

Asset-Building Ideas for Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth Teams

The seeds of a Healthy Community • Healthy Youth initiative can be planted by one committed individual, but a team working together can accomplish much more in a shorter period of time. However, working as a team can be a challenge, even when all members share a common goal. Focusing on asset building in the community as well as among team members can help keep you working effectively toward your common goal. Here are ideas on how to build assets as a team:



- ✧ Create a study group to explore the importance of asset building in the community.
- ✧ **Make time for team members to build relationships and build assets for one another.**
- ✧ Give people the chance to share asset-building stories at every opportunity.
- ✧ **Generate a mission, goals, and a logo for your initiative.**
- ✧ Save yourself time and effort by not re-inventing the wheel. Resources such as *Speaking of Developmental Assets* and *The Asset Activist's Toolkit* are available from Search Institute (www.search-institute.org). These provide you with much of the information and tools you need. Other excellent resources are available on networking, community development, and related topics. For ideas, contact a library, bookstore, or local community-development agency or look for information on the Web.
- ✧ **Link with existing community networks to help spread the word about asset building.**
- ✧ Learn what established organizations and programs are already doing to build assets. Acknowledge their contributions and invite them to join your team.
- ✧ **Go where people already gather to discuss common asset-building goals. Civic organizations, clergy associations, and service organizations are a few options.**
- ✧ Distribute the asset message using creative and varied strategies, such as placing brochures in waiting rooms at clinics or printing them on grocery bags.
- ✧ **Publish a weekly column in your community newspaper featuring asset-building stories.**
- ✧ Provide literature on assets to parents of newborns and newly adoptive parents.
- ✧ **Sponsor or support community-wide events for families. Make sure that information about asset building and your initiative is available.**
- ✧ Train businesses in the asset language and encourage their participation in your initiative.
- ✧ **Divide the team into task forces or smaller working groups to take on particular projects or tasks.**
- ✧ Make connections between schools and the community through business/teacher exchanges.
- ✧ **Plan a career fair with local businesses. Provide all participants with information about assets and encourage them to think of the ways their organizations can build assets. Then invite youth to**



talk with these potential employers about the kinds of work they do and the skills and experience needed.

- ✱ Bring together asset-building organizations in the community, such as 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and YMCA programs. Encourage them to learn from and support one another.
- ✱ **Identify key people in the community who could be allies in asset building and invite them to get involved with your initiative.**
- ✱ Extend the school day by providing a community education program that includes evening and weekend learning experiences for individuals and families.
- ✱ **Encourage service to others (asset 9) by sponsoring or supporting fund-raising projects such as paint-a-thons, bike-a-thons, and other community-wide service efforts.**
- ✱ Supply local restaurants with table tents and place mats printed with information about asset building. Use the artwork of students to decorate them.
- ✱ **Hold community roundtable discussions to talk about assets and encourage networking.**
- ✱ Use asset-building language everywhere. Using the words often makes the ideas part of everyday conversation.
- ✱ **Change the meeting place each time so that each group member can host a meeting. For example, a business executive could have the meeting one week at the executive's company, a high school student could host it another week at the high school, and a neighborhood resident could have the meeting at a neighborhood park. These changes encourage people to talk about the setting and let the host show others her or his environment.**
- ✱ Publish a list of group members with each person's full name, address, and best way to connect (such as by phone or e-mail). Encourage people to bring the list each time. Some people will use it as a way to get to know names. Others will use it to make connections outside of the meeting.
- ✱ **Manage personal differences and conflicts as soon as they arise. Encourage people to think about responses and actions, rather than emotions, and to try to understand the perspectives of others.**
- ✱ With all initiative activities, efforts, and events, make sure people understand the connections to asset building.