

State of the Youth Report

Great Lakes Center for Youth Development

June 2005

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Summary View of Developmental Assets	5
Social and Environmental Context: Upper Peninsula	8
Social and Environmental Context: Marquette & Alger Counties	11
Thriving Indicators and Risk Behaviors: Marquette and Alger Counties	13
Developmental Assets: A Profile of Marquette & Alger County Youth	14
External Assets: 2004: 8 th , 10 th and 12 th Grades	15
External Assets: 1997-2004 Trends: 8 th , 10 th and 12 th Grades ..	16
External Assets: 2004: Comparing 6 th Grade to 8 th , 10 th and 12 th Grades	17
Internal Assets: 2004: 8 th , 10 th and 12 th Grades	18
Internal Assets: 1997-2004 Trends: 8 th , 10 th and 12 th Grades ..	18
Internal Assets: 2004: Comparing 6 th Grade to 8 th , 10 th and 12 th Grades	20
Changing Behaviors & Developing Assets	21
Maintaining Good Health	22
Decreasing Risk-Taking Behaviors	23
Increasing Mentoring and Community Identity	24
Improving Youth’s School Experience	25
Strengthening Family Support and Involvement	26
Enhancing Positive Identity and Social Competency	28
Summary	28

Executive Summary

Data from the 2005-2006 State of the Youth Report show that Marquette-Alger youth in later childhood and adolescence generally reflect national results regarding the total number of 40 Developmental Assets they indicated in a survey conducted in October 2004. Sixth grade students in the local survey sponsored by the Great Lakes Center for Youth development averaged 25.9 Assets while 8th, 10th and 12th grade students averaged 18.1 Assets. This report's review of specific assets reveals that there are both external (community, family, school) and internal (individual, youth-specific) assets that can be enhanced through specific interventions that fall within six priority areas that have previously been identified by the Center as being critical to healthy youth development.

The Center's investment in the Assets Survey over the last seven years (four surveys) also provides the opportunity to observe trends over time that reveal where we have been, and where we may be going. The trend data show that there have been generally positive changes in the adoption of specific Assets by Marquette-Alger youth. Moreover, comparison of the 6th grade results to those of the 8th, 10th and 12th grade students suggests that youth in late childhood have assets that may erode over time, but may be amenable to intervention through the influence of individual adults or programs/resources designed to enhance specific assets. Overall, the data provide an important snapshot of our youth and, together with complementary social context and survey data, a framework for continuing to influence the healthy development of youth in rural communities in productive ways.

Introduction

The Great Lakes Center for Youth Development (GLYCD) exists to “*serve as a catalyst for the healthy development of youth in rural communities...*” with a specific emphasis on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. One important method used by GLYCD to inform this mission since 1997 is a biennial (1997, 2000, 2002, 2004) survey of a sample of 8th, 10th and 12th graders in Marquette and Alger Counties conducted in local schools and analyzed by the Search Institute of Minneapolis, Minnesota. This survey focuses on 40 Developmental Assets (20 community-based and 20 individual) that have been shown by the Search Institute to be associated with a variety of risk-taking behaviors as well as behaviors that are associated with educational success and life achievement (<http://www.search-institute.org/assets/>). The 1997, 2000 and 2002 surveys were summarized in a report released nearly one year ago (<http://www.soyreport.org/>) and introduced six Priority Areas for positive youth development:

- Maintaining Good Health
- Decreasing Risk Behaviors
- Increasing Mentoring and Community Identity
- Improving Youth’s School Experience
- Strengthening Family Support and Involvement
- Enhancing Positive Identity and Social Competency

In October, 2004, this biennial survey was replicated in Marquette and Alger Counties, making it possible to observe the 40 Developmental Assets over a seven year period in our community. In addition, the core survey was supplemented in 2004 by a survey of a sample of 6th grade students, components of which are included in this report, and a “Sidebar Survey” addressing local issues of concern such as career pathways, substance abuse, and exercise (refer

to www.soyreport.org/sidebar for a full report). These data provide a rich resource for understanding the “state of our youth,” providing insight into what families and communities can do enhance their healthy development.

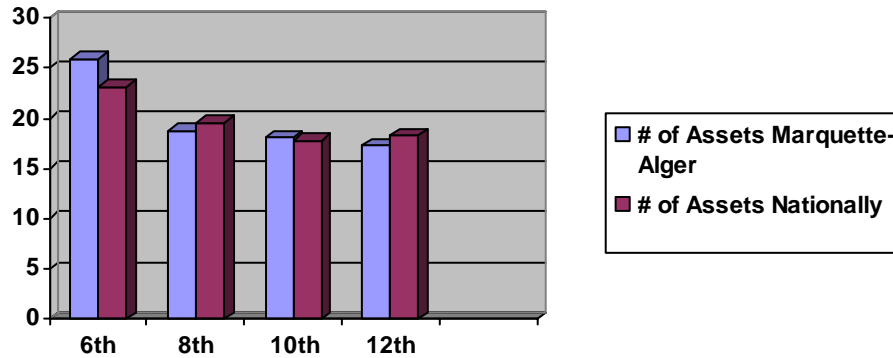
The 2005-2006 State of the Youth Report also places the survey findings in a broader context, referring to state and national data, programs and information where appropriate, in order to place the Marquette-Alger data in context. For example, the GLCYD has underscored the importance of reducing risky behaviors (e.g., substance abuse) and improving health behaviors. The recently released 2005 Index of Child Well-Being (<http://www.fcd-us.org/PDFs/2005CWI-Report-Final.pdf>) indicates that, nationally, the number of teens not engaging in risky behaviors has increased 44% since 1975, but overall child health (particularly with respect to obesity) continues to decline. Similarly, Governor Granholm’s *Great Start* initiative to encourage early literacy efforts and parent education reflects needs throughout the State of Michigan that are also evident in the Upper Peninsula (U.P.) and are being addressed by the Great Lakes Center for Youth Development (<http://www.greatstartforkids.org/about.htm>). Recognizing the unique characteristics of youth in our area, while simultaneously understanding the findings in regional, state and national contexts, is essential to being a catalyst for the healthy development of youth in the U.P.

