

Building CHARACTER

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CHARACTER FIRST! IACC
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF CHARACTER EDUCATORS

www.characterfirst.com

Addressing Character

"You get more of what you praise." Although this phrase has been repeated so often it almost seems a cliché, ADESA in Buffalo, New York, has been proving its truth. This auction company started using *Character First!* in November 1999 and the result has been steady, sustained progress.

Public recognition is the most important part of the character emphasis at this branch, says Warren Clauss, the general manager for Buffalo. The highlight of the monthly employee meetings is the time allotted to each department head to recognize the employees in his or her division. With almost 500 employees, this is no small time commitment. However, it is worth it, says Mr. Clauss. "I have some employees in their sixties, and this is the first time they have ever been recognized for anything in their entire career. They thank me for praising them, and they treasure their certificate. You know you've hit home when you hear that."

The character emphasis is reflected in the company finances. "Last year we won the Ford Quality award for the entire country," Mr. Clauss says. "Was that because we are a

Character First! company? I don't [necessarily] think so. But I do think that by training for character our employees have a better work experience, and that is reflected in the way they treat our customers."

Character First! was ideal for ADESA, since the corporation had already decided on eight corporate values that all 60 branches supported. These values, including integrity, teamwork, and customer care, have been enhanced and reinforced by the forty-nine character qualities taught through *Character First!*.

But why do you need character in an auction company? Mr. Clauss contends that "in a service industry it's paramount to have these values on your sleeve, wearing them day in and day out. It's important for the customer."



The management team of ADESA in Buffalo, NY has experienced the power of sincere character-based recognitions.

Punctuality vs. Tardiness

Showing esteem for others by doing the right thing at the right time

Five aspects of punctuality:

- Be at the right place at the right time.
- Prepare for unexpected delays.
- Do your work ahead of time.
- Plan a daily schedule and keep it.
- Do not fall into the trap of "just one more."



Life-Saving Punctuality

Helen wanted to help people, especially sick people, no matter the challenges she might experience. She overcame dyslexia and tuberculosis to graduate at the top of her high school class. She then attended Johns Hopkins Medical School, where she was able to fulfill her lifelong dream of becoming a doctor.

Upon graduation, she was assigned to the pediatric cardiac unit. It was to this unit that "blue babies" were sent. These babies, because of an unknown heart problem, had bluish skin and short lives.

Helen dedicated herself to finding the cause of their ailment. After nearly two years of research and analysis, a solution was almost ready.

Baby Eileen, a very small patient in the cardiac unit, desperately needed Helen's potentially lifesaving, but untested, operation. Helen set aside last-minute refinements and agreed to the surgery.

After working for hours, the surgeons removed the last clamp. Eileen's face turned a healthy pink for the first time in her life. Helen's work was completed just in time—this little girl would live!

The heart of punctuality is esteem for others. Helen Brooke Taussig dedicated her life to esteeming others, and thus saved thousands of lives. She was punctual and she became a hero.

“It produced an almost instant visible behavior change with inmates.”

—Captain Cliff Uranga

Power of Positive Role Models

Character Cities are sending in reports of civic pride and community involvement, but what happens when you apply a character emphasis to those who are perhaps rejected by the rest of society—the incarcerated? In Oklahoma, the Oklahoma County Detention Center is discovering the results.

The character emphasis at this detention center started when Argyl Dick, chaplain of the detention center, was approached regarding character training for the juvenile delinquents. The emphasis worked so well that it has now been broadened to having positive role models at every level of the center.

Chaplain Dick states, “We are dealing with people that do not have—have never had—a role model.

While they are incarcerated, what better place to see a demonstration of good character on a day-to-day basis?”

Captain Cliff Uranga adds, “We have to be role models for the people we are responsible for. The only way to do that is by displaying character that will result in behavior change.”

A character emphasis is being implemented by training the supervisory staff, instructing the inmates, and praising demonstrations of good character. Everyone is impacted—from the top down. Staff are increasingly aware of the need to praise those under them. Those who are hardened by constant exposure to the tragedies around them have a renewed vision. Chaplain Dick concludes, “*Character First!* has given them a hope that things can be better.”



The Oklahoma County Detention Center has seen value in emphasizing character.

Just in Time

A fire was threatening to burn down the entire shopping district. The townspeople seemed helpless to do anything.

Suddenly, a truck filled with farm workers came speeding down a hill toward the fire. The crowd moved back as the truck drove into the flames. The workers jumped out and beat at the fire with their coats, miraculously bringing it under control.

The city was so grateful for the men's heroism that they gave to each a plaque and a \$1,000 reward. After the ceremony, a newsman interviewed the driver and asked him what he was going to do with the money. Without a moment's hesitation the man replied, "You can be sure the first thing I'm gonna do is to fix the brakes on my truck."

Do you do the right thing at the right time on purpose, or because you have no other choice?

adapted from an account by Brian L. Harbour

New Year Resolutions

It's that time of year again: time for students to look ahead and set goals for what they want to accomplish during the next 12 months. Some goals may be academic, some physical, some personal, and others spiritual.

However, setting goals is only the first step to making new year resolutions. The second step is to identify which character qualities are necessary to accomplish those goals. For example, it takes:



- Diligence to learn new skills
- Thriftiness to save money
- Endurance to build strength
- Self-control to eat wisely
- Determination to overcome habits
- Enthusiasm to excel at work
- Patience to withstand trials

The final step for maintaining resolutions is to establish regular accountability. Students should write down their goals and schedule time at the beginning of every month to review their resolutions and evaluate their progress. By sharing their goals with a parent, teacher, or friend, students can find outside motivation to maintain their commitments.

Character Council Conference

Are you interested in launching or strengthening a Character Council in your community? Come to Oklahoma City January 31–February 1, 2002 to learn how. For details, contact IACC at (405) 815-0001, ext. 272, conferences@charactercities.org, or [download the brochure](#).

New Website!

We have expanded our presence on the Internet. Visit www.characterfirst.com for complete information on our services and resources for businesses, schools, and cities.

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.