

The Impact of the

Faith In Youth Partnership



GOOD SAMARITAN
MINISTRIES



A Collaboration of:

AmeriCorps • Calvary Reformed Church • Cambodian Fellowship
• Core City CCDA • Cornerstone Ministries • Good Samaritan
Ministries • Harderwyk Ministries/ Neighbors Plus • Maple
Avenue Ministries • Montello Park/South Shore Youth Impact
• Rose Park Reformed Church • The Bridge Youth Ministry
Center • Trinity Reformed Church • Urban Youth Ministries

SUMMARY REPORT 2004-2007



A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Good Samaritan Ministries' mission is building collaborations of faith-based organizations, nonprofits, government, and schools to meet pressing community needs. Good Samaritan Ministries' vision and history of collaborative development remains vital to our community as we continue to eliminate duplication of efforts, leverage financial resources and build cross-sector partnerships to leverage the unique resources of all partners. The Faith In Youth Partnership is another example of a collaborative partnership in which the faith community can do its best work - providing transformational relationships to youth in our community. The Faith In Youth Partnership demonstrates what is possible in a cross-sector collaborative.

In 2004 the Faith In Youth Partnership emerged from a need expressed in the Ottawa County Needs Assessment and local school districts who identified a gap in services to the middle school aged youth for after-school programming. Good Samaritan Ministries, as the lead agency, was awarded a federally-funded grant to place 15 AmeriCorps members at various faith-based sites for after-school programs.

The impact of the Faith In Youth Partnership has been measured during the first three years of the program. We are encouraged by the initial results that show positive outcomes of the mentoring relationships youth have with caring adults in our community.

We are pleased to share these results and thank those who believed in and supported this outreach.

Sincerely,



Linda Jacobs,
Executive Director

PROGRAM INFORMATION

The Faith In Youth Partnership is a collaborative between Good Samaritan Ministries, churches and faith-based organizations, the AmeriCorps program and area middle schools. Its outreach, based at sites throughout the Holland/Zeeland area, serves at risk middle school students with one-on-one and small group mentoring, small group tutoring, and after-school recreation. All programs include some form of mentoring.

The goal is to improve academic achievement and promote a sense of well-being in participants through all program areas by fostering caring, trusting relationships between adult volunteers and middle school children. Nine AmeriCorps Members (paid volunteers) act as a bridge between churches and middle schools to coordinate the resources in the neighborhood churches to meet the needs of at risk middle school students.

Current Faith In Youth Partner Sites

- Calvary Reformed Church
- Good Samaritan Ministries
- Harderwyk Ministries/ Neighbors Plus
- Maple Avenue Ministries
- Montello Park/South Shore Youth Impact
- Rose Park Reformed Church
- The Bridge Youth Ministry Center
- Urban Youth Ministries

Youth may be considered at-risk because of academic standing, poverty, or household dynamics. Household dynamics include a single parent or a two parent family where both parents are working often resulting in a young child left alone for long periods of the day. The programs serve mostly middle school youth – youth too old for child care but too young to be left unattended.

Area School Districts

- Holland Public Schools
- West Ottawa Public Schools
- Zeeland Public Schools

OUTCOME HIGHLIGHTS

The Faith In Youth Partnership wants to give the youth we serve the resources they need to grow up healthy, caring and responsible. In order to best measure achievement of this goal, Good Samaritan Ministries developed a survey based on research by the Search Institute (www.search-institute.org).

The Search Institute developed a framework of 40 Developmental Assets that fall into two broad groups - External and Internal. Within each group, there are four Asset Categories. Each asset paints a picture of the positive things all young people need to grow up healthy and responsible. Research done by the Search Institute over the last decade shows that the more assets youth have, the more likely they are to make better decisions and avoid risky behaviors.

The Faith In Youth Partnership survey uses selected assets in all eight Asset Categories. (For a copy of the survey, see Appendix A.) The Faith in Youth Partnership holds itself to the very high standard of having 75% of student participants report having 6 or more of the Asset Categories. In order to have any given Asset Category, the student must respond positively to all surveyed assets within that category.

