

Helping Kids Succeed – Alaskan Style!

Practical Suggestions for Building Assets in Your Child

Asset # 9- Service to Others

COMMUNITY SERVICE To Build Asset # 9 Parents and Extended Family Can . . .

Volunteer together on a community service project. An example is a family that trained with the local public radio station and became volunteer hosts for a weekly two-hour music show. — Valdez

Encourage those groups that your children are in to work together on some useful task or project in the community. — Glennallen

Help your child put together a weekly schedule of activities that includes some type of service to others. — Wrangell

Call a local agency that uses volunteers and help your children (and yourself) become a part of their team. — Anchorage

Traditional Ways to Promote Asset # 9

Teach the children how to cut the meat, how to distribute it to the Elders and to the other people in the community. — Napaskiak

Let them know what their own culture expects of them. For example, in Athabascan Potlatches, young boys are encouraged to serve the people. They'll be more blessed for helping and serving. — Delta Junction

Teach young people to chop wood, stack wood, haul water, and do other useful things for community members, without being asked. — Port Lions

The book, **Helping Kids Succeed-Alaskan Style**, is a common sense, easy to read book that is written by Alaskans for Alaskans.

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Asset # 9 — Service to Others

Kids serve in the community one or more hours per week

50% of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.*

*Based on Search Institute surveys of almost 100,000 6th to 12th grade youth throughout the United States

What are Assets?

Assets are 40 key building blocks to help kids succeed. Like a dream catcher, assets are the supporting threads in a young person's life that can keep away harm and invite goodness.

Words of Encouragement

What do the youth say about helping others? A Gallup poll survey found that one of the main reasons young people volunteered was their desire to do something about a cause that was important to them. They wanted to be useful and feel valued. You might be surprised to learn that communities that report low levels of youth involved in drugs, alcohol, and other risky behaviors are no more likely to than other communities to have their youth participate in community service. Why? It seems that few communities of any size or kind do a good job of engaging young people's energies and idealism - of activating their potential.

The Gallup poll mentioned above, found that youth were four times more likely to volunteer and help out in the community if they were asked than if they were not. It is unfortunate, but the same poll found that less than one half of the 12-17 year olds said that adults had asked them to help.

In October of 1997, Nickelodeon TV sponsored its annual Big Help-a-Thon. Over 8 million young people called in pledges of community service totally more than 85 million hours, working with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Youth Service America, and Boys and Girls Clubs. This, indeed, shows us that young people are interested and committed to serving their communities.

Have you invited a youth in your community to serve? Remember that it is about relationships - the better your relationship with a youth, the more likely they will be to accept your invitation.

Quote:

Whoever renders service to many puts him/herself in line for greatness — great wealth, great return, great satisfaction, great reputation, and great joy.

Jim Rohn

Research

In 1998, a study of more than 1000 6th- 8th graders, found that service-learning students' concern for others welfare was maintained over the school year, while control students' concern for other decreased. The research showed that service-learning youth had considerably higher levels of concern for the welfare of others by the end of the school year, compared to the youth in the control group.

Researchers have also found that the degree of exposure to helping behavior seems to matter: Moore and Allen (1996) concluded that positive effects occurred most often in programs of at least 12 weeks duration in which youth were involved at least two days per week.

The research is clear. It is not enough to simply assign a youth to volunteer in service to their community. The positive effects come when the youth is working alongside adults who are modeling the desired behavior and assisting the youth in valuing and processing the lessons learned through service.

What this means is simple. Rather than forcing youth to service their community, we must invite them. We must ask them what they are interested in and care about. Then, give them an experience that matches their interests and the interests of their adult mentor. What are you doing to help youth serve the community in a meaningful way?

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