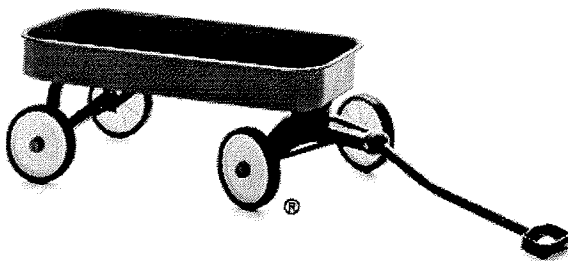


FIVE PROMISES FOR  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
PREPARED BY SEARCH INSTITUTE

# AMERICA'S PROMISE

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THE ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH®





**This report was commissioned by America's Promise — The Alliance for Youth. It was prepared by Search Institute, whose mission is to generate knowledge and promote its application to advance the well-being of adolescents and children. For information on Search Institute, contact 615 First Avenue Northeast, Suite 125, Minneapolis, MN 55413 or visit [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org). First released April 27, 1997, at the Presidents' Summit for America's Future. For additional copies of this booklet, contact America's Promise — The Alliance for Youth at 800-292-6430.**

**Revised November 2000 and August 2002.**

## How Are We Doing as a Nation?

The short answer is *better, but not good enough*. There are encouraging signs that the people of this country understand the importance of the Five Promises that America's Promise — The Alliance for Youth has identified on behalf of children and youth. In fact, growing numbers of communities are mobilizing to build the character and competence of our nation's youth. The message is clear that the Five Promises, if consistently fulfilled, can significantly increase the chances of youth becoming successful adults. The Five Promises are:

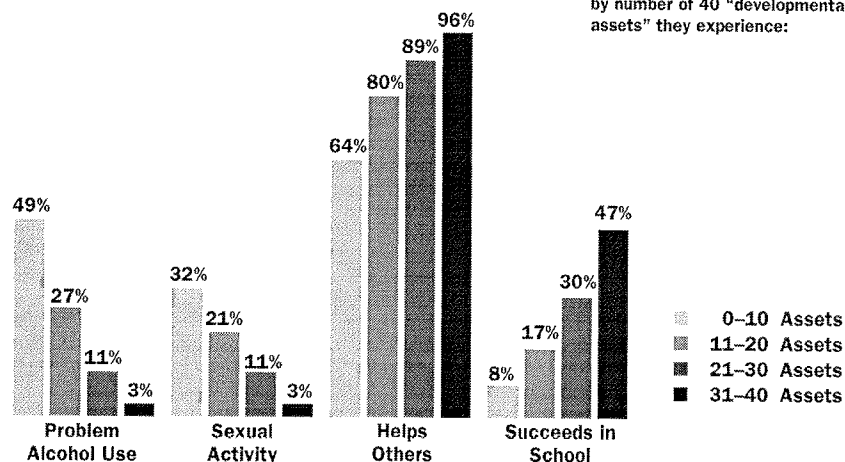
1. **Ongoing relationships with caring adults — parents, mentors, tutors, or coaches**
2. **Safe places with structured activities during nonschool hours**
3. **A healthy start and future**
4. **Marketable skills through effective education**
5. **Opportunities to give back through community service**

The goal of America's Promise is to connect young people, from birth through age 20, with relationships and opportunities that fulfill all Five Promises. Communities of Promise are facilitating these connections through natural support systems in neighborhoods and communities — families, youth-serving organizations, human service agencies, government institutions, faith-based institutions, schools, businesses, and youth themselves.

The importance of the Five Promises is undergirded by a wide range of research, including Search Institute's major study of 217,277 students in grades 6 through 12 during the 1999–2000 school year in 318 towns and cities in 33 states. This research identifies and measures young people's experiences of 40 "developmental assets" or critical needs for healthy development. These assets

### THE POWER OF DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS

Percentage of 6th- to 12th-grade youth who report each behavior, by number of 40 "developmental assets" they experience:



are consistent with the Five Promises established by America's Promise and endorsed by all living presidents of the United States in 1997.

