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## **Peter Benson Keynotes White House Conference on Helping America's Youth**

*Following presentation, Benson accompanies First Lady  
to Minnesota to observe asset-building community in action*

INDIANAPOLIS – Dr. Peter Benson, president and CEO of Search Institute, served as keynote speaker at the first regional White House Conference on Helping America's Youth, hosted by First Lady Laura Bush. Helping America's Youth is a presidential initiative designed to promote public awareness of the problems facing young people in the United States.

The conference—a two-day event held at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)—provided nearly 200 community partners with training and expert panel presentations on the current status of America's youth and successful methods for helping make a difference in the lives of young people. Dr. Benson's keynote address provided an overview of the Search Institute's research on our nation's youth and discussed the importance of mobilizing community-wide support for children and youth.

Dr. Benson spoke on the 40 Developmental Assets, the research-based framework of building blocks of young people's healthy development. He stressed that caring relationships with adults are experiences that every young person needs to thrive. "From a developmental perspective, relationships are as critical to growing a healthy adolescent as water and oxygen are for growing vibrant crops here in the heartland," Benson said.

Benson reminded the conference participants that the "most abundant and renewable energy source in our nation is the energy of adults choosing to know, name, move toward, care about, and connect with young people in their midst." He concluded his remarks by providing specific strategies on how communities can rally to support the healthy development of all youth.

Following the conference in Indianapolis, Mrs. Bush and Dr. Benson traveled to St. Louis Park, Minn., to see asset building in action. In 1993, St. Louis Park became the first community in the United States to adopt Search Institute's framework of Developmental Assets as the foundation for community-wide action on behalf of children and youth.

The First Lady applauded Dr. Benson and other community leaders for their efforts to empower and mobilize residents and to create safe, child-friendly places for young people to play and socialize. “This is a really great example of what communities can do when they all work together,” said Ms. Bush during her visit to the Meadowbrook Collaborative. Meadowbrook is a low-rent housing development in St. Louis Park that has made dramatic strides in caring for children and building community, inspired by the asset-building vision of the city’s Children First asset-building initiative.

*For more information on the Helping America's Youth initiative, visit the White House Web site, at [www.helpingamericasyouth.gov](http://www.helpingamericasyouth.gov).*

*Search Institute is a leading innovator in discovering what children and adolescents need to become caring, healthy, and responsible adults. Drawing on extensive research, Search Institute brings solutions to pressing challenges in the lives of young people and their communities. For more information, visit [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org).*