
STORIES

There's nothing like a story to illustrate a point, even if only briefly. Stories have the ring of truth, and they paint pictures that statistics, information, and charts just cannot. We recommend that you use your own stories when you can, but here are a few that you can mention to illustrate different points in your presentation. To find additional stories, visit the Search Institute Web site, www.search-institute.org, to see what other individuals and community initiatives are doing.

To Illustrate Specific Developmental Assets

The Asset Banner Run-Walk-Crawl (Asset 4, *Caring Neighborhood*)

The community of Pittsford, New York, holds an event that includes a five-kilometer run throughout the community. Members, volunteers, and staff from community organizations are stationed along the route, each of them illustrating a poster and giving out information about a different asset. After the runners take off, individuals and families begin the five-kilometer walk. Each participant is given a list of the assets to check off as he or she visits each station. The conclusion of the event is a five-foot “baby crawl” on a gymnastics mat.

Lunch Buddies (Asset 14, *Adult Role Models*)

Mentoring programs aren't really unusual, but this one is different because of who's involved—office staff from a state department, specifically, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. Robert Carlton, director of youth development for the department, wanted to do something that contributed to the local school district. He coordinated a lunchtime mentoring program with 2nd-grade students (60 to 70 percent of them are on free or reduced-price lunch) at H.B. Rhame Elementary School in Columbia. To his surprise, 70 people from his department volunteered. Carlton reports that both students and adults look forward to the days—the first and third Thursdays each month—when the bus carrying the mentors arrives at the school. “The adults gain as much as the children,” he says, especially because many of the mentors have desk jobs and, except for those who have their own children, have had no other contact with young people, certainly not in schools.

The Festival of Nations (Asset 34, Cultural Competence)

Park River, North Dakota, puts on an annual “Festival of Nations.” The organizers contact people in their community who are from countries other than the United States and who have access to accurate information and authentic illustrations of those countries’ cultures. They invite them to set up tables at the festival, and students and others learn about the countries by, for example, looking at native clothing, tasting native foods, and hearing the native languages. Teachers tie the event into classroom assignments, which, for example, could consist of writing essays on topics ranging from “What did all the representatives have in common?” to “What was unique about each culture?” The organizers make up passports for students, and arrange to have the passports stamped with the name of each country they “visit.”

Kids as Shoppers (Asset 37, Personal Power)

After students at Eastmont Junior High School, East Wenatchee, Washington, saw their results from *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*, the self-report survey developed by Search Institute, they realized that many of them felt that the community didn’t care about them. On further discussion, they said that merchants downtown and at the local mall suspected them of planning to steal things, perhaps because students wore earrings, carried backpacks, came in groups, and otherwise manifested behaviors considered negative by the merchants. The students decided to do something positive about the situation, and this is what they did: They constructed a survey in which fellow students were asked to state their shopping preferences—where they liked to shop, what they liked to purchase, when they liked to shop, and so on. They administered the survey to students, compiled and analyzed the results, and presented the results to the downtown association. Then they worked with the association to translate the results into policies that would provide a friendlier environment in which young people could shop.

Big Band Booms Asset Benefits (Asset 6, Parent Involvement in Schooling)

The annual 5th- and 6th-grade band concert at Livonia Intermediate School in Livonia, New York, took on new dimensions when students recruited parents, teachers, alumni, and administrators to participate. The musician ranks swelled to 180 and boasted a clamorous 30 trumpet players and 17 percussionists.

“There were a lot of people so it got kind of loud,” allows 11-year-old oboe player Kaylee Lucco, whose mother, Michele, joined in on the flute. But overall, Kaylee reports that the adults who participated did a pretty good job. “It turned out really well,” she says. “Plus, it was kind of cool playing next to your mom or dad.”

Many adult musicians played on instruments a local music supply store provided free of charge. And a number of rehearsals, in which elementary school stu-

dents were explaining the ins and outs of codas and repeats to their adult stand partners, meaningfully connected youth with caring adults who shared similar interests.

When performance day came, the annual concert was moved to the gymnasium to accommodate the bigger band. In front of bleachers filled with enthusiastic community members, the band played a march, a jazz piece, and more. The setting allowed younger children to join in the fun, running and dancing as the music played. The successful concert has all the makings of an annual event.

