



## Search Institute Webarticle 2011

**Normally when people hear the words *police* and *youth* together, they automatically think of what kind of trouble a young person is in.** Team Kids, a nonprofit organization founded in Irvine, California, has been using the Development Assets as their framework in developing youth-serving programs since 2003. Team Kids is built upon a close partnership with police and fire departments to inspire and empower students as active leaders in their community. One example of an impromptu project created by Team Kids, Irvine Police, and Orange County Fire departments was a city-wide call for “LemonAID” stands in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. In a 48-hour period over 1,200 youth set up 220 homemade lemonade stands in the Irvine community. The “LemonAID” project raised over \$10,500 for hurricane relief efforts. Police officers and firefighters created a route of all the lemonade stands to ensure that each of the young participants was visited and honored for their leadership.

Additionally, police officers and firefighters work alongside Team Kids staff in the local public schools to host the Team Kids Challenge, a month-long service-learning program. Over the course of the month, children from kindergarten to sixth grade complete four individual, project-based, service projects, which empower them as compassionate advocates in the areas of hunger, homelessness, peace, and the environment. A leadership team made up of fifth and sixth graders work on a team during their lunch recesses to spearhead a school-wide carnival complete with youth-created games and activities. The team decides on all of the arrangements, including where to donate the proceeds. In the past students have chosen to donate their earnings to help detect early childhood cancer, to support a preschool in a dump city in Mexico City, and for children who are battling serious illnesses. Since 2003, over 18,000 students have completed this innovative, asset-based program in their schools.

In the five years Team Kids has been active in Irvine, it has witnessed success stories in the kids not only in its community, but other communities as well. Last year, the Team Kids Challenge was launched successfully in Newport Beach, within a new district, and alongside new public safety partners. Police and fire officials have reported that their staffs' involvement has helped with morale and provided them with tools and experiences to partner with youth in their communities to create positive change. By taking a positive approach in dealing with children in the community, Team Kids has helped local fire and police agencies realize the potential and compassion that lie in every child.