



It's what's inside that counts

The 40 Developmental Assets® is a City of St. Albert initiative that calls on the entire community to support our youth. Together, we can ensure our youth receive the support they need to lead healthy lives and achieve personal success. Building assets is easier than you think. In fact, it's already happening all around us. Check out Kyle's story below and start thinking of more ways that you can be a part of the sum of success for youth.



Kyle Dubé knows about conflict.

Although his teen years were marked by self-esteem problems and interpersonal conflict, for the past seven years he has been teaching youth strategies to avoid and resolve conflicts as the director of YOUNG CAN – Youth Organizing to Understand Conflict and Advocate Nonviolence.

"When I was in high school, I did bully some people and I might not have been the best person to be around," he said. "I was trying to be the funny guy, but I was being the funny guy at the expense of other people. I was going to cut somebody down before they could do that to me."

Despite his comfortably middle-class upbringing and a loving household, Dubé began to struggle with self-esteem issues between the ages of 10 and 12.

"It wasn't because of lack of support or lack of activity. I came from a good loving home, but I didn't care about myself that much," he explained. "I didn't excel at a lot of things. I lacked the effort because I was scared of failure and I was scared of people not accepting me."

The interpersonal conflicts Kyle engaged in as a teenager only deepened his isolation. Experiencing a time of depression, Kyle contemplated suicide.

"Not a lot of people knew that was going on with me," he said. "But I don't think my story is unique. There are a lot of people who go through that, but don't talk about it."

As his last year of high school drew to a close, Kyle began to reach out to people as he struggled with his inner turmoil. He began volunteering and reached out to a local youth pastor.

"What happened for me is, when I graduated, I sought out a couple of good influences who were there for me," he said.

A chance encounter at a local convenience store became a turning point for Kyle as he and a homeless person struck up a conversation.

"He asked me if I had any money and I went in and bought him a pizza pop and a big gulp. We chatted for an hour to two hours. I don't know why I did that. I was interested in him as a person," Kyle said. "He wasn't looking for pity. He was just happy to sit down and have a good conversation. I realized that he and I weren't so different."

Kyle's volunteering led to a career in youth services and the non-profit sector. Now, 18 years later, he says it's important to him to not forget what it was like.

"I've never seen anyone able to relate so well to so many people," said Shaina Archer, who volunteered with Kyle when she was 14. Now, 10 years later, she notes that she's constantly impressed with his work on behalf of youth. "He makes the youth he works with feel like they are important, worthwhile and able to resolve conflicts peacefully."

Kyle, who is now a father of three and raising his family in St. Albert, says that his hard-won lessons are helping him in his career. He explained that he avoids calling someone a 'bully' because doing so defines a person by one aspect of his or her behaviour, rather than addressing the underlying issues.

"Let's call violence what it is," he said. "Let's call it assault. If you assault someone physically, verbally or emotionally, it's a lot more damaging than most people realize."

Since autumn 2008, the City of St. Albert has been part of an Asset Development initiative that examines the ways that

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the community can foster positive life skills in youth. The assets are divided into two categories – External Assets and Internal Assets. The latter comprise a youth's values and competencies.

"How great are you going to feel knowing that when a conflict comes up, you are confident knowing that you are capable of dealing with it," Kyle said. "Knowing that

you can even help others deal with conflict. It can be very empowering."

Like Kyle, youth need to call on their internal resources to deal with conflict in a non-violent manner and to develop empathy, sensitivity and friendship skills, all of which contribute to growing up caring and responsible.

