



Asset-Building Ideas for Law Enforcement and Juvenile Justice

All young people need Developmental Assets, and that includes young people at risk for getting into trouble and those already in trouble with the law. In a number of communities, individuals in law enforcement and juvenile justice are incorporating the Developmental Assets framework into their work and are seeing positive results. Consider some of these ideas:

- **Look for links** between the 40 Developmental Assets and your work. Tom English, program coordinator for the Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior at the University of Oregon (and past president of the Oregon Council on Crime and Delinquency), was drawn to the empowerment and positive aspect of asset building. “Asset building works for kids in the system,” he says. “Instead of looking at these kids as law violators, which they are, we also need to take a look at the competency deficits and the skills deficits that brought them into the system.”
- **Examine your attitude** toward the juveniles with whom you work. Which ones have the most potential to you? Why? How can you help them develop the skills they need?
- **Tell others** in your field about asset building. Talk about how you see the Developmental Assets framework enhancing the work you do.
- **Use the Developmental Assets framework** as a tool for case management for juvenile offenders.
- **Work with programs** (or help develop them) that identify young people who are at the highest risk of committing crimes—before they begin to get into trouble with the law. Identify ways to build their Developmental Assets so that they can become productive, successful citizens in your community.
- **Partner with schools.** Some police departments and school districts have worked together so that police officers and young people get to know each other (and young people learn that making smart choices will help them succeed). In some school districts, police officers teach anti-drug programs in the classroom with an emphasis on building personal relationships in addition to teaching the curriculum.
- **Examine your community laws** and ordinances based on the Developmental Assets framework. In Minneapolis, young people picked up for municipal curfew violations are taken to the Curfew/Truancy Center, where they are safe and can be supervised until a parent picks them up. While young people wait, center workers talk with them about why they’re on the

streets past curfew and how they can find activities that keep them out of danger.

- **Become more visible** with young people in the community. In Cape Girardeau, Missouri, police officers assigned to be community service officers have eaten lunch on a regular basis at the junior high and senior high school, provided the training for school crossing guards at

the elementary schools, and spent two hours each week in the classroom interacting with students as tutors, readers, and teachers of conflict resolution.

- **Have fun with young people.** In Iowa Falls, Iowa, Police Chief Douglas Strike chauffeurs teenagers to the prom in his 1950s patrol car with the lights flashing and the siren screaming.

Developmental Assets™ are positive factors in young people, families, communities, schools, and other settings that have been found to be important in promoting young people's healthy development. From *The Asset Activist's Toolkit: Handouts and Practical Resources for Putting Assets into Action*, copyright © 2005 by Search Institute™; 612-376-8955; 800-888-7828; www.search-institute.org. This handout may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only (with this copyright line). All rights reserved.