

Our Mission

To preserve, enhance and expand character-building and recreational opportunities for Saginaw County youth that will help them achieve their potential as individuals and citizens of our community.

Our Vision

We see the adults of Saginaw County – parents, business persons, volunteers, citizens – coming together to combat apathy and make youth the number one priority for Saginaw County.

We see the children of Saginaw County reaching their potential as prepared and engaged citizens, assuming their positions as the future leaders of Saginaw County.



Creating tomorrow's leaders

It's no secret that today's youth face incredible challenges to do well in school and learn to be responsible citizens. The Youth First program creates a positive atmosphere where children can thrive. By shining a bright light on the impact of positive youth development, Youth First teaches leadership skills to today's children to create tomorrow's leaders.

For more information

To learn more about the Youth First program, the current participating sites, volunteer opportunities or to enroll your child, contact Debra Shelton, Youth First director at (989) 755-0545 or deb@saginawfoundation.org.



Youth First is a 21st Century Community Learning Center.
Developmental Assets is a registered trademark of Search Institute.

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What is Youth First?

Youth First is a long-term collaborative solution operating at elementary schools throughout Saginaw County. It delivers dozens of existing youth development and recreation programs during non-school hours to underserved youth. The programs help reinforce fundamentals learned in school by providing fun and creative learning experiences. Youth First also can help students be better prepared for school and improve their problem-solving skills, attitudes and community engagement.



The program is based on a blend of youth development models. All activities are drawn from Search Institute's *Developmental Assets*[®], the most widely used approach to positive youth development in the United States. The 40 *Developmental Assets*[®] represent the relationships, opportunities and personal qualities that children need to avoid risks and to thrive. The average child experiences fewer than half of these assets.

Search Institute has organized its 40 *Developmental Assets*[®] into groups based on age. Visit saginawfoundation.org/site/initiatives/youth-first/ to view lists tailored to each stage of development.

How it works

Each Youth First site offers open enrollment for kindergarten through fifth grade students enrolled at the elementary school that houses the Youth First program. Preference will be given to students who commit to attend the full program. Parents must complete and sign a registration form each year. If the program is full, parents can have their child added to a waiting list to be notified when space becomes available. There is no charge to participate.

Youth development services and activities are provided in a physically and emotionally safe environment. Our sites strive to have consistent adult leaders who will nurture supportive and positive relationships with students and families. Participating students will learn leadership skills through multiple experiences including: program development, leadership training classes, youth advisory council participation and service learning projects.

Students are able to choose from nine activity focused-themes (academics, visual and performing arts, career exploration, family involvement, fitness, life skills, recreation, sports and technology) ensuring a well-rounded after school learning experience.

A countywide collaboration

Youth First is a community collaboration, utilizing school buildings and staff, volunteers and community partners. We are guided by an Executive Committee comprised of community leaders from a wide variety of backgrounds. Each site maintains a Site Advisory Council responsible for overseeing initiatives at each location. The Youth First Coordinator, working with the Executive Committee, helps site teams work effectively and oversees the day-to-day operation of the program.

Youth First provides support services, leadership and service learning opportunities, access to information and referrals for health and human services in partnership with Saginaw Community Foundation's FORCE Youth Advisory Committee and Saginaw County's Promise.

