

Building CHARACTER

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CHARACTER FIRST! IACC
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF CHARACTER EDUCATORS

www.characterfirst.com

An Ordinary Story

"We're just a bunch of accountants. We're not that creative." So says Don Murphy, managing partner of Barfield, Murphy, Shank, and Smith, an accounting firm in Birmingham, Alabama. No one expects—or wants—accountants to be creative. But when it is time to implement a character emphasis, will a "by the book" approach produce quantifiable results? Apparently so.

Barfield, Murphy did not have any outstanding problems when they began their character emphasis eighteen months ago. Turnover was low. There were few, if any, Workers' Compensation claims. However, there were 60 employees. Don Murphy saw those employees not as potential problems, but as 60 opportunities to strengthen the company, the community, and ultimately, the world. So when he saw *Character First!* materials on display, he knew it was what his company needed.

The company began a character emphasis in August 2000. They held training, scheduled regular meetings, and began praising for character. Nothing extraordinary, nothing extreme. Regardless, changes occurred. Slowly, almost

imperceptibly, employees began praising one another for character instead of achievement. They began to take home what they had learned and apply it in the family.

Murphy says, "Our company is definitely a better place to work." An obvious statement to make, perhaps. But its simplicity belies its truth. After all, shouldn't that be the goal of every company, every manager, every employee—to make the world, in some small way, a better place? Barfield, Murphy, Shank, and Smith did. And maybe, just maybe, someday they will find out what an impact they had beyond the walls of their organization.

What about you? What are you doing, each day, every day, to invest in others? Are you praising good character? Are you making right choices? Persevere, and someday you may learn how you have, in some way, changed the world.



The headquarters of Barfield, Murphy, Shank, and Smith, an accounting firm in Birmingham, Alabama

Creativity vs. Underachievement

*Approaching a need,
a task, or an idea from
a new perspective*

Five aspects of creativity:

- Use your talents for good.
- See things from more than one perspective.
- Use principles to solve problems.
- Learn all you can.
- Look for new ways to be a person of character.



Creative Achievement

His mother abandoned him when he was just a baby, and when he was nine, his father died. He was soon on his own and got a job sweeping floors in a garage.

He persuaded the mechanics to let him help with repairs, and by age 15 was foreman of the garage. Here he began learning and developing new ideas.

When he joined the Army in World War I, no one knew of his mechanical training. When they learned of his ability, he was in demand by everyone who needed anything fixed. By the end of the

war, he was a sergeant teaching classes on electrical wiring.

It was not until after his return to civilian life that he developed the technology that changed the way a nation operated. A broken truck and spoiled load of poultry presented him with a challenge—could he succeed where many had failed by developing a refrigerated truck? He took the challenge and won. He didn't stop there. He used his newly discovered technology to develop cooling units in planes, trains, and ships. In World War II, his ideas kept lifesaving food, blood, and medical supplies cool and useable.

No one knows how many lives were saved through the work of Frederick McKinley Jones. He was creative, and he became a hero.

Defining Terms

On a recent seminar tour in Western Australia, *Character First!* representatives encountered several questions regarding the appropriateness of qualities such as humility, obedience, and tolerance. It soon became apparent that these words meant different things to different people.

In one teacher's mind, *humility* meant that children should never question an elder. Another person viewed *obedience* as blindly following instructions. In a mining town, government or environmental regulations were often ignored in the name of *tolerance*.

It has been said that "he who defines the terms wins the battle." If children do not clearly understand what is required for good character, they will never gain victory over bad habits.

This need is why *Character First!* defines each quality with precise language. *Character First!* also shows five specific applications—or "I

Wills"—for each quality so that none are misinterpreted. When teaching your children, do not forget to study these definitions and discuss the key concepts together.

Know the character qualities and their definitions, and you will have started on the road to building good character.



Educators in Australia learn how to define good character through nature stories.

"I'm glad you spell out each quality so clearly."

—a teacher in Western Australia

Automatic No?

During a business meeting in a small country church, the pastor and his deacons were discussing the need for a brighter sanctuary. Finally, one of the deacons made a practical suggestion.

"Pastor, I think we need a chandelier for the church."

Immediately another deacon stood up and proclaimed, "No, I'm against it!"

"Why don't we need a chandelier, Brother deacon?" asked the pastor, curious as to his rejection of the very logical idea.

The deacon answered pompously, "Well first of all, nobody in the church can spell it. Second, nobody in the church can play it. And third, what this church needs more than anything else is more light!"

How often do you reject new ideas just because you don't understand them? Learn to weigh every suggestion, however ridiculous it may seem to you, and find its merit.

True Heroes

Who's your hero—a sports star, political figure, or successful businessperson? What makes them a hero in your eyes—their talent, money, or possessions?

On April 11, 2002, the Nacogdoches Economic Development Corporation was pleased to host Craig MacFarlane at their monthly Community Leaders' Breakfast. Craig's name may



not sound familiar, but it should. He has won dozens of gold medals in various sports, and is a former Olympic wrestler. Does that make him a hero? Not necessarily.

Craig is blind. He lost his sight in an accident at age two. Yet he overcame this tragedy and won numerous awards. Does that make him a hero? Not especially.

What makes Craig a hero is his character. He demonstrated determination, enthusiasm, and patience. He has shown good character, and today he speaks across the nation in front of thousands of people, challenging them to demonstrate good character as well. Craig is a true hero.

Who's your hero? Is it someone who deserves to wear that title? The greatest hero you ever see may be next door, daily living a life of good character. *Character First!* challenges communities across the nation to find those who deserve to be called heroes—those who are quietly showing good character—and honor them.

Give the children of your community genuine heroes, people they can seek to pattern their lives after. Seek out and emulate those who deserve to be called heroes and perhaps someday you, too, will be called a hero.

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.