



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



FEBRUARY Asset of the Month: **YOUTH AS RESOURCES**

Young people are given useful roles in the community.

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

The Importance of Youth as Resources

People of all ages want to feel that they make contributions to and play a meaningful role in their community, whether at home, school, or in the neighborhood. Research shows that youth who feel valued and useful have higher self-esteem, a greater sense of personal control, reduced delinquency, greater social and personal responsibility, reduced substance abuse, and better social skills.

Most youth in Silicon Valley do not feel that they have opportunities to contribute to their community. In the 2016 Search Institute Developmental Assets Survey, implemented by Project Cornerstone for Santa Clara County schools, **only 54% of 4th-6th graders and 35% of 7th-12th graders reported that they are given useful roles**. To help address this problem, February is *Youth as Resources* month in Silicon Valley. This asset focuses on including youth in decisions that affect them and creating participation and leadership opportunities where their contribution makes a difference.

The following discussions can help youth recognize opportunities to serve as resources:

- What would you like to share with adults about your experiences in your home, school, neighborhood, or faith community?
- Who are some adults that you could talk to about making positive changes?
- How will you know when these changes happen?
- How would you like to be recognized for your contribution?

Keep in mind that serving as a resource does not have to be a large effort. Adults can help youth serve as resources simply by asking them to share their opinions, skills, or knowledge, such as how to play a game or use technology such as text messaging and social media apps.

Remember, it is important that young people's efforts be recognized and celebrated! Be sure to create opportunities to show that you value *everyone's* unique contributions.

Activities

For families

- Hold family meetings. For example, a meeting can focus on reviewing family responsibilities/contributions. Youth can provide input on which jobs should be included, how often they rotate, and what is the expectation for completion.
- Involve children in planning events such as holiday celebrations or trips. For family events, young people can help plan menus and cook, or plan games and activities for younger children; for vacations, they can research destinations and activities.
- Ask children what they do or do not like about their daily routines and find ways to improve them.

For all adults

- Ask a young person to teach you something new (e.g., a game, a hobby, a computer skill) or to share their favorite music or YouTube videos with you. It is empowering to be able to introduce adults to something that they do not already know.
- Ask a young person for advice on solving a challenge or completing a task. You'd be surprised at the quality of suggestions you receive.
- Be sure to notice young people's contributions and talents in every aspect of their lives.
- Help a young person find age-appropriate opportunities to serve as resources in their community. For example, many cities and towns have a youth advisory committee or other group of young people who provide input regarding issues affecting youth.

For adults who work directly with youth

- Does your organization allow young people to sit on boards and committees that affect its mission and programs? Including youth input at the highest levels not only creates valuable opportunities for young people but also helps your organization ensure that it's in touch with the needs and desires of the youth you serve.
- Be sure to create opportunities for *all* youth to feel valued. For example, a county sheriff's office found that youth with low grades wanted to volunteer in the community as much as those with higher grades, but the community rarely asked the students with lower grades to contribute. All young people deserve the opportunity to feel that their opinions and contributions are valued.

At school or in youth programs

- Create leadership and contribution opportunities in your classroom or programs. Groups such as a Student Council, playground peace monitors, traffic safety patrol, and others are great ways for young people to feel like their contributions are valued, especially if they have some responsibility in making decisions for the group. In younger grades, classroom responsibilities like line leader help students feel like their contributions make a difference to the class. Middle and high school students can even help interview new staff and participate in school improvement teams.
- Invite students to share their opinions and suggestions about activities and incorporate their suggestions in the future. Give young people choices about which activities they take part in.
- Encourage young people to write letters to the editor, to companies, or elected officials to share ideas or express opinions. Help them develop and share constructive suggestions to address their concerns.

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.