

## **HEALTHY HABITS CONTEST HONORABLE MENTION WINNERS**

### **Grades 4-8**

Jennimarie S.  
Allison Park, PA

Do you love running? How about being aggressive on defense, or heroically making the winning goal? Would you like to increase upper body strength while working your legs and abs, and still have a blast and make new friends? Then field hockey is the sport for you!

Before I took up field hockey, I wasn't very athletic or physically fit. I took dance lessons, but I didn't play any sports, and I was horrendously out of shape. I knew I needed to become more active and exercise more in order to stay healthy. However, I wasn't very good at any sports I had already tried. I needed to find something new.

I was about to give up and settle for a life as a couch potato, when a friend told me about field hockey. She said she was signed up for an introductory camp later that month, and that I should give it a try. I figured it couldn't hurt, and I enrolled.

I wasn't expecting much when I arrived at the field where the camp was to take place, decked out in cleats, shin guards, and a mouth protector. When the camp director put that stick in my hand, something clicked. I knew right then that field hockey was the perfect sport for me.

Perfect it was! All week long at camp, we learned the basics of field hockey—how to pass, hit, dribble, and shoot the ball. We scrimmaged, ran laps, and performed drills. Most importantly, I had a blast! It was the first time I had ever had so much fun playing a sport.

Not until after camp ended, did I realize how much just a week of steady fitness had helped me. Already, I felt more energetic and excited than I had just seven days before! I could only imagine how beneficial field hockey could be after an entire season of playing, or even a second week after that first. So I bought myself a stick and a practice ball, and practiced all summer long.

Now, a few months after I first heard about field hockey, I feel great. I practice field hockey a lot, and plan on joining an indoor winter league later this year. Field hockey has been an incredible experience for me, and I know I'm going to stick with it. As long as I continue eating well and practicing other healthy habits, I'm well on my way to living a healthy, happy life. Without field hockey, I would not be as fit and energized as I am today. I am eternally grateful that I signed up for that camp. It's given me a lot of new friends, a great new hobby and, most importantly, a fun way for me to stay in shape and healthy. Now that's something worth playing for!

Gabrielle F.  
Gibsonia, PA

I have started a healthy habit in the past year. That habit is mountain biking! I wanted to start something new, and my birthday was almost here, so I asked for a mountain bike for

my 11th birthday. Once I received my Schwinn bike I promised myself that I would ride a lot and learn how to mountain bike on hard trails.

Once I tried my bike out in my cul-de-sac and worked out the gear and shocks, I started to ride locally, but I rode almost daily. I rode in the neighborhood a lot with my mom who was training to do the Avon walk, and my dog, Daisy. We all got a lot of exercise, just in the neighborhood! On the weekends, sometimes my whole family would go out to North Park and bike the 5-mile lake. It really can make you feel good.

After the first month, I began to get more creative, and asked my mom to Google some nice bike trails. My mom found a lot of them, and the most memorable was Moraine State Park, and a trail along the 3 rivers. My friend Anna invited me to Chautauqua, and I rode there. Even though I forgot my bike I rented one, and it gave me experience in riding with a ton of people! It was a lot of fun to ride with Anna. In my cul-de-sac I was learning some new tricks through trial and error.

I was happy that I did so much, but there is so much more that I plan to do and I hope to do this coming fall and summer. For one, I'd like to go to Ohio Pile. It's a 20-mile bike trail almost an hour away, and it would be really fun. There's even a restaurant when you're about halfway there. I would also like to do a real mountain bike trail! My dad said they're really hard, but I'm up for the challenge! The last goal I have is going to be a lot of hard work if I'm going to do it. I think I might try a kid's triathlon. I would have to train really hard to do well in it.

I think I improved a lot this summer. Did I keep my promise? I sort of did. I rode a lot, and I did some trails. Not really mountain bike trails, but I feel healthier. This sport is really enjoyable, and you can do a lot with it. It helps with your endurance, and it can help you with other sports. It is also a lifetime sport, and it's worth being good at. If you want to be healthy once you grow up, then you should pick something you can do all of your life.

## **Grades 9–12**

Antonio S.

Assumption, Ill.

There are many things that I have added to my life that have been a healthy choice for me. One of these choices has been to exercise.

Another choice has been to stop smoking. At the beginning of the year I weighed in at 230 pounds. Within 6 months I had lost 30 pounds. I used to play a little sports and when I did, I put little effort into it. I was always good enough to make the basketball team. But I didn't put enough effort in it to be one of the star players.

I would eat fast foods almost every day. I would always eat many sweets that tasted good but were not that healthy. These were not healthy choices that would contribute to my overall health. What made me want to change was that I didn't feel good about myself.

Today I have made many changes in order to treat my body well. The most major change was to stop smoking. Smoking does nothing for your body. All smoking does for

you is cause damage to the lungs. In this way all you are doing when you smoke is harming the body. Because I love my body, I don't want to harm it.

So now each day I get an hour of exercise. I don't eat fast food except maybe once a week. With these healthy choices I have lost 30 pounds. The best part about it is I feel better about myself and I know I am maintaining healthy habits.

Ashley M.  
Auburn, N.Y.

Over the past twelve months I have accomplished a few things that I never thought were possible. My dream of not having to go through boring classes every day of the week couldn't have come at a better time than now; my senior year. Thanks to my hard work over the past three years, my greatest achievement is being accepted into the New Visions Medical program in which every day I am experiencing exciting challenges that will help prepare me for college and a future in medicine.

Many twelfth grades from my town spend their last year in high school wanting to press fast-forward on their lives until graduation, but I am lucky enough not to be infected with this "sickness" most often referred to as "senioritis." Symptoms such as lack of motivation, failure to turn in homework, and disruptive behavior in class are all eliminated when you become a New Visions student. Our twice-weekly rotations at various health-based locations in our area are what make school fun. I am able to learn from watching what we learn inside the classroom being brought to life. A year ago I had no idea that within the next 12 months my school would soon be a hospital and my classrooms would transform into an operating room, an emergency room, a birthing center, a nursing home, and many more exciting places.

I have noticed a few things that have changed with me personally as a result from this program. Control over what I do has shifted from my mom to [me] now being responsible for myself. I like being in charge, I think, because I inherited my dad's leadership and New Visions is perfect for people like me. Nobody is going to force you to do anything you don't want to do, so your grades in this class are a reflection of effort, thought, and time you put into it. Also, I think my drive to do homework has increased a great deal. Before, I used to try to do all of my homework in study halls and lunch periods because I never wanted to bring things home. Now, along with that being impossible because I have no time for a study hall, I enjoy bringing things home to work on because I can take my time and do what I think is my best. Last, I think I have matured a lot faster than my peers for obvious reasons. Ever day we are dealing with adults which is very different from being surrounded by people your own age. In the hospital we are considered professionals and need to act appropriately.

Over the course of the past year, I have noticed as much of a difference in terms of growing up, than I did transitioning from elementary school to middle school. I am very thankful that New Visions has helped me mature and to go to a place of learning that I have never traveled to.