Summary View of Developmental Assets

There are three important uses for the data collected by the Search Institute for the GLCYD that are summarized briefly here. First, although the availability of comparable national data is limited, Figure 1 shows that the 2004 data from Marquette and Alger counties generally reflect national findings. Hence, our references to national trends and programs should be

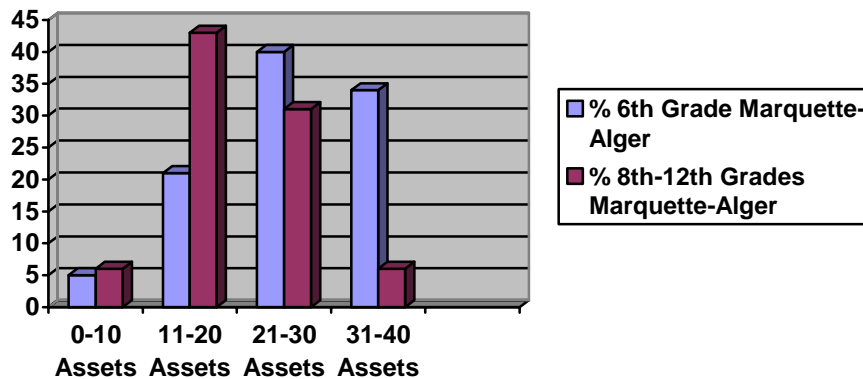
considered in light of the commonalities between our youth and their national peers, while also noting important differences wherever they are apparent.

Figure 1. Average # Developmental Assets - by Grade Level - Nationally (1999-2000) and for Marquette-Alger Counties (2004 Data).



Second, the addition of the complementary survey of 6th grade students provides an opportunity to reflect upon the greater number of assets noted for both the National and Marquette-Alger data in Column One of Figure 1. Specifically, Figure 1 reveals that 6th grade students in Marquette and Alger Counties average 25.9 Developmental Assets, while their 8th (18.8), 10th (18.1) and 12th (17.3) grade counterparts have considerably fewer Developmental Assets (as is also true nationally). Similarly, Figure 2 shows that the proportion of 6th grade students with 21-30 and 31-40 assets is much greater than among 8th-12th graders.

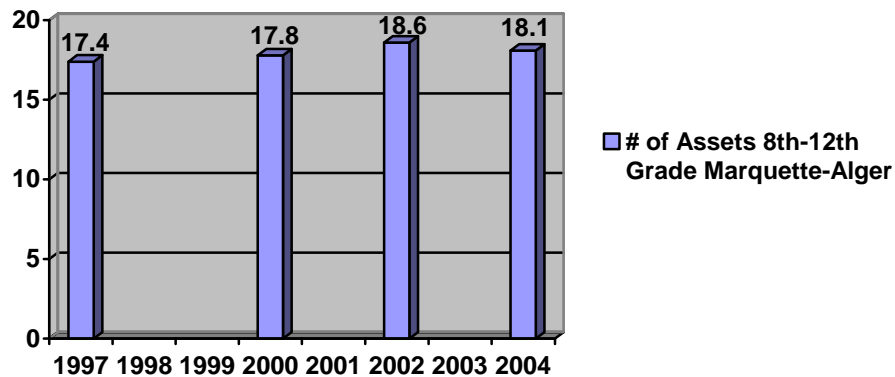
Figure 2. Distribution of # Developmental Assets - by Grade Level for Marquette-Alger Counties (2004 Data).



The differences between the 6th grade students and their older peers can be instructive regarding possible interventions and/or programs that may assist in maintaining certain Developmental Assets over time. It is important to note, however, that the Search Institute generally reports greater assets in middle childhood than in adolescence, and that these differences may be influenced by two underlying factors. First, there are wording differences between the elementary (<http://www.search-institute.org/assets/40Assets-Elementary.pdf>) and adolescent surveys (<http://www.search-institute.org/assets/40Assets.pdf>) that may make it easier for elementary students to be scored as having some assets or reflect a positive bias in their reporting (according to the Search Institute). Second, these differences are consistent with our understanding of developmental stages and studies indicating that preadolescents are more likely than adolescents to have the relationships and opportunities needed for positive development that may be reflected in reporting a greater number of Developmental Assets (see Scales, Sesma and Bolstrom, 2004; http://www.search-institute.org/catalog/catalog/product_16288_Coming_into_Their_Own.html). Examples from the Assets Survey may include (1) Parental Involvement in Schooling, (2) Bonding to Adults at School, and (3) Positive Peer Influences, among others.

Finally, the GLYCD's investment in four biennial surveys provides the opportunity to observe trends over time. While Figure 3 reveals a slight drop in the total number of assets among 8th-12th grade students in Marquette and Alger counties after increases in the 2000 and 2002 surveys, this report will review trends in specific assets that provide important insight into the state of our youth in the Upper Peninsula (U.P.).

Figure 3. Trends in Overall # Developmental Assets for 8th-12th Grades, Marquette-Alger Counties, 1997-2004.