Additionally, the Faith In Youth Partnership has focused specifically on Internal Assets which have been shown to help youth stop or prevent risky behaviors. These intrinsic internal assets allow youth to control their behavior personally and without the influence of programs or other people - to resist peer pressure and maintain their achievements even after graduating from a program. These specific internal assets are Commitment to Learning, Social Competencies and Positive Identity. The Faith In Youth Partnership's declared goal is that 50% of youth will report a positive internal behavior change as a result of mentoring.

EIGHT ASSET CATEGORIES

External Assets

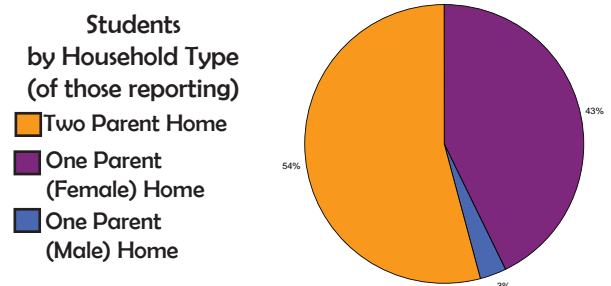
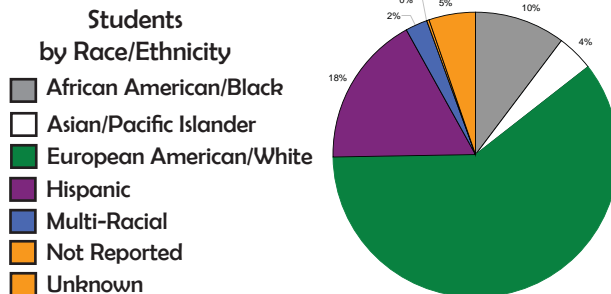
- Support
- Empowerment
- Boundaries and Expectations
- Constructive Use of Time

Internal Assets

- Commitment to Learning
- Positive Values
- Social Competencies
- Positive Identity

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

On average, the Faith In Youth Partnership serves over 600 youth in a year. Here is a brief glimpse of the demographic make-up of that student population as reported by the students themselves.



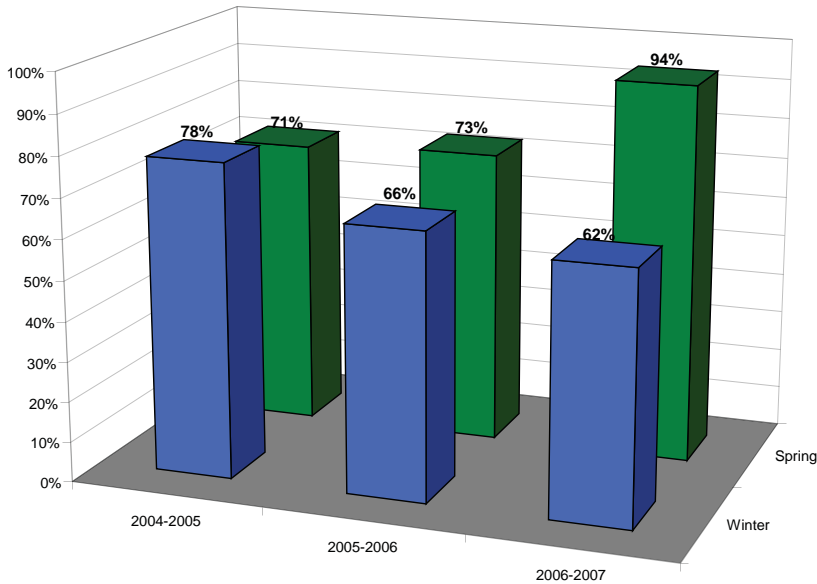
Students receiving free and reduced price lunches by school:

- Holland Middle Schools: **60%**
- West Ottawa Middle Schools: **53.5%**
- Zeeland Public Schools: **21%**

100% of students involved in suspension programs were referred by their schools.

PARTICIPANT ACHIEVEMENT

Participants Having 6 or More Asset Categories



The Faith In Youth Partnership's primary goal is for 75% of surveyed youth state that they have 6 or more Developmental Asset Categories by the spring of the program year.

