

THE AMERICAN
Family Assets
STUDY

Building Family Assets in Your Community:

IDEAS FOR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

WE LIVE IN A CULTURE WHERE THE DEFAULT IS TO “LIVE AND LET LIVE.” THAT SOMETIMES MEANS WE DON’T TAKE OPPORTUNITIES TO BE CARING AND SUPPORTIVE OF THE OTHER FAMILIES AROUND US (WHILE ALSO MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES AND PRIVACY). THE FAMILY ASSETS FRAMEWORK REMINDS US THAT STRONG, TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS ARE PART OF WHAT MAKES FAMILIES STRONGER. HERE ARE SOME IDEAS OF HOW YOU CAN BUILD FAMILY ASSETS AS A FRIEND OR NEIGHBOR.

- **Take the first step.** If you don’t know the names of the families who live around you, be bold and introduce yourself. Then write down their names to help you remember.
- **Welcome newcomers.** Whenever someone moves into your neighborhood, take the time to welcome them and get to know something about their family, their interests, and their pets (always a good connecting point!). You’ll likely discover shared interests that could be the foundation for a meaningful relationship.
- **Plan neighborhood celebrations and get-togethers.** Give people time to get to know each other informally. Be sure to offer name tags to help people learn or remember names.
- **Celebrate with families.** When you learn there’s an upcoming birthday, graduation, promotion at work, or other milestone, take a minute to offer congratulations or to send a note. If you know the family well, you may also be able to with the celebration.

For information on the research behind the family assets, visit www.search-institute.org/familyassets

For practical ways to build assets in your family, visit www.ParentFurther.com/familyassets

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- **Ask for a little help from time to time.** Invite neighborhood children to give you a hand with an out-of-doors project, and thank them for being a good neighbor. Sometimes asking young people to help reminds them that they are an important part of the neighborhood. In addition, it increases the chances that a neighborhood family will ask you for help sometime when they need it. This practice can go a long way in creating a supportive neighborhood culture.
- **Keep an eye out for neighborhood children.** Let parents know when their kids do something positive or fun. “I heard your son playing drums yesterday. He’s really getting good.” If you have concerns or questions, raise them with care—not in an accusatory way, but as a supporter. Knowing that neighbors are keeping an eye out for your family is an important Family Asset.
- **If you’re a parent and your child spends time with a neighbor, get to know the neighbor yourself.** Thank them for being hospitable and supportive. You may also find that it’s fun to barbeque or take walks together as a way of cementing positive, mutual relationships.
- **Invite families to participate with you.** If you learn that a family is not well-connected to the opportunities in the community, invite them (without badgering them!) to come with you to places that are important to you. Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to go into a new place where you don’t know anyone; you could make it easier. Perhaps they could be your guest at a special event in your faith community. Perhaps you can take them to your favorite coffee shop for a treat. Or maybe they can join you in a community education class or the community band practice.
- **Find connections around shared Sparks.** Once you discover these shared interests and passions, it will be easy to discover ways to spend time together, become friends, and be supportive resources to each other.
- **Offer support when it’s appropriate.** If you discover that a family is struggling or dealing with difficult challenges, find thoughtful ways to offer support and care. For example, if they are taking care of an aging parent, they might appreciate some help with mowing the lawn or raking leaves. Or perhaps they would enjoy a meal together as a respite from the routine—or maybe a bowl of their favorite fruit as a “care package.” Those kinds of expressions of care during tough times are remembered and valued.

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