Social and Environmental Context: Upper Peninsula

The U.P. encompasses roughly one-third of the land mass of the State of Michigan, yet its fifteen counties (<http://www.december.com/places/up/images/upcounties.gif>) comprise only 3.2% of the state's total population (2000 Census). The entire U.P. is rural by nearly every definition. The first inhabitants of the area were the Anishnabe people. The initial immigrants were the Cornish who arrived to mine copper, followed by Germans, Irish and French Canadians. Later, mining, timber, shipping, railroad and other industries brought immigrants in large numbers from Italy, Finland, Scandinavia, Poland, Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire (existed from 1867 until WWI in Central and Eastern Europe), Wales and Scotland. The “hey day” of growth and opportunity in the U.P. occurred between roughly 1880 and the beginning of World War I. The differences in food, culture and traditions were such that National Geographic Magazine (1917) noted that when you left Houghton and traveled to Calumet some ten miles away it was like entering a foreign land because over 75% of the population was foreign-born. Now, only a century later, the stoicism, work ethic and traditions of these early pioneers are still reflected in their descendents. Acknowledging this ethnic variability – and the differences from

community to community - is important because it helps us to understand today's youth and the challenges that they face.

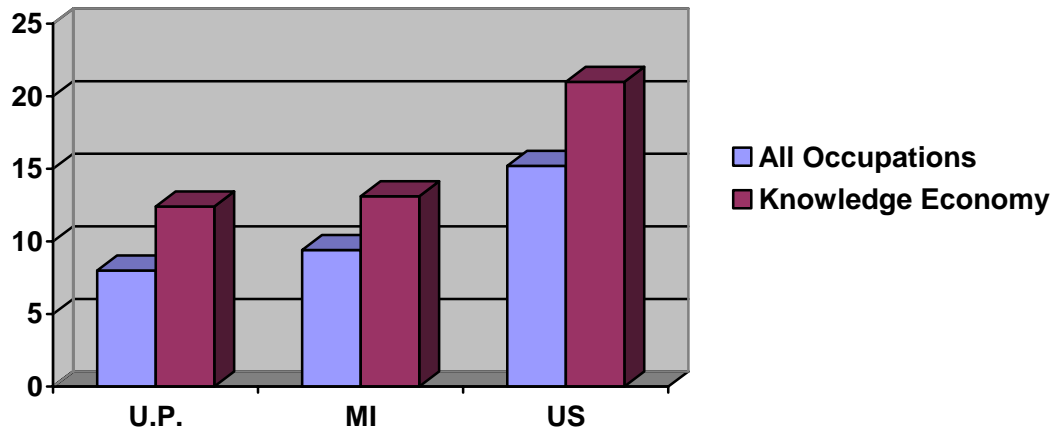
The Anishnabe people are a small but important part of the fabric of the U.P. – particularly in Alger and Marquette counties - because of their history as the first inhabitants of the area as well as the challenges imposed on their youth as immigration and development brought people from around-the-world over the last 125 years. In the State of Michigan 0.6% (approximately 55,000) of residents are classified as Native American. In Alger and Marquette Counties, 3.3% and 1.5% of the population, respectively, identify themselves as Native American (2000 Census). It is important to note that Native Americans are a substantially greater proportion of the population in U.P. counties such as Baraga (12.0%), Chippewa (13.3%), and Mackinaw (14.2%). The history of the Chippewa Indians who originally settled this area and were forced to adapt to the influx of white settlers in the 19th Century is critical to understanding this portion of our community today. Perhaps nowhere is this story better told than in *A Face in the Rock: The Tale of A Grand Island Chippewa* by Loren A Graham (University of California Press, 1998), a poignant account of Powers of the Air and his people as they adapted to a dramatically changing world in what is now Alger County.

All fifteen U.P. counties reflect a moderate rate (11.1-24.8%) of childhood poverty according to the 2000 census. The rate of unemployment in December 2004 was about 6% (www.michigan.gov/documents/October2004_110058_7.pdf) roughly equivalent to the state as a whole. Although significant employers (the departure of the Air Force from K.I. Sawyer and the subsequent reuse of that facility is a good example) have left the U.P. in the last decade, the continuing development of the tourist industry has helped to moderate the negative impact of these departures. Household income across U.P. counties is approximately 20% less than the

average in the State of Michigan. Of perhaps greater importance for the healthy development of youth are the occupational forecasts for the U.P. Projected overall employment growth rates (2000-2010) are lower for the U.P. (8.0%) and the State of Michigan (9.4%) than the United States (15.2%), with all occupational categories showing a slower growth rate in the U.P. than at the national level (www.michmi.org; www.bls.gov). These disparities are exacerbated when focusing on growth in the “knowledge economy.”

The **Knowledge Economy** refers to the use of knowledge to produce economic benefits. The phrase came to prominence in New Zealand in the mid-to late-1990s as a way of referring to the manner in which various high-technology businesses, especially computer software, telecommunications and virtual services, as well as educational and research institutions, can contribute to a country's economy. Businesses that are highly innovative, and leaders in their industry as a result of the knowledge and intellectual creativity that go into their products, characterize the knowledge economy. The “knowledge economy” is a critical indicator for planning, education and youth development in the U.P. because, based on findings from the Michigan State University Community & Economic Development Program (MSU-CEDP) current wages in the UP are two-thirds higher (\$50,114) in the knowledge economy sector than in all other occupations (\$30,554). Moreover, this disparity is exacerbated by projections that the rate of growth in the knowledge economy in the U.P. (2000-2010) will be lower (12.4%) than in either the State of Michigan (13.1%), or the United States as a whole (21.0%). Currently, Houghton County is identified as a “leader” in this respect, while Marquette, Alger and Dickenson Counties are identified as “contenders.” This represents an opportunity for the U.P to refocus its efforts on developing jobs in the Knowledge Economy that will improve the well-being of families and youth.

