

Program spotlights (Click each link to view the associated file.)

- [January Calendar](#): Stay current on everything Irving Recreation Center has to offer middle school students this month.
- [6th Grade Boys Basketball](#): Our after-school basketball program for sixth grade boys will begin Monday, January 11 with an information meeting at the rec. center.
- [Girls' Night Out](#): This collaborative effort with the Homestead Girl Scout Council is for all girls in our community and doubles as a kick-off and recruitment event for IRC's new after-school Girl Scouts program!
- [Summer Day Camp 2010 Registration Form](#): Our summer program for middle school students is one of the hottest in town. Registration begins January 25.
- [Video of the Month](#): Lincoln Parks and Recreation is **fundamental** to youth development in Lincoln (Public Service Announcement).
- [IRC Winter Program Guide](#): Your guide to what's going on for ALL AGES at Irving Recreation Center.

Positive youth development

Irving Recreation Center is dedicated to offering young people the supports and experiences necessary to grow up happy and successful. We do this through child and youth recreation programming, by advocating for young people and sharing valuable information with parents and others in our community. Each month's email from the rec. center includes ideas for how everyone can respond to the changes and challenges of raising our kids in positive, healthy ways. This month we consider **empowerment** and how it contributes to positive youth development.

Give young people a chance to show you what they can do

Feeling valued and appreciated is important to all of us. For young people, this means feeling safe and believing they're liked and respected. These feelings can go a long way toward empowering children and youth. Providing opportunities and recognizing accomplishments helps young people build self-esteem. This in turn, gives them the confidence to share their ideas, knowledge, and creativity by volunteering and working in paid jobs. By paying attention to young people, you show that you value them.

Empowerment is one of the eight asset categories that make up Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets, the qualities, experiences, and relationships that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

Here are the facts

Research shows the more young people are valued and feel valuable, the more likely they are to grow up healthy and avoid risky behaviors, such as alcohol and other drug use, violence, and early sexual activity. Search Institute has identified four assets in the Empowerment category crucial for helping young people grow up healthy: Community Values Youth, Youth as Resources, Service to Others, and Safety.

Tips for building these assets

It's not always easy to know what it takes for young people to feel empowered. Sometimes young people doubt themselves or don't feel valued despite the good intentions of and recognition from caring adults. Communicate with young people openly and honestly about relationships, politics, religion, and other serious issues. Young people need to know that their questions and concerns are valid and important.

Also try this

- **In your home and family:** Empower your child by providing choices. Have regular family meetings to plan, solve problems, and encourage one another. Rotate who leads the meetings.
- **In your neighborhood and community:** Get involved in the community and advocate for developing meaningful opportunities for young people, such as volunteer projects and civic activities.
- **In your school or youth program:** Take a field trip to a nursing home or senior housing complex. Have students and group members perform a concert, and afterwards talk to residents and learn about their present situations, as well as their pasts. Ask participants to send thank you notes to the residents they met. Also encourage the young people to discuss what they learned from their visit and what they contributed to the lives of the residents.

Empowerment at Irving Recreation Center

Research tells us young people must first feel safe in order to feel empowered. In an assessment conducted in 2009, 28% more youth reported feeling safe at Irving Recreation Center than reported feeling safe in their neighborhood. Irving Rec. Center staff values youth input and our Student Advisory Board meets weekly under the guidance of the Center Director to discuss current topics, as well as plan and conduct after school projects to benefit the greater student body. Student Advisory Board involves ALL students in decision-making at the rec. center through monthly General Board Meetings. The structure of our after school drop-in programming also allows young people the opportunity to make choices and experience a sense of control and ownership in their own leisure activities. Several of our special interest clubs intentionally utilize youth as resources and provide opportunities for service to others.

In our most recent parent survey, several parents indicated they would like to see additional opportunities for empowerment, and we agree wholeheartedly. During the month of January, Irving Rec. Center will conduct a student focus group and form an Empowerment Committee with the sole purpose of providing opportunities for a greater number of students to experience Empowerment Assets. If you are interested in participating or simply have ideas to share, please contact Dan Payzant at 441-7954 or dpayzant@lincoln.ne.gov. We would love to hear from you!

Want to know more about Search Institute's other seven asset categories or the 40 Developmental Assets and ideas for helping young people build them? Visit www.search-institute.org/assets.

Wishing your family a happy and healthy new year,

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Developmental Assets® are positive factors within young people, families, communities, schools, and other settings that research has found to be important in promoting the healthy development of young people. From *Instant Assets: 52 Short and Simple E-Mails for Sharing the Asset Message*. Copyright © 2007 by Search Institute®, 877-240-7251; www.search-institute.org. This message may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only (with this copyright line). All rights reserved.