

Building Assets to Promote Substance Abuse Prevention

A new, highly effective approach to alcohol and other drug prevention focuses on identifying, enhancing and capitalizing on the strengths or assets of individual young people and of the communities within which they live. Forty developmental assets that are qualities deemed essential to raising successful young people were developed by the Search Institute of Minneapolis, MN. These concrete, common sense assets positively influence the choices young people make and thus reduce risky behaviors. These assets help youth to become caring responsible adults. Twenty of those assets are “external,” consisting of positive experiences young people receive from the world around them. They include support and empowerment of young people, setting boundaries and expectations, and positive, constructive use of their time. The other twenty assets are “internal” and pertain to positive values and identity, social competency and commitment to learning.



A Snap Shot of Asset Building in One Community – Old Saybrook

- Old Saybrook surveyed young people and found that, overall, students didn’t feel supported by their schools or community.
- *Healthy Communities, Healthy Youth*, a community coalition, implemented an innovative approach to build assets and strengths in young people.
- Old Saybrook involved adult volunteers to provide kids with new opportunities, skills and relationships.
- The entire community mobilized to address youth needs and sponsor events to celebrate young people.

RESULTS!

- A subsequent survey found that 50% of young people now believe that the community cares for them.
- There was an increase in 28 of the 40 assets.
- There were sustainable reductions in alcohol, tobacco and other drug use by students in grades 6 – 12 (see *Figures 1 and 2 below*).

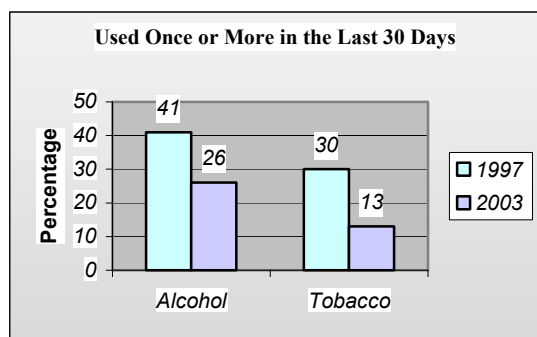


Figure 1

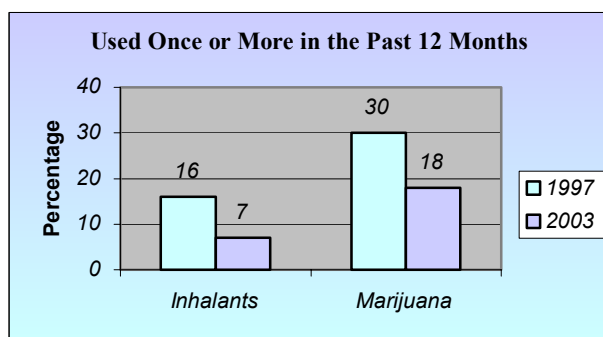


Figure 2

DMHAS funds the Connecticut Assets Network (CAN) to provide training, consultation and capacity building. Through its work and allocation of mini grants, CAN supports local communities, like Old Saybrook, to further their asset building work. For more information on the asset building approach or tools and resources for your community, including a process for community asset mapping, contact Gregory Ryan at CAN at 860-571-8463, or visit: www.ctassets.org.

For more information on Old Saybrook’s “*Healthy Communities-Healthy Youth*” project, contact Larry Freundlich at 860-395-3190, and for more information on the Search Institute visit www.search-institute.org

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