

**Sheboygan & Plymouth Area United Way**  
**Sheboygan Press Column for the Week of November 2, 2009**  
**By Nancy Jusky**

**“I Have Assets” Has High Priority at United Way**

With so much attention focused on the economic crisis in our community, I want to remind all of you that Positive Youth Development is still a high priority with the Sheboygan & Plymouth Area United Way. Our first ever Impact Initiative – Healthy Communities, Healthy Youth – is alive and well and embarking on its second year with our community partners The Family Resource Center and the Sheboygan YMCA.

Healthy Communities, Healthy Youth uses the 40 Developmental Assets to make a difference in children’s lives. Why the 40 Developmental Assets? Because it focuses on a change in philosophy, attitude and positive actions toward youth. Instead of focusing on youth problems, it shifts to focusing on youth’s strengths. Youth development is no longer the sole responsibility of professionals but that of everyone’s job.

Asset building, while not new, needs to be intentional, not incidental and it needs to be a collaborative effort among all – youth, young adults, parents, older adults – to communicate the collective message that youth are valued and can have any future they put their minds to...with a little help from their “friends” of all ages in all places.

The reality is that the average young person surveyed in the United States experiences only 19 of the 40 assets leaving the majority of young people in this country lacking in sufficient Developmental Assets needed for healthy development. The need for positive youth development has never been stronger here in Sheboygan County and the United Way recognizes that it’s time to roll up our shirt sleeves and develop our finest natural resource – our youth.

The “I Have Assets” campaign is gaining momentum in our communities through the commitment of our Assets Coordinators Erik Wagner from the Family Resource Center and Mike Burns from the YMCA. Erik and Mike have been presenting Asset training sessions to community businesses, churches, schools and organizations this past year and have launched the Asset of the Month flyer which is sent out monthly via email to thousands of parents, teachers and area professionals. They would love to share more information on the Assets campaign with your business or organization.

Don’t miss this opportunity to partner with United Way, Family Resource Center and the Sheboygan YMCA in this much- needed positive youth development initiative. Call Erik, 892-6706, or Mike, 451-8000, to schedule a presentation soon.