



### **The Teen Years: Organized Activities, Volunteerism, and Community Involvement**

Doing volunteer work and good deeds for neighbors, helping solve community problems, and taking part in political action can help teens move beyond themselves into the larger world. Recent research shows that taking part in sports, arts, music, organizations, and hobbies encourages a variety of positive outcomes for youth. Some of the benefits include decreased delinquency, greater school achievement, increased self-control, and increased sensitivity to the needs of others.

You as parents should help your teen guard against over-scheduling his day, but you can set an example of a balanced life that includes community service. For example, you might:

- *Stay involved in school and community organizations.* Teens who see their parents attending school activities and volunteering in community organizations are more likely to feel that school work and community service are important.
- *Talk with your teen about community issues.* Teens often have valuable insights into how community problems might be solved, especially if those problems involve other teenagers. When you encourage your teen to share her ideas, she will feel that her opinions matter and that there can be successful solutions to community problems.
- *Attend community cultural events as a family.* When your family attends community cultural events, your action reflects a respect for and appreciation of the neighborhood's uniqueness. This, in turn, fosters a sense of healthy pride in your teen.
- *Encourage your teen's participation in music, the arts, or sports.* Neighborhood bands or music groups, community theatre or dance, and neighborhood sports leagues help teens channel their energies in productive ways, build community spirit, and have informal adult mentors.

For more information about how you can encourage your child's participation in community organizations, you may wish to talk with representatives of local youth clubs, the YMCA/YWCAs, your local recreation district, Boy/Girl Scouts, religious organizations, and the Urban League.

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