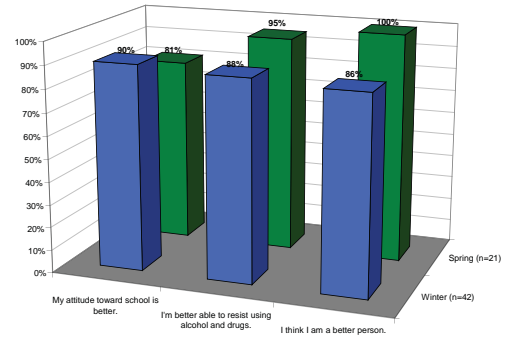
- Year 1 shows a small drop from 75% to 71% from winter to spring. This is due to low numbers of returned surveys.
- Years 2 and 3 show increases in the percentage of students having 6 or more Asset Categories.
- Year 3 was the first year to attain the goal of 75% of surveyed students having 6 or more Asset Categories.

Our secondary goal is to have 50% of surveyed youth reporting a positive internal behavior change by the spring of each program year.

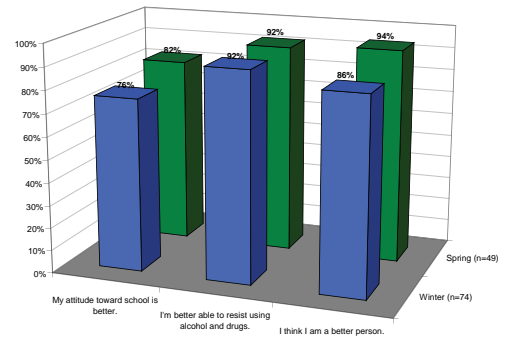
- Year 1 shows a small drop in the Commitment to Learning Asset Category but increases in the others.
- Years 2 and 3 show increases in all 3 Asset Categories measured.
- All years attained the goal of 50% or more reporting a positive internal behavior change.

This summary includes data from the first three years of the Faith In Youth Partnership. The fourth year, 2007-2008 ended in August 2008. Data will be compiled in mid-October.

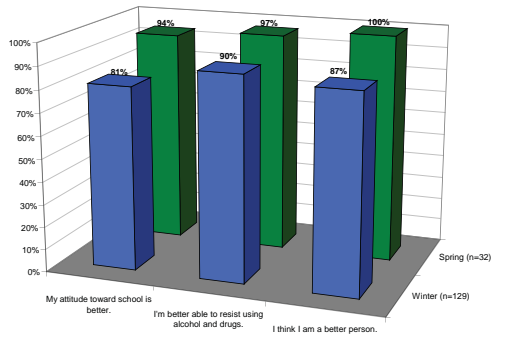
Internal Assets 2004-2005



Internal Assets 2005-2006



Internal Assets 2006-2007



Youth Having Many Development Assets

- Exhibit Leadership
- Maintain Good health
- Value Diversity
- Succeed in School
- Avoid Problem Alcohol Use
- Avoid Violence
- Avoid Use of Illicit Drugs
- Avoid Sexual Activity

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The 2003 YMCA report Hardwired to Connect, the New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities, concluded that the deteriorating mental and behavioral health of U.S. youth was the result of a lack of connectedness of youth to caring adults. The report calls for creating “authoritative communities” or communities that foster connections between youth and adults. The Commission found that “authoritative communities,” those in which committed people give of their time and model good behavior, are needed to solve the deteriorating conditions of our youth.

The Faith In Youth Partnership works through each of the partner sites to engage positive adult role models in order to create an authoritative community for the youth they serve. This is primarily achieved through the adult volunteers who faithfully give their time, attention and care to the youth we serve. Adult engagement is key to helping youth develop the necessary Developmental Asset Categories.

However, it has longer-reaching effects as well, for the volunteers and for the community at large. Volunteers learn and grow through their experiences, while the community enjoys lower youth delinquency rates and the benefits of stronger future leaders from both the volunteers and the students.

“What AmeriCorps was to me: A great life-changing experience! I loved working with the kids from Urban Youth Ministries. They are some of the greatest kids in the world. They challenged me to be a better example to them and myself. I enjoyed working with members of my team too. They encouraged me and helped me grow more in my faith and life.”

