

POINTERS FOR PARENTS

Strategies To Reduce Underage Drinking

(NAPSA)—Good news for adolescents and their parents is that kids can get help dealing with life's daily challenges and potential pitfalls, such as consuming alcohol. Parents have a lot more influence than they may realize and there are many concrete, everyday actions they can take to help youngsters make the right decisions.

Studies by the Search Institute identified the essential building blocks of healthy adolescent development. These building blocks form Developmental Assets—a framework that gives parents the tools they need to unlock their children's potential and help them thrive. Research has also shown the more of these assets young people have, the more likely they are to resist unhealthy behaviors.

There are eight categories you can use to help your child.

1. **Support:** Children need encouragement, support and love from parents and others. By inviting other caring, responsible adults to be a part of your child's life, you can broaden your child's experiences and network of care, encouragement and guidance.

2. **Empowerment:** Adolescents should be active contributors inside and outside the home, taking on appropriate responsibilities for themselves, their families, their communities and the organizations to which they belong. Opportunities to explore their leadership abilities and to serve others lets them know they're valued and valuable.

3. **Boundaries and expecta-**



tions: Children need to know what's expected of them. They need clear rules and consequences for what they should and shouldn't do. Starting that process early makes it easier when they have more independence as teenagers.

4. **Constructive use of time:** With so many social, recreational, entertainment and educational opportunities available, most children stay busy. But "keeping busy" is not always the most "constructive" use of a child's—or a family's—time. Shared and individual hobbies, spiritual activities, volunteer work, youth programs and quality time at home play a role in healthy development.

5. **Commitment to learning:** Nurturing a lifelong commitment to learning begins with the belief that all young people can learn and have something they can teach others, even adults. Finding opportunities for your family to learn and to celebrate learning through everyday activities helps demonstrate its importance.

6. **Positive values:** By talking with your children about what's really important to your family

(such as honesty and responsibility), you help them develop an internal "compass" to guide their choices. Positive values begin at home but they don't end there. Showing care, concern and respect for your neighbors and your community also helps instill positive values in your children.

7. **Social competencies:** Every child needs to learn how to build relationships, make decisions, resolve disagreements, cope with challenges and get along with different kinds of people. Those are skills children begin learning from their parents.

8. **Positive identity:** A strong sense of their own power, purpose, worth and promise helps young people make wise decisions. Listen to your children talk about their sense of purpose in life, ask what they are passionate about and encourage their discoveries and capabilities.

The Internet can be a great place for you to discover Developmental Assets. MVParents.com, for example, provides asset-building tools parents need to become the "most valuable players" in their children's lives. Parents can also register for Everyday Parenting Ideas, a weekly e-mail update with tips, ideas, and encouragement.

Created by Search Institute in partnership with Coors Brewing Company and Players Inc, an arm of the NFL players' association, the Web site also features parenting advice from football legends Barry Sanders, Troy Aikman, John Elway and Marcus Allen.