Figure 4. Employment Growth, All Occupations and Knowledge Economy, 2000-2010.



According to the MSU-CEDP: (1) communities that do not get smarter will get poorer; (2) educational opportunities should be provided across the life-span; and (3) early childhood development with seamless transitions to K-12, higher education and career development opportunities is essential for healthy communities.

<http://www.msu.edu/unit/cua/web%20pdf%2004-05/EUP%20Snapshot%20Presentation.pdf>.

Social and Environmental Context: Marquette and Alger Counties

Marquette County has a total population of 64,616 (2000 Census), an 8.8% decline since 1990, and includes Marquette (Population: 20,714), the U.P.'s largest city. Median household income in the County is \$35,548; the poverty rate is 10.9%; and 16.3% of County residents are between the ages of 5 and 17. Alger County has a total population of 9,862 (2000 Census), a 9.9% increase since 1990. Median household income in the County is \$35,892; the poverty rate is 10.3%; and 15.9% of County residents are between the ages of 5 and 17. Hence, while these counties have very different total populations, they are strikingly similar on many important social indicators. In addition, the economies of the two counties are linked in several ways including (1) cross-county employment, (2) the "trickle down" benefits Alger County enjoys

from Marquette City/County’s designation as a “Cool City,” “America’s Most Livable,” and “All American County,” and (3) Marquette County’s tourism benefit from the natural destinations (e.g., Pictured Rocks National Seashore) located in Alger County.

In 2000, 81.5% of Alger County residents 25 years and older had at least a high school diploma; 24.5% had some college experience; and 14.7% had a Bachelor’s or advanced college degree. Similarly, 88.4% of Marquette County residents 25 years and older had at least a high school diploma; 29.4% had some college experience; and 23.7% had a Bachelor’s or advanced college degree. Table 1 provides additional indicators, from a variety of sources, regarding the overall well-being of Marquette-Alger youth. Overall, the data indicate that youth in this area generally are similar to their peers throughout the State of Michigan. It is important to note, however, that on a variety of educational indicators Marquette-Alger youth exceed State of Michigan averages. This may provide additional support for the potential to support youth development with a specific interest in participating in the knowledge economy.

Table 1. Social and Economic Indicators: Marquette-Alger Youth.

Indicator	State of Michigan	Marquette County	Alger County
Births to Teenage Mothers	9.6%	7.7%	11.8%
Students w/Free/Reduced Lunch	32.9%	29.5%	33.7%
Children receiving food stamps	12.3%	7.5%	9.8%
Michigan Merit Scholars	39.4%	53.3%	56.0%
12th Grade Math Meets/Exceeds	xx.x%	64.7%*	57.8%**
12th Grade Reading Meets/Exceeds	xx.x%	83.1%*	80.2%**
12th Grade Science	xx.x%	69.7%*	69.9%**
Uninsured < 18	8.4%	11.7%	8.6%

* Marquette Public Schools (2005) ** Munising Public Schools (2005)

Sources: www.kidscount.org; <http://www.mpca.net/healthpolicy/profiles.htm>;

<http://midata.msu.edu/index02.asp>; <http://www.mcgi.state.mi.us/mischoolinfo/>.

Thriving Indicators and Risk Behaviors: Marquette and Alger County Youth

Concurrent with the survey of 40 Developmental Assets, questions were asked of youth participants regarding their risk behaviors (e.g., substance abuse; violence; truancy) and the extent to which they exhibit thriving indicators (e.g., school success; helping others; leadership). As indicated in Figures 5, 6, 7 and 8 the greater the number of assets, the greater the number of thriving indicators and lower the number of risk behaviors. (Figures 5 – 8 should be interpreted with great care, especially when attempting to make comparisons between the 6th Grade data and the 8th, 10th and 12th Grade data. Note specifically that the number of “Thriving” and “Risk” behaviors that are possible differ between these data sources.)