-Shawn, Former AmeriCorps Member

From 2004 – 2007 Faith In Youth mobilized **over 450** volunteers who donated **over 20,000** hours of their time to area youth.

A VOLUNTEER STORY

“When one immerses oneself in another’s life, that is when true service, true change can happen. That’s why I know this summer at [working at] Blacktop Recreation and [living in] Stratford Way is changing my life.”



Karis is a Hope College Senior who worked at Faith In Youth and Calvary Reformed Church’s “Blacktop Recreation” program through AmeriCorps. She volunteered and lived in the community she served, surrounded by the families of the youth who spent their days at Blacktop Recreation. She was deeply affected by both her stay in the neighborhood and her experience at Calvary.

Karis learned a lot, not all of it comfortable or politically correct. She recalls it was, *“a rubbing of worlds, sometimes with outright confrontation, sometimes with silent resentments and prejudices walking next to each other.”* However, she also witnessed a miracle as the kids *“[ran] around together until our colors blur, and we aren’t separated by the cruel barriers of race or gender and class.”*

Before this experience, Karis planned on completing her degree at Hope followed by a Masters in Fine Arts in Writing. Now, she’s drawn to the idea of applying for AmeriCorps or teaching. She has a passion for people and for community. She states, *“My ambition to write is strong and I know I will pursue it. But working towards a common good is so deeply fulfilling that I pray my life will continue to unfold, rooted in a commitment to service.”*

AMERICORPS MEMBER GREAT STORY

Hannah has gone through some very rough transitions. Her family was once homeless and received housing from Good Samaritan Ministries. Faith In Youth/AmeriCorps member Raquel is not only a mentor for Hannah but she is also a role model and provides much needed stability in this child's life. Hannah is benefitting from their relationship, but Raquel is too.

"Never in my life have I been given the great responsibility of helping to instill the many teachings of life in a child. I have never before had the feelings that I get from Hannah. It seems as though her little eyes are watching my every move, her ears are listening to my every word, and her heart is feeling my every action. What an awesome obligation to ensure that what I do, say, and show can be making all the difference in the way she will one day grow... It has given me such joy to be a part of her life, and such power to know that I can help in showing her the way she should go."

-Raquel



AMERICORPS ALUMNI GREAT STORY

In 2004, Mollie was looking for a job where she could make a difference in her community and gain new experiences. She found that through the Faith In Youth Partnership. Mollie worked as an AmeriCorps member from 2004 - 2006 at Harderwyk Ministries/ Neighbors Plus. During that time, she gained real "hands on" experience and benefitted from the training and leadership development offered to her.

As an AmeriCorps member, Mollie developed an after school program for middle school students with West Ottawa Public Schools. For the program, teachers identified students who would benefit from one-on-one academic focused mentoring. She and adult volunteers met with students one hour a week in their classrooms. Mollie also organized a "homework club" where 10 to 12 middle school students would come to Harderwyk Ministries after school for help with homework and for recreation activities.

"We have truly developed a wonderful working relationship with West Ottawa Schools. I believe we have given middle school students an opportunity to feel valued as individuals and to also encourage and support their academic work," says Mollie of the impact of the programs. **"Today's youth are tomorrow's leaders and we need to provide the programs for them to learn and grow. We also need to show them that we believe in them, by funding programs that allow them to gain leadership skills and also [provide] a place for them to feel valued."**

After finishing her service through AmeriCorps, Mollie continued to serve for Harderwyk Ministries and returned to school to complete her degree.



DRAWING CONCLUSIONS AND LOOKING AHEAD

Research clearly shows that *“what happens during adolescence greatly affects long-term adult outcomes.”* This applies to the young people in our community just as in any other.

There is a need and an opportunity for us to invest in today's youth as tomorrow's adults, right here and now. From the latest research, we understand the approach of asset-building communities emphasizes support, empowerment, boundaries and opportunities (appendix B). Unleashing *“the extraordinary power of community when people unite around a widely shared vision of healthy child and adolescent development”* is the most intentional approach, paying attention to the dailyness of healthy development and allowing every resident of the community to participate.