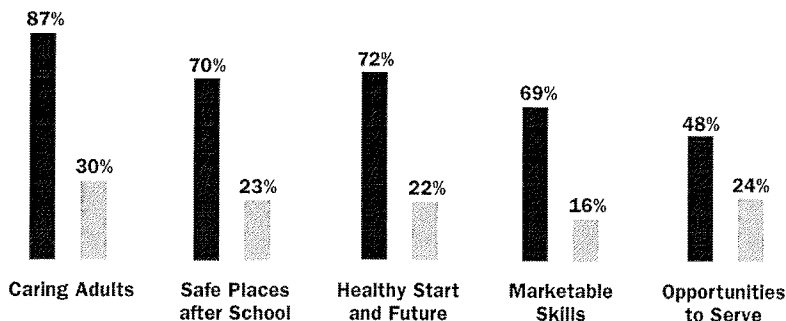
The research findings on developmental assets are compelling: The more assets young people experience, the less likely they are to engage in a wide range of negative behaviors, and the more likely they are to experience positive outcomes (see chart on page 1). In short, the more of these assets young people experience, the better off they — and our society — will be.

The impact of developmental assets on young people's behaviors underscores the urgency of fulfilling the Five Promises. Adding to the urgency are the realities presented in the research gathered for this report: Yes, many signs point to hope for our young people and many Americans believe the Five Promises are important (see chart below), yet far too few of our children and adolescents consistently experience the critical support they need.

This document offers snapshots of the presence — or absence — of the Five Promises in the lives of children and youth. Added together, the findings continue to sound a powerful call for individuals, organizations, and communities — indeed, the nation — to work together for a better future for America's youth.

#### DO ADULTS BELIEVE THE FIVE PROMISES ARE IMPORTANT AND BEING FULFILLED?

- See as "extremely important"
- Believe "community is doing extremely well" in fulfilling promise



SOURCE: The Gallup Organization (2001)

## Ongoing Relationships with Caring Adults — Parents, Mentors, Tutors, or Coaches

### The Target

The power of caring adults during the first two decades of a young person's life cannot be overstated. Research shows that through sustained relationships with caring and trusted adults, children experience support, guidance, advocacy, and connection to the skills, opportunities, and knowledge they need to succeed.

Communities need both to support families *and* to provide ample opportunities for young people to connect with other caring adults. Caring and connectedness within and beyond the family are found to be powerful factors in fostering good health, protecting young people from negative behaviors, and encouraging good social skills, responsible values, and positive identity.

Ideally, youth develop rich, ongoing connections with:

- Parents and other caregivers;
- Extended family members;
- Neighbors and other adults they see regularly;
- Older peers who are role models; and
- Teachers and other adults who spend time with them at school and through programs,

### The Realities

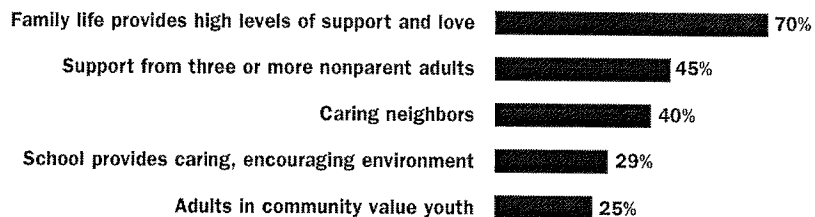
Percentage of adults who stated that the young person they mentored was "fun to be with" when asked why they became involved in the adolescent's life:

**92%**

SOURCE: Beam et al. (2002)

#### SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Percentage of youth who report having the following positive experiences:



SOURCE: Search Institute (2002a)

#### COST PER YOUTH

\$1,000/year	Mentoring
\$80,000/year	Juvenile incarceration in state of New York

SOURCE: Mentoring USA (2002)

#### CONNECTEDNESS TO SCHOOL

Percentage of students who feel connected to school:

**69%**

Average connectedness to school, on a scale of 1 to 5:

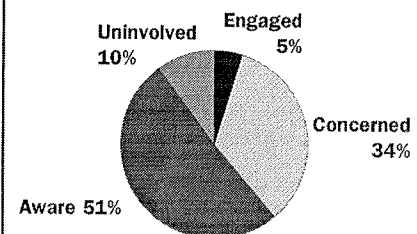
**3.6**

SOURCE: McNeely et al. (2002), Blum et al. (2002)

including coaches, mentors, child-care workers, youth workers, and employers.

