

ASSET-BUILDING IDEAS FOR MERCHANTS

Small gestures can go a long way toward making children, youth, and families feel like important customers in your store. You can play an essential role in asset building by being a good role model, letting young people know that they are valued members of the community, and developing caring relationships with regular young customers. Here are a few tips on how to build assets:

- **Post the list of 40 developmental assets** in your store.
- **Treat all customers with respect.** Children and youth sometimes say that merchants avoid them and don't take them seriously as customers. But kids can be very savvy about where they spend their money. If they think you don't like them, they probably won't frequent your store.
- **Learn the names of repeat customers of all ages.**
- **Wear a name tag with your first name on it** and introduce yourself or make conversation when working with customers.
- **If you have a parking lot for your store, designate some front spots for pregnant mothers and for people with small children.**
- **Place information about the developmental assets into bags** with receipts.
- **If you advertise, consider using part of your advertising space to celebrate children, youth, and asset building.** One grocery store started picturing an asset builder of the week in its weekly newspaper advertisement.
- **Support your community's asset-building initiative by getting involved or donating something from your store** that would be of use for the initiative or as prizes for a community event.
- **Set boundaries for store behavior** and merchandise returns. Have these boundaries posted and available for customers.
- **If you have teenage employees, treat them as you do your adult employees.** Have clear guidelines and expectations for professional behavior and give them support and encouragement to do their best.
- **Find ways to promote the asset-building projects of young people.** On the advice of an 8-year-old, one store sold quilt squares to be decorated for a community-wide quilt that was sewn together during a family-activity day.
- **Print asset-building messages on your store's bags.**
- **If you have a marquee, put asset-building messages on it.**
- **Donate unsold items to a local shelter, free store, or other organization that serves children.**

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