Figure 5. Average # of 7 Thriving Indicators by Asset Level, 6th Grade

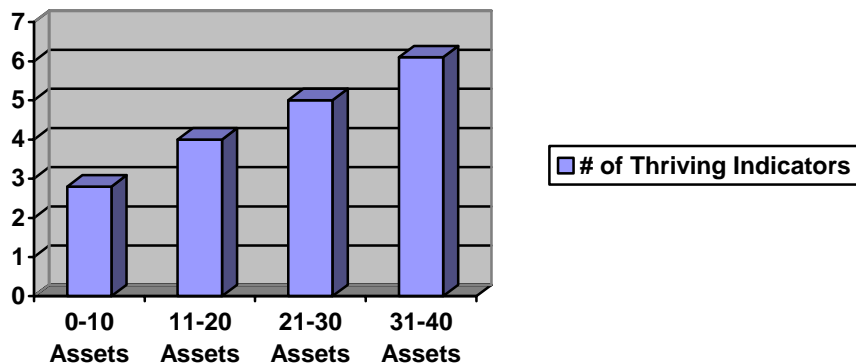


Figure 6. Average # of 8 Thriving Indicators by Asset Level, 8th-12th Grade

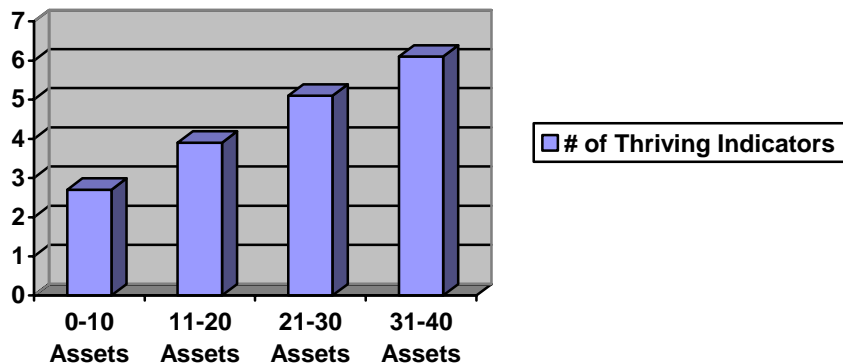


Figure 7. Average # of 6 Risk-Taking Behaviors by Asset Level, 6th Grade

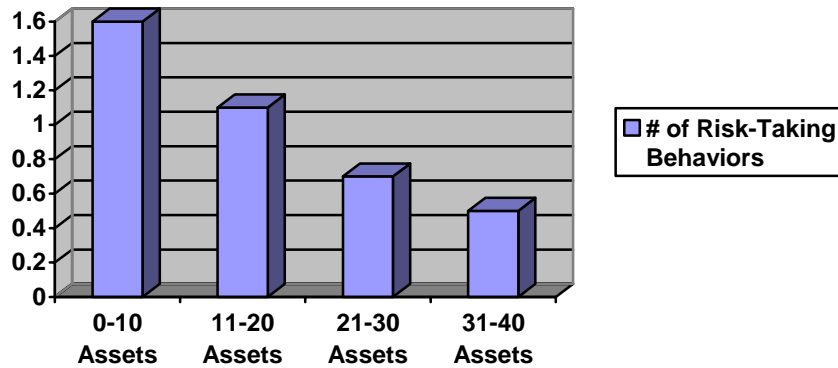
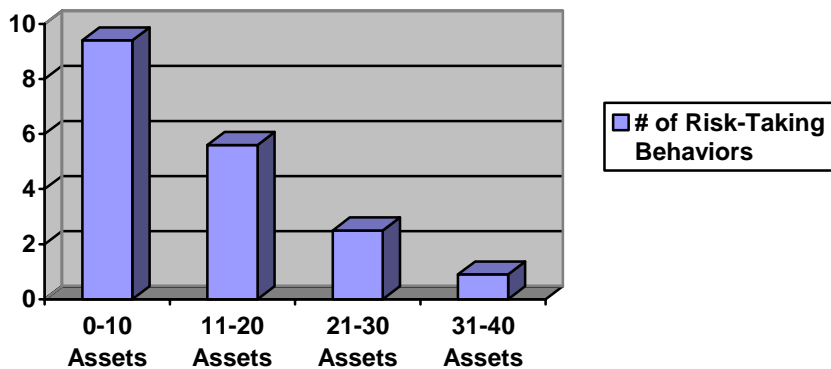


Figure 8. Average # of 24 Risk-Taking Behaviors by Asset Level, 8th-12th Grades



Developmental Assets: A Profile of Marquette and Alger County Youth

Every child is unique and must be assessed in light of the family, school and social context within which they live and develop over time. Nevertheless, all need communities that support their development in effect ways (external assets), allowing them to attain the tools (internal assets) necessary to be productive and contributing members of society. As noted earlier, the 40 Developmental Assets as formulated by the Search Institute include 20 External Assets (community-level) and 20 Internal Assets (individual-level). The 40 Assets address four asset categories that focus on external structures, relationships and activities (Support, Empowerment, Boundaries and Expectations, Constructive Use of Time) and four categories that

reflect internal values, skills and beliefs (Commitment to Learning, Positive Values, Social Competencies, Positive Identity). Hence, these assets focus on social rather than physical developmental assets. Moreover, they provide an opportunity to look at how our communities are progressing over nearly a decade of biennial surveys.

The biennial survey of 8th, 10th and 12th graders in Marquette County (1997, 2000, 2002, and 2004 and the additional survey of 6th graders in October, 2004, are the basis for the information included in this section of the report (see xxxx for the full reports). The discussion of the results will be organized around the four external and four internal categories noted above. In addition, attention will be focused on the newly released 2004 data for 8th, 10th and 12th graders; obvious trending in the 8th, 10th and 12th grade data from 1997-2004; and on differences between the 6th grade data and the 8th, 10th and 12th grade data. The findings presented in this section are intended to provide a general overview of the State of the Youth to guide understanding and possible programming and intervention. In many instances it will be important for readers to refer to the full data report in order to understand the interpretation of specific concepts and the survey questions from which they are derived.

External Assets: 2004: 8th, 10th and 12th Grades

The external/community-level assets provide the context within which youth are able to build and mold individual assets. Hence, it is important for families, schools and communities to carefully consider these findings and the possibilities for modification and intervention.

- **Support:** 67% of youth report feeling supported by their family; 25% report positive family communication; 44% of youth feel some support (e.g., encouragement, talk regularly) from other adults; 38% feel their neighbors care about them; 27% believe

that they experience a caring school climate; and 29% acknowledge parental involvement in schooling.