As vital to young people's well-being as these relationships are, most do not experience this web of adult support and care beyond their families.

#### ENGAGEMENT OF ADULTS WITH YOUTH



Engaged: Consistently see asset-building actions as important  
 Concerned: Inconsistent in their commitment or involvement  
 Aware: Mildly committed  
 Uninvolved: Do not see asset-building actions as important

SOURCE: Scales et al. (2001)

## Safe Places and Structured Activities during Nonschool Hours

### The Target

Children and youth need (and want) structure that allows them to feel physically and emotionally safe and engaged. Research affirms the benefits to both young people and society of providing safe places and supervised activities that do the following:

- Connect children and youth to principled and caring adults;
- Provide developmentally appropriate experiences for preschoolers;
- Protect youth from violence or negative influences;
- Connect youth to peers involved in positive actions;
- Encourage a healthy level of physical activity;
- Build positive social skills;
- Provide opportunities for young people to contribute to their community and society;
- Enrich young people's academic performance and commitment to learning; and
- Expose youth to skills that will help them in the workplace.

Public opinion favors providing these opportunities. Yet there is still work to be done to ensure that all children and adolescents have ongoing access to this critical support.

### The Realities

#### WHAT TEENS SAY

Percentage of unsupervised teens who want structured programs that:

Help them get better grades, get into college, give them life skills	74%
Build their leadership skills, work closely with different kinds of people	63%

Percentage of teens engaged 3 hours per week or more in:

Youth programs (sports, clubs, organizations at school or in their community)	58%
Creative activities (lessons or practice in music, theater, or arts)	20%

Percentage of students who get A's and B's in school:

Are supervised every day during nonschool hours	76%
Are unsupervised every day during nonschool hours	58%

SOURCES: YMCA of the USA (2001), Search Institute (2002a)

#### WHAT HAPPENS DURING NONSCHOOL HOURS?

48% Percentage of students who are home alone 2 hours or more a day

35% Percentage of students who watch TV or videos 3 or more hours a day

SOURCE: Search Institute (2002b)

#### WHAT ADULTS SAY

90% Percentage of adults who favor making daily after-school programs available to all children

75% Percentage of adults willing to raise taxes \$10/year to offer programs to children

69% Percentage of police chiefs who say quality after-school and child-care programs are the most effective strategies for reducing youth violence

SOURCES: Newman et al. (2000), Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (1999)

#### CRIMES AWAY FROM SCHOOL

Number of thefts and violent crimes per 1,000 students: **78**

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (2001)

## Healthy Start and Future

### The Target

The health of babies and children depends primarily upon their caregivers. As young people enter their teens, they begin to exert more control over their own health, though their well-being still depends heavily on families, caring adults, their schools and environment, even the peers with whom they associate. Communities need to take these actions:

- Provide families and caregivers with the support they need to protect the health of very young children; and
- Understand the many influences on adolescent health and support that keep young people strong, safe, and able to live up to their potential.

Research has linked the following services and opportunities to good physical and mental health during the first two decades of life:

- Economic security (including adequate food and housing);
- Affordable health care (including prenatal care, immunizations, checkups, eye and ear exams, and treatment for chronic illnesses such as asthma) and the coverage to ensure access to this care;

### The Realities

#### GOOD HEALTH PRACTICES

Percentage of children between 19 and 35 months who had received the recommended immunizations: **78%**

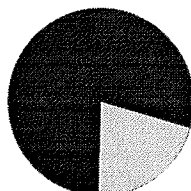
SOURCE: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2001)

Percentage of adolescents who engage in the recommended amount of physical activity: **65%**

