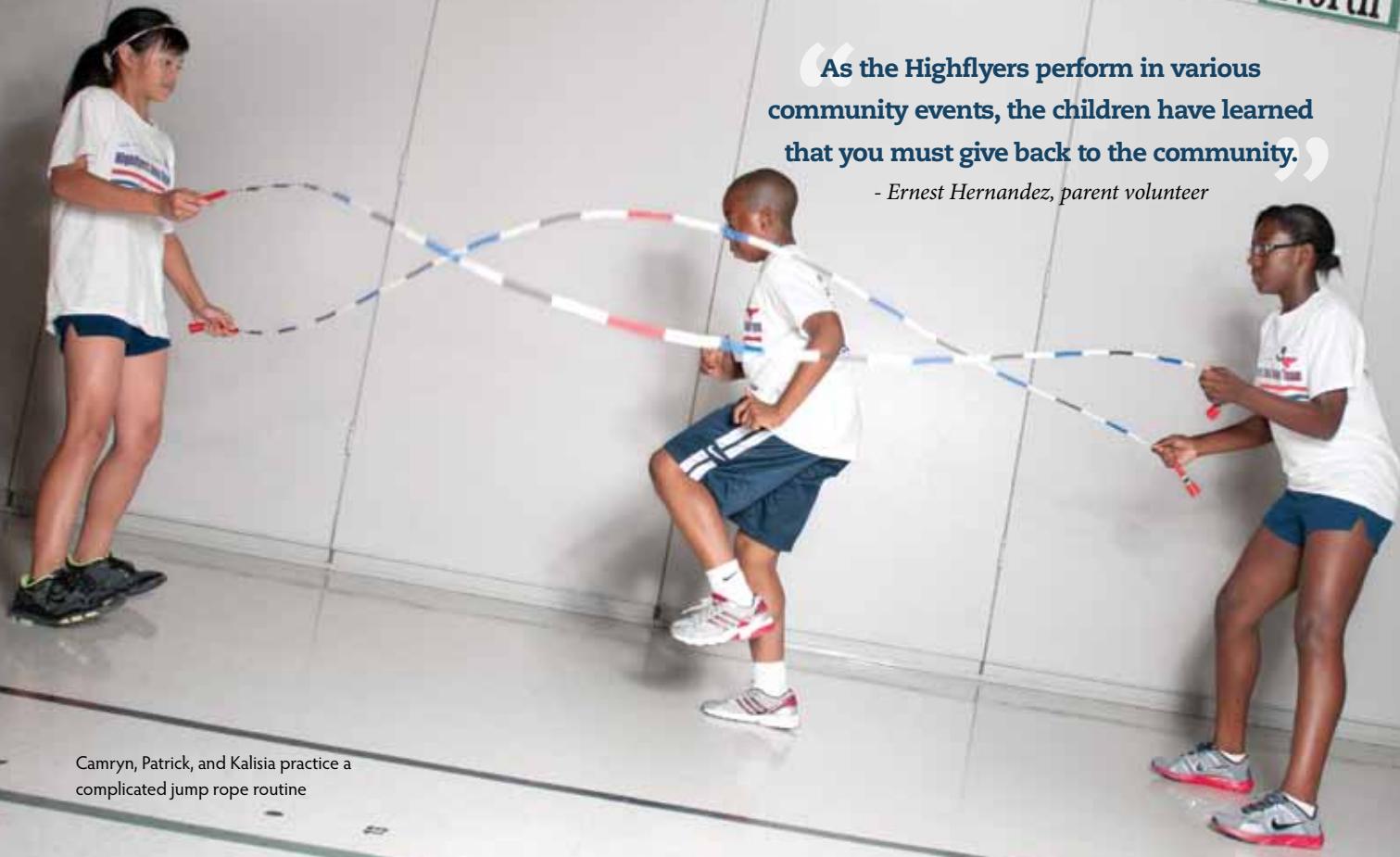




FLYING HIGH NOW

**Katy Highflyers
Jump Rope Team
Promotes Good
Sportsmanship
& Performs
at Contests &
Events All over
Texas**

*Written by Emily Ng
Photography by
Micahl Wycoff*



Camryn, Patrick, and Kalisia practice a complicated jump rope routine

As the Highflyers perform in various community events, the children have learned that you must give back to the community.

