

# Helping Kids Succeed – Alaskan Style!

## Practical Suggestions for Building Assets in Your Child

### Asset # 19- Religious Community

#### Traditional Ways to Promote Asset # 19

Help children see the power of the Creator in the beauty of the land, sky, and water. — *Shishmaref*

Thank the Creator every day; be prayerful.

— *Toksook Bay*

#### 9 Reasons Youth Should Be Involved in a Faith Community

1. Religious communities reduce risky behaviors. Youth who are involved in a faith community are half as likely as those who aren't to use alcohol or other drugs, have sex too soon, or attempt suicide.
2. Religious communities teach values. This leads to responsible decision making and positive choices. Teens who say no to risky behaviors often do so because of their values.
3. Religious communities are intergenerational. Society is increasingly age-segmented. Your religious community may be one of the few places you go where you have regular contact with principled, caring adults.
4. Religious communities provide caring and support. You'll form relationships with religious education teachers, youth group leaders, peers, friends, relatives, and mentors who care about you and are there for you in good times and bad.
5. Religious communities have high expectations for their young people. They motivate teens to grow and mature, succeed and achieve.
6. Religious communities provide opportunities to be contributing members of a group. You'll participate in meaningful activities and perform useful roles. Along the way, you'll learn and practice problem solving, decision making, and goal setting.
7. Religious communities encourage service to others. All major faith traditions include an emphasis on service, and many congregations make service an integral part of their youth programs.

#### To Build Asset # 19 Parents and Extended Family Can . . .

Help your children develop a personal relationship with the Creator. Listen to their questions, show them that you believe, and help them understand that the Creator is everywhere. — *Elim*

Volunteer to lead a religious youth group and recruit teens to be a part of the group. — *Shaktoolik*

Pray together as a family, and let young people see how prayer works in their lives. — *Kenai*

Discuss your children's ideas about where your family will worship. If you can, allow your children to have a choice, because it is important that they feel comfortable with the group. — *Juneau*

8. Religious communities nurture social competencies and leadership. Most give youth opportunities to lead, plan programs, become peer ministers, and care for younger children.

9. Religious communities offer security and stability. Over the course of your lifetime, many things will change. You'll graduate from schools, leave home to live on your own, move into and out of neighborhoods, and probably switch careers more than once. But no matter where you go, you can always find a community of people who share your faith and values. Most large religious organizations have congregations around the world. Your religious community can be a source of support, encouragement, and affirmation throughout your life.

**Source: Search Institute**

#### Asset # 19 — Religious Community

Kids spend one or more hours each week in religious services or participating in spiritual activities.

64% 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

Research:

Faith communities are one of the few places where youth, people who are "middle aged", and the elderly can be together and all have the same standard of behavior. In these communities, people of all ages come together in a place where similar values and beliefs are shared between individuals. Here, young people can bond with peers and with elders in a safe environment, which can give lots of support while building and sustaining assets. Time spent in spiritual activities is associated with:

### **An increased sense of well-being**

(Donahue & Benson, 1995; Moore & Gleib, 1995)

### **Increased self esteem**

(Thomas & Carver, 1990)

### **Increased life satisfaction**

(Hong & Giannakopoulos, 1994)

### **Decreased problem behaviors including decreased alcohol use**

(Burkett, 1997; Cochran, Wood, & Arneklev, 1994; Donahue & Benson, 1995; Kandel, 1980; Rohrbaugh & Jessor, 1975)

### **Decreased alcohol dependence**

(Clapper, Buka, Goldfield, Lipsitt, Tsuang, 1995)

### **Decreased marijuana use**

(Kandel, 1980)

### **Decreased use of other drugs**

(Adlaf & Smart, 1985)

### **Decreased delinquency**

(Mulvey, Arthur, & Reppucci, 1997, Thomas & Carver, 1990)

### **Decreased early sexual activity**

(Jensen, Newell, & Holman, 1990; Zelnik, Kantner, & Ford, 1981)

### **Lower levels of depression**

(Wright, Frost, & Wisecarver, 1993)

to name a few.

## Research

We've all heard the idea that it "takes a village to raise a child." Part of that village can be found in faith communities where every member can easily take part in children's lives. The opportunity for connecting with kids is easier here than almost anywhere else. This is the place where people come together to discuss and share in something greater than the self.

Similar to gathering around a warm fire sharing stories, this is a great place for youth to learn their family's values and behaviors. Faith communities are places where moral and ethical behaviors are expected and reinforced. By modeling appropriate behaviors and letting youth get to know us, we can instill those values with ease.

The concept of building assets can be ingrained in your thoughts the same way that your clothing captures the smoke that circles around you from a shared fire. And the longer you sit and listen to the lessons, the more the smoke becomes a part of you - just like the ideals that are quietly being taught.

### **Quote:**

To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.

*Theodore Roosevelt*

This newsletter and other asset resources are produced by the  
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