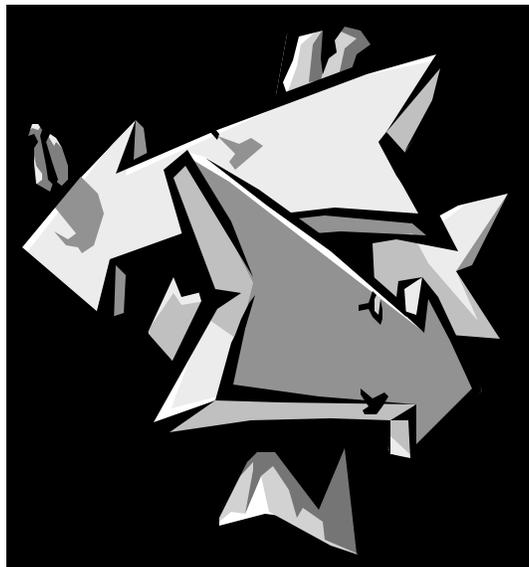


# the ethics box



***A Resource from  
Allegheny County's Promise  
and The Content of Our Character Project***

## Foreword to *The Content of Our Character: Voices of Generation X*

*We offer these guiding principles —to which we pledge to adhere — and invite our generation, and the American public generally, to manifest honesty to democratic promises, exhibit compassion toward human frailties, and observe mores to act ethically.*

“Each age, it is found, must write its own books;  
or rather, each generation for the next succeeding.  
The books of an older period will not fit this.”

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

### ***So we strive...***

We gathered in Durham, North Carolina, on August 28, 1998, to share ideals with one another and to begin to construct our vision for this American generation. We disagreed, and continue to disagree, about many policy choices. Yet, on that day, we resolved that we could express a shared vision for principled leadership. From the cacophony of our ethnic, religious, and political voices, we affirmed common ethical principles that promote democratic participation and generosity of spirit. American governance — in politics, markets, civil society, and communities — rests upon a vision of moral leadership that celebrates individual freedom and civic responsibility.

“The ideals which have lighted me on my way  
and time after time given me new courage to face life cheerfully  
have been truth, goodness, and beauty.”

*Albert Einstein*

### ***So we strive...***

We honor the enlightened values that forged this country, and we further propose new ideals that echo what Vaclav Havel describes as our ‘higher responsibility.’ Amidst contending allegiances, economic inequalities, and varying notions of justice, we as a nation must nurture what remains of our shared trust. We implore political leaders to obey principles of the common good, honesty, courage, and visionary purpose. We urge market leaders to abide by principles of equity, transparency, and sustainability. We call upon leaders in civil society to observe principles of human dignity and accountability. We encourage community leaders to follow principles of equity, selflessness, and mutual responsibility. Our hope arises from these ideals long dreamed and still imagined.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us. . . .  
Your playing small does not serve the world. . . .  
We were born to manifest the glory of Spirit which is within us.  
It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone.”

*Quoted by Nelson Mandela*

### ***So we strive...***

We view our covenant as a preamble to the broader discussions about America’s leadership that will occur in the years ahead. We offer these guiding principles — to which we pledge to adhere — and invite our generation, and the American public generally, to manifest honesty to democratic promises, exhibit compassion toward human frailties, and observe mores to act ethically. We must be the ones, confident in the values of our ideals, who advance the American legacy served by visionaries such as President Abraham Lincoln and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We endeavor to spark and enhance spirited dialogue about the fiber of our common good. We respectfully request that you join us in our call for restlessness, for reflection upon the *content of our character*.

***Gregg Behr***  
***March 1999***

## INTRODUCTION

*This country cannot afford to be materially rich and spiritually poor.*

**-Abraham Lincoln**

This "Ethics Tool Box" was created and designed to foster teaching, communicate ideas, and spark dialogue about ethics and leadership. As a sponsor of this resource, the Content of Our Character Project has posed the following critical question:

What shared values uphold the America  
of which you dream and for which you strive?