- **Empowerment:** 18% of youth feel valued by their community; 24% believe that they are recognized as a resource in their community and/or at school; 49% believe that they are a service to others; and 64% feel safe in their community.
- **Boundaries and Expectations:** Many youth feel that they have clear family (46%), school (53%), and neighborhood (49%) boundaries; 26% feel they have adult role models; 57% feel they have positive peer influences; and 45% believe that teachers and parents have high expectations of them.
- **Constructive Use of Time:** 18% of youth acknowledge being involved in creative activities (e.g., music, art, drama); 61% are involved in youth programs; 46% participate in religious activities; and 39% spend many evenings per week at home

External Assets: 1997-2004 Trends: 8th, 10th and 12th Grades

The cross-sectional nature of these data limit the extent to which specific conclusions can be made regarding changes over time. Nevertheless, where trends reflect a 5% or greater change over the period 1997-2004, it is instructive to note and give further consideration.

- **Boundaries and Expectations:** There is a generally increasing trend (1997-2004) in the extent to which youth believe they have family (41%-46%), school (47%-53%) and neighborhood boundaries (44%-49%). In addition, the percentage of youth feeling that they have high expectations placed on them has increased from 38-45% between 1997 and 2004.
- **Constructive Use of Time:** Fewer youth are spending time in religious activities (54%-46%), but more are spending discretionary evenings at home (33%-39%).

External Assets: 2004: Comparing 6th Grade to 8th, 10th and 12th Grades

The comparison of the 6th grade data to that of the older youth must be understood in the context of developmental stages. As noted earlier, 6th graders are in the later stages of childhood while 8th, 10th and 12th graders are adolescents developing toward the transition to adulthood. Hence, the findings noted here should be understood in this context . . . rather than as inherently problematic. Nevertheless, in some cases, the findings may provide guidance for possible intervention strategies designed to retain specific assets as youth transition from late childhood to adolescence. Overall, total assets are higher among 6th graders (25.9) than among the older youth (18.1) (refer to Figure 1).

- **Support:** 6th graders acknowledge higher levels of family support (88% versus 67%) and positive family communication (57% versus 25%). They also feel generally more supported by other adults (51% versus 44%); caring neighbors (58% versus 38%); a caring school climate (57% versus 27%); and parental involvement in schooling (55% versus 29%).
- **Empowerment:** 6th graders are more likely to both feel valued by adults in the community (34% versus 18%) and feel as though they are a resource at home and in the community (53% versus 24%).
- **Boundaries and Expectations:** 6th graders are more likely to indicate that they have adult role models (48% versus 26%) and twice as likely (89% versus 45%) to believe that others have high expectations of them.
- **Constructive Use of Time:** 6th graders are three times (58% versus 18%) more likely than 8th, 10th and 12th graders to be involved in creative activities.

Internal Assets: 2004: 8th, 10th and 12th Grades

Internal assets are individual-level factors that generally reflect the respondent's assessment of themselves within the broader social context within which they are situated.

- **Commitment to Learning:** Youth report relatively high levels of achievement motivation (64%); school engagement (63%); having much homework (46%); and feeling connected to their school (51%). However, Only 27% of kids acknowledge reading for pleasure.
- **Positive Values:** Youth report high levels of integrity (67%); honesty (65%); taking responsibility (64%); caring about others (44%); caring about equality and social justice (46%). Nevertheless, only 36% believe it is important to show restraint with respect to sexual activity and alcohol and drugs.
- **Social Competencies:** Not surprisingly, fewer youth (ranging between 29% and 44%) have positive assets when it comes to planning and decision-making, friendship skills, cultural competence, resistance to peer pressure, and peaceful conflict resolution.
- **Positive Identity:** 44% of 6th graders believe they have control over “things that happen to me”; 41% exhibit high self-esteem; 53% report a sense of purpose in their life; and 69% have a positive view of their personal future.

Internal Assets: 1997 – 2004 Trend: 8th, 10th and 12th Grades

The cross-sectional nature of these data limit the extent to which specific conclusions can be made regarding changes over time. Nevertheless, where trends reflect a 5% or greater change over the period 1997-2004, it is instructive to note and give further consideration.

- **Commitment to Learning:** There is an increasing trend (46% peaking in 2002 at 52%) toward feeling a greater bond toward school.
- **Positive Values:** There is an increasing trend (1997-2004) in the number of youth acknowledging caring about others (37% to 44%), placing importance on equality and social justice (40% to 46%), expressing greater restraint when it comes to experimentation with sex and alcohol (31% peaking in 2002 at 40%), and valuing honesty (59% peaking in 2002 at 68%).
- **Social competencies:** There is a generally increasing trend (peaking in 2002) toward and peaceful conflict resolution (38% peaking in 2002 at 47%).
- **Positive Identity:** There were declines in feelings of personal power (49% to 44%) and self esteem (47% to 41%).

Internal Assets: 2004: Comparing 6th Grade to 8th, 10th and 12th Grades

The comparison of the 6th grade data to that of the older youth must be understood in the context of developmental stages. In general, 6th graders are in the later stages of childhood while 8th, 10th and 12th graders are adolescents developing toward the transition to adulthood. Hence, the findings noted here should be understood in this context . . . rather than as inherently problematic. Nevertheless, in some cases, the findings may provide guidance for possible intervention strategies designed to retain specific assets as youth transition from late childhood to adolescence.