Good Samaritan Ministries is pleased to partner with other stakeholders in our community – schools, government, churches, faith-based organizations, and community leaders – to launch, develop and sustain the Faith In Youth Partnership. The evidence is clear that as youth acquire necessary developmental assets and can state *“I feel like there are adults who care about me . . . My attitude toward school is better . . . I'm better able to resist using alcohol and other drugs. . . I get along better with others,”* we can know we've invested well in our community's future.

The Faith In Youth Partnership's first three years demonstrate that the collaborative approach in our community works. School superintendents, faith-based organization leaders, volunteers, mentors, parents, and students themselves all testify to the effectiveness of transforming relationships and changed lives.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Donate your time - Mentor
- Donate your expertise - Teach
- Donate funds - Financial assistance is always needed

The future of the Faith In Youth Partnership depends not only financial support at the governmental level, but also on community support – both as mentors and financial supporters – to Good Samaritan Ministries and directly to partner sites.

The Faith In Youth partner sites shoulder the burden and carry the privilege of the dailyness of healthy development . . . Every day after school there is a safe place to go . . . Every day after school there is a caring adult waiting to listen . . . Every day after school, there is a constructive and challenging recreational option ready to divert teenage energy. The partner sites, their board members and volunteers deserve our admiration and support.

“West Ottawa Public Schools has had a great partnership with Harderwyk Ministries/ Neighbors Plus for the past year and a half... Because of the services we receive from Harderwyk and Neighbors Plus, our students receive a seamless transition back to school and a mentorship that has proven to be beneficial upon their return into our school system. We are thankful for the services they provide to our students which in turn benefits our entire community.”

--Dr. Patricia Koeze
Superintendent,
West Ottawa Public Schools

To sustain the Faith In Youth Partnership, Good Samaritan Ministries will continue to administer the grant available through AmeriCorps to provide members and program oversight. Partner sites will continue to provide an increasing amount of financial support in exchange for the outstanding volunteers and leadership they gain from AmeriCorps members. The local match needed by the community to sustain the outreach is critical. Our goal is to help the sites and the partnership become self-sustaining - in Leadership, Volunteers and Finances.

Consider your role as a member of the community. Ask yourself, “How can I invest in our young people? How can I be a positive role model for those who are eager to learn from me?” And also, “How can I financially support an effort where others have invested so much in my community's future?”

Your involvement is crucial for the future of the Faith In Youth Partnership and for the youth of our community.

“We partner with The Bridge for a suspension program where kids are placed with an adult mentor for a suspension day in a setting that encourages a change of behavior, community service and success in school. There have been many students touched by these services. We are grateful for the services offered and the volunteers who work with our kids.”

--Laurie Poll

Assistant Principal,
Zeeland Cityside Middle School

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Search Institute. www.search-institute.org.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CIRCLE: MENTORING or AFTER SCHOOL REC/TUTOR/DROP IN/OTHER