Rich in content that will challenge you and others to examine your definition(s) of ethical leadership and to question what builds communities of character, this Ethics Tool Box suggests ideas, poses questions, and offers lesson plans to you, as well as to trainers, teachers, directors, and preachers. The enclosed resources have been gathered from some exemplar, local and national programs promoting ethical analysis, leadership education, and civic engagement. Such programs are working within and among communities, endeavoring to enrich the "content of our character."

Be part of this! Use this Ethics Tool Box in classrooms, board rooms, communities of faith, civic meetings, and circles of families and friends. This resource is intended for all Americans, especially young Americans.

Each of us must go forth, engaging one another in conversation about the ethical principles that guide our decisions and actions. We must act with integrity and lead by example. Only by doing so will we discover, and perhaps embrace, the content of our character, and that of our communities.

**Daniel Horgan**  
**Editor, "The Ethics Tool Box"**

L e t ' s B u i l d . . .

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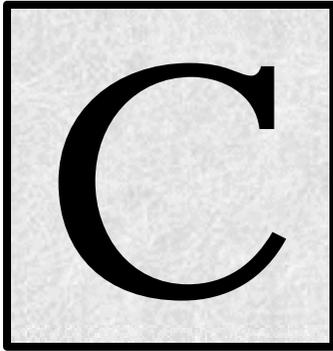
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# Children

**“Heartwood is keeping Hope alive—for children, for teachers, for parents, for anyone who understands that our country urgently needs a renewed ethical base.”**

**-The Heartwood Institute**

To develop our own individual character and the character of our community, we must collectively focus our energy on children, the future generation of doctors, lawyers, politicians, community activists, teachers, and entrepreneurs. One such way to develop the character in our children is to share with them the morals and lessons behind the characters in childrens’ books.

The Heartwood Institute is a non-profit educational organization whose mission is to promote the understanding and practice of ethical values that are the foundation of community among all people, with particular emphasis on children and families.



Heartwood offers pre-K and elementary ethics curriculums that use multi-cultural literature to help children understand seven universal attributes: Courage, Loyalty, Justice, Respect, Hope, Honesty, and Love.

With **courage**, children gain the state or quality of mind that enables one to face danger with self-possession, confidence, and resolution.

**Heartwood Story Quote:**

The hand that held back the sea was numb, but the boy hugged the dog with his free arm. “Someone will come soon,” he said....But he wasn’t sure he believed it himself.

—Thomas Locker, *The Boy Who Held Back the Sea*

Practicing **loyalty**, children achieve a state or quality of being that is faithful to a person, ideal, or custom.

**Heartwood Story Quote:**

“I am standing by him,” Pee Wee Reese said to the world. “This man is my teammate.”

—Peter Golenbock, *Teammates*

With *justice*, children gain a sense of moral rightness, equity, fairness.

**Heartwood Story Quote:**

“Today I have learned a great truth,” he proclaimed. “Strength, though vital, must always be in the service of wisdom. For that reason, Toeman will become next emperor of this land.”

—David Wisniewski, *The Warrior and the Wise Man*

*Respect* provides a child with esteem for, or sense of worth of, a person, personal quality, or trait.

**Heartwood Story Quote:**

In the evening Alice sat on her grandfather’s knee and listened to his stories of faraway places. When he had finished, Alice would say, “When I grow up, I too will go to faraway places, and when I grow old, I too will live beside the sea.”

“That is all very well, little Alice,” said her grandfather, “but there is a third thing you must do.”

“What is that?” asked Alice.

“You must do something to make the world more beautiful,” said her grandfather.

—Barbara Cooney, *Miss Rumphius*

Children must find *hope*, or belief, desire, and trust.

**Heartwood Story Quote:**

I was afraid, Grandfather, until you called to me. Tell me again what you said.

I said, “Don’t be afraid, Boy! Trust your darkness! Go like the wind!”

—Martin and Archambault, *Knots on a Counting Rope*

With *honesty*, children understand the quality of being honorable in principles, intentions, and actions.

**Heartwood Story Quotes:**

“Because you are such an honest boy,” the old man said, “...do not be surprised...if you find your axe to be much more of a treasure than the others.”

