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As the parent of a young child, you have the tremendous opportunity **to get to know your kid, while your kid is still a kid!** Whether you have one child or multiple, spending quality one-on-one time with your child contributes to their healthy development and a stronger bond with you.

The YMCA is committed to creating opportunities for families to strengthen their relationships, meet others who share core values, experience new activities, and make memories that last a lifetime. Since 1926, the YMCA has offered parent and child programs to foster understanding and companionship.

Thanks to generous funding from the Kimberly-Clark Corporation, the YMCA of the USA in partnership with the Search Institute have developed numerous web based resources to support parents in their efforts to strengthen communication and relationships. The following links share the value of involved parenting.

Support

The Search Institute shares the following excerpt from “Your Family: Using Simple Wisdom in Raising Children” to demonstrate our ability to support our children. http://www.ymcaoc.org/pdf/support_bonding.pdf

40 Developmental Assets

Are you aware of the power internal and external developmental assets have on growing children? Thriving behaviors, such as academic achievement, and resistant behaviors, such as avoidance of aggression and substance use, are far more prevalent in children raised in asset rich environments. Two such assets are explored in the following Healthy Communities, Healthy Youth “Ideas for Parents” newsletters links. “Open Communication” http://www.ymcaoc.org/pdf/open_communication.pdf and “The Support of Others” http://www.ymcaoc.org/pdf/support_of_others.pdf

The YMCA utilizes the Asset Development framework to support our intentional program outcomes. Increasing communication in early childhood can help prepare our children for the challenges of adolescence. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychology has created a “Facts for Families” website to support the opportunities and challenges parents face. The following link details the importance of good communication and provide ideas for you to incorporate in your current effort. “Starting early is the best way for parents to prepare for their child’s adolescence.” <http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/adolescence.htm>

The YMCA of Orange County Y-Guide/Princess programs have created one-on-one involvement opportunities for more than 30 years in Orange County. Individually, there are 7 different programs.

Y-Guides - Fathers and Sons

Y-Princesses - Fathers and Daughters

Y-Maidens – Mothers and Daughters

Y-Braves - Mothers and Sons

Y-Dream Catchers – Parent and Child (not gender specific)

Y-Papooses - Fathers and Sons or Daughters (3-4 years)

Y-Trail Blazers - Fathers and Sons (11-14 years)

Y-Trail Mates - Fathers and Daughters (11-14 years)

Parent and child pairs join tribes of 7-12 families who gather monthly for in-home meetings and community events and outings. All gatherings involve the active participation of both parent and child in meaningful experiences. Our members often reflect that the experiences they shared at campouts (catching their first fish, hitting the target in archery, catching their first wave at Camp Surf) have created traditions and hobbies they continue to share through adolescents and into adulthood. Former Y-Guides father Marc Urias shares this example.

“My son Marshall and I shot our first arrows at Camp Oakes in Big Bear in 1998. I didn’t believe you could hit the broad side of a barn after that first attempt. Each year he would look forward to returning to camp to try his skill on the archery range.

Following Y-Guides, we found an instructor, joined the El Toro Archers and have shared this passion together. In fact, we just spent last Father’s Day shooting arrows together.”

The Y-Guide/Princess programs accomplish these goals through an organized program, rich in volunteer leadership and adult participation. Click here http://www.ymcaoc.org/contact_us/index.php to get connected with a program in your community. Don’t miss your opportunity to **get to know you kid, while your kid is still a kid!**