

Building CHARACTER

April 2002 Edition

Keeping On

A character emphasis is exciting when it begins. The challenge of learning new material and the adventure of a new direction combine to build enthusiasm and excitement. But what about when the emphasis has been in place for some time? Is character still exciting to the employees?

To find out, ask Greco Frame and Supply. This company, a division of Hobby Lobby, Inc., has been using *Character First!* materials for seven years, and they show no signs of stopping their pursuit of good character.

Jack Johnston, director of Human Resources, has been with Greco since before the emphasis began. He recounts the impact it has had on the company: "It's defined our culture. We hire for character; we train for character. It's become part of who we are."

How has Greco kept character from becoming a boring routine? In addition to regularly praising employees at monthly meetings, the company has built a "Wall of Fame." At any time, an employee who notices another employee making right choices can submit a written praise to the human resources department. The praise is then edited and posted on a

certificate of recognition along with a photo. Employees are excited about finding ways to praise others and it keeps them thinking about character.

What is the key to maintaining your enthusiasm while implementing a character focus? Johnston recounts three steps. "One, you must have leadership example. Our president led the way. Two, you have to have consistency in maintaining the program. Three, you need to share the results as you see them." Ultimately, the results keep Greco excited about character.

Says Johnston, "We saw changes in people's lives, we saw changes in their focus, and that's what keeps us going."

After seven years, Greco has more than a character emphasis: it has a culture of character.



Pat Rutledge stands in front of Greco's "Wall of Fame"

Tolerance vs. Prejudice

Realizing that everyone is at varying levels of character development

Five aspects of tolerance:

- Do not confuse what is right with what is popular.
- Expect the same of myself as I expect of others.
- Look for ways to help others mature.
- Accept my own unchangeables and the unchangeables of others.
- Listen before I form an opinion.



Tolerant Scholar

Some people change history by doing something spectacular and gaining the attention of the world. Others transform the fate of a nation by simply doing their duty. Timothy Dwight was one of the latter. His patient tolerance for the young men under his leadership guided their thinking and changed the course of history.

Timothy Dwight was a gifted man. He entered Yale College at age 13 and graduated at 17. He then worked as a tutor while continuing his studies. He had a brilliant mind, sharpened by constant use. However, his greatness came not because of his abilities, but because of how he used his abilities.

When he became the president of a college, many of

the students professed beliefs that were destructive and even unpatriotic. The guidelines of the college stated that the students could be expelled for these ideas. However, Dwight was tolerant. Rather than rejecting the students and their ideas, he held debates.

Each student was given an opportunity to present his beliefs and the logic behind them. After all were done, Dwight began to systematically explain the errors in their logic. He did not attack the students. On the contrary, he valued them! However, he did not want to let them continue to believe ideas that would cause their own destruction.

Timothy Dwight is not well known, but the college he led certainly is. Yale College, now Yale University, would not be the same today had it not been for the leadership of Timothy Dwight. He was tolerant, and he became a hero.

Home Run!

Spring has arrived, and with it baseball season begins. As students around the country pull out their bats and gloves, parents prepare for another season on the sidelines or coaching the team.

Summer camp is fast approaching. Bake sales, car washes, and other fund raisers vie for the time of you and your children. Saturday afternoons are rapidly consumed by commitments to help in various causes.

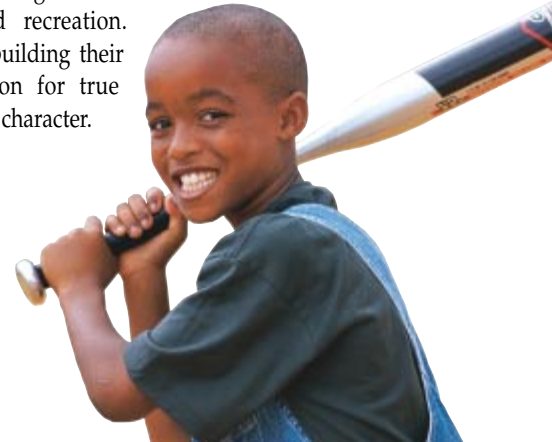
School is drawing to a close. Graduation exercises, class trips, and award ceremonies fill the calendar.

Any of these situations may be facing you as a caring parent, involved teacher, or concerned citizen this spring. Rather than feeling overwhelmed by the numerous activities of the season, use your time to invest in young lives by encouraging children to develop good character.

- During sports activities, start the beginning of every practice by briefly explaining one character quality. Emphasize the humility and forgiveness needed for good sportsmanship.

- At a car wash, encourage thoroughness while washing the car, orderliness in handling money, and joyfulness through the day.
- While planning class activities, explain the need for tolerance of others and responsibility for oneself.

By encouraging character during times of interaction, young people will gain much more than fun and recreation. They will be building their own foundation for true success—good character.



“This is a huge success.”

—a teacher in Bosqueville, TX

Too Short

A psychiatrist, an engineer, and a doctor got lost in the woods. Stumbling onto a trapper’s cabin but getting no response at the door, they went inside for shelter.

Their attention was immediately drawn to a wood-burning stove sitting on a platform at waist level. As they warmed themselves around the stove it became the focus of their conversation.

The psychiatrist explained the stove’s unusual positioning as evidence of the trapper’s mental problems brought on by isolation. The engineer, on the other hand, saw it as an ingenious form of forced-air heating. The physician decided that the man had arthritis and found it too painful to bend over to put wood into his stove.

When the trapper finally came home, the men asked why his stove was on a platform. They waited eagerly to learn who had the correct theory. “Simple,” said the man. “My stove pipe is too short.”

Do you form opinions before you know all the facts? Seek to be tolerant by learning all the circumstances before you make a decision.

Adapted from text by Rubel Shelly

A Hero’s Legacy



It should have been a simple call. A house fire at a private home should have gone according to routine. However, no amount of routine or level of experience could have prevented the nightmare that occurred when the burn victim started shooting wildly, fatally wounding Chief Jones and three others.

Fire Chief Louis Jones did not know March 16 would be his last day on duty. He did know that it could be—the possibility came with the job. That did not stop him from responding to the call or attempting to aid the burn victim. Chief Jones did all he could to use the time he had to make the world a better place.

During his tenure as Fire Chief, Jones firmly believed in the importance of character in every aspect of a city. He started a character focus in the fire department and sent several of his staff through character training. Roswell, New Mexico became a City of Character due in part to Jones’ efforts.



**Chief Jones
1956–2002**

Chief Jones lived the words of Helen Keller, “I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; because I am one, I will not refuse to do something I can do.” He was only one, but his efforts affected his community more than anyone will ever realize.

Character First! salutes Chief Jones and those other “ones” who are choosing to do all they can to transform a nation by impacting one life at a time. Chief Jones’ death ten days after the shooting must not bring his efforts to an end. Who will continue the task that he began? Who will encourage good character in your community?

“The only thing that walks back from the tomb with the mourners and refuses to be buried is the character of a man...What a man is survives him. It can never be buried.”

—J.R. Miller

To see a complete list of Character Cities, click here.

About CTI

The Character Training Institute (CTI) was established to encourage true success in businesses, organizations, schools, communities, and families by encouraging character growth and development. With forty-nine qualities at its center, *Character First!* offers a variety of training and resources to stimulate character growth in individuals from all walks of life.

CTI is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization based in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.