—Demi, *Chen Ping and His Magic Axe*

Children seek *love*—an intense, affectionate concern for, and of, another person.

**Heartwood Story Quote:**

“I am the king. I am also the hungry boy with whom you shared a yam in the forest and the old woman to whom you made a gift of sunflower seeds. But you know me best as Nyoka. Because I have been all of these, I know you to be the Most Worthy and Most Beautiful Daughter in the Land.”

—John Steptoe, *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters*

The childrens’ books selected for inclusion in the program include classics, folk literature, legends, and contemporary tales in which students can discover similarities in values among children from many cultures. In addition to the Ethics Curriculum Book List below, there is also the Heartwood BridgeBuilders Library, which consists of additional ethical literature for children. You can review this list and others by reviewing [www.heartwoodethics.org](http://www.heartwoodethics.org).

**Level A (pre-K or K)**

Brave Martha  
Salt Hands  
Lucy's Picture  
Jessica  
Doorbell Rang  
On Mother's Lap  
Miss Tizzy  
Two Eyes, a Nose, and a Mouth  
At the Crossroads  
The Carrot Seed  
The Empty Pot  
Jamaica's Find

**Level B (K or Grade 1)**

Thunder Cake  
Ira Sleeps Over  
Dogger  
A Chair for My Mother  
Amazing Grace  
Mike Mulligan and his Steam Shovel  
Masai and I  
Silent Lotus  
Owl Moon  
Too Many Tamales  
Sam Bangs and Moonshine  
Mama, Do You Love Me?

**Level C (Grade 1 or 2)**

Abiyoyo  
The Very Last First Time  
The Legend of Bluebonnet  
The Seven Chinese Brothers

Androcles and the Lion  
Sam and the Lucky Money  
How My Parents Learned to Eat  
Angel Child, Dragon Child  
We Be Warm 'Till Springtime Comes  
The Empty Pot  
Maggie and the Pirate

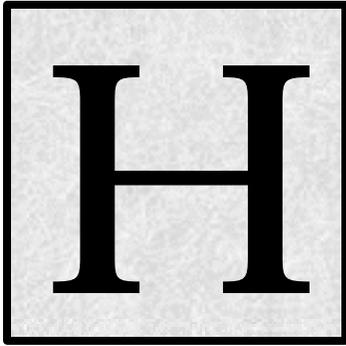
**Level D (Grade 2 or 3)**

Follow the Drinking Gourd  
The Two Brothers  
Nettie's Trip South  
The Tale of the Mandarin Duck  
The Great Kapok Tree  
Chicken Sunday  
Fly Away Home  
Grandfather's Journey  
A Day's Work  
Our King Has Horns!

**Level E (Grade 3 or 4)**

The Flame of Peace  
The People Who Hugged The Trees  
Cornrows  
The Nightingale  
Prince Boghole  
Crow Boy  
The Wall  
How Many Days to America  
Knots on a Counting Rope  
The Gold Coin  
Fire on The Mountain  
Annie and the Old One

\*You can contact *The Heartwood Institute* at 1-800-HEART-10 or [www.heartwoodethics.org](http://www.heartwoodethics.org).



# Hero

**“The world needs heroes, people with vision and courage, people who are willing to stick their necks out and take responsibility for solving tough problems, on the planet and on the block.”**

**-The Giraffe Project**

Everyone, whether young or old, has a hero in his/her life. A hero may be a parent, grandparent, relative, priest, rabbi, teacher, coach, friend, leader, or stranger. These heroes provide us with the motivation and the drive to better our lives in an effort to emulate the goodness being done by others. When building our own individual character or the character of our community, we must examine who our heroes are and strive to incorporate their values into our decisions and our lives in general.



