



## Small actions make a big difference for youth

*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 Jamelle's story below and start thinking of more ways that you can be a part of the sum of success for youth.*



If it takes a village to raise a child, then the neighbourhood is the village of modern life.

Jamelle Kyle, a St. Albertan mother of three,

has reached out to make the neighbourhood a more welcoming place for children.

"I took it upon myself to arrange one block party per year in the early summer," she said. "We had a really good response. People were excited and eager to get to know their neighbours."

About three years ago, realizing that there were many people in the neighbourhood that she didn't know very well and, recognizing that her neighbours were people who her children would be around, Jamelle decided to hold a block party to get to know them better. After consulting a few people on their block, Jamelle and her children designed flyers and then knocked on doors to invite people.

"Having a familiarity with your neighbours is important from a safety standpoint," Jamelle acknowledged. "Children are going to be that much more comfortable asking neighbours for help if they know their neighbours. It's essential for them to know which people are a part of the neighbourhood so they can differentiate between strangers and those whom they know they can trust."

Ensuring the kids know the adults in the neighbourhood has made some of the more minor incidents easier to deal with, such as toys accidentally ending up in neighbours' yards.

"Because the kids know the neighbours, if something like a soccer ball gets kicked into someone's backyard, the kids have no worries about retrieving it," Jamelle said. "It has happened and it's just been a quick smile and a wave of

the hand. If there was any damage, the kids would have no problem telling the neighbour about it and making sure that it gets resolved and, if something is broken, it will be fixed."

The City of St. Albert started promoting the Asset Development philosophy in the fall of 2008. The initiative encourages the community to support youth in ways that bring about positive life skills. Having a caring neighbourhood is highlighted as one of the 40 Developmental Assets.

"When we were kids we knew everybody in the neighbourhood," explained Charlayne Zaharichuk, one of the neighbours who attended the party. "I think that's something that's lacking in today's society, but it's nice that we have it around here."

Getting to know people in the neighbourhood and making those connections has a myriad of positive effects for children and parents. In knowing that they are welcomed and valued throughout the community, youth are likely to develop a more positive self-image. Parents are more aware of what resources they have within their neighbourhood. Additionally, as they grow up, children who know

people in the neighbourhood are more likely to help out neighbours who are in need and are more likely to respect neighbourhood property.

"From an adult perspective, we had a great time. It was a great way to get to know the neighbours and to network for various reasons," Jamelle

said. "Personally, I found out about childcare providers. I found out about what preschool to send my kids to. It has been nothing but beneficial."

While Jamelle's three children see the block parties primarily as a way to hang out with their friends, they are enjoying positive experiences and building relationships that will undoubtedly serve them well as they grow.

"We played in our backyard and then we went to our friend Zachary's and then we

went back to them both and then we ate and had dessert," recalled Jamelle's six-year-old daughter, Lauren. She confessed, however, that she has also learned that several of her neighbours are good people to turn to for help. "I could go to Tim or Bill or Al," she continued. "They make me feel good and happy and comfortable."

And that's exactly what Jamelle had hoped for - an environment in which her kids were comfortable with their neighbours, in which they could grow up feeling cared for and safe.

"You want the kids to have a sense of belonging," said Jamelle. "You want the kids to have that true feeling of comfort within the boundaries of their entire neighbourhood, not just within the confines of their own homes."

Jamelle's dedication to her neighbourhood is admirable and a wonderful step to ensuring her children and youth in her area receive the community-wide support they need.



From Left to Right: Ella, Jamelle, Athan and Lauren

Social Competence



### 40 Developmental Assets the sum of success for youth

The 40 Developmental Assets are divided into two sections that include four different categories each. This week, we discover the five assets that speak to the **SOcial CoMPETENCE** that our young people need.

**32. Planning and Decision Making:** Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.

**33. Interpersonal Competence:** Young person has empathy, sensitivity and friendship skills.

**34. Cultural Competence:** Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.

**35. Resistance Skills:** Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.

**36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution:** Young person seeks to resolve conflict non-violently.

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