To Illustrate How Building Developmental Assets Can Help Protect Young People from Risky Behaviors

Bronco Choice 2000

In Fair Oaks, California, a student assistance counselor identified places around town that offered positive alternatives for young people. She got administrative permission, secured the services of the maintenance grounds crew, and called the organizations to have booths at an event called Bronco Choice 2000 to describe their services. The local Parent Teacher Student Association made box lunches for each person staffing a booth. Members of the school's Youth Action Team were assigned to each booth to take care of the community people's needs. And students also sent thank-you letters to the participating organizations. The result of "Bronco Choice 2000"? Students who did want alternatives to using alcohol and other drugs now had a better idea of just what some of those alternatives were.

Play Fair

Prairie View Elementary School, in Oregon, Wisconsin, determined that there was too much fighting during recess. So they started "Play Fair." They set aside times in the gymnasium for only cooperative play. For example, on two mornings of every week, they held two cooperative play sessions in the gym, 11:15-11:40 and 11:45-12:10. Teachers chose the students at first, although they made sure that all the students went willingly. They established rules: No fighting, name-calling, or competition was allowed. Counselors facilitated the sessions. Play Fair was a huge success, so much so that now more students want to participate in it than they currently have room for.

To Illustrate How Building Developmental Assets Can Promote Positive Behaviors

Kids in the Hall

In Westwood Elementary School, Junction City, Kansas, a cart of age-appropriate books is set aside for each classroom. Between 8:00 and 8:30 every morning, students come into the hallway or sit in front of their classrooms and read books

or magazines. Parents and other adults who bring their children to school are encouraged to stay and read as well. One or two days a week, the school provides urns of coffee and hot water for tea at the entrance to the school, in addition to couches and chairs. Adult monitors help students read, prevent squabbles, and maintain order.

Teen Pages

Teen Pages is the name of the magazine put out four times a year by Helene Perry's 7th- and 8th-grade students at Clara Barton Open School, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Students brainstorm ideas for articles, write and edit the articles, physically put together the magazine, and distribute it to students and teachers. Beyond the fact that the magazine is interesting and informs its readership, this activity succeeds on a number of levels: Parents say that it's great to hear what the students are thinking. The students improve their writing skills, especially because they're writing about something they care about. The students also learn the difference between fact and opinion, they learn to produce graphics and tables, and they care about the content: They continually talk with one another about different articles. Teachers like it, too, and comment on the academic improvements they see in the students who help produce the magazine.

The Great Ephemeral Art Project

In Henderson, Nevada, elementary school students undertook a unique art-and-service project. They collected almost 25,000 articles of used clothing and sorted them by colors. Then they outlined a figure of a 100-foot child in a two-acre lot next to their school, filled in the outline with the clothes, and arranged for a person in a helicopter to take a picture of the figure. Finally, they disassembled everything and donated the clothing to neighborhood charities. The project took about two months. Besides finding interesting ways to apply their math skills, the children exercised their creativity, did something beneficial for the poor in their community, and garnered tremendous amounts of confidence by completing a project that at the start seemed overwhelming.

To Illustrate How People Can Help Build Developmental Assets through Relationships

Share a Friend

Michael Kent Kay's younger brother was "almost totally disabled," and it struck him that he'd like to do something for the physically and mentally disabled people in his community, Wilmington, Illinois. He contacted a nearby residential group home and proposed his plan: to link students with disabled adults, based on common interests; to provide an orientation for the students; to ask that students spend at least an hour a month with their new friends for at least one year; and to

coordinate special events (e.g., golfing or bowling outings) with the adults and students. As the idea and the project grew, Kay talked with members of other youth groups in his community. There are now 61 disabled adult-student pairs in Share a Friend, and the number grows. Kay sees a twofold purpose to Share a Friend: One is to provide companionship to people who may find that at a premium. But the other is perhaps even more important in the long run, and that's to remove the fear and the nervousness that many people often feel around disabled people. "We hope to make them feel like part of the community as well as make the general public realize that disabled people are just like us," says Kay. "Just because someone is different, you don't have to fear them." When he began Share a Friend, Michael Kent Kay was 13 years old.

