

Each of the community leaders highlighted in this brochure uses Developmental Assets as a tool for building a more supportive environment for our city's youth.

- 05 **Caring School Climate** | School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
- 07 **Community Values Youth** | Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
- 13 **Neighborhood Boundaries** | Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
- 14 **Adult Role Models** | Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
- 17 **Creative Activities** | Young person spends 3+ hours per week in lessons or practices for music, theater, or other arts.
- 21 **Achievement Motivation** | Young person is motivated to do well in school.

For more information about Developmental Assets and getting involved in the lives of our community's young people please visit assetpromise.org or contact the Youth Services Bureau at 860.347.8594.



YOUTH

Raising our community's children: It's a shared responsibility.

A special thank you to Dr. David Blumenkrantz, whose contributions to the Developmental Assets movement in Middletown have been immeasurable.

Change your community with a wave and “hello.” Show up to a game or concert and significantly reduce the crime rate, drug use, violence and alcohol abuse among Middletown teens. What can you achieve by simply learning a teen’s name? You can increase success in school, participation in leadership activities and a sense of commitment to our community. Just a little can go a very long way.

Committing to help children improve their ability to succeed can be simple. The key is to increase the number of Developmental Assets for children in Middletown.

Few of us had heard of Developmental Assets until 2007 when we began conducting the most comprehensive survey of our young people in the city’s history. As it turns out, these assets are excellent predictors of success for our kids.

There are 40 Developmental Assets and here are a few examples:

- **I feel safe at home, at school and in the community**
- **My neighbors encourage and support me**
- **Parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior**
- **I tell the truth even when it’s not easy**
- **I am good at planning ahead and making decisions**

The more assets kids have, the better off they are. Nationally, students with 30 assets or more are ten times more likely than their peers to get better grades, help others, maintain good health, resist danger and overcome adversity. In Middletown, almost 2/3 of our kids report having fewer than 20 assets. Additionally, we know that there are some immediate areas of concern—most notably, 81% of our 7–12th graders feel like the community doesn’t value them. But, efforts like the city’s Youth in Government program show how we can intentionally start to build assets and make a difference.

Every one of us—parents, friends, students, senior citizens, neighbors, teachers, coaches, business owners—can make a difference by rallying around our kids using this common language and it’s surprisingly easy. All we have to do is think about what relationships, opportunities, lessons and resources we received growing up and how we can return the favor to our youngest generation. This publication explains what you can do.

Change a life, change a community. It’s that simple. The dividends for our children and for all of us in Middletown are beyond measure.



Sebastian N. Giuliano
Mayor of Middletown



Michael J. Frechette
Superintendent
of Schools



Justin Carbonella
Director, Middletown
Youth Services



Kevin Wilhelm
Executive Director,
Middlesex United Way



Larry McHugh
President, Middlesex
Chamber of Commerce



Chandler J. Howard
CEO, Liberty Bank



Jacqueline Williams
President & Owner,
Sterling Realtors



Elizabeth Nocera
Chair, Youth Services
Bureau Advisory Board

Determination. Integrity. Patience.
A sense of humor. What keeps you engaged?

We all have assets—they are the things that we rely on every day to take care of ourselves, our families, our businesses. Kids also need assets to grow into healthy, caring and responsible members of our community. It's no surprise that children need positive experiences, good opportunities and supportive relationships to do well in life. It turns out that these are the keys to increasing the number of assets in their lives.

Fifty years of child and adolescent research consistently shows the same results:

- Assets promote academic success and other positive behaviors
- Assets divert youth from risky behaviors and increase civic engagement
- When faced with negative pressure or difficult circumstances, assets give young people the strength and resiliency they need to make good choices.

The good news: kids in Middletown want to increase the number of assets in their lives, and they are ready for change.





(l to r) Felicia Goodwine-Vaughters, Heather Haouchine, Jennifer Gorman, parents who helped to implement a Developmental Assets initiative within their PTA.

All children need assets.

Struggling student. High achiever. Musician, juvenile offender, artist, school drop-out or athlete. If you think only certain groups of kids need support, think again. Regardless of age, ability, culture, ethnicity, interests, gender, or socioeconomic background, all children need assets.

