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Teen Edge Program Hopes to Prove "There Are No Bad Kids, Just Kids Without Guidance"

Kellie Lightbourn's Teen Edge shares messages of encouragement and positive self image

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August 11, 2011

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Just like her mother [Carol Childs](#), who runs Carrollwood's National Humane Society and would drop anything to help an animal in need, Carrollwood resident Kellie Lightbourn operates the same way.

Lightbourn, ABC Action News' weekend "Consumer Update" host and the newly crowned 2012 Mrs. Galaxy International will do whatever it takes to help a child.

Her charitable organization, [Teen Edge](#), focuses on bringing positivity, confidence and self-esteem to kids who often have never heard such a message.

Only opened since 2009 with a community partner in the [Pinellas Police Athletic League \(PAL\)](#), the program speaks to teens honestly, on their level about topics such as confidence, leadership, success, community and positive self image. Officials from PAL were unavailable for comment.

"Within our first year and half, I've had six different states wanting to mimic our program," said Kellie. "I go to schools, colleges, churches, homeless shelters – wherever it's needed and I'm wanted, we put the program in."

Lightbourn woke up from a dream with the name of her organization and sketched out her logo online. The concept of Teen Edge came from being tired of hearing about bad kids in the news.

"They're not bad kids. Somebody just didn't catch them before they did a bad thing," she said. "They're just kids who have no guidance."

In her Teen Edge seminars, Lightbourn was confident that she could answer questions posed by girls, but knew male-oriented questions asked of the boys in the audience were out of her realm of experience.

So Lightbourn drew from her connections in the media and reached out to different athletes. She began receiving video messages and creating partnerships where the athlete could go and speak with her at larger events.

"One of them said to me, 'Wouldn't it be cool if we put a panel together of all the successful athletes and let all the kids come and experience the power?'" Lightbourn said. "As I'm doing these (*athlete*) interviews, I realize that the same keys to success that I'm teaching are what they're saying."

Kellie shared the vision with the Tampa Bay Lightning. They were highly receptive and are the newest community partner of Teen Edge. Officials from the Lightning were available for comment.

The yet un-named Teen Edge youth athletic panel is planned for 2012.

"As soon as we officially put it together, we will reach out to any organization who's interested, but it's going to happen," said Lightbourn. "To me to

have that vision is what I am teaching the kids: you put it out there, you tell everybody about it, you don't limit yourself and it happens. And it's happening right now. We are targeting February because that seems to be the (*sports*) seasonal lull where everybody can participate."

Her first program with PAL, even before they became a community sponsor, made an immediate impact on the teenagers participating. The kids were excited to be involved and brought in research about what they were interested in and showed it to the PAL counselors. Teens who normally didn't speak to anyone, stayed to themselves, or had a tough exterior came in with new hope and energy.

"Our whole message is 'take action,'" explained Lightbourn. "It's one thing to put it out in the world that I want to be a doctor, but what are you doing today to do that? Do you know what it takes to be a doctor? Have you called a local doctors office and asked to come in? If they said no, do you call the next one or do you give up?"

The program's message is that the teens need to take action every day towards their future.

A week after her participation in the Teen Edge program, a teen who had accepted that she would 'sit at home like everyone in her neighborhood and do nothing with her life,' enrolled in the ROTC to become a marine.

"Nobody showed her that she could have that possibility. She thought that she was a product of her environment and her tough neighborhood. But, she isn't," said Lightbourn. "We showed her that you aren't your parents, you aren't your environment or those people around you. You are whoever you want to be."

From the printed program materials and the positive message bracelets given to the kids to the commercial video camera and the video production of the positive messages of business people, celebrities and sport figures, Teen Edge is self-funded by Lightbourn.

She's witnessed, first hand, the positive effect of Teen Edge and knows how desperately the program is needed, so she won't let limited funding interfere with her vision.

She needs someone skilled in video production to volunteer to edit the positive message videos and an organization to sponsor the printed material. She knows eventually someone will come into her life that has these talents and abilities. She's living her message to the teens.

"The power and momentum this is creating is unbelievable because the need is there. I believe in this and am excited about it. I am willing to give to everybody, and when you give, people are willing to give back."

Lightbourn is reaching out into the community and trying to develop other synergistic community partnerships. She said many people have positive messages and don't know how to share them.

"There's a multi-faceted theme of Teen Edge," she said. "We are helping the teens, but I want to help the adults that want to help the teens. If I empower other people, this can be national.

"Me waking up and dreaming about this program – I couldn't have dreamed where it's going."

To learn more about Teen Edge, to volunteer or to sponsor, visit www.teenedge.com or their [Facebook](#).

Would you want to get involved with Teen Edge? [Tell us in the comments.](#)

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