

# Building CHARACTER

December 2002 Edition

## Requesting Good Character

Fifty thousand tons of tomato paste. One hundred thousand tons of semolina flour. Seven hundred seventy-five miles of pasta. In Holland, Michigan, Request Foods' 385 employees produce a lot of frozen entrees each week. But they also focus on something else—building people up.

That is why they began using *Character First!* five months ago. They hold monthly training sessions for each of their departments, feature character in the bimonthly company newsletter, and make the bulletins available to employees. They also use the monthly *Character First!* PowerPoint to help employees completely understand each character quality.

They especially emphasize monthly character quality recognitions, but with a twist. An employee is given a personalized certificate and a small stuffed animal which corresponds to the one featured in the *Character First!* bulletin. The employee keeps the certificate, but must recognize

someone else for the character quality within the next three days, passing on the stuffed animal.

The response has been very favorable. Mark Zink, manager of People Services for Request Foods, said, "We affect a large customer base, and [focusing on] character has reinforced the need to ensure quality and product safety so that we put out the best product. This has given our company a competitive edge in the marketplace."

"But the biggest benefit," Zink said, "has been a greater awareness in our employees. They are realizing that good character is vital, and are beginning to learn what it means. They see that what you do today does affect the future."



## Sensitivity vs. Callousness

*Perceiving the true attitudes and emotions of those around me*

Five aspects of sensitivity:

- Listen to others fully.
- Watch facial expressions.
- Notice tone of voice.
- Put yourself in others' shoes.
- Show that you care.



## Sensing Needs

*Snap.* The snowshoe rabbit froze in its tracks. Using its sensitive ears, the rabbit tried to detect the source of the distant sound. The snowshoe rabbit's hearing is critical to its survival. Listening intently, the rabbit sensed that the noise was merely a porcupine, and resumed looking for food.

The vision of the snowshoe rabbit is poor; its eyes perceive little more than movement. But its sensitivity to light and timing is critical, because the rabbit's main defenses are speed and camouflage. Detecting the longer daylight hours in the spring triggers a hormone change, and prompts the rabbit to molt its white fur. The new fur is brown, so that the snowshoe rabbit blends into its recolored surroundings.

With Christmas just around the corner, think of ways that you can show sensitivity to others. Reach out to those who are lonely, far from home, or grieving during this time with a plate of cookies, an invitation, or a warm hug. Visit those in nursing homes and sing a few carols with them. Perhaps the "Scrooge" at the office is going through a difficult personal time right now. Consider how you could lighten his load.

Be sensitive to the attitudes of those around you, whether driving to the mall, or baking cookies with your family. Everything does not have to be "just perfect." Use sensitivity to focus on what is most important: building relationships with those you love during this time of celebration. Take the time to find out what is important to them, and invest in their lives. The results will be immeasurable!

**“We’ve  
tried to  
teach  
character,  
and now  
we finally  
found a  
systematic  
way to  
do it!”**

—Peggy Huckleba

## ***Giving Good Character***

For the past two months, *Character First!* representatives have traveled through Asia conducting seminars for schools, parents, and community organizations. In Hong Kong, educators admitted that character had been forgotten by many families and replaced with material goods and temporal success. They were especially excited about training parents to use the book *Achieving True Success* so that children can focus on character at home and school.

In Shanghai, officials from the education department were interested in how *Character First!* operates in schools around the world. After attending one of the originally scheduled seminars, these officials arranged another training at the last minute for about 70 character education specialists. Some couldn’t believe how many comprehensive resources are available for teaching character.

The last stop was Taiwan, where *Character First!* returned for its fifth year of seminars. In attendance were teachers,

administrators, volunteers, church workers, community service providers, and several groups of university students. The deputy director of education in one city reminded his teachers that character training was a major part of Chinese culture, but has been lost over the years. “Now we see the consequences of that failure,” he said, “and it’s time to return to our roots.”

That’s good advice for anyone. As we approach the new year, all of us can evaluate our character. How we can grow in the months ahead? How can we establish a good foundation for our children’s future? Let’s think about it today.



**Over 4000 people attended recent seminars in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Taiwan.**

## ***Holly Cheer***

The Christmas rush jammed the streets of London. Everyone had finished their shopping for the day, and were ready to return to their families. Drivers were in a hurry to get to the next engagement, and were losing their tempers.

One fellow, who had decorated his car with a bunch of holly on his hood, was especially in a rush. He seemed to think that he was in the biggest hurry and therefore, everyone should make way for him. When a taxi got in front of him and blocked his progress, he became outraged and shouted abuse at the driver.

The taxi driver replied, “What’s the use of having holly on your bonnet if you ain’t got holly in your heart?”

What about you? As you celebrate this season, remember that it is more than giving presents and attending festive celebrations. It is the attitude in your heart that counts. Show sensitivity to those you meet—even on the road.

## ***Character First! Mexico***

Mexico City is big. Very big. If you put the populations of Boston, Philadelphia, and Dallas in one city, it still would not equal the capital of Mexico. And in early November, something big was happening in the Presidente Intercontinental Hotel.

For three days, representatives gathered from across Mexico to learn how to be Associate Trainers for *Character First!* In a city of 22 million, 17 trainers might not seem like many. In a nation of 96 million, that number is woefully small. But to these individuals, that does not matter. There is a need—character—and they will do everything in their power to help fill that need.

Leading the effort to bring *Character First!* to Mexico is Itzel Cabrera, director of the Mexico branch office. With her father, Francisco, Itzel is investing her life in bringing the solution to the needs that face her country. Her diligent labor has already assisted in the *Character First!* Mexico web site, as well as a soon-to-be-released Spanish version of the popular book *Achieving True Success: How to Build Character as a Family*.



**Attendees at the recent *Character First!* training in Mexico are excited about sharing character with their country.**

For the November training, Larry Rhoads, director of *Character First!*, and John Burnett, director of the International Association of Character Cities, flew down. They presented the instruction through translators. Says Burnett, “The trainers were excited! They kept asking question after question...They know that character is the solution to help their country be successful.”

*Character First!* salutes the men and women around the world who are working in every level of society to restore good character. Your labor is not in vain.

### ***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.