



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



GROWING ASSETS AT HOME

Youth First Parent Newsletter

Vol. 2, Issue 1

YOUTH FIRST: An Initiative In Putting Youth First

Youth First, a program initiative of the Washington County Family YMCA, was formed in January 2007 by the Washington County Community Foundation in response to a county-wide assessment conducted that showed a deficit in services for our youth.

Youth First, in its 10th year of service to Washington County, is dedicated towards creating a positive environment within our county where youth are valued, their needs come first and investments are made in their well being. This dedication and commitment went hand in hand with the Y's focus of healthy living, social responsibility, and youth development.

Because of these common core values, a merger commenced in 2011 for Youth First to become a program of the Y. This merger has allowed the Youth First mission to take flight in all youth geared programs at the Y, and incorporates the 40 Developmental Assets frame work into all youth development at the YMCA.

"The 40 Developmental Assets are integral in growing strong, healthy, and confident youth," stated Rosie Morehous, Youth First Director at the Washington County Family YMCA. "The Assets have always been the foundation of Youth First Programming, and I don't think a lot of people realize that Assets are the foundation for youth development at the Y too."

The 40 Developmental Assets are evidence-based resiliency factors that Search Institute has established as being crucial to a youth's successful development.

The Assets include areas of focus in support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and building a positive self identity. The YMCA and its Youth First initiative strive to fill community voids in these areas to provide youth with the environments, mentors, skills sets, and personal commitment needed to succeed.

"Our enrichment programs here at the Y are near and dear to my heart," said Ashley Hubbard, Youth First Program Coordinator at the YMCA. "We focus extensively on providing intentional and fun activities—we always want our interactions to be educational, but hands on fun is a must for the Y." When asked why she has so much passion for her job, Hubbard stated, "We all want the best for our kids, and if they are at the Y, they are my kids—that's why I do what I do... to give my kids the best."

YMCA Youth First programming has many options to help grow Assets in our youth—from break camps, ROCKs and Jr. Rocks, to the After School Program, Preschool, and Youth Sports and Leagues—there is something for EVERYBODY at the Y.

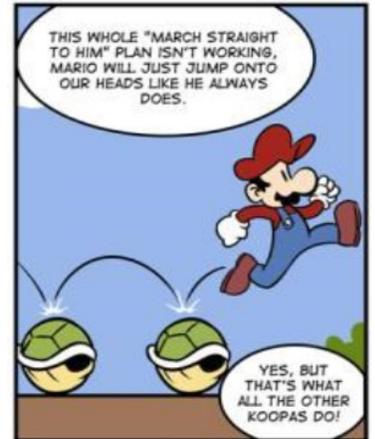
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GROWING ASSETS AT HOME

Youth Development doesn't stop at the Y campus—there is opportunity for it to happen everywhere! That's why Youth First is committed to providing information and education to all—teachers, neighbors, parents, cousins, grandparents, and everyone in-between. We want to equip our community with skills needed to keep #PuttingYouthFirst.

A LETTER FROM OUR COORDINATOR

Dear Parents,

Your child's class has just finished the JR. ROCK's program through the Washington County YMCA and Youth First. This program teaches anti bullying and life skills lessons through activities, stories, and games.

Bullying is a problem in schools throughout the world. It begins when children are very young, and if it isn't stopped, it can have destructive effects that last a lifetime.

Through our 4 lessons—Self Esteem, Peer Pressure, bullying, and social media safety—we work to instill the tools and resources for each child to reach out to adults in their lives for help when they know that themselves or someone else is being bullied or in a bad situation.

Self Esteem:

We start by teaching them how valuable they are and how their actions can have an effect on those around them. Each grade has lessons tailored to their specific learning ability and life situations.

We use peer interaction to show children how they can appreciate the little things done by their classmates. By building up each student's confidence, we help to make them more confident and able to stand up to Peer Pressure and Bullying of all types.

Peer Pressure

For this lesson, we play a game with kids based on the choices that they make. We ask them about real life situations and have them race against one another to problem solve the situation with their peers. They learn how to talk themselves out of any bad decision.

Giving the youth a strong voice, and a way out of a situation that could cause them or others harm—without being violent—is a tool that gives them the power to stand up for their beliefs and values.

Bullying

Each year we take a different look at Bullying. The schools and other organizations flood our kids with a lot of facts about bullying, and we like to flip the script and put the kids in the bully's shoes.

We show them through a hands on experiment why people choose to bully, and that the only way to stop the cycle of bullying is to get help from an adult.

When we take a different look at

the problem, kids see that a bully is behaving in reaction to a situation in their life in which they feel powerless.

Social Media Safety

Our final lesson, completed with grades 3-5th, is a social media safety lesson. We talk to the kids about ways they can protect themselves when playing games, apps, and other social media sites.

We want the children to be aware of the dangers and damage that can happen when we are not protecting ourselves.

We try to get the kids into the mind frame that if it's not something they would do at home or with someone in person, then they shouldn't be doing it on social media websites or online games and apps.

At Home

Being responsible for a child is the most difficult and, at the same time, most joyous and rewarding of experiences. As parents and/or caregivers, we have the opportunity to guide to guide the growth and development of a young life in a positive direction.

What a tremendous responsibility! Please talk to your children about what they are doing, stay informed on the people they are spending time with, and the things those friends are doing. Keep an open communication with the school and your child. It truly takes a village to raise them up.

Putting Youth First,

Ashley Hubbard
Youth First Program Coordinator



“Who cares what little kids think? What’s important is that you believe in yourself.”

THANK YOU TO OUR JR. ROCKS SPONSORS!

