FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

PROJECT CORNERSTONE
A YMCA of Silicon Valley Initiative

AUGUST Asset of the Month:
CARING NEIGHBORHOOD
Young person experiences caring neighbors.

This document is designed to help adults throughout Silicon Valley develop materials and activities to promote the asset of adult role models.

Newsletter Content

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The Importance of a Caring Neighborhood

Research shows that youth who reside in caring neighborhoods have higher grades, better self-esteem, reduced crime, and less drug use. And, caring neighborhoods are safer: a study of 343 Chicago neighborhoods discovered that in a caring community, youth experience less acts of school absence, graffiti, and violence. Other benefits of a strong neighborhood include a greater sense of community and easier conflict resolution among neighbors. A caring neighborhood creates a better environment for everyone regardless of age.

Unfortunately, in Project Cornerstone's 2011 survey, **only 52% of 4th-6th graders and 37% of 7th-12th graders** reported that they feel that their neighborhood is caring. To help raise awareness of this important asset, August is Caring Neighborhood month in Silicon Valley. The following discussion topics can help you work with young people to become aware of the ways that their neighborhood is caring and identify possible opportunities for improvement.

- Which adults "keep an eye" on neighborhood kids when they're playing outside to help keep them safe?
- Which adults and families in the neighborhood can you turn to for help in case of an emergency? Help your family identify a "safe house" on every nearby block where they can go if they need help.
- Which adults and families should you get to know better? How might you approach them?
- Are there any neighbors who might benefit from assistance such as a senior citizen who may need help with their yard work, carrying groceries, or taking their trash and recycling to the curb?

This article was provided courtesy of Project Cornerstone's Asset-a-Month program. For more information, visit www.projectcornerstone.org.

Activities

The activities below are a starting point to help create caring neighborhoods.

For families

- Make an effort to get to know your neighbors, and help your children understand the importance of strong neighborhood bonds. Encourage your children to share toys or activities with other kids on the block.
- Invite another family to go with you when you walk your dog, or ask if you can join a family when they walk theirs.
- With your children, make a map of your street and write down names and a few facts about each neighbor.

- Volunteer to house- and pet-sit when your neighbors go out of town.
- Throw a neighborhood party! Invite everyone on the block for food, fun, games, and the opportunity to get to know each other better. Be sure to plan activities for youth of all ages.

For all adults

- Learn the names and interests of the kids in your neighborhood, and find areas that you have in common. Offer to teach a new skill or ask the young person to teach you.
- Let families know that your home represents a "safe house" where their children can come if they need help.
- "Check in" with children and youth who are playing outside, and help them stay safe.
- Establish an emergency contact list for neighbors so that everyone can be reached in case of an urgent matter.
- Volunteer to pick up a neighbor's children from school or programs.
- Treat neighbors of all ages with courtesy and respect.
- Attend a game, play, or event in which a neighborhood youth is participating.
- Be aware of graduations and other major events in children's lives.
- Create an email list or online group for neighbors. This is an easy way to share announcements, invitations, plans, and concerns.
- Support local youth in their fundraisers. Even if you don't care for cookies, candy, wrapping paper, or the other items that the children are selling, your support of their activities shows that you value their goals and efforts.

At school or in youth programs

- Schools, religious organizations, and youth programs can help create a sense of community in the neighborhood. Visit with your immediate neighbors to help them understand your programs and enlist their help in keeping children and youth safe.
- Hold events for the neighborhood, such as a Halloween carnival or 'open house' with children's activities. Neighbors can learn about your programs and visit with each other.
- Develop a service project where youth in your programs volunteer in the nearby neighborhood, such as picking up litter or assisting the elderly with chores.
- Discuss ways that youth can create a caring community in their own neighborhoods.

Resources

- National Night Out is an annual event involving citizens, law enforcement agencies, civic groups, businesses, neighborhood organizations and local officials from thousands of communities in the United States and Canada. For more information, visit http://www.nationaltownwatch.org/nno.
- The National Neighborhood Watch Program pairs neighborhood groups and law enforcement to work together to create safe communities. For more information, visit http://www.usaonwatch.org/
- Ian Chamandy of Portland, Oregon has created a detailed manual titled "How To Throw A Great Street/Block Party And Transform Your Neighborhood Into A Tight-Knit Community," which covers a range of activities before, during, and after the party that ensure a successful event. To view the manual, visit **http://www.streetparty.net/** and click the link to download the manual.

SEPTEMBER Asset of the Month: Parent Involvement in Schooling!

If you or your organization can share ideas for positive, creative activities for young people, please contact (408) 351-6482 or by email at info@projectcornerstone.org.

About the Asset-a-Month Program

The goals of the Silicon Valley Asset-a-Month program are to help align adults throughout our diverse community in their efforts to promote positive youth development by fostering developmental assets. For more information about the Asset-a-Month program, contact Project Cornerstone at (408) 351-6482 or info@projectcornerstone.org.