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000a)

#### CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH NO HEALTH-CARE INSURANCE

Total: 8.4 million



2.2 million are from low-income working families

SOURCE: Annie E. Casey Foundation (2002)

- Quality health education and a growing ability to make good choices;
- Sensible nutrition and regular exercise;
- Safety at home, in schools, and in neighborhoods; and
- Connection to caring adults, peers who exert a positive

Percentage of parents whose uninsured children would qualify for Medicaid or State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) but who did not believe those programs applied to them: **60%**

SOURCE: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2000)

#### YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN HIGH-RISK BEHAVIORS

Percentage of 6th- to 12th-grade youth reporting involvement in health-compromising behaviors:

	Male	Female
Smoked cigarettes*	20%	19%
Drove after drinking**	12%	8%
Used marijuana**	23%	18%
Had sexual intercourse***	30%	23%
Physically hurt someone else**	22%	8%

\* Once or more in past 30 days

\*\* Once or more in past 12 months

\*\*\* One or more times

SOURCE: Search Institute (2002b)

#### MENTAL HEALTH

Percentage of U.S. students who felt "low" at least once in last 6 months:

	Female	Male
11-year-olds	38%	32%
13-year-olds	41%	31%
15-year-olds	49%	34%

SOURCE: World Health Organization (2000)

influence, and structured and stimulating activities. Overall, the health of children and youth is improving, but far too few young people are experiencing the level of support in their communities that will ensure a healthy future.

## Marketable Skills through Effective Education

### The Target

Nurturing the skills that make it possible for a child to succeed as an adult, become self-sufficient, and contribute to her or his community must begin the day the child enters the world. Research shows that talking, telling stories, and reading to babies and toddlers form the foundation of literacy. Exposure to high-quality child care and preschools fosters the skills young children need to learn to read, write, be creative, and get along with others. Elementary, middle, and high schools advance essential academic, reasoning, and social skills and competencies and expose young people to important experiences that lead to careers.

Making the transition from high school to higher education and work is a critical milestone in the developmental journey. Employers increasingly need workers who can think, learn new skills rapidly, work in teams, and solve problems creatively. Too few youth — whether college bound or not — have these qualities, or in many cases, even basic work skills.

Particular supports are needed to enhance skills and readiness for a productive life. These include the following:

- Efforts that ensure students are engaged in relevant, challenging, and interesting learning;
- Economics and business education, internships, work-study, vocational and career counseling, on-the-job experiences, and job shadowing opportunities; and
- Connections between schools and employers that help young people link education, marketable skills, and personal interests.

Percentage of youth 16–19 not attending school and not working: **8%**

SOURCE: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2001)

### The Realities

#### ADVANCED COURSE WORK

Percentage of high school students taking high-level course work:

	1994	1998
Math	38%	41%
Science	54%	60%
English	18%	20%
Foreign language	11%	13%

SOURCE: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2001)

#### LITERACY SKILLS

Percentage of children who read for fun:

9-year-olds	54%
13-year-olds	32%
17-year-olds	23%

Percentage of 4th-grade students reading levels:

63%	At or above basic level
37%	Below basic level

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000b), National Center for Education Statistics (2001)

#### PERSONAL QUALITIES NEEDED BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL AND IN WORKPLACE

Percentage of 6th- to 12th-grade students reporting these qualities:

Optimistic about personal future	74%
Motivated to do well in school	67%
Actively engaged in learning	61%
Says "my life has a purpose"	59%
Knows how to plan ahead and make decisions	30%

SOURCE: Search Institute (2002a)

#### EXPOSURE TO BUSINESS

Percentage of schools with a 12th grade

that offers school-to-work programs: **64%**

SOURCE: Joyce & Neumark (2001)



## Opportunities to Give Back through Community Service

### The Target

Studies consistently show that when youth are seen as a resource and are encouraged and engaged in meaningful service, they grow and the community improves. Add a learning component to community service, and young people derive even more positive benefits.