The Boy Who Became a Mentor

A boy at Dry Creek Elementary School in Englewood, Colorado, was having all kinds of emotional, learning, and motor problems. He was becoming increasingly difficult to teach—or even have in a classroom. When the guidance counselor asked around about the boy, one teacher—just one—had something really positive to say about him: she said he did well in her classroom because he was the oldest and enjoyed helping the younger ones. On the basis of that positive feedback, he was given the responsibility of teaching reading to several kindergarten students, and he became a mentor. The improvement in the boy's behavior was dramatic. He began to walk taller, to follow the rules in class, and to concentrate on his own work. He was treated as a resource, not as a problem, and as a result he more than fulfilled people's expectations and blossomed.

Winning Big during a Losing Season

Don Berry, a juvenile probation officer in Mason City, Iowa, is a volunteer Little League coach. His focus on strong relationships turned a season with 14 losses into a big win. "We didn't have a great season," allowed Alex Bohl, one of the team members, "but Coach Berry made it a fun season. During the games, we'd usually be down by a lot, but he'd keep our hopes up. He'd tell us, 'There's always another game.'"

Constantly on the lookout for ways to build up young people, Berry called every player on the roster after a loss to compliment some aspect of his playing. The losing season became a growth opportunity for the players—and not just because they improved their skills. Take Bohl, for example, whom Berry terms "just an excellent athlete." "Alex learned to have patience with kids who aren't as good and respect the fact that they're trying," Berry says.

The heart of any team is the relationships that develop, and Berry, whose own son also plays on the team, is keenly aware of his importance to those players who don't have fathers around. "One thing they like to do is hang around and see what

a dad does,” Berry says. “So I kid ’em, tease ’em, rub their heads. And I talk to them about staying around positive people and trying hard.”

Berry is clearly one of those positive adults young people do well to hang around.

To Illustrate How People Can Help Build Asset-Rich Environments

Kindness Chains

Despite her efforts, Seattle preschool teacher Yvette Zaepfel saw that her charges were sometimes being mean to each other. When she tried explaining to them that they were being mean, they responded, in so many words, “Well, that was the point.” Then Zaepfel took a different tack: Instead of focusing on reducing the negative behavior, she initiated a strategy to increase positive behavior and, indeed, to make it a habit. The goals of Kindness Chains are to increase the frequency of kind acts and also help the children remember them. Every time a student does something kind, that student gets a paper link, with the act of kindness written on it. The links are joined together, and a goal is set, e.g., to reach from one end of the room to the other. The chains usually take at least a month to complete; once, Zaepfel had 182 links. After the goal is met, Zaepfel and the students usually have a party, disassemble the chain, and give the links back to each student.

A Culture of Caring

Growing up Jewish in the Deep South can be an isolating experience. But for the hundreds of young people who visit every summer, Henry S. Jacobs Camp in Utica, Mississippi, provides an oasis in which to celebrate Judaism’s rich cultural heritage. It’s also a perfect place to build Developmental Assets, says the camp’s director, Jonathan Cohen.

“The assets give us a quantitative, tangible way to explain what we do for kids,” says Cohen, a camp alumnus and asset-building veteran. Over the past year, the facility, sponsored by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, has integrated the asset framework into camp curriculum and staff training.

“Every camp activity can be an opportunity for asset building,” Cohen says. “We wanted to build Jewish values and used the [asset] framework as a goal-setting tool.” The staff divided into teams to set expectations based on each asset category and created their own individual asset pledges, which were posted on the wall as a reminder. “The assets don’t really change what we do, but how we do it,” Cohen says. “It makes people realize that the little things they do make a big difference in the eyes of a young person.”

For a camper away from home for the first time, the “community raising a child” philosophy of assets can be particularly comforting. If homesickness strikes a camper, Cohen says, “we start locally with cabin counselors and quickly bring in the rest of the staff. It’s really a community process so that every member of the staff has an opportunity to positively influence that young person.”

