an immediate success, selling more than 80 percent of the stock in the first month.

The 4-H Afterschool program helps teens realize that they are capable of creating a product from scratch and seeing it through to success. "I've learned how to be more conscious about



Through their 4-H Afterschool program, New York teens created, developed, bottled and sold a half ton of nectarine salsa, popular for its "unique taste and versatility."

the things that I do and decisions that I make, and I've learned that hard work builds character," said Paris Sims, 18. The JCPenney Afterschool Fund is the national presenting sponsor of 4-H Afterschool.

Through the year, the teens also work with emotionally disturbed children in the gardens and sell produce at the farmers' market. This fall, they'll look at ways to solve the unusual business problem created by Hot Shot salsa—how to change a business plan when product demand exceeds supply.

Barbara Belotte, 19, may be able to help. "I have learned how to keep track of money and budget and the amount of time and patience that it takes to make a business work," she said.

4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. Learn more about the 4-H adventure at www.4husa.org.