



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



## **APRIL** Asset of the Month: **SERVICE TO OTHERS**

*Young people serve in the community one hour or more per week.*

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

### **The Importance of Service to Others**

Community service, volunteering, and service learning do more than allow youth to help the community—these activities also provide youth with the positive experiences, relationships, and connections that help them thrive. Research shows that the Developmental Asset of Service to Others results in higher academic performance, increased self-esteem, reduced incidence of depression, better problem-solving skills, and increased community involvement as an adult.

Unfortunately, most youth in Santa Clara County do not participate in significant service to others. In the 2016 Search Institute Developmental Assets Survey, implemented by Project Cornerstone for Santa Clara County schools, **29% of 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders and only 42% of 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders** reported that they serve in the community one or more hours each week. To help raise awareness of the importance of this developmental asset, April is *Service to Others* month in Silicon Valley.

One reason youth may not serve is that their assistance is not welcomed. A Gallup poll found that adolescents were four times more likely to volunteer and help in the community if they were asked, but only half of a national sample of youth reported that adults *asked* them to help. Youth gain the greatest benefit from service programs that enable them to “do” instead of observing, to work with supportive adults, to demonstrate responsibility, to explore their own interests and ideas, and to reflect on the meaning of their activities.

The following discussion topics can help young people recognize the value of service to others and identify new kinds of service opportunities:

- Ask a young person to complete this sentence: “One way I would like to change the world is...”
- What are some needs or problems that you see and are concerned about in the community? What do you think can solve these issues? What can you do to get the ball rolling?
- If you had to commit one year after high school to performing service in your own community, anywhere in the United States, or abroad, where would you go and what would you choose to do?

## **Activities**

### *For families*

- At mealtime, share your recent community service activities with your family. This discussion demonstrates that your family values service, enables you to role-model community service, and opens a discussion about ways to help in the community.
- Serving others doesn't always mean taking on a big commitment—it can be as simple as picking up litter in the park, helping an elderly neighbor unload their groceries, or bringing a meal to a sick neighbor.
- Have a family meeting to consider the idea of a family service project, and make sure that everyone participates regardless of their age. Have everyone list their volunteer activities to see if others are interested in helping and talk about additional causes that each member would like to support.

### *For all adults*

- Create youth-oriented volunteer opportunities that are diverse in the amount of time, energy, and expertise required. To make sure that youth get the most out of the experience, provide adequate training and make sure that the youth understand how their efforts will make a difference.
- When seeking volunteers, do not just reach out to the high-achieving youth in leadership programs! Young people from all backgrounds and experiences deserve the opportunity to experience the benefits of service.
- Be sure to affirm and recognize the efforts of all the youth who serve.

### *At school or in youth programs*

- Service-learning programs that link educational or program objectives with opportunities to address real-world issues are a proven strategy for increasing Developmental Assets. Resources to help get started with service-learning programs can be found in the "Resources" section below.
- Start a service club for youth! Work with the group to identify a list of causes that they care about (E.g., animals, education, environment, creating safe places for youth to hang out, health care, disaster relief, homelessness, peace, etc.) and identify ways that they can help. Help the youth research the need, define goals, create a plan (keeping in mind the potential needs and feelings of the recipients), and implement their service ideas. Be sure to guide the youth in reflecting on their experience at the end of the project.
- You can also create service opportunities for youth within the school or program itself. Work as a group to list needs that youth have observed at the site, like picking up litter or refereeing games for younger children and ask youth to choose which needs they'd like to address. If their choices require the permission of other staff members, have the youth choose a team of representatives to present their offer to the person in charge, and coach them on how to make their presentation.

## **Additional Resources**

- Bay Area Volunteer Information Center has a number of volunteer opportunities in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties: <https://volunteerinfo.org/category/south-bay/>
- Volunteer Match has an extensive, searchable database of volunteer opportunities: <https://www.volunteermatch.org/>
- Sign up for Doing Good Together's monthly email of family volunteer opportunities in Silicon Valley: <https://www.doinggoodtogether.org/family-volunteering-silicon-valley>
- A wealth of information about service learning is available at Search Institute's "Civic Development and Service-Learning" page: <https://www.search-institute.org/our-research/youth-development-research/civic-development-service-learning/>

## **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](http://www.projectcornerstone.org) or email us at [info@projectcornerstone.org](mailto:info@projectcornerstone.org).