

Building CHARACTER

November 2002 Edition

Kenowa Puts Character First

Metal fabrication is a tough field. Competition is intense. So why, when faced with a recession, did Kenowa Industries cut coffee, salaries, 401k donations—anything except *Character First!*? President Larry Heyboer says, “That would have been an easy thing to do. It’s a big expense. But it’s important enough that we wanted to keep going.”

Located in the Character City of Holland, Michigan, Kenowa Industries has fifty employees. While some companies have trouble getting their employees to read the character bulletin, those at Kenowa are ready—even eager—to discuss the information covered that month. What makes the difference?

Says Heyboer, “We hold mid-monthly meetings in each department to discuss the booklet. Employees know that every one else will have read the bulletin, so they don’t want to go in unprepared. They know we will call on them and ask for their perspective. They want to be ready.”

The departmental meetings are in addition to monthly

company-wide character quality introductions. At these meetings, on their anniversary with the company, employees are praised.

“I think some of them are surprised by the quality we pick,” relates Heyboer, “They didn’t know that was a recognizable quality, that someone would actually notice that and praise for it.” The results of the character emphasis have been dramatic. “We’ve seen employees turn their lives around. Alcoholics, drug addicts, those stuck in dead-end jobs—I’ve seen them transformed.”

What is the key that has led to these changes? Heyboer is concise. “Persistence. You’ve got to stay with it, talk about it constantly, surround yourself with it. Our lunchroom is decorated with character posters, so that’s what you see—good character!”

Such determination—in the face of a recession, skepticism, or resistance—will yield future benefits as Kenowa Industries continues to put character first.

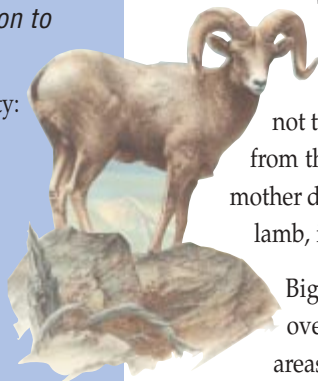


Hospitality vs. Loneliness

Cheerfully sharing food, shelter, or conversation to benefit others

Five aspects of hospitality:

- Welcome visitors.
- Make others feel important.
- Prepare for guests.
- Gladly share your things.
- Do not expect anything in return.



Agile Hosts

Maneuvering over mountain slopes, a ewe finds a protected, quiet spot. Hidden by rocky ledges and brush, she gives birth to one or two lambs.

The mother licks the wet lamb dry, allowing the lamb to bond with its mother. Bonding does not take place if the lamb is separated from the mother for half an hour. If the mother does not establish a bond with her lamb, it dies from neglect.

Bighorn sheep maneuver easily over the mountains, feed in open areas, and find shelter in caves. They are rarely found alone. The older sheep welcome others and give of their knowledge and experience. Without the expertise of their elders, inexperienced sheep would be in danger from mountain lions, coyotes, and starvation.

Squanto chose to share his knowledge and experience with the Pilgrims when they first came to America. Without his hospitality, they would never have survived in the New World. Because of his experience, the Pilgrims harvested abundantly that first year. They wanted to express their gratefulness for the help of the Indians and provision of food, and thus they chose to celebrate the first Day of Thanks.

Thanksgiving is a great time to share food and conversation with friends and family. Plan to make this year’s holiday extra-special by trying a few new ideas. What about mentioning a character quality you are grateful for in each of your guests? You could make small fruit baskets to distribute to your coworkers. The possibilities are endless! You will be amazed at the results as you benefit others through hospitality.

“It is time to define exactly what character looks like.”
—Peggy Huckeba

Higher Character Education

What is different about Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas? The university recently passed a resolution making it the first official Campus of Character.

And what prompted this admirable resolve? “We wanted to educate the campus, specifically define character qualities, and heighten student awareness about the importance of character,” says Peggy Huckeba, Assistant Dean of Students. The goal of administrators is to teach character qualities and give applications to impact the everyday lives of students. Showing students the benefits of character is high on the list.

How did they do this? They began by training the resident life coordinators and resident assistants. Posters featuring character qualities are prominently displayed in dorms, and student government leaders speak on the character quality each month. The same quality is shown on the screen before and after the daily announcements, while

resident assistants emphasize the quality in the dorms with bulletin boards and other ideas. Resident life coordinators meet with the assistant dean and focus on one character quality weekly, beginning the month with the quality the school is emphasizing that month.

Has this emphasis made any difference? “It’s been really good for us,” Huckeba said. “Character is being more valued than it was before.”

We applaud this innovative university, and salute all those who daily choose to put good character first.



Food for Thought

Two friends met at a restaurant for dinner, and each requested file of sole. When the waiter returned with their order, the two pieces of fish were on the same platter. One was large and the other small. One of the men proceeded to serve his friend. Placing the small piece on a plate, he handed it across the table. “Well, you certainly do have nerve!” exclaimed his friend.

“What’s troubling you?” asked the other. “Look what you’ve done,” he answered. “You’ve given me the little piece and kept the big piece for yourself.”

“How would you have done it?” the man asked. His friend replied, “If I were serving, I would have given you the big piece.” “Well,” replied the man, “I’ve got it, haven’t I?”

Do you cheerfully share what you have with others? Are you willing to sacrifice what you want to benefit those around you?

Building a Brighter Future

“Our liberty is not a license to do any thing we want, but the freedom to do what we ought. And you cannot have a free society without a moral foundation. Character crafts the human good and is the cornerstone of American citizenship.” The luncheon attendees listened closely as Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell spoke. “If we want better communities, we have to be engaged. Values without virtue is just lip service....We must lead by personal example.”

In addition to being located in a county of character, Greenville, Ohio is a City of Character, and the Character Council of Darke County was excited to be a co-sponsor of this event. Secretary Blackwell’s words and enthusiastic endorsement of character meshed perfectly with the mission of the Character Council. Says Dave Keiser, treasurer of the Character Council, “After the luncheon, one of the largest employers in our area came up and asked how he could get involved with our county-wide character emphasis. This was definitely one of the highlights of our

time as a Character Council.”

In Greenville, Ohio, city employees are given a character recognition in the month of the anniversary of their employment. The monthly character quality is printed on the pay stub of city and county employees. Various industries feature the character quality in their company newsletters. Keiser relates, “A lot is happening, but we wish we could move faster.”

In the words of Secretary Blackwell, “Our future is ours to create. Let’s do it by remembering the strength of character.”



The Character Council of Darke County, Ohio is excited about the support that Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell is demonstrating.

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.