- Ernest Hernandez, parent volunteer

Many are well-versed in the health benefits of sports like swimming and gymnastics and the teambuilding benefits of football and basketball. But jumping rope is also much more than just a playground pastime, providing many of the same physical and mental health benefits of other sports.

A Jump Start on Fun

In the fall of 2000, David and Tammy Cazares established the Highflyers Jump Rope Team to give Katy kids an outlet for enjoying this fun and invigorating sport. They formed the nonprofit organization as part of the Katy Family YMCA for kids in grades one through 12.

Since then, the Highflyers team has grown to include 33 members, who have performed for organizations like the American Heart Association and the Ronald McDonald House. "As the Highflyers perform in various community events, the children have learned that you must give back to the community," says Ernest Hernandez, a parent volunteer for the team. The Highflyers team promotes fun and fitness, as well as good sportsmanship and leadership.

Criss-Cross & Confidence

The Highflyers spend many vigorous hours of practice together, and that has made jump roping more worthwhile. The kids build strong bonds by performing intricate jump rope tricks and techniques that require a substantial amount of teamwork. Cindy Fisher has seen how the team has made a difference in her daughter Alison's life. "Jumping rope has taken her out of her comfort zone by challenging her physically, emotionally, and socially," she shares. "I wish I could capture the incredible excitement I see when she has successfully

accomplished a particularly difficult and challenging skill." The team members demonstrate great strength and agility as they master and perform fancy footwork, flips, and hundreds of synchronized tricks and maneuvers. "I still get comments like, 'Wow, that's cool,' when others hear what our kids do," says Gary Arthur, a proud Highflyers dad. "It gives kids a chance to feel special and unique." After attending many contests and events, Arthur has watched his daughters Becka and Rachel develop into strong and confident young girls.

Double Dutch & Determination

Jumping rope as a sport not only boosts self-esteem, it also provides a very intensive workout. "It is an unparalleled cardiovascular workout that will tone and strengthen the entire body," says Hernandez. Unlike other sports, jumping rope can be relatively safer and cheaper. While it can be a sport in itself, many athletes use jumping rope as a part of their training routine to supplement other sports.

It improves agility, coordination, and stamina, skills vital to success in most other sports. "I cannot imagine a better exercise for any kid, and it is a fantastic spectator sport, too," says Fisher. The Highflyers have performed everything from basic double dutch to their own version of the Texas cotton-eyed Joe, a combination of single and double dutch ropes. "My favorite jump rope trick is any type of rope release," says team member Patrick Anaemejeh.

Highflying Friendships

The Highflyers work extremely hard preparing for contests and performances, practicing every Sunday at the YMCA and every Tuesday and Thursday at Kilpatrick Elementary. "As one of the older



Jump rope friends Alyssa and Liany



Patrick warms up before team practice



Katy Highflyers Bruno, Justin, and Rachel

jumpers, I am expected to set an example, [because] younger jumpers look up to me," says team member Sydney Bertrand. "This makes me work harder and always do my best, whether at competition or practice."

Even with all of their accomplishments at competitions and workshops, many Highflyers say the friendships they make are the most rewarding part of being on the team. "I have gotten to meet jumpers from other teams and made friends with a lot of them," says

team member Kalisia Brisco. After recently competing at the regional competition in Montgomery, a few of the Highflyers have advanced to the USA National Jump Rope Championship in Galveston, where they are sure to wow fans. KM

EMILY NG is a proud 2011 graduate of Cinco Ranch High School.

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