

Make a Difference!

Ideas for Asset Building

Communities

- Establish a representative “vision team” (up to 30 people) and executive committee (fewer than 10 people) to build commitment, gather information, set priorities, and plan.
- Identify a local coordinator who manages the process and unleashes multiple volunteer-initiated efforts.
- Gather data about youth, adult perceptions, and community resources for asset building. Use surveys (such as Search Institute’s *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*), focus groups, interviews, town meetings, and other techniques.
- Raise community awareness of the asset-building model, using newsletters, fact sheets, newspaper articles, speeches, cable television, computer networks, and other mechanisms.

Schools

- Make it a priority to provide caring environments for all students.
- Train support staff, teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, and other school staff in their role in asset building.
- Provide additional opportunities to nurture values deemed crucial by the community.
- Integrate service-learning, values development, relationship-building, the development of social competencies, and other asset-building strategies into the curriculum.

Youth-Serving Organizations

- Involve youth in leadership and program planning.
- Provide a range of structured activities for youth with diverse interests and needs.
- Develop expectations, boundaries, and consequences with youth who participate in programs; enforce appropriate consequences when boundaries are not respected.
- Train volunteers, leaders, and coaches in asset building in young people’s developmental needs.

Neighborhoods

- Create neighborhood service projects linking adults and children.
- Coordinate residents to provide safe places where young people can go after school if they would be home alone or if they feel unsafe.
- Organize informal activities (such as pick-up basketball) for young people in the neighborhood.
- Use neighborhood meetings and other settings to educate people about their responsibility and potential for asset building.

Business and Industry

- Develop family-friendly policies that allow parents to be active in their children’s lives.
- Provide opportunities for employees to build relationships with youth through mentoring and other volunteer programs, flexible scheduling, and internships for youth.
- Be intentional about nurturing assets (such as support, boundaries, values, and social competencies) in the lives of teenagers employed by the business.
- Become partners in and advocates for initiatives designed to create healthy communities for children and youth.

Health Care Systems

- Serve as visionary leaders in reshaping public consciousness about the health and well-being of children and adolescents.
- Offer information on asset building to parents and teenagers when they seek care.
- Emphasize integrating asset building into health care services. For example, are the clinics, hospitals and other facilities providing a supportive, caring environment for children and youth?
- Provide financial and in-kind support to initiatives within the community that seek to strengthen developmental assets.

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Adults

- Build at least one sustained caring relationship with a child or adolescent.
- Pay attention to youth when you see them.
- Model responsible behavior with young people.
- Volunteer to work in a youth program as a coach, group leader, or tutor.

Parents

- Regularly re-negotiate family rules with teenagers so they are developmentally appropriate, and consistently and fairly enforced.
- Talk with your kids about matching personal interests with extracurricular opportunities.
- Stay in contact with teachers about your child's progress.
- Talk with your teenager about life goals, priorities, and dreams.

Young People

- Learn the names of your neighbors (both adults and children). Go out of your way to greet them.
- Write a note (or call) one of the main asset builders in your life, thanking her or him for making a difference in your life.
- Talk about the 40 developmental assets with members of your family. Which assets do family members think are the strongest in your family?
- Even if your family provides a warm, caring, supportive place to grow, also seek support through adults in schools, community organizations, and congregations.

Congregations

- Intentionally foster intergenerational relationships by providing activities for all ages within the church, synagogue, or other faith community.
- Listen to what youth say they want.
- Regularly offer parent education as part of the congregation's educational programs.
- Make community service a central component of youth programming.
- Network with other congregations and other institutions for mutual learning, support, and programming.

Local Government

- Through policy development, staff training, and resource allocation, make asset development a top priority in the city.
- Initiate community-wide efforts to name shared values and boundaries.
- Partner with other organizations in creating child-friendly public places and safe places for teenagers to gather.
- Help to coordinate and publicize after-school, weekend, and summer opportunities for youth in the city.

Juvenile Justice

- Use the framework of assets as a tool for case management for juvenile offenders.
- Build connections to positive youth organizations and to schools.
- Educate parents and other support networks about the developmental needs of young people at risk.
- Explore how the asset framework may support innovative practices and programs in juvenile detention centers.

Community Organizations

- Involve youth as volunteers and leaders in the agency.
- Provide information on asset building to families and others who participate in programs and services.
- Train agency staff and leaders in their role as asset builders.
- Build into your planning ways of connecting people across generations.