No young person is immune to struggles. However, asset-building shifts the focus from fixing problems to promoting strengths. We need to look at our kids for what they can do right instead of just what they do wrong. All young people have strengths and they need adults to help nurture and support them.

Here's where you come in. Asset building depends on a web of positive relationships encompassing young people, their peers and the adults in their community. We all interact with young people, and each experience becomes an opportunity to build assets.

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“Building assets will benefit everyone because we’re raising successful kids who then give back to our community.”

Felicia Goodwine-Vaughters, PTA member at Lawrence Elementary, Rushford Counselor at Woodrow Wilson Middle, MHS Class of 1998.



Building relationships also builds assets.

Developing relationships with young people can be as simple as a casual greeting on the street, or a smile. If you have more time, you can volunteer in a sports league, in the schools, or at the library. Stop by a game on your way home from work. If you enjoy music or theater, attend a show. Just being in the audience sends a positive message to kids. Another wonderful way to build relationships is to ask youth for help when you need a hand. From helping you move a box, to assisting you with a larger project, or having a regular job, kids thrive when they are entrusted with appropriate responsibilities.

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“I saw kids’ attitudes change when I would visit the neighborhood. My simple and repeated presence confirmed that their success was important to me.”

Mark Proffitt, Sp. Ed. Teacher Bielefield School and former Principal Spencer School on his visits to Traverse Square.

Raising children is a shared responsibility.

Think back to your childhood. Who made a difference in your life? Chances are that several adults offered different types of support and opportunities to you. We each have varied and important roles to play in raising kids in our community. You don't have to be a teacher or a coach. Everyone can build assets—and the more people who get involved, the better. From recent graduates to retirees, local business owners, neighbors, working professionals, students, stay-at-home parents and guardians, we all play a part in young people's lives.

“Kids should be heard, whether it's through music, art, sports, or whatever they're interested in. Sometimes just listening makes all the difference.”

Miles Nasta, Berklee College of Music student, MHS Class of 2007, Producer of the Assets CD funded through MCA teen arts grant.

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Every encounter is an opportunity.

Since most people only remember about 10% of what they hear, repetition is an important part of learning. In fact, many studies reinforce this approach. Make asset building part of your routine by repeating your core messages to kids. For some, this might be messages about manners. For others, it might be about setting goals or making healthy choices. Whatever it is, let young people know what's important to you. Use humor to get your message across if it helps. Chances are, someday you'll hear about the big difference you made to a child growing up in Middletown.

**“If you start with a positive attitude,
it's much easier, and a lot more fun.”**

Johnny Callas, LCSW, Coordinator Lions Den's Champions of Life boxing program, NCBA Lightweight Champion, 1985.



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There is strength in a common language.

When kids get consistent messages from different areas of their lives, they are more likely to understand and live up to expectations of good behavior. Whether you're a neighbor, a coach, a boss, or just an acquaintance, every time you interact with a young person, you have the opportunity to reinforce those expectations. Acknowledge courteous behavior, shake hands, treat them with the same level of respect you expect in return. All of these seemingly small gestures send a very powerful message: we support and expect a certain standard of behavior in our community.

“The rules have to be consistent. If one person expects a standard of behavior and another doesn't, then it sends the wrong message. Kids thrive on consistency.”

Mitchell Wynn, Pastor, local business owner & school volunteer at Bielefield.

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Investing in assets is an ongoing process.

Change. It's a process that harnesses the momentum of individual contributions and turns them into larger outcomes. An investment in our kids results in positive change for our community—it builds trust and goodwill while providing our youth with support and opportunities to thrive.

