

WORCESTER COUNTY ASSET BUILDING PLAN

Overview:

The Worcester County Asset Building Committee began meeting in 2004 to develop a community-specific plan to strengthen families in our community through strategies utilizing a youth development model. The Committee consisting of community and agency representation as well as community members reviewed several models for youth development and empowerment. It was determined that the Search Institute's Developmental Assets provided a framework which could lend itself to county-wide implementation without excessive staff and monetary expense.

The goal was to develop a county-wide plan and use the Community Service Centers, located at Family Connections in Berlin, and Pocomoke Community Service Center in Pocomoke, as a vehicle for the implementation of the localized strategic plans. The Parent Consortium, in collaboration with AOD Task Force, and the LMB, offered a two day training opportunity with the Search Institute - Everyone's an Asset Building Workshop in May 2004. In addition, several staff from Family Connections as well as one staff from the Prevention Office attended the Search Institute's Conference in Minnesota to increase knowledge and skills necessary to implement the County-wide plan.

The Asset Building Committee then assessed the community needs, reviewing data from various needs assessment and surveys. A supplemental survey was also developed to garner additional information about our local communities. A youth meeting was also held to engage them in this initiative.

Framework:

The Search Institute has developed a youth development model identifying 40 positive experiences, relationships, skills, and qualities that all young people need to promote positive development and reduce their involvement in risk taking behaviors. This framework includes the 40 Assets which are organized in eight categories including external and internal assets. The Developmental Asset model offers innovative strategies for building community capacity to ensure that the community, family, and individual build assets in youth.

There are three dimensions to this approach:

- Cultivate community readiness and commitment
- Create an infrastructure in the community

- Build capacity through five “Action Strategies”

After review of these three dimensions the Asset Building Committee felt that while the whole of the community may not be familiar with Asset Building there is a sense of commitment to promote healthy lifestyles and choices for our youth. Those involved agreed that cultivating the community readiness was a slow process but that we represent sectors that could promote these Asset Building concepts. Thus, we would be creating the community infrastructure as we promote the ideas and concepts of asset building.

The Action Strategies are five domains within the community which have the potential to transform the lives of young people. They provides the framework for long-term action that must be consistent, intentional, and ongoing.

Engaging Adults – promotes adults from all walks of life to develop sustained strength building relationships with children and adolescents, both within families and in neighborhoods.

Mobilizing Young People – mobilize young people to use their power as asset builders and change agents.

Activate Sectors – Activate all sectors of the community – such as schools, congregations, youth, businesses, human services, and health-care organizations – to create an asset building culture and to contribute fully to young people’s healthy development.

Invigorate Programs – invigorate, expand, and enhance programs to become more asset rich and to be available to and accessed by all children and youth.

Influence Civic Decisions – influence decision makers and opinion leaders to leverage financial, media, and policy resources in support of positive transformation of community and society.

The Asset Building Committee identified two of these strategies to implement county-wide.

The Plan

The first strategy to be implemented is **Activate Sectors**. The Committee decided that through the various organizations that are represented, we could begin to create an asset rich culture and enhance interactions with young people.

The second strategy to be implemented is **Mobilizing Young People** to use their power as asset builders and change agents.

WORK PLAN

Activate Sectors	Many of the existing programs and services in our community have the capacity to positively impact on the lives of youth.	Provide training on the Developmental Assets model to promote the philosophy throughout the county.	WHCD, LMB, Community Service Centers, youth serving agencies, community leaders, school personnel	May 2004 Everyone's an Asset Builder 2 nd Training – Oct. 2005 More than Just a Place to Go
	Increasing an understanding of the Asset philosophy by all members of the community will increase the positive interactions between adults and youth.	Develop a Community Commitment Packet	WCHD, Community Service Centers, youth serving agencies, business, churches, etc.	Dec. 2005
	Provide families and individuals with a thorough and comprehensive guide of available resources using the assets as a foundation.	Provide presentations in the community –through a Speakers Bureau	Designated Asset Ambassadors	Sept. 05 – ongoing Nov. 05 – Two H.D. staff and one Bd. Of Ed. Staff trained in TOT for Asset Building by Search Inst.
		Develop an Asset - focused Community Resource Guide	WCHD, LMB, businesses	Dec. 2005

Strategy	Rationale	Objective	Who's Involved	Timeline
Mobilizing Young People	Engaging youth as partners strengthen and increase their sense of empowerment to change their community.	Develop a Youth Council	WCHD, BOE, Youth	<p>Jan. 05 – May 05 Meet with Youth – identify Think Tank to develop youth council.</p> <p>May 05- ongoing Recruit & Training of Youth Council members.</p> <p>Oct. '05 Approval of youth Council by County Comm.</p> <p>Nov. 05 Youth Council actively meeting and serving.</p>