

ASSET-BUILDING IDEAS FOR POLICE OFFICERS

Police officers play a unique role in our society because they're entrusted with considerable power to uphold the law while also creating a presence of safety. Becoming an asset-building police officer can add a new dimension to the job, a dimension that often is overlooked. Here are ideas on how to start building assets:

- **Learn as much as you can about the 40 developmental assets.** Use the list in thinking of ways to deal with juvenile offenders and also criminals who have children.
- **Keep the assets in mind when making arrests.** Recognize that many offenders have few assets and have not had many experiences interacting with asset builders.
- **Learn as much as you can about the community you work in.** Identify areas of strength and safety besides areas of crime. Consider doing asset analysis in addition to doing crime analysis.
- **When handling family disputes or arguments between people, encourage peaceful conflict resolution.** In addition to intervening when conflicts come to a head, think of ways to help people build the skills to deal with their anger and prevent violence.
- **Build relationships with people in the community.** Become a visible presence in the neighborhoods where you work. Attend annual neighborhood block parties or events and get to know the people.
- **Give "positive tickets" to children and youth who wear bike helmets.** In Jackson, New Jersey, police officers issued 200 tickets for free ice cream cones to children who wore protective helmets while riding bicycles. "It makes for a positive first contact with police," says the sergeant in charge.
- **Target high-crime areas to build assets.** Have a police officer set up office in the area to build strong relationships first with young people and then with the parents, neighbors, and finally the schools and community. Find others within the area to partner with to build assets.
- **Consider ways to build assets off the job.** One Baltimore, Maryland, officer becomes J.J. the Clown during off-hours and visits children in the hospital. He also uses his amateur puppeteer and magician skills to connect with young people.
- **Volunteer to visit a school to talk about safety.** Emphasize how safe the community is instead of how dangerous it is. Talk about the types of calls you get the most. Young people often think that police officers are constantly having high-speed chases and arresting murderers. Let them know about the other roles you play in the community.
- **Work with families with teenagers to create "safe houses" (houses that will host teenage parties where liquor won't be available or tolerated).** Bring parents together to discuss ways to stop alcohol from being served at teen parties and how to create parties that teenagers will enjoy.
- **With other officers, eat lunch at a local school on a monthly basis with the students.** Get to know them and talk with them about what it's like to be a police officer.