Giving children and adolescents opportunities to serve others is an important strategy in shaping America's future. Although school-based community service has received much attention, there are many avenues through which young people can contribute to their community, including the following:

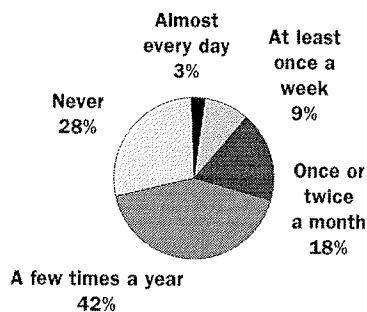
- Religious congregations;
- Neighborhood teams;
- Service clubs;
- Family volunteering; and
- Youth organizations.

Research confirms that service-learning experiences which link community service to teaching goals enhance young people's sense of self-esteem, personal competence, and social responsibility; keep young people engaged in school; improve peer relationships; build acceptance of cultural diversity; and deepen

### The Realities

#### SERVICE PARTICIPATION

Percentage of U.S. high school seniors who report spending time serving others:



SOURCE: Johnston et al. (1997)

#### HOW INVOLVED ARE SCHOOLS?

Percentage of schools offering community-service opportunities:

64%	All public schools
83%	Public high schools

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics (1999)

#### CHANGES IN PARTICIPATION OVER TIME

Number of students involved in service-related programs:

1984	900,000
1997	6,181,797

SOURCE: Schumer & Cook (1999)

#### BARRIERS TO SERVICE

Percentage of students who say the following problems prevented them from being more involved in service:

64%	Not enough time
34%	Don't know how to get involved
32%	Nobody asks me
14%	Can't get there

SOURCE: America's Promise (2001)

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF ASKING

Percentage of 6th- to 12th-grade students who agree they are "given lots of chances to help make my town or city a better place in which to live":

Agree or strongly agree	33%
Not sure	35%
Disagree or strongly disagree	32%

SOURCE: Search Institute (2002b)

Average cost per student involved in service-learning: **\$52**

SOURCE: Melchior (2000)

young people's understanding of politics, ethics, and morality.

While there is rising awareness of the power of service, too few young people are connected to this important opportunity.

## The Importance of Collaborative Communities

### STRATEGIES FOR MOBILIZING COMMUNITIES

- Mobilize locally by forming diverse grassroots coalitions encompassing all sectors of the community — corporations, not-for-profits, youth, elected officials, schools, congregations, and other partners — to more efficiently channel resources that increase the scale and impact of youth initiatives.
- Establish Sites of Promise where kids are known by name and where programs and services are combined to fulfill the Five Promises. Sites include schools, congregations, recreation centers, public housing, places of business, and group homes.
- Coordinate service delivery in the sites so that programs providing each of the Five Promises are operating at the Sites of Promise.
- Form a core group of leadership representing local champions, financial supporters, and volunteers.
- Leverage additional community resources so that each partner provides essential resources to community efforts, such as leadership, volunteers, funds, equipment, consulting expertise, facilities, and connections with other groups and individuals resulting in a self-sustaining effort.
- Utilize community mobilization tools like the Five Promises Checklist, The Power of Five, Promise Stations, and the Community of Promise Self-Assessment Tool to be more efficient and effective.

The long-term success of the important efforts launched by America's Promise hinges, to a large extent, on how well communities work together. Communities of Promise ensure that all Five Promises are being fulfilled for a critical mass of children and youth in the community. Through a robust collaborative of stakeholders — youth-serving organizations and programs, community champions, and resource providers — services are deepened and coordinated using America's Promise tools in sites where kids are known by name. Four principles should guide community planning and action around the Five Promises:

**1. The Five Promises build on each other.** Children and youth need the fulfillment of all Five Promises. It is the weaving together — the integration — of the Five Promises that offers real hope. Twenty-five years of research demonstrates that access to this combination of support, experiences, and opportunities is what matters most to the well-being of a child. Every child.

**2. Support for the Five Promises is needed for all youth.** As the data in this report suggest, too many young people in the United States lack ongoing, consistent fulfillment of the Five Promises. While special attention needs to be paid to increasing support to the Five Promises among economically or socially marginalized youth, community efforts to expand access to all youth are also needed.

