



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



## **JULY** Asset of the Month: **COMMUNITY VALUES YOUTH**

*Young people perceive that adults in the community value children and youth.*

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

### **The Importance of Community Values Youth**

Research shows that youth who feel valued in their community enjoy better mental health; a greater sense of personal control and optimism; reduced crime, violence, and fighting; less substance abuse; and higher academic performance. Unfortunately, in Silicon Valley, Community Values Youth is by far the least reported asset. In the 2016 Search Institute Developmental Assets Survey, implemented by Project Cornerstone for Santa Clara County schools, **only 27% of 4th-6th graders and 22% of 7th-12<sup>th</sup> graders** reported that they feel valued by their community. To help raise awareness of the importance of communicating respect to young people, July is *Community Values Youth* month in Silicon Valley.

All adults in the community have a role to play in showing their support for youth. Young people are not fully connected to their community when they notice value from only the adults they know. They will miss the benefits that such a connection can provide. Normally adults feel that youth already know that they're valued and appreciated.

The following discussion topics can help you work with young people to identify the ways that the community does, and does not, provide them with the permission associated with this asset:

- Do you ever encounter adults who have negative opinions about people your age? Do you know how to respond politely but well to their criticism or comments?
- Are there good (and safe) places for kids your age to hang out after school and on the weekends? If there are not, what kind of place(s) would you like to see?
- Do you feel that adults at school and other organizations give you an opportunity to voice your opinion? Can you suggest some ways that adults could create opportunities for youth to provide feedback and suggestions?

Community Values Youth is linked with other external assets. Children and youth will feel that they are welcomed and valued by the community when adults provide them with support, permission, boundaries, and positive outlooks. The more effective we are as a community at building assets in general, the more effective we will be at raising the levels of this lacking asset.

## **Activities**

The activities below are a starting point to help adults find ways to show youth that they are valued and appreciated.

### *For families*

- Many programs young people enjoy are created and maintained by the community. (e.g., libraries, parks, and playgrounds).
- Your children can participate in community life. Help them identify issues that affect young people and share those insights with local government entities and officials, and news groups.
- Encourage your children to write letters/emails of thanks to the organizations and businesses that treat young people well. Doing so will encourage them to continue their efforts. Your child's letter/email may be publicly displayed.

### *For all adults*

- Remember to treat all young people with respect and take their ideas and suggestions seriously.
- If you work in a business, train your staff to treat young people with respect. Make sure your policies are youth-friendly. If your business serves adults who may have children with them, make sure the space is inviting and provides age-appropriate diversions.
- Celebrate youth who help your organization.
- Attend and contribute to local government meetings to ensure that young people's needs are being addressed.

### *At school or in youth programs*

- Ask community businesses to show support for your program. In addition to financial donations and sponsorships, they can display artwork, host tours of their facility, or find other ways to demonstrate that they care about the youth in the community. (Doing so also makes good business sense — today's youth are tomorrow's customers!)
- With older children and teens, discuss whether the community has safe and supportive places for them to hangout, and if there are opportunities for younger children as well as teens and older youth to get involved and share their voice. Use the results to create an action plan to raise awareness with adults in the community.
- Invite notable members of the community to attend shows and events.

## **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).