Situation
Many children and families living within Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) communities are given little to no access to the educational benefits of their surrounding areas. This, at times, has led to high crime rates, poor academic performance and a continued cycle of being stuck in a system from which so many want to desperately free themselves. Delaware 4-H Afterschool has begun to change all of that. Through a Grant from the 21st Century Learning Centers, 4-H Afterschool and DSHA have paired up to give these children experiences that may be foreign to them, in an educational and fun way.

The five DSHA sites--Liberty Court, Mifflin Meadows, Clarks Corner, Burton Village, Laverty Lane and Knollwood--have many at-risk youth residing there. Working as a joint effort, the 4-H Afterschool staff from each site has brought in academic support and ingenious lessons to share with the children and families. Each program is open five days a week for approximately 2 ½ to 3 hours. Every day the children receive a nutritious snack provided through a partnership with the Delaware Food Bank. Then the children will work with staff and certified teachers on their homework, as well as on any academic area that they need help. This hour helps us to improve their academic standing as well as their life skills of knowledge, logic, and reasoning.

After all the other activities are completed, the children are exposed to a wide range of lessons, based on 4-H curriculum, as well as lessons created by staff. The children have learned photography, cooking, science experimentation, in addition to the countless topics that have been covered.

What were the issues?
In discussions with DSHA staff, 4-H Afterschool staff came up with a list of areas where the children needed extra education. The staff focused on:

- Academic improvement
- Behavior modification
- Attendance at school
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Exposure to outside positive influences

What Happened?
Since the program’s inception in 2009:

- DSHA staff has reported an increase of children attending school regularly.
- Crime during the time period when afterschool takes place is down significantly, as is other times during the day.
- 4-H Afterschool staff has seen detentions and suspensions for the enrolled children fall.
- Children have completed in county and statewide contests with great self-respect.
- Worked with outside agencies to bring in Adult learning component to the communities
- Created a safe environment for children to come when they need it.

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