- **Commitment to Learning:** 6th graders are less likely to report a commitment to learning (41% versus 63%). Conversely, younger students indicate a greater commitment to homework (80% versus 46%) and achievement motivation (77% versus 64%). 6th graders are also more than twice as likely (57% versus 27%) than the older youth to read for pleasure. (Note: Both results may be an artifact of different survey questions as noted earlier.)
- **Positive Values:** 6th graders report somewhat higher levels of integrity (83% versus 67%); honesty (90% versus 65%); responsibility (85% versus 64%); and maintaining a healthy lifestyle (78% versus 36%) than the older youth.
- **Social Competencies:** 6th graders have a much greater sense of social competency (i.e., planning, interpersonal, cultural competence, resistance, peaceful conflict resolution) than adolescents in this survey (ranging from 46% to 80% versus 29% to 44%).
- **Positive Identity:** 6th graders appear to have a greater sense of personal power (64% versus 44%) and self-esteem (72% versus 41%).

Changing Behaviors & Developing Assets

In many respects, the 2005-2006 State of the Youth Report reinforces the importance of the six priority areas previously identified by the Great Lakes Center for Youth Development (see 2004 SOY Report) as essential for building community capabilities and individual youth assets that will foster healthy development in adolescence and a positive transition to a productive adult life.

- Maintaining Good Health
- Decreasing Risk Behaviors
- Increasing Mentoring and Community Identity
- Improving Youth's School Experience
- Strengthening Family Support and Involvement
- Enhancing Positive Identity and Social Competency

As indicated in the 2005 Youth Asset Report (see xxxxxx), there are many ways in which individual parents, teachers, adult role models and others can adopt behaviors that are likely to build and reinforce assets in youth that will influence their healthy development.

In this section of the SOY Report we provide ideas and resources specific to each of the six priority areas. Within each area we differentiate by (1) community/school/family (external) and (2) youth (internal) strategies for asset enhancement. It should be noted throughout, however, that many of the most effective programs include both levels of development and cross-cut two or more of the six priority areas. Moreover, the local issues of concern (i.e., career pathways, substance abuse, and exercise) assessed in the complementary "Sidebar Survey" (refer to www.soyreport.org/sidebar for a full report) may also be addressed by types of programs addressed in this section of the State of the Youth Report.

Maintaining Good Health

The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”

(<http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/>). Hence, it is appropriate to view the healthy development of youth in the broadest possible sense. Moreover, health issues among youth ranging from obesity to depression have clearly become a national issue in recent years. The following examples include programs that address external and internal aspects of maintaining good health.

Community/School/Family. The *Coordinated School Health Program*, sponsored by the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, focuses on eight interacting components to address the nation’s most serious health and social problems (<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/CSHP/index.htm>). Families, health care workers, the media, religious organizations, community organizations that serve youth, and young people themselves work together to maintain the well-being of young people. This is one of many programs designed under the auspices of the *National Initiative to Improve Adolescent Health by the Year 2010*, which supports states and local agencies, in part, by providing a range of practical resources focused on strategic action to improve the health of adolescents and young adults at the community level. *Improving the Health of Adolescents & Young Adults: A Guide for States and Communities* (<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/NationalInitiative/order/index.htm>) is designed to help guide state and local agencies and organizations through public health processes that address important adolescent health and safety issues.

Youth. “My Health to Better Living: The 4-H Health Challenge” is a Michigan 4-H Development Program designed to increase the number of youth (5 to 12 years old) practicing

healthy habits such as: choosing not to use tobacco products, practicing sun safety, eating healthier and being more physically active. The programs goals include learning health behaviors as well as developing positive values such as responsibility and restraint, positive identity and self-confidence, and competencies to make healthy lifestyle choices. These latter attributes are similar to those identified as “internal assets” in this report. Additional Information can be found at: <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/health/index.html>.

Decreasing Risk-Taking Behaviors

Risk-taking behaviors range from sexual experimentation to substance abuse. As is often the case, the most successful programs address issues from multiple perspectives. In addition, underlying “internal assets” such as self-esteem and body image are recognized as important indicators of risk behaviors.

Community/School/Family. School-based prevention programs have had positive short term effects (typically declining in 1-4 years) on smoking behavior and tobacco-related attitudes among middle school students. Programs that focus on social influences (i.e. media, peer, family) and teach refusal skills, however, tend to be the most effective. School-based programs are further enhanced when they are included in broad based community efforts in which parents, mass media, and community organizations are involved, and in which the social policy or social environment as well as individual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors are targeted for change.

Guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

(<http://www.cdc.gov/>) include: (1) instruction should provide information on the social influences of and peer norms regarding tobacco use in addition to information on the short and long term physiologic consequences of smoking; (2) program-specific training for teachers

should be provided; and (3) schools should develop and enforce tobacco free policies, to make sure programs are implemented in a setting with broad policy support.

Youth. Advocates for Youth (<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/about/index.htm>) “is dedicated to creating programs and advocating for policies that help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health.” In addition to information and programming about safer sex, HIV, sexual assault and other important topics, emphases include the recognition of the impact that body image has on youth’s lives. *15 Ways to Create a Body-Positive World* helps to inform children and youth of all ages about the importance of body image and how it can be addressed in today’s world (<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/youth/health/bodyimage/bodypositive.htm>).

Increasing Mentoring and Community Identity

Youth must be given both the tools to contribute to their community effectively as well as the opportunity. Ensuring youth involvement – on community boards, for example – and mentoring opportunities for community youth can invigorate a town or city and provide new ideas and opportunities.

Community/School/Family. The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development (http://www.theinnovationcenter.org/a_mission.shtml) views it’s mission accomplished – in part - when youth “are viewed as valued resources and partners in every community, and they respond to their respected status by devoting their tremendous energy and focus to the pursuit of social and economic justice.” The *At the Table Resource Catalog* provides information on eight organizations that help to ensure meaningful youth involvement in leadership and services in communities of all types and sizes (http://www.theinnovationcenter.org/pdfs/At_the_Table_Catalog.pdf).

