

**Kent Co. 4-H Council**  
836 Fuller, NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

## **Club Spotlight**

There are many wonderful urban 4-H clubs in Grand Rapids. But there's only one that will teach you how to dance on your tiptoes and that's Steps In A New Direction. Run by the Grand Rapids Ballet and the Grand Rapids Parks Department. Youth from schools throughout Grand Rapids are given the opportunity to learn ballet, jazz, and African cultural dances. The program is funded by a major grant from the Grand Rapids Foundation, and is open to boys and girls, ages 8 - 12 years old. Professional dancers Patrick Johnson and Tassia Hooks, formerly with the Dance Theatre of Harlem where they traveled the world, are the inspirational teachers who brighten children's lives.

Patrick and Tassia have a special 4-H club for some of the more advanced students in their program. These hand-picked students come to 4-H's urban Learning Center twice a week to, as Tassia puts it, "Come to a neutral place where our students receive very personal, individual attention. Our goal is to prepare them for more in-depth dance instruction." New students may join this dance troupe after passing an audition with Patrick and/or Tassia. Low-income students are eligible for a scholarship which will help pay their tuition expenses for the Grand Rapids Ballet Dance School.

Performance goals for this special program obviously include the desire to teach these young students about different forms of dance, but just as important are the opportunities to learn about discipline and commitment, etiquette, and movement awareness. Tassia and Patrick hope to have their students perform during the Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration at the Paul I. Philips Recreation Center in Grand Rapids next year, perform at the African-American Cultural Dance Program at Grand Valley State University, and perhaps even perform in June at the Grand Rapids Ballet's annual school recital program. We wish you the best of luck. Who knows, one day maybe it will be some of these kids performing the Nutcracker every Christmas!