

Asset-Building Ideas for congregations

Congregations of all faiths are in a unique position to not only nurture and support the faith and spiritual development of young people but also to build developmental assets. Congregations have the potential for intergenerational relationships; they provide opportunities for youth to grow and understand themselves; they reach and work with parents; and they have a public presence with the potential for leadership, advocacy and service. Here are some asset-building tips for congregations:

- ◆ **Post the list of assets in key, high-traffic areas** throughout your congregation's building.
- ◆ **If your community has an asset-building initiative, get involved.** If there isn't an initiative, take a leadership role in getting one started
- ◆ **Integrate asset building into worship in ways that fit with the specifics of your faith tradition.** Create worship experiences for entire families. Think about how to include children and youth.
- ◆ **Provide a variety of educational opportunities for all ages.** Create interactive, intergenerational sessions that encourage younger people to connect with older people.
- ◆ **Provide opportunities for young people to volunteer in the community.** Afterward, discuss the experience from your faith perspective.
- ◆ **Reinforce positive values and morals.** Talk with young people about why these are an important part of your faith tradition.
- ◆ **Plan ways for families and other intergenerational groups to spend time together,** such as having a weekly or monthly meal, picnics, dances, concerts, or sports tournaments.
- ◆ **Collaborate with other congregations and youth-based organizations** to learn about and build assets.
- ◆ **Provide responsible, meaningful roles for youth.** These could include being teaching assistants for young children, volunteering for child care, and pledging financial support from their allowance and part-time jobs, as well as worship activities, such as handing out bulletins, serving as readers or lay liturgists, and being involved in music or other aspects of worship.
- ◆ **Make your facility an asset-building place.** Rent or provide free space for children and youth clubs to use when your building is typically empty. Create a homework room for children and youth to hang out in after school, particularly if many are going home to empty houses. Host a neighborhood child-care center.
- ◆ **Educate congregational staff and lay leaders—in addition to the congregation at large—about asset building.** Discuss the implications that asset building has for your congregation, and brainstorm ideas together.
- ◆ **Create a book study group** that gives children, youth, and adult opportunities to read and reflect on books with asset-building themes.

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