



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



AUGUST Asset of the Month: **CARING NEIGHBORHOOD**

Young person experiences caring neighbors.

This handout is designed to help adults throughout Silicon Valley develop materials and activities to promote the asset of **Caring Neighborhood**. Developmental Assets®, created by Search Institute, are the positive values, relationships, skills, and experiences that help children and teens thrive.

The Importance of a Caring Neighborhood

Research shows that youth who reside in caring neighborhoods have higher grades, better self-esteem, reduced crime, and less drug use. In addition, caring neighborhoods are safer. The Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods and Its Additions (PHDCN+), a study of 343 Chicago neighborhoods, discovered that in a caring community, youth experience less acts of school absence, graffiti, and violence. Other benefits of a strong neighborhood include a greater sense of community and easier conflict resolution among neighbors. A caring neighborhood creates a positive environment for everyone regardless of age.

Unfortunately, in the 2016 Search Institute Developmental Assets Survey, implemented by Project Cornerstone for Santa Clara County schools, **only 46% of 4th-6th graders and 33% of 7th-12th graders** reported that they feel that their neighborhood is caring. To help raise awareness of this important asset, August is *Caring Neighborhood* month in Silicon Valley.

The following discussion topics can help you work with young people to become aware of the ways that their neighborhood is caring and identify possible opportunities for improvement:

- Which adults “keep an eye” on neighborhood kids when they are playing outside to help keep them safe?
- Which adults and families in the neighborhood can you turn to for help in case of an emergency? Help your family identify a “safe house” on every nearby block where they can go if they need help.
- Which adults and families can you make an effort to get to know better? How might you approach them?
- Are there any neighbors who might benefit from assistance such as a senior citizen who may need help with their yard work, carrying groceries, or taking their trash and recycling to the curb?

Activities

For families

- Make an effort to get to know your neighbors, and help your children understand the importance of strong neighborhood bonds. Encourage your children to share toys or activities with other kids on the block.
- Invite another family to go with you when you walk your dog or ask if you can join a family when they walk theirs.
- With your children, make a map of your street and write down names and a few facts about each neighbor.
- Volunteer to house- or pet-sit when your neighbors go out of town.
- Throw a neighborhood party! Invite everyone on the block for food, fun, games, and the opportunity to get to know each other better. Be sure to plan activities for youth of all ages.

For all adults

- Learn the names and interests of the kids in your neighborhood and find areas that you have in common. Offer to teach a new skill or ask the young person to teach you.
- Let families know that your home represents a "safe house" where their children can come if they need help.
- "Check in" with youth who are playing outside and help them stay safe.
- Establish an emergency contact list for neighbors.
- Volunteer to pick up a neighbor's children from school or activities.
- Treat neighbors of all ages with courtesy and respect.
- Attend a game, play, or event in which a neighborhood youth is participating.
- Be aware of graduations and other major events in children's lives.
- Create an email list or online group for neighbors. This is an easy way to share announcements, invitations, plans, and concerns.
- Support local youth in their fundraisers. Even if you are not in need of cookies, candy, wrapping paper, or the other items being sold, your support of their activities shows that you value their goals and efforts.

At school or in youth programs

- Schools, religious organizations, and youth programs can help create a sense of community in the neighborhood. Visit with your immediate neighbors to help them understand your programs and enlist their help in keeping children and youth safe.
- Hold events for the neighborhood, such as a Halloween carnival or 'open house' with children's activities. Neighbors can learn about your programs and visit with each other.
- Develop a service project where youth in your programs volunteer in the nearby neighborhood, such as picking up litter or assisting the elderly with chores.
- Discuss ways that youth can create a caring community in their own neighborhoods.

Resources

- National Night Out is an annual event involving citizens, law enforcement agencies, civic groups, businesses, neighborhood organizations and local officials from thousands of communities in the United States and Canada. Visit <http://www.nationaltownwatch.org/nno>
- The National Neighborhood Watch Program pairs neighborhood groups and law enforcement to work together to create safe communities. For more information, visit <http://www.usaonwatch.org/>
- Ian Chamandy of Portland, Oregon has created a detailed manual titled "How to Throw a Great Street/Block Party and Transform Your Neighborhood into a Tight-Knit Community," which covers a range of activities before, during, and after the party that ensure a successful event. To view the manual, visit <http://www.streetparty.net/> and click the link to download the manual.

About the Asset of the Month Toolkit

The Asset of the Month toolkit is designed by YMCA of Silicon Valley Project Cornerstone using Search Institute's research-based Developmental Assets framework. The toolkit highlights 12 Developmental Assets and provides an editable poster (available in English and Spanish) and an overview handout for each asset. To access all 12 months of resources, go to <https://www.ymcasv.org/ymca-project-cornerstone/developmental-assets/asset-month-toolkit>

About Project Cornerstone

Project Cornerstone is an initiative of the YMCA of Silicon Valley with a mission to ensure all youth feel valued, respected, and known so they grow into healthy, caring, and responsible adults. For more information, visit www.projectcornerstone.org or email us at info@projectcornerstone.org.