

Purpose: To help participants visualize the power of individuals and the power of communities in building assets.

Suggested Group Size: 8 to 16. If you have a larger group, build several webs simultaneously.

Estimated Time: 12 to 15 minutes.

Materials Needed: One roll of crepe paper streamer (any color); 10 balloons that are 12 to 15-inch diameter for each group.

Directions

1. Before your meeting or presentation, inflate the balloons and label them with a permanent or dry erase marker as indicated:

- Inflate one balloon completely. Label it "31-40 Assets."
- Inflate three balloons three-fourths full. Label each of them "21-30 Assets."
- Inflate four balloons one-half full. Label each of them "11-20 Assets."
- Inflate two balloons one-fourth full. Label each of them "0-10 Assets."

2. Have participants stand close together in a circle. (Six to 16 persons is best, but this can work with up to 20. If you have a large group, have smaller teams create webs simultaneously.)

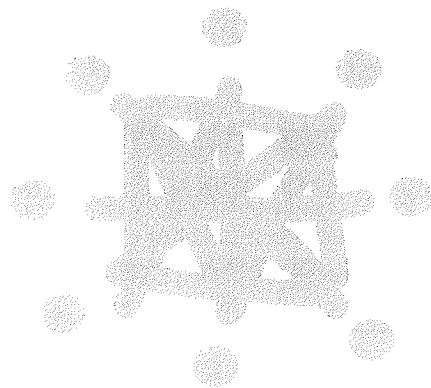
3. Give the roll of streamer to one person. Have that person tell one role that he or she currently has as an asset builder (such as neighbor, parent, mentor, coach, aunt, friend, or grandparent). The person holds the end of the streamer and tosses the roll to a person who is at least two people away. That person then tells her or his role as an asset builder, hangs on to the streamer, and tosses the roll to another person. Continue until all have

participated. If the group is small, go around again until all of the streamer is in the web.

4. Comment on all the acts of individual asset building that work together to make a strong community web. Encourage the group to pull on the streamers to "tighten up" their web so that it is the best one possible for supporting their youth.

5. Tell the group that their community has 10 young people. Toss the largest balloon on the web and challenge them to keep it supported. Point out that for every 10 young people, we know that about one experiences 31-40 assets. Toss the 21-30 balloons on the web, pointing out that about 30 percent of our young people have this level of assets. Next toss the 11-20 balloons, challenging the group to keep them in the web and telling them that 43 percent experience this level of assets. Finish with the two smallest balloons representing 0-10 assets for 20 percent of youth. (Inevitably, some balloons will be on the floor by now.)

6. Now, tell the group that anyone born in January, February, or March has done their fair share for young people. They can now stop building assets and drop their part of the web.



Asset-Building Teaching Points

Lead a discussion with questions like these:

- What does this show about the power of individuals?
- What happened when some people decided they had done enough (stopped participating in asset building)?
- What does this show about the power of communities?
- What would it take to create a strong web of support for all our youth?
- What will you remember from this exercise tomorrow?

Tip for Success

As the web is being built, encourage people to keep their examples brief. If participants start sharing stories, it will make the activity too long.

Variations

If your meeting space allows, lay the web on the floor with the balloons as a visual reminder for the rest of your time together. You can also use various size balloons (5, 7, 9, or 12 inch).

Adapted with permission from Bob Wittman,
*Taking Asset Building Personally: A Guide
for Planning and Facilitating Study Groups*
(Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1999).