1. How long have you been participating? (how many months?) _____

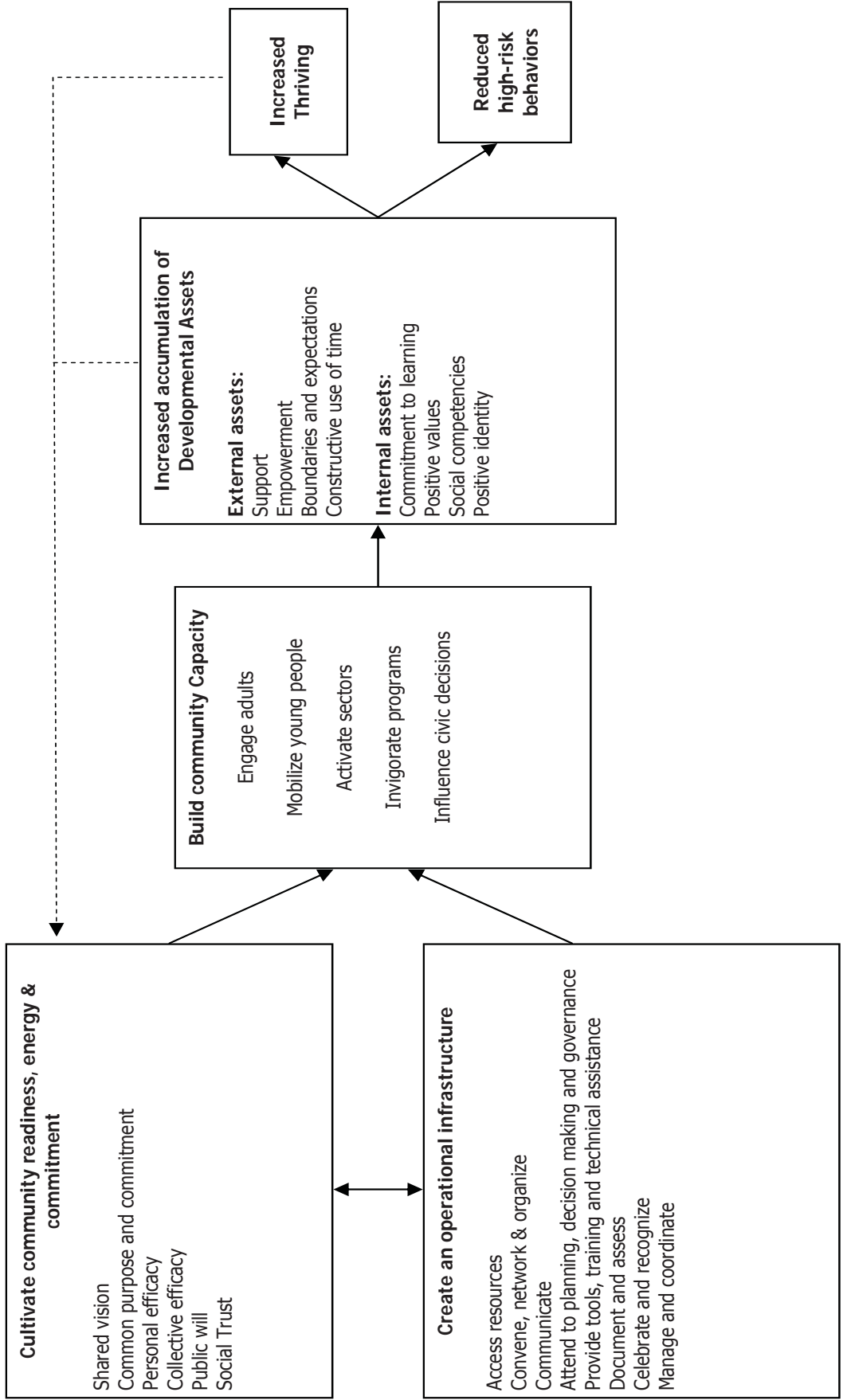
2. On average, how many hours per week do you spend here? _____

Because of my involvement with the mentoring program...	TRUE	FALSE	DID NOT CHANGE (Fine to Begin With)
SUPPORT			
3. I feel like there are adults who care about me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I feel like there are people who will help me out if I need it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EMPOWERMENT			
5. I feel I have more options for my future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I'm a better leader.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS			
7. I feel others see me as more responsible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I have higher expectations of myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME			
9. I have more interests or hobbies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I'm involved in more youth programs or activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COMMITMENT TO LEARNING			
11. My attitude toward school is better.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. My grades and test scores are better.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I come to school better prepared (such as having my homework done).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. My behavior in class (such as paying attention and not being disruptive) is better.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
POSITIVE VALUES			
15. I think it's important to try and help others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I am more honest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SOCIAL COMPETENCIES			
17. I'm better able to resist using alcohol and other drugs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I am able to express my feelings better.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I get along better with my family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. I get along better with others (like friends, teachers).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
POSITIVE IDENTITY			
21. I have a more positive view of my future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I feel more confident of myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I think I am a better person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

24. Any Thoughts or Suggestions to improve the program.

APPENDIX B

A Model of Unleashing capacity Toward Becoming an Asset-Building Community (adapted from Benson, All Kids are Our Kids)





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