Animal House

An elementary school in Austin, Texas, has set aside part of a common area within the school for ferrets, turtles, chinchillas, snakes, hedgehogs, and birds. Classes rotate the responsibilities to make sure that each animal is cared for, and that each student has an opportunity to care for them. The principal believes that the students feel good about themselves when they're involved in being responsible for another life. And the climate is different, she says: "Kids are more relaxed. They walk slower in the halls; they know it's okay to stop and pet an animal."

To Illustrate How People Can Help Build Developmental Assets through Programs and Practices

A New Verdict for Juvenile Offenders

Why, in a fit of anger, had 15-year-old Raymond grabbed a sharp knife from the kitchen and chased his older sister through the streets of Lansing, Michigan? When probation officer Michael C. Clark met Raymond (not his real name) at his family's apartment, he had no illusions about trying to discover what had led up to Raymond's arrest on charges of felonious assault. (Fortunately, local police had intervened before the tall, broad-shouldered teen caught up with his sibling.) Not only might such information prove difficult to ascertain, Clark didn't believe it would prove particularly useful.

Instead, Clark asked Raymond how he had acted at other times in his life when he'd been angry. He even used Raymond's words to describe that fury of emotion.

"When you felt like 'blowing off,' what did you do instead?" Clark wondered.

"I worked on my bikes," Raymond replied and led Clark to the small backyard where rusted bicycle frames, chains, tires, and other parts lay scattered about. Raymond told Clark how people in the neighborhood brought him their old, disheveled two-wheelers to bring back to life.

Once he uncovered Raymond's yen for bikes, Clark took action. The probation officer asked a nearby bicycle shop owner if Raymond could sweep floors without pay as part of his probation. The man agreed, but with the caveat that if Raymond caused trouble, he would be forced to leave.

"The phone stopped ringing about that kid," Clark said. "His passions were touched. When I had his passions, I had everything." And Raymond eventually had a job at the bike shop, where he was hired at minimum wage.

Both the "villain" and "victim" lenses are often used in the juvenile justice system to view young people. But those characterizations fail to reveal the assets of a young person like Raymond, who had strengths at bicycle repair, a willingness to warm quickly to the attention of a caring adult, and a mother with a strong desire to keep her family together.

"You don't expect much from villains and victims," Clark says. "There's a third lens we need to use in viewing kids, and that's one that looks at their strengths as individuals."

Learn to Earn

Florida's First Presbyterian Church of Orlando—with about 5,000 members—works with Howard Middle School to provide one-on-one mentoring for 30 students on the free lunch program. The Learn to Earn program is an offshoot of this: Students get experience working at a regular “job” for tangible goods. Students in the program are picked up after school, brought to the church, and given a meal. They then spend about 45 minutes either doing homework, writing thank-you notes to people, or participating in some other activity related to schoolwork or academic skills. Some of these students are given opportunities to “learn to earn”: They show up every Wednesday evening for two hours, five weeks in a row, and work in a kitchen or in the financial office or some other on-site office. They get paid the equivalent of minimum wage in refurbished bicycles, helmets, chains, and locks provided by the local police station; and they earn a certificate for satisfactorily completing the program.

Asset-Building Businesses

Lots of businesses donate money to Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth initiatives or send representatives to serve on the board—and their contributions are greatly appreciated. But some businesses are taking asset building to heart in a deeper way. They're rethinking their corporate cultures. They're revamping internal policies. They are creating new models for how business can champion young people in their communities.

Take the Bunn-O-Matic coffeemaker assembly plant in Creston, Iowa. Winner of the 2000 Jostens Our Town Corporate Award, Bunn-O-Matic has revamped plant policies to support young people at nearly every turn. Just a few examples include a new family-friendly time-off policy to encourage employees to attend their children's events, the offering of parent education and networking sessions during the lunch hour, and holding in-house contests to support the local asset-building initiative.

