



Week #1
August 30, 2009

Overview of Youth Asset Development

Everyone has the power to help young people succeed

- The secret to helping children and youth grow into happy, healthy, and responsible adults isn't really a secret at all. Simply make a point to connect with young people: Get to know them, talk to them, understand them, help them, and build relationships with them.
- As a caring, trusted adult, you'll be better able to provide the building blocks young people need to succeed and reach their goals. Adult role models, guides, and friends are very important to young people.
- With your help, young people can begin to understand themselves and the world around them. We all know growing up isn't always easy. That's why young people need adults like you in their lives.
- According to "What Kids Need to Succeed" by Peter Benson, we are worried about our kids and our neighbor's kids. We see youth violence, teen pregnancy, suicide among our youth, and school failure on TV, in the news and right next door. We feel powerless to do anything about it. Some of us feel it's none of our business. **It is our business! We can do something!**

Here are the facts

- Research from Search Institute identifies 40 Developmental Assets that have a powerful, positive impact on young people.
- Children and teenagers who have high levels of these assets get involved in fewer risky behaviors and are much more likely to exhibit the positive values, such as leadership, good health, diversity, and success in school.
- The bad news is most young people don't have enough assets. About 59 percent of young people, ages 11–18, have 20 or fewer Developmental Assets, according to Search Institute surveys.
- The good news is we can change this because we *all* have the power to build assets in young people's lives.
- This holds true for young people of all racial, economic and geographic subgroups.
- Every community has the capacity to grow asset-rich youth.
- Building assets is not another program. Rather, it is about mobilizing the capacity of individual citizens, families, neighborhoods, businesses, schools, congregations, youth and all other community sectors to establish asset-building relationships with young people.

Understanding Developmental Assets

The eight asset categories Search Institute has found crucial in helping young people grow up healthy include:

- **Support:** Young people need to be surrounded by people who love, care for, appreciate, and accept them.
- **Empowerment:** Young people need to feel valued and valuable. This happens when youth feel safe and respected.
- **Boundaries and Expectations:** Young people need clear rules, consistent consequences for breaking rules, and encouragement to do their best.
- **Constructive Use of Time:** Young people need opportunities—outside of school—to learn and develop new skills and interests with other youth and adults.
- **Commitment to Learning:** Young people need a sense of the lasting importance of learning and a belief in their own abilities.
- **Positive Values:** Young people need to develop strong guiding values to help them make healthy life choices.
- **Social Competencies:** Young people need the skills to interact effectively with others, to make difficult decisions, and to cope with new situations.
- **Positive Identity:** Young people need to believe in their own self-worth and to feel they have control over the things that happen to them.

Each of these categories involves several specific assets that help young people grow up healthy.

Tips for building assets

In your home and family: Post a list of the 40 Developmental Assets on your refrigerator door. Each day, do at least one thing to build assets for each family member.

In your neighborhood and community: Learn the names of the young people who live around you. Find out what interests them, and ask them about those interests.

In your school or youth program: Plan asset-building activities as part of the curriculum or program. For example, engage young people in service-learning projects, social skills training, or reading for pleasure.

Youth: Young people are not too young to build assets among their peers and younger folks they know. Find a way to stay motivated to learn more about what you can do to build your own assets!

For local information, contact Communities In Schools of Lenawee at 517-263-4591
www.cisnet.org/cislenawee

Want to know more about the Search Institute and 40 Developmental Assets?
Visit www.search-institute.org/assets.