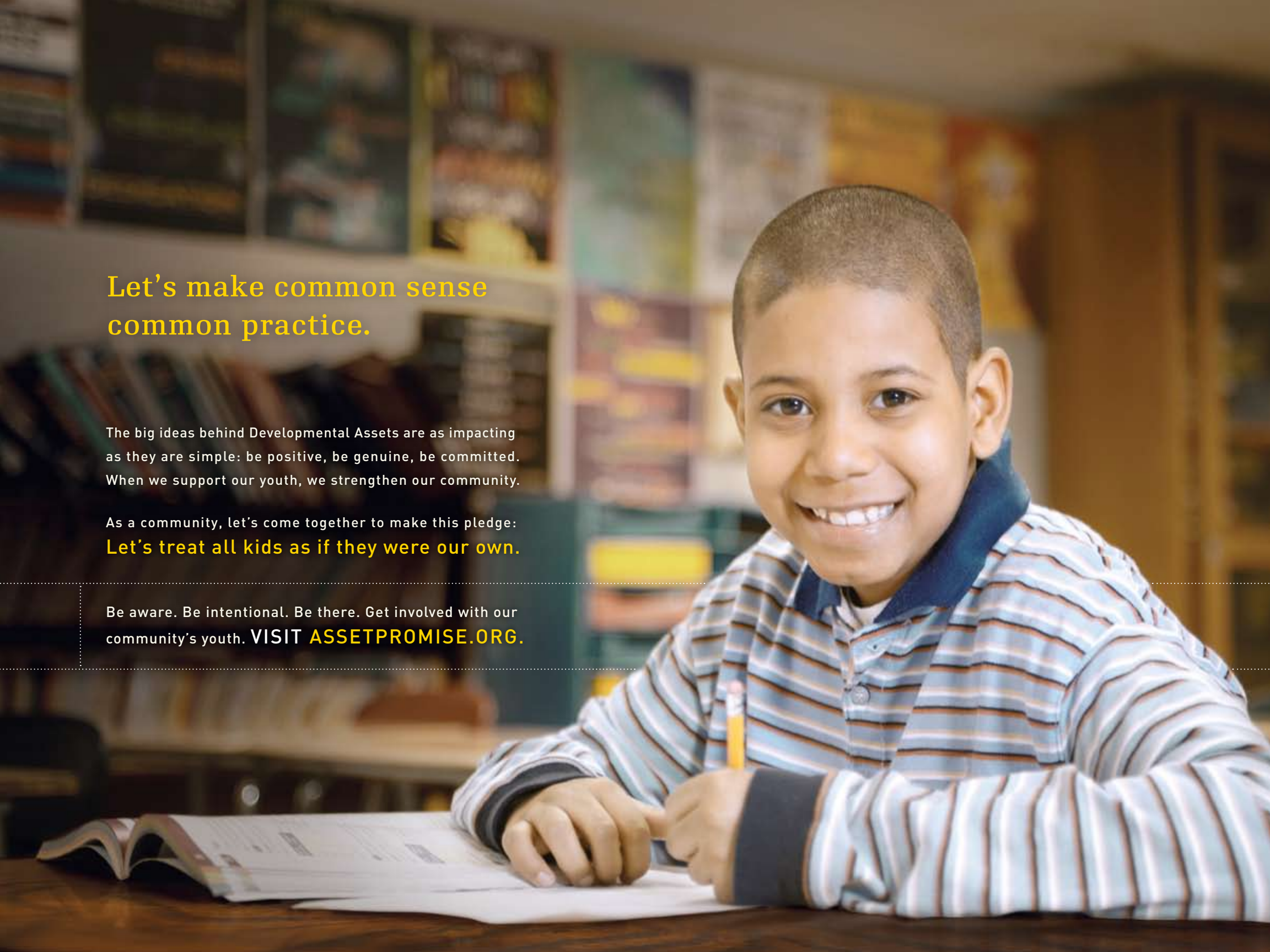
Our city's Youth In Government (YIG) program, which allows local teens to be appointed to a number of boards and commissions, is just one example of an investment that's paying back. Recently, a past YIG student was appointed to a city commission as an adult. His ongoing commitment to Middletown is a testament to the transformative power of positive change.



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“When 19% of our youth don’t feel valued by the community, it’s time to do something different.”

Mayor Sebastian N. Giuliano, with YIG students (*l to r*) Nyanda Maille, Jahlil Kardulis, Anne Machuga, Josh Owens and Pauravi Chhaya.



**Let's make common sense
common practice.**

The big ideas behind Developmental Assets are as impacting as they are simple: be positive, be genuine, be committed. When we support our youth, we strengthen our community.

As a community, let's come together to make this pledge:
Let's treat all kids as if they were our own.

Be aware. Be intentional. Be there. Get involved with our community's youth. VISIT ASSETPROMISE.ORG.