Young Entrepreneurs

Mitchell Elementary School, in Denver, Colorado, facilitates a variety of programs that help bring out the strengths of its students. There's a program called SPELL—Students Producing Educational Letters in Learning—in which students work with a computer and a machine that looks like a cross between a lathe and a printer to produce vinyl letters. The letters make groups of words that help build knowledge of a subject-specific vocabulary, such as for music, sports, or theater. The students make the letters available in “Word Wall” packages to other schools. There's also a teacher-supplies warehouse, in which students are given a budget and asked to store, take orders for, and deliver supplies (usually by pulling a red wagon through the halls) to classrooms. There's also a school store, which sells school materials to students and which is staffed by students. And there's a mart where students sell

some of the flowers and vegetables they've grown in their own garden behind the school. All these programs are staffed by the K–5 students.

Parents as Asset Builders

Jaime di Paulo had thought—until he became a single father of three young boys—that he was an involved parent. “My father taught me that being involved was keeping a roof over their heads,” di Paulo says, “but I realized I didn’t really know my kids. I didn’t know who they were playing with or who my neighbors were. My oldest son was getting in trouble at school because of the divorce. I had my eyes opened big time.”

The Englewood, Colorado, father sought help at his son’s school and discovered the Developmental Assets through “Los Padres,” a special curriculum developed for fathers by the Colorado Statewide Parenting Coalition. He got so excited about asset building, he started handing out the Search Institute mini-poster “150 Ways to Show Kids You Care,” whenever taxi drivers where he worked as a dispatcher complained about transporting kids to appointments. Mornings found him standing at the entrance of his son’s middle school, surprising students by saying hello. He now professionally counsels teen fathers at a local hospital, and, as a volunteer supervisor of the Los Padres program, he recruits and trains other dads to share the asset message; 80 dads are now involved.

As a result of his immersion in asset building, di Paulo has become a very different father to his own 13-, 11-, and 9-year-old boys. “We now have a very open family,” he says. “Every school night, we have family time. We do homework, read, and we always talk about ‘men things.’ They’ve all become experts on asset building.”

Examples of How Communities Are Building Developmental Assets

- Roswell, New Mexico, put on a celebration called “Teen Power! ¡El Poder del Juventud!” It included an exhibit of audio self-portraits installed in personal stereos, a low-rider bike show, youth art traveling on city buses, and murals decorating the Roswell Museum and Art Center, the hospital, and a local printing company.
- In San Luis Obispo, California, the local Pacific Gas and Electric Company has made promoting the 40 Developmental Assets the primary criterion for corporate giving and includes youth in its team of grant readers. The grantees are required to have their activities involve partnership with a business, agency, or school, which helps to encourage dissemination of the asset approach across the county.
- In Albert Lea, Minnesota, students designed plaques and wrote thank-you letters to recognize businesses that followed the laws about not selling alcohol or tobacco to young people.

- In Racine, Wisconsin, young people telephoned 70 local youth-serving organizations, obtaining detailed information for a database to build awareness about existing community resources.
- In Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, policy makers, agency directors, and congregational leaders ride a school bus to sites throughout the inner city to see the impact of building assets firsthand. “Child Watch Tours” is sponsored by The Heart of OKC, a community-based teen pregnancy prevention project, and by the Junior League of Oklahoma City.
- In Lansing, Michigan, the young leaders of the Michigan Community Foundation’s Youth Project helped to pass Public Act 444, which sets the minimum age at 16 to serve as a voting member on nonprofit boards in Michigan. Young people lobbied and testified on behalf of the bill.
- In Boise, Idaho, the city, the YMCA, United Way, the major medical center, and the school district formed a coalition to support asset building. Each agency, in turn, is providing staffing and operating support for a three-year period.
- Gwinnett County, Georgia, located just east of Atlanta, answered the question of how to encourage asset building in a populous, fast-growing area with this idea: Tear down the walls separating government agencies, social service groups, businesses, faith-based organizations, schools, citizens, and youth. The Gwinnett Coalition for Health and Human Services has been working on the initiative since 1990. Ellen Gerstein, executive director, says the key to the group’s long-term success has been developing trust among partners, continually seeking new partners from a variety of sectors, and ensuring that the coalition is stronger than any one person or participating group. It takes hard work and time and patience, she says, but “don’t give up.” By focusing on true partnering and minimizing territorial issues, the coalition has allowed the Gwinnett Alliance With Youth to focus on creating new asset-building programs, such as school-based volunteer centers that have encouraged young people to donate more than 30,000 hours of community service since 1998.