



Illustration by
Billy Nuñez, age 16

CONNECTING WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

WHY SHOULD YOU BE INVOLVED WITH YOUR COMMUNITY?

- Participating in community activities gives you more opportunities to become an independent and successful adult.
- It provides you with a group of friends who can help you learn more about yourself and your talents and help you make better decisions.
- By connecting with your community, you are never alone. You have a place to go and people to talk with when you need it.
- The more you help others, the better you feel and the more likely that someone will be there for you.

Teens can—and do!—improve the communities they live in.

While families provide the love and support needed for teens to become more independent, teens active in their community will:

- Do better in school.
- Find it easier to stay out of trouble.
- Be less likely to become depressed or suicidal.

MAKING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Help others.

- Ask about service projects. Check with your school or where you worship about volunteering at homeless shelters, soup kitchens, nursing homes, or child care centers.

- Work for a political campaign.
- Tutor children at the library or become a coach.
- Help clean up the neighborhood.

Do what you love.

Try different things until you discover your passion. Art, music, writing, drama, or sports are just some examples.

Keep in touch with family members.

Learn about your family—both near and far. Ask about family stories and history. Get in touch with family you have not met or have not seen for a while or plan a family reunion.

Get to know your neighbors.

Talk with people who have different cultural backgrounds, religious or spiritual beliefs, and political values.

NOBODY SUCCEEDS ALONE— EVERYONE NEEDS HELP

There are many adults in your community who can help.

- A teacher, coach, or counselor at school can help **point you in the right direction**.
- A neighbor, relative, friend's parent, or your boss can give you the **advice you need to make decisions**.
- A spiritual leader or an adult at an after-school activity or club can **help you through a hard time**.

Find people who can stay calm and listen, understand you, and give you practical advice.

It is hard to talk with parents about some topics. Find other trusted adults who can help. They also can help teens and parents figure out how to talk with each other.



YOUR PARENTS' JOB

You are now old enough to start making your own decisions and taking care of yourself, but parents are still there to help keep you safe and guide you in becoming an independent adult.

For safety reasons, parents will ask about:

- Where you are going
- Whom you will be with
- What you will be doing
- When you will return



Parents need to know the names of friends.

They also will want to meet your friends as well as meet and talk to your friends' parents.

Parents still can help solve problems.

This includes correcting you when you make a mistake, without making you feel bad.

Parents can help you get involved with community activities.

Being involved with your community will help you become independent, develop new skills, and help others.

Connected Kids are Safe, Strong, and Secure

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 66,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2001-JN-FX-0011 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

HE50402

PAGE 2 **CONNECTING WITH YOUR COMMUNITY**

Graphic design and illustrations by Artists For Humanity, a non profit arts and entrepreneurship program for Boston teens.

American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

Connected Kids: Safe, Strong, Secure™

© 2006 American Academy of Pediatrics, Reaffirmed 03/2018. All rights reserved.