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Building Asset #34:

Cultural Competence

Project Cornerstone Welcomes New Executive Director Anne Ehresman

Project Cornerstone is pleased to announce the appointment of Anne Ehresman as the organization's new executive director. Anne will guide our organization as it continues its mission of ensuring that all young people in Santa Clara County possess the developmental assets that they need to thrive.

Says Anne, "When I decided to come to Project Cornerstone, I was reminded of the story about the man pulling children out of the river over and over again. A woman comes along, assesses the situation, and begins to walk upstream. The man asks, 'Where are you going? I need your help!' The woman replies, 'I'm going upstream to find out who's throwing these kids into the water and get them to stop!' With this position, I feel like I'm walking upstream into the prevention side of social service."

Anne brings more than 20 years of nonprofit program leadership and development experience to Project Cornerstone that includes fighting childhood hunger, preventing child assault, and developing housing and programs to help low-income families achieve self-sufficiency. Anne previously was senior vice president of InnVision the Way Home, overseeing programs serving more than 15,000 homeless and low-income families and individuals throughout Santa Clara and San Mateo counties.

Even in communities that are diverse in terms of ethnicity, race, and culture, most people spend time with people who look like them, think like them, and often act like them. Many people do this not because they are prejudiced but because they don't know how to begin reaching out to people who are different.

However, even if you feel uncomfortable interacting with people from races, religions, and cultures different from your own, today's young people are growing up in a world that is diverse racially, economically, religiously, linguistically, and in other ways. As adults, they will need skills to work with people from a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives.

"Cultural competence" doesn't mean that we all have to like each other. It does mean that we treat each other with respect, tolerance, and equality. It means we strive to understand other cultures, and perhaps come to appreciate and value them. It means we want to learn about the values, perspectives, and ideas of people who are different from us.

Prior to her work with InnVision, Anne served as executive director of San Jose First Community Services, where she supervised delivery of services to more than 1,500 low-income and homeless people in downtown San Jose, designed and developed programs to increase self-sufficiency and economic opportunities for children and adults, and increased grants, contracts, and contributions by 75 percent.

Anne received a master's degree in social welfare from University of California at Berkeley and a bachelor's degree from Brown University. In 2003, she received a fellowship to attend the Stanford Business School Executive Education Program for Non-Profit Leaders. She serves as vice president of the Community Working Group Board of Directors.

As executive director of Project Cornerstone, Anne will provide leadership for our efforts to strengthen families, neighborhoods, communities, and schools, and ensure that young people's needs are addressed in public policy.



Anne Ehresman (right) and family at YMCA Family Camp.

Register for the Fifth Annual Asset Champions Awards Breakfast!

Please plan to join us at Project Cornerstone's Annual Asset Champions Breakfast on March 6, 2008! This event gathers 800 local civic leaders, parents, youth, and school leaders to recognize the contributions of organizations and individuals who have supported the healthy development of children and youth in Santa Clara County.

Your attendance will honor asset building at its finest and celebrate the progress of our Santa Clara County-wide

If a child has a negative reaction to a cultural or racial difference, immediately find out more about what happened and what the child is feeling, and ask questions to help your child figure out why he or she responded that way. Point out harmful, hurtful responses and suggest alternatives that promote cultural competence.

For practical, age-specific advice on teaching children to shun prejudice, see [40 Ways to Raise a Nonracist Child](#) by Barbara Mathias and Mary Ann French.

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movement to ensure that all our children and youth have the assets they need to thrive.

This event will sell out, so be sure to register by February 15, 2007 at our Web site (www.projectcornerstone.org). For more information, contact Project Cornerstone at (408) 351-6482 or by e-mail at info@projectcornerstone.org.

Teachers, Administrators Share Best Asset-Building Practices at Middle School Summit

Project Cornerstone held its second annual Middle School Summit on Wednesday, January 23. Nearly 100 teachers and administrators gathered to share experiences and best practices for asset-building in the middle school years. Presentations and discussions included the following:

- Ways that asset-building strategies can close the achievement gap
- Methods of increasing meaningful parent involvement in middle school
- Developing teaching strategies that teach content and meet standards while building developmental assets
- The results at middle schools with a school-wide commitment to intentional asset building for several years

Overall, the Middle School Summit provided an excellent opportunity to share ideas, strategies, and experiences within a community of colleagues and peers to aid middle schools on their mission to create a caring community of thriving learners. Thanks to all who participated!

Service Learning Projects Forge Youth-Community Connections

Tell Me Your Story is one of Project Cornerstone's newest service learning programs to raise developmental assets in middle school students. Piloted in six middle schools, the goal of *Tell Me Your Story* is to improve the emotional and behavioral health of preteens. Research shows that service learning helps raise developmental assets by helping youth forge a greater connection to their communities.

In *Tell Me Your Story*, young people actively partner with adults and elders who hold special significance in their lives. The youth interview and document the life stories of these older adults and share their learning with community members through public presentations and multimedia projects. Project Cornerstone trained the teachers to use a service learning curriculum emphasizing oral history techniques, the importance of intergenerational connections,

research, interviewing, and presentation skills.

Participating schools implemented the program in a way that best met their unique environment; for example, one school included the program as part of their regular Cornerstone elective class, while another created an after-school "Community Connections" club.

Students are surveyed on their asset levels at the beginning of the program and after completing their projects. While all the data is not yet available, a preliminary analysis indicates that most students increased assets in at least two categories.

Project Cornerstone thanks the faculty, staff, and students of Monroe, Ida Price, Cabrillo, Ley Va, Hoover, and Fischer middle schools for their efforts. Tell Me Your Story was made possible through the generous support of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health.

School Partnerships Update

The School Partnerships team has achieved the following results to date in the 2007-08 academic year:

- **Facilitated *Expect Respect* workshops for more than 1000 students** who committed to year-long efforts to make their schools more caring and safe environments
- **Trained nearly 2400 adult volunteers** to deliver the Asset Building Champions (ABC) and Cultural Heritage Asset Programs (CHAPs, which includes the Spanish-language *Los Dichos de la Casa* program), **reaching more than 53,000 students.**
- **Trained more than 400 teachers**, including student teachers and Masters candidates in the Education department at San José State University, in forging stronger connections with their students and creating a caring and supportive school climate.

We look forward to reaching even more students, teachers, parents, and administrators in 2008!