

## **Not always safe, but hopeful** **Survey shows how city youth feel about life now, in future**

**BY LAURESHA XHIHANI**  
**REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN**

**WATERBURY —** Only 43 percent of the city's sixth- and ninth-graders feel safe at home, in school and in their neighborhood. And only 26 percent feel valued by their community.

Those were just two of the findings of a survey of 628 city students in public and private schools.

The results of the survey were released at a youth summit held at the University of Connecticut Waterbury on Tuesday. The summit, attended by about 200 people, was organized by the Prevention Policy Board, a coalition of about 50 service agencies, schools and other public and private organizations whose goal is to provide support for youth so they stay clear of risky behavior including violence, drugs and alcohol and risky sexual behavior.

The survey of about 200 questions was given out last April. The answers were evaluated against a scale of 40 external and internal assets that young people need to become successful adults. The more of these assets youth have the more likely they are to stay away from risky behavior and become successful adults.

The survey found that city youth have an average of 18.9 assets, which is about the same See **SUMMIT, Page B2**

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**LAURESHA XHIHANI** **REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN**

**Gary Foster, left, a senior at Wilby High School, and Jose Campos, a junior at Sacred Heart High School, talk with Sandra Porteus of Family Services of Waterbury during a youth summit at the University of Connecticut's Waterbury campus Tuesday.**

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## SUMMIT: Agency evaluates assets for youth

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as the national average.

Though the Prevention Policy Board has been around for several years, this is the first time it has conducted a survey. It plans to use the findings as a baseline from which to better help the city's youth.

Policy Board Chairman Louise Allen Brown said the Policy Board will focus on providing more support for teens in school and in the community.

In about two years, the survey will be given again to evaluate progress, Allen Brown said.

For those attending, the survey raised some concerns but also bright points.

"I'm concerned about the safety issue," said Sandra Porteus, executive director of the Family Services of Greater Waterbury.

The survey offered some surprising positive data as well. Porteus said she was pleasantly surprised by the survey's finding that 73 percent of youth have a positive outlook of their future. The survey also found that the data between different ethnic groups was similar, which means city youth of different backgrounds face the same issues.

The survey also found that 74 percent of youth can count on their family for support.

Jose Campos, a junior at Sacred Heart High School, who took the survey last year as a ninth-grader said he had no idea when he was taking it that it would lead to the youth summit.

"I didn't think people actually cared," Campos said, surprised at the number of adults attending.

Campos said he found truth in the part of the survey that dealt with youth as valued members of the community. One solution to teens feeling more valued by older members of the community is as simple as taking time to notice them.

"It makes sense," Campos said. "Just acknowledge us. We want to be part of the community."