**3. Young people need ongoing support for each promise throughout the first two decades of life.** All Five Promises gain power when they are experienced multiple times in multiple settings. For example, caring adult support has more impact when it is experienced not only through formal mentoring programs but also informally within neighborhoods, schools, congregations, and youth organizations. Similarly, opportunities to serve have more profound benefits when young people participate in multiple service-learning experiences, not just one.

**4. All individuals and organizations can help fulfill these Five Promises.** Neighborhoods, congregations, schools, and agencies can all provide safe places, for instance. Likewise, many citizens can choose to identify and connect with young people, thus increasing access to caring adults. Hence, the success of the movement to fulfill the promise of America depends not only on developing new programs, but also on individuals recognizing and tapping into their own capacity to make a difference in young people's lives.

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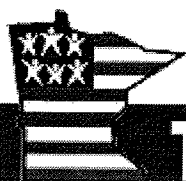

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**AOL Keyword: America's Promise**

Quick Navigation 

# The Minnesota Alliance With Youth

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## Resources for Communities

### Minnesota Mentoring Database

Explore ways to encourage mentoring in your community, or become a mentor yourself! Search the database for mentoring opportunities throughout Minnesota!

### Resource Lists

Click on a Promise, and a list of resource organizations will appear below!

[Mentor](#)[Protect](#)[Teach/Learn](#)[Nurture](#)[Serve](#)[Other Resources](#)

### Other Resources

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#### **America's Promise--The Alliance for Youth**

909 North Washington St.  
Suite 400  
Alexandria, VA 22314

**Phone:** (703) 684-4500

**Fax:** (703) 684-7328

**URL:** <http://www.americaspromise.org>

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#### **Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF)**

601 South Kingsley Drive  
Los Angeles, CA 90005

**Phone:** (213) 487-5590

**Fax:** (213) 386-0459

**Email:** [crfcitizen@aol.com](mailto:crfcitizen@aol.com)

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**League of Minnesota Cities**

145 West University Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55103

**Phone:** (651) 281-1241

**Fax:** (651) 281-1296

**Email:** [kboettch@lmnc.org](mailto:kboettch@lmnc.org)

**URL:** <http://www.lmnc.org/public/apromise/>

The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) and Insurance Trust (LMCIT) work with and for member cities across Minnesota. LMC brings diverse municipal groups together to create a collective voice for cities. This voice strengthens the overall effectiveness of the community of Minnesota cities. By providing cities with benefits like advocacy at the legislature, education, research and information for both elected and appointed officials, the League fosters the work Minnesota cities are doing to promote excellence in governance, management and services to citizens. Both the National League of Cities and the League of Minnesota Cities have recognized how important it is for city governments to be involved with the young people in their communities. By incorporating attention to youth issues into their agenda, NLC and LMC are encouraging city governments to be actively involved with other community members in an effort to better the lives of the young people in their communities, as well as their communities as a whole.

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**Lions-Quest Skills for Action**

Lions Clubs International  
300 22nd Street  
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**Phone:** (708) 571-5466

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**Points of Light Foundation, Inc.**

1400 I Street, N.W. Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20005

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**Email:** [volnet@pointsoflight.org](mailto:volnet@pointsoflight.org)

**URL:** <http://www.pointsoflight.org/>

The Foundation's mission is to engage more people more effectively in volunteer community service to help solve serious social problems. Founded in May 1990, the Foundation is a nonpartisan nonprofit

