

Asset-Building Ideas for Youth Group Leaders

A primary goal of youth group leaders is to address young people's spiritual needs and to nurture their faith. Asset building can be an important part of nurturing a faithful, value-centered person. A caring, welcoming environment that supports young people and challenges them to grow will keep young people involved and interested in your church. Here are some suggestions:

- Learn about the 40 Developmental Assets™. Make a commitment to building assets for youth in your congregation and for all the children and young people around you.
- Teach youth about the 40 Developmental Assets and discuss how they can be asset builders for their peers and for younger children.
- Work with youth to set clear boundaries for what is appropriate and not appropriate during youth activities.
- Involve youth in asset-building efforts. Include them on planning teams, ask for and use their ideas about programs and activities, and build relationships with them by working together to build assets for all young people and youth in your congregation.
- Lead serving projects where people of all ages work side-by-side. Plan time after the work is finished to discuss how faith and serving are related.
- Be open in talking about and modeling your personal faith and values. Make time to listen to youth tell about the values that are important to them. Discuss together how values affect behavior and decisions.
- Plan activities and classes that help youth learn skills that help strengthen family relationships.
- Plan a youth program that intentionally addresses one or more of the assets. For example, plan a series of events focused on the positive values assets (#26-31).
- Nurture your own assets. Surround yourself with people who support you and your work. Empower yourself by serving others. Set boundaries on your time. Maintain high expectations for yourself. Uphold positive values. Build your own social competencies. Focus on what excites you about youth work and dream big about the future.
- Identify how the current programs and activities in your church already build assets. List all the formal and informal opportunities your congregation offers for youth and evaluate each in light of the asset framework.
- Nurture an asset-building climate in your youth group. Focus on creating an atmosphere where young people, volunteers, and youth leaders are friendly and welcoming and caring. Challenge young people to think and grow. Make it clear that young people are valued and respected for who they are.

- Ensure that retreats, camps, and trips are asset-building experiences by balancing fun with learning and by building relationships. Expose young people to new people, cultures, experiences, and opportunities to learn about themselves and their abilities. Take time after these experiences to reflect on what happened—the positives and the negatives—to help young people process what they have learned.
- Form partnerships with other people who are interested in building assets. Some of these people may be members of your church; some may be part of a different faith tradition; others may be part of a youth-serving organization or school. The important thing is to find other caring people who want to bring out the best in young people. By working together; you'll develop creative ideas, be able to expand your outreach, and make a bigger difference in the lives of kids.

This handout may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only. From *Toolkit for Integrating Developmental Assets in Your Congregation*. Copyright © 2005 by Search Institute, 615 First Avenue NE, Suite 125, Minneapolis, MN 55413-2211; 800-888-7828; www.search-institute.org. All Rights Reserved.