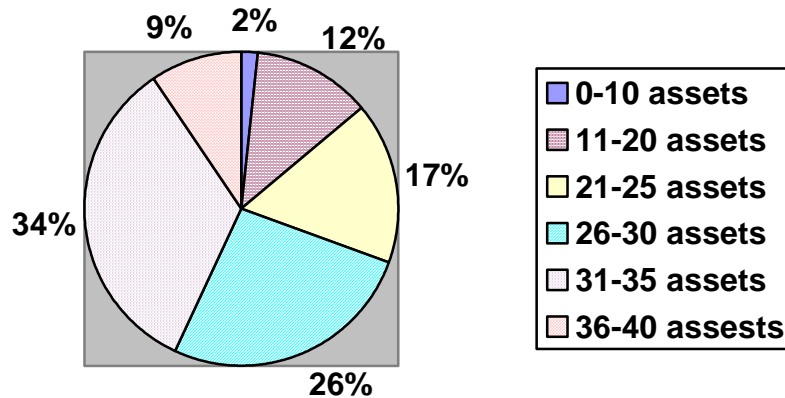


SWYS 2005 News - Southwest Wisconsin Teens Have Many Assets to Resist Negative Influences



**Overall Developmental Status of Southwest Wisconsin Youth
Youth reporting positive youth development assets**

A majority of southwest Wisconsin teens report possessing high levels of internal and external assets that help protect them from engaging in problem behaviors. The Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) evaluated 40 positive youth development assets, such as positive attitudes toward school, family love and support, self-esteem and use of time. The presence of these youth assets promotes positive attitudes and healthy life styles.

Eighty-six percent of southwest Wisconsin teens surveyed report possessing at least one-half of the 40 total assets, with 43% report that they possess at least 31 of the 40 assets. Less than 2% of teens report 10 or fewer assets. Research from the Search Institute says those teens with more of these positive development assets are less likely to engage in smoking, drinking, sexual intercourse and other risky activities and the research on southwest Wisconsin teens finds similar results.

These are among the findings of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) conducted by 15 school districts in the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) District 3 as reported by UW-Extension. The school districts of Argyle, Belmont, Benton, Black Hawk, Cassville, Cuba City, Darlington, Fennimore, Iowa-Grant, Ithaca, Lancaster, Platteville, Potosi, River Ridge, and Seneca, surveyed more than 3,700 students in September of 2005. UW-Extension faculty in Crawford, Grant, Lafayette, and Richland counties are involved in processing and presenting the findings. The survey was funded by participating school districts and the Grant County Drug-Free Coalition.

"The assets that most southwest Wisconsin teens report possessing include: a sense that it is important to help others (95%), caring about other people's feelings (93%), positive

view of personal future (90%), family love and support (89%), and accepting responsibility (89%)," comments Amy Mitchell, 4-H Youth Development Agent in Crawford County. "Many teens also report that they can resist negative peer pressure (85%), they value honesty (85%) and that they are responsible (85%). The least reported assets were spending time in volunteer work (23%), spending time at religious programs (30%) and reading for fun (34%)."

"Roughly equal percentages of males and females report between 26-30 positive youth development assets, says Jesse Potterton, Lafayette County 4-H and Youth Development Educator. However, almost twice as many females (68%) as males (31%) report the presence of 36 or more assets. It also appears that the number of assets tends to decline with age. Survey results indicate that 76% of 7th-9th graders report 26 or more positive youth development assets, however, only 64% of 10th –12th graders report the same number."

"Research by Search Institute and other youth development professionals documents the impact of assets on teen behavior. Generally, teens with more assets have better school success, more positive mental health, higher self-esteem, a decrease in delinquency, and greater peer acceptance. The SWYS survey supports this research," comments Bev Doll, Grant County Family Living Agent. " For instance, 76% of teens reporting 26 or more assets receive As, A/Bs, and Bs and less than 1% of teens reporting 36 to 40 assets get C/Ds and below. In contrast, 64% of teens with 0 to 10 assets report receiving B/Cs or lower."

"Assets also seem to protect teens from risky behaviors," remarks Tom Schmitz, Grant County Youth Development Educator. "Ninety-two percent of the teens who report possessing 31 or more assets and 75% of teens with 26-30 assets do not smoke. In contrast, 26% of teens reporting 0-10 assets and 38% of teens reporting 11-20 assets do not smoke. When looking at alcohol use and assets, 82% of teens reporting 31 or more assets have not drunk alcohol within the past 30 days. Whereas, only 34% of the students possessing 0-20 positive development assets report not drinking alcohol within the past 30 days."

"These developmental assets also impact a teen's self-esteem. Ninety-three percent of teens reporting 31-40 assets report having high self-esteem and only 7% report having low self-esteem. For teens reporting 0-20 assets, only 35% report high self-esteem while 65% report low self-esteem," comments Pam Hobson, Richland County 4-H Youth Development Agent.

A full report on the SWYS survey results is due out this summer. Hobson, Schmitz, Doll, Mitchell, and Potterton are also giving community presentations on the data. For more information on the survey contact your local school district, Schmitz and Doll at 608-723-2125, Potterton at 608-776-4820, Mitchell at 608-326-0223, or Hobson at 608-647-6148.

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