organization devoted to promoting volunteerism. The Foundation is based in Washington, DC, and works in communities throughout the United States through a network of over 500 Volunteer Centers. Its Board of Directors includes prominent and politically diverse national leaders from business, education, and the nonprofit communities. Former President George Bush serves as the Honorary Chairman of the Board. The Foundation believes that, at the core of most social problems, lie disconnection and alienation. That is why the Foundation launched an initiative called Connect America. At the heart of this initiative is the idea that bringing people together through volunteer service is a powerful way of combating disconnection and alleviating social problems. A growing number of national membership-based organizations, corporations, cities and states are signing on to the Connect America movement by creating activities which unite people through volunteer service. Some of the major areas of the Foundation's work are: Assisting employers in developing workplace volunteer programs. Participating in the development of youth service leaders and youth service programs. Providing training and development for Volunteer Centers across the nation Providing products and services to volunteer management professionals. Aiding and encouraging the growth of the family volunteering concept. The Points of Light Foundation and the Corporation for National Service were the co-sponsors of the historic Presidents' Summit for America's Future held in April 1997. For the first time in U.S. history, the current President and many former Presidents came together around the urgent need to engage all Americans in volunteer service to help provide fundamental resources for our nation's children and youth. The Points of Light Foundation and the Corporation for National Service will be partnering with America's Promise to highlight the work done in the last three years since the Presidents' Summit for America's Future, and where it is going. They will also be working with the National Youth Leadership Council to deliver a National Youth Summit, as a pre-conference to this years National Service Conference.

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**Quest International**

P O Box 4850  
Newark, OH 43058-4850

**URL:** <http://www.quest.edu>

To empower and support adults throughout the world to nurture responsibility and caring in young people where they live, learn, work, and play.

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**Search Institute**

700 S. 3rd Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1138

**Phone:** (612) 376-8955

**Fax:** (800)888-7828

**Email:** [si@search-institute.org](mailto:si@search-institute.org)

**URL:** <http://www.search-institute.org>

An independent, nonprofit organization committed not only to contributing to the knowledge base about youth development, but also committed to translating high-quality research on children and youth into practical ideas, tools, services, and resources for families, neighborhoods, schools, organizations, and communities.

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### **The Coalition for Healthier Cities and Communities**

**Phone:** (800) 803-6516

**Fax:** (303) 444-1001

**Email:** [roulier@bwn.net](mailto:roulier@bwn.net)

**URL:** [www.healthycommunities.org](http://www.healthycommunities.org)

The Coalition is... A partnership of entities from the public, private and non-profit sectors collaborating to focus attention and resources on improving the health and quality of life of communities through community-based development. Our Vision is of... Healthy people, and healthy communities, in a healthy country. Our Mission is... To stimulate and encourage collaborative action and efficient use of resources from multiple sectors and community systems. A primary focus of the Coalition is to promote the initiation, development and sustainability of initiatives that result in healthy people and healthy communities. We promote these initiatives at the local, regional, state and national levels-- particularly those with a focus on the well-being of families and children. The Coalition for Healthier Cities and Communities is the U.S. national network of partnerships and organizations working towards healthier people in healthier communities. With its hundreds of partners, the Coalition serves as a link to resources; a voice for policy and action; and a force for helping create and sustain effective local change initiatives. TOGETHER, WE'RE DEVELOPING THE KNOWLEDGE, RELATIONSHIPS AND CAPACITIES THAT PROMOTE HEALTHY PEOPLE IN HEALTHY COMMUNITIES. The Coalition for Healthier Cities and Communities is the U.S. national network of partnerships and organizations working towards healthier people in healthier communities. With its hundreds of partners, the Coalition serves as a link to resources; a voice for policy and action; and a force for helping create and sustain effective local change initiatives. TOGETHER, WE'RE DEVELOPING THE KNOWLEDGE, RELATIONSHIPS AND CAPACITIES THAT PROMOTE HEALTHY PEOPLE IN HEALTHY COMMUNITIES. Call (800) 803-6516 to discuss ways of participating in, and partnering with, the Healthy Communities Agenda campaign. A Contact here in Minnesota: Ms. Hanna Cooper Acting Unit Leader, Health Education Unit MN Dept of Health 85 East Seventh Place PO Box 64882 St Paul, MN 55164-0882 651/281-9835 651/215-8959 [hanna.cooper@sunny.health.state.mn.us](mailto:hanna.cooper@sunny.health.state.mn.us)



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**mighty media**

The Expanding Educational Network