Youth. The National Youth Mentoring Center

(<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/foundations.html>) has recently made available *Foundations of Successful Youth Mentoring: A Guidebook for Program Development* (<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/foundations.pdf>) to help guide communities in developing strong mentoring relationships utilizing a variety of community-based models. In addition, the *National Youth Leadership Council* (<http://www.nylc.org/aboutus.cfm>) has adopted a service learning model designed to engage students in meaningful service to their schools and communities. Through the provision of technical assistance, conferences, workshops and networking that emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving and the development of leadership skills, students are given the tools to address real issues and value the contributions and talents of people of all ages. Mentor Michigan (<http://www.michigan.gov/mentormichigan>), initiated by Governor Granholm and her husband, similarly works to support and enhance mentoring programs throughout the State of Michigan.

Improving Youth's School Experience

For most children and adolescents, school is a "home away from home." Hence, as indicated by Developmental Assets, attachment, expectations, boundaries and family involvement are critical elements that shape the school experience. These issues are especially important because of the connection between school experiences and the adjustment to young adulthood. Moreover, the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (among others), has shown that strong school and family ties help to protect teens from risk behaviors such as violence, drugs, suicide and early sex

(<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/cpr/dbs/pubs/ti8.pdf>).

Community/School/Family. The National Gardening Association

(<http://assoc.garden.org/about>) is a leading national provider of K-12, plant-based educational materials. School-based gardening programs provide a unique opportunity to help children gain knowledge in science, literacy, social studies, nutrition, the environment, and personal skill areas such as leadership, problem-solving, and team building. In the U.P., Clear Lake Education Center (<http://www.clearlakeinfo.org/>) adds an important element to the school experience by providing “an opportunity for people of all ages to connect to the natural world through integrated educational and recreational programs.”

Youth. The Macarthur Youth Commitment Network

(http://www.macro.nsw.gov.au/Content/templates/projects_detail.asp?articleid=22&zoneid=2)

in Australia focuses on young people “at risk” of leaving school early. This emphasis is important because early leavers face long term disadvantages such as unemployment, lower incomes and other risks to their wellbeing, which in turn affect the communities in which they live. A just released report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention titled *Healthy Youth: An Investment in our Nation’s Future*

(http://www.macro.nsw.gov.au/Content/templates/projects_detail.asp?articleid=22&zoneid=2)

reinforces the especially important role of schools in teaching healthy behaviors and reducing harmful risk behaviors.

Strengthening Family Support and Involvement

Parents and family members are important sources of support, learning and modeling. In an age when family separation, economic factors and other strains on family life influence family support, it is increasingly important to foster regular quality involvement by parents in the lives of children and youth.

Community/School/Family. The Administration for Child and Families, part of the Department of Health and Human Services, provides information and funds projects intended to support families and children. In particular, a recent report, *A Childhood for Every Child* (http://www.acf.hhs.gov/publications/acf_brochure/a_childhood.html) provides a range of information on strengthening families, empowering communities, and positive youth development. Similarly, The *Center for Family Involvement in Schools* “provides equity-focused professional development programs and resources that strengthen family-school-community partnerships and encourage and support the academic, intellectual and social development of **all** children” (<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~cfis/>). Gladstone Area Schools recently adopted a “turn off the tv and video game” campaign designed to foster family and student interaction by encouraging involvement in other activities.

Youth. According to the *National Service Learning Clearinghouse* (http://www.servicelearning.org/resources/quick_guides/family_k-12/) research has demonstrated that strong family involvement has numerous benefits for children and youth, including higher grades and test scores, better school attendance, greater completion of homework, demonstration of more positive attitudes and behavior, and higher graduation rates. In addition, when parents maintain strong relationships with their children’s schools, the parents develop a greater appreciation of their role in their children’s education, an improved sense of self worth, stronger social networks, and a greater understanding about their schools and teaching and learning activities in general. Service-learning programs can benefit parents by providing them with unique ways of communicating with and understanding their children while also developing their skills as leaders and advocates in their schools and communities.”

Enhancing Positive Identity and Social Competency

A positive identity and social competency among children and youth are critical because of their links to school failure, risk-taking behaviors and other less than ideal outcomes. This is particularly important in the current context because some research indicates that self esteem declines for most students the longer they are in school.

Community/School/Family. Todd McKinney, a Comedy Magician and Magical Motivator, has developed shows that address topics such as reading, substance abuse, bullying and self-esteem (<http://magicmaninfo.com/page809.html>). The Public Broadcasting System (<http://www.pbs.org/wholechild/parents/getting.html>) identifies four components to the development of social competence that parents should be aware of: (1) modeling behavior; (2) sharing from the heart; (3) fairness; and (4) cooperation versus competition.

Youth. The Child Health Institute (http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/parenting/self_esteem.shtml) makes a number of suggestions for how parents can enhance self-esteem in their children. As with other priority areas, the development of good self-esteem is predicated on the development of other skills such as good communication, good parenting, and the ability to recognize developmental changes over time.

Summary

In most respects children and youth in Marquette and Alger Counties are similar to their peers throughout the United States. This focus on Developmental Assets has, however, provided a means to identify areas of both strength and weakness, and too explore possible resources that may help to improve both community- and individual-level assets that will enhance well-being at all levels. The healthy development of youth in the Upper Peninsula will be best affected by

comprehensive programming that recognizes the unique characteristics of individual communities while drawing on the substantial worldwide resources for intervention and change.