

# 20 Years of Asset Building

## in Marquette and Alger Counties

In 1997, Kellogg Youth Initiative Partnerships—now GLCYD—led an effort to see how young people in Marquette and Alger Counties were doing in regards to their healthy development. The idea was to create a picture that would show where the youth were doing well and where they needed extra support.

Many local organizations were already using the 40 Developmental Assets model of positive youth development—building on the strengths of youth and engaging them as fully contributing community partners. The picture would help them better understand where to focus their efforts.

To create the picture, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders were surveyed with the *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey* from Search Institute. The survey measures the levels of assets present in the lives of youth. Research shows that kids with more assets participate in fewer risky behaviors and experience more success in life.

The survey revealed the students had on average only 17.4 of the 40 assets. Some assets were much more prevalent than others. For instance, 70% of students had the asset of *Positive View of Personal Future*, and 65% experienced the assets of *Family Support and Safety*. But fewer than 20% experienced *Creative Activities* and *Community Values Youth*. The survey also showed high levels of risk-taking behaviors including alcohol and tobacco use. The community used this data as a baseline for measuring the impact of its asset-building efforts.

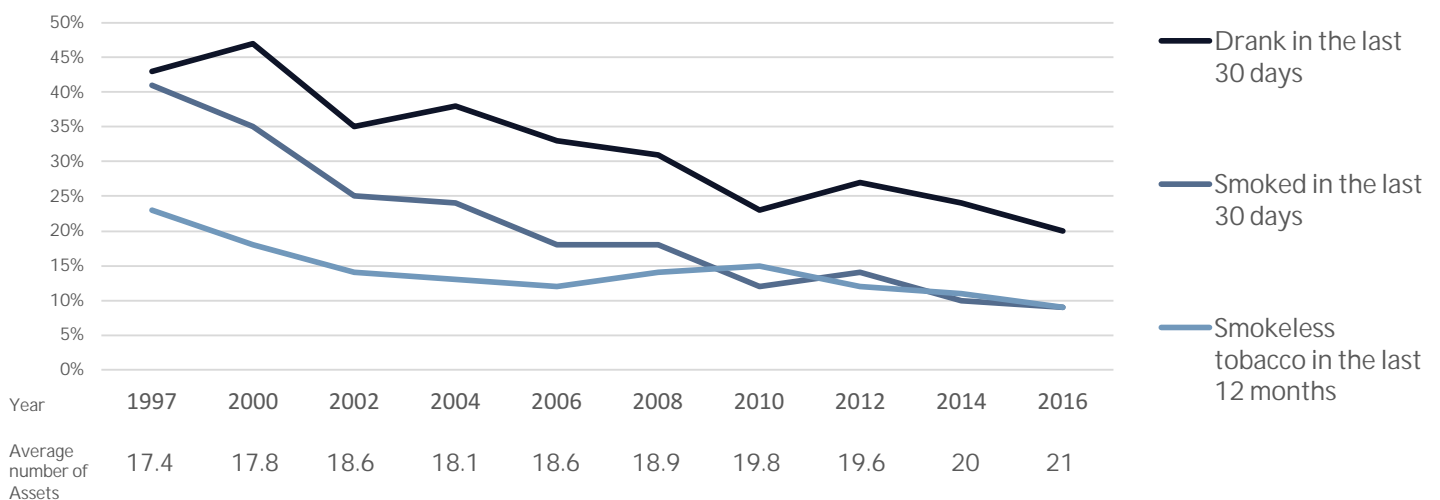
Fast forward 20 years, and the community is still using the survey and asset framework to measure and improve outcomes for youth. The picture today is much brighter than in 1997. In fall 2016, our youth had 21 of the 40 assets. As their assets have increased, the rates of risky behaviors such as substance use have significantly decreased as shown in the graph below. Some assets, such as *Equality and Social Justice*, *Caring* and *High Expectations*, have increased dramatically as shown in the table on back of this page. This is exactly what was hoped for back in 1997!

That's not to say our work is done—far from it. The table on back shows the assets of *Safety* and *Religious Community* have decreased significantly over the years. Others have remained stubbornly low including *Reading for Pleasure* which decreased from 25% in 1997 to 23% in 2016 and *Creative Activities* which increased only slightly from 16% in 1997 to 18% in 2016.

As a community, we can continue to improve the picture. The key is intentionality. We are fortunate to have many organizations in our community—Alger Parks and Recreation, U.P. Children's Museum and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Marquette and Alger Counties to name a few—that have made asset building a regular part of their work with young people. Combined with the efforts of individual, purposeful asset builders, we have built a strong foundation of support for youth.

Positive youth development works. The data clearly bears that out. If we continue to build assets intentionally, the picture of our youth over the next 20 years will be even brighter.

Substance Use Rates 1997 - 2016



# Why It Matters



Search Institute® released the 40 Developmental Assets® framework in 1990. Since then, over 5 million youth have taken the survey globally. Search Institute's research has consistently shown the more assets youth have, the more likely they are to engage in thriving behaviors. It has also shown that youth with more assets are less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors.

The chart at right shows the most significant gains and losses among Marquette and Alger County youth assets in the last 20 years. Although some assets had large increases, a few declined significantly. Even with the progress made since 1997, we must remain diligent in our asset-building efforts. Although there is no magic number of assets that will ensure youth grow up healthy, competent and caring, we know the more assets they have, the better they do. So it is critical to continue to increase the level of all assets in youth.

Youth stay in communities they help build. By being intentional in supporting youth, we empower them to become leaders in our communities. Below you will find simple asset-building actions you can take to help the youth in your life develop leadership skills they will carry into adulthood to keep our communities strong, healthy and vibrant.

## Assets with the Most Change Since 1997

Asset	1997	2016	Change
Equality and Social Justice	40%	69%	29%
Caring	37%	64%	27%
High Expectations	38%	64%	26%
Bonding to School	46%	71%	25%
Safety	65%	54%	-11%
Religious Community	54%	40%	-14%

# 20 ways to Help Youth Become Leaders

1. Challenge them to set goals
2. Listen to their stories
3. Volunteer with them
4. Cheer them on
5. Laugh together
6. Be yourself with them
7. Follow when they lead
8. Keep your promises to them
9. Share and discuss a good book or movie
10. Invite them to be on a committee or board
11. Introduce them to your friends and family
12. Be consistent with them
13. Teach them life skills
14. Appreciate their uniqueness
15. Learn what they have to teach
16. Hire them for odd jobs
17. Ask what fires them up
18. Put them in charge of a project
19. Celebrate their accomplishments
20. Ask for their opinion and take it seriously

