



Parents Make A Difference!

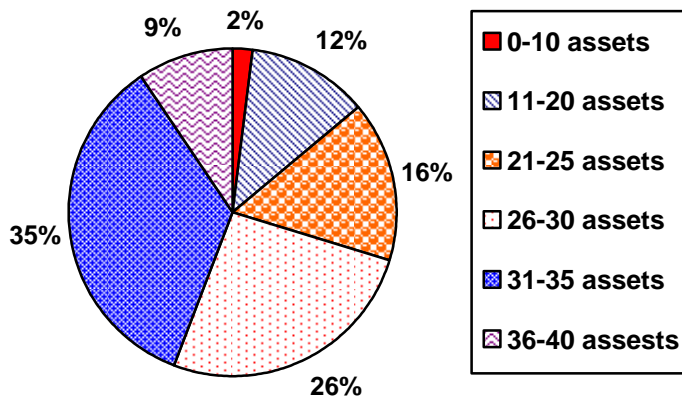
Teens and Assets

May 2007

Positive youth assets are factors that help protect a teen from engaging in risky behavior and promote positive development. The more assets a teen possess, the more likely they are to engage in positive behaviors.

As the pie chart below indicates, results of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) find that 70% of area teens report between 26-40 Positive Youth Development Assets and 44% report 31-40 assets. Only 2% of teens report 10 or fewer assets.

Youth Reporting Positive Youth Development Assets



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 over 26 assets, but less than 64% of 10th – 12th graders report the same number.

SWYS looked at both internal and external positive youth development assets. Internal assets, those which the young person finds within themselves were divided into four categories; positive values, positive identity, social competence and commitment to learning.

Youth in southwest Wisconsin rate very well on positive values, but they are most likely to struggle with abstaining from sex, alcohol and tobacco. As to positive identity, youth are optimistic about their future and generally have high self-esteem and feel they have control over their life.

SWYS found mixed results with regard to commitment to learning, many youth were motivated to do well in school but only 34% read at least 3 hours per week for pleasure.

When it came to social competence youth were generally empathic, made good choices and were able to resist peer pressure, but many were uncomfortable with people from different races and cultures and only 42% seek non-violent resolutions to conflicts.

External positive youth development assets include, support, empowerment, boundaries - expectations and constructive time use. They relate to the home, peer, school and community in which the teen lives.

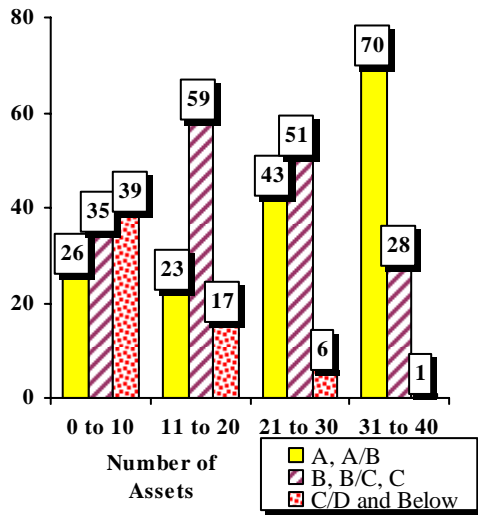
Results of SWYS show the vast majority of youth report high levels of support at home and report that their school and community are supportive. Less than half report a willingness to seek their parents' advice. With regard to empowerment, youth generally feel safe and listened to in their community, but many feel they are not given useful roles in their community, only 23% of youth give an hour or more a week to community service.

A high percentage of youth participate in extra-curricular activities as a constructive use of their time, but less than a third spend more than an hour a week in religious activities or three hours a week in the creative arts. Overall, the survey found most youth reported strong boundaries and expectations. Just over half reported that their peers modeled responsible behavior.

Why Are Assets Important?

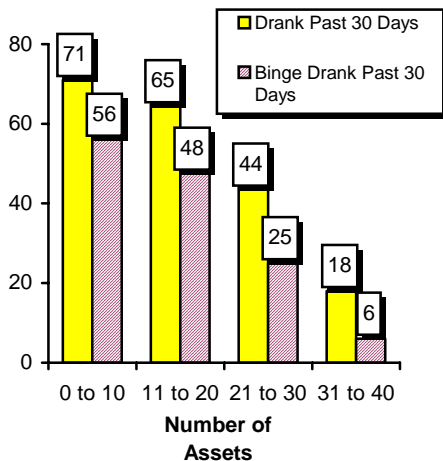
Research by the Search Institute and other youth development professionals documents the impact of assets on teen behavior. Generally, teens with more assets have better school success, more positive mental health, higher self-esteem, a decrease in delinquency, and greater peer acceptance. SYWS results support this research. 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.

Average Grades in Relation to Number of Assets



Assets also seem to protect teens from risky behaviors. 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. Similar trends are seen with alcohol use.

Alcohol Use and Assets



These developmental assets also impact a teen's self-esteem. Ninety-three percent of teens reporting 31-40 assets report having very high self-esteem and only 7% report having moderately low or very low self-esteem. For teens reporting 0-20 assets, only 35% report very high self-esteem while 65% report very low or moderately low self-esteem.

Asset Building Ideas for Parents

Research shows that an effective approach to raising healthy, competent kids is to concentrate on building assets. These assets form the foundation young people need to make healthy choices and to succeed in life. Here are some ways to be intentional about asset building:

Regularly do things with your child, including projects around the house, recreational activities and service projects.

Eat at least one meal together as a family every day.

Negotiate family rules and consequences for breaking those rules.

Talk about your values and priorities and live in a way that is consistent with them.

Give your children lots of support and approval while also challenging them to take responsibility and gain independence.

Don't wait for problems to arise before talking to your children's teachers. Keep in regular contact with them about how your children are doing.

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Assets form the foundation young people need to make healthy choices and succeed in life. The more assets youth have, the stronger this foundation will be. Parents can make a difference for their children, but they are not alone. Other asset builders in children's lives include coaches, childcare providers, religious education teachers, 4-H club leaders, teachers and neighbors. Communities can work together to build assets and help young people grow up to be healthy, caring, responsible and successful adults.

"Parents Make a Difference" is a product of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS), a program of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, local school districts and UW-Platteville. This series is adapted from the UW-Extension "Whose Kids?...Our Kids!" series written by Huser, et. al. This issue was written by Amy Mitchell, UW-Extension Crawford County (adapted from "Parents Make a Difference," Ivey et.al.) and edited by Jessie Potterton, UW-Extension Lafayette County, Bev Doll and Tom Schmitz, UW-Extension Grant County and Pam Hobson, UW-Extension Richland County. Thanks are extended to the 3747 7th to 12th graders from southwest Wisconsin who participated in the 2005 SWYS survey. Contact UW-Extension for further information by phone Grant County (608) 723-2125; Lafayette County (608) 776-4820; Richland County (608) 647-6148 and Crawford County (608) 326-0224 or on the web at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/grant/tap/SWYS2005.html>