

# Pennridge students to participate in 40 Assets conference

By Bob Keeler  
Staff writer

Next week's two-day conference, "Unleashing the Power of Youth and Community Potential," will try to do just that.

"Out of the 350 people attending, 100 will be students," said Lee Rush, executive director of justCommunity, the Quakertown-based group that organized the conference and coordinates the Pennridge Area Healthy Communities/Healthy Youth asset building initiative.

"It's not really a conference about youth. It's one with them," Rush said. "We have youth involved."

That involvement includes youths taking part in the planning and making some of the presentations.

One of the workshops, "Youth Led Team Building Activities" will be presented by three Pennridge High School students, Brad Grey, Ben Kratz and Ryan Zamroz.

By including the youths, a new viewpoint is added to the conference, Rush said.

"We wanted to do a conference that didn't repeat what we've heard five times before," he said.

Following the Oct. 14 and 15 conference at Allentown Holiday Inn, one of the speakers, Derek Peterson, director of child/youth advocacy for the Association of the Alaska School Boards, will hold an in-service session the afternoon of Oct. 16 for elementary teachers in the Pennridge School District. He will also present a program for parents and community members. "What Kids Need to Succeed — Creating Safety Nets and Launching Pads for All Our

"Whether growing up today is different from before is not as important as the fact that too many kids are unsuccessful and too many are hurt. Hear a powerful story about how thousands of Alaskans have become energized to launch a statewide asset building movement," reads a portion of a conference brochure, describing Peterson's presentation.

He is quoted as saying, "Hope is believing in spite of the evidence, and watching the evidence change."

Student council at the middle school will provide childcare for young children whose parents attend Peterson's talk at the school.

The in-service program is a continuation of the asset building training, Rush said, with this year's sessions presented to elementary teachers. Last year's presentation was for teachers in the secondary grades.

The "40 Assets" initiative, is a group of positive experiences or building blocks, such as family support and self-esteem, that help young people develop into good community members. The 40 Assets are guidelines for Pennridge Area Healthy Communities/Healthy Youth. There are Healthy Communities/Healthy Youth organizations in more than 500 communities nationwide.

Attendees at the conference in Allentown will include people from 15 different states, Rush said.

Artwork on display at the conference will include works by Pennridge and Quakertown students, Rush said.

"They'll get national exposure for their art," Rush said. "People will be there from all over the country."