The Giraffe Heroes Program is a story-based K-12 curriculum that teaches courageous compassion and active citizenship by spotlighting the stories of real heroes, Giraffes. The curriculum combines character education with service learning, guiding students through the experience of character in action. Who are Giraffes? They're men, women and kids, and they're from many races, religions and backgrounds—all sticking their necks out for the common good. They're truck drivers, students, retirees, artists, waitresses, doctors, homemakers, business people and teachers. Since 1982 the nonprofit Giraffe Project has found over 900 of them, then told their stories in national and local

media, and in schools—inspiring others to take on the challenges they see. Giraffes are working on many different issues, from poverty to gang violence to environmental pollution. One element that's common to all of them is that they lead meaningful lives. Win, lose or draw they're living fully, giving their all. They know why they get up in the morning, why they do things that may be scary and difficult but must be done if their cause is to be served. Their stories give students models of active citizenship, showing the young people ways of participating fully in this democracy.

## ***A Free Giraffe Lesson***

Here's an exercise that works at all grade levels, though better at second grade and up than at kindergarten and first. Figure it will take at least 90 minutes, in at least two sessions.

- 1** Ask students who their heroes are. Write them all on the board without comment, and don't attach students' names to the heroes.
- 2** Tell the stories of at least two Giraffes from the website: **[www.giraffe.org](http://www.giraffe.org)**.
- 3** Spark a class discussion about the Giraffes, the risks they took, and the common good that their actions served. Tell students that "Giraffe" heroes stick their necks out for others.

**4** Go through the list of heroes on the board and ask what risks each of them has taken and who they helped by their actions. Without embarrassing the nominators, guide the class through a discussion that helps them see that being rich, talented, gorgeous or bulletproof can make people celebrities, but not necessarily heroes. (For the bulletproof ones, remind them that it isn't brave to do something courageous if you know you can't get hurt.)

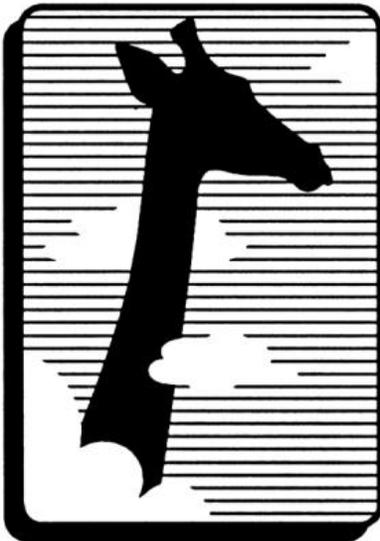
**5** Divide the class into small teams. Ask each one to brainstorm several possible Giraffe heroes and to select one to present to the group. Different teams could be asked to focus on heroes in the news, literature, history, movies, the community, etc.

**6** Each team presents its hero's story using drama, art, narrative, song—encourage them to be imaginative.

**7** Ask the class to discuss each person whose story has been presented, focusing on the risks taken and the caring shown. Make a new list of group heroes, including all those who have indeed stuck their necks out for others. Don't forget to include anyone from the first list who turned out to be a real hero.

**8** Students can present these heroes to the school in a Hall of Heroes display, at an assembly, and/or in P.A. announcements.

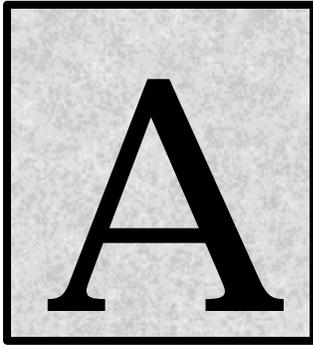
## ***Stick Your Neck Out***



***The Giraffe Project***

The Giraffe Project can be reached by contacting:

Office@giraffe.org  
360-221-7989  
PO Box 759  
Langley WA 98260  
www.giraffe.org



# Activism

**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world: indeed it's the only thing that ever has!”**

**- Margaret Meade**

There comes a time when we must refrain from complaining about the state of our society and take action. Dreams have never been fulfilled by pure luck. It takes a certain amount of passion, independent will, and determination to seek and witness change within ourselves and others. As thoughtful citizens striving for a bright future full of successful endeavors, we must begin today by evaluating the state of our society and the nature of social issues that flood the media we consume.

The Boston Young Leaders Forum, organized in concert with the Content of Our Character Project, convenes public meetings and “ethics hours” that unite young people in Boston in an effort to increase dialogue over various social issues. The following are examples of issues and questions that can be used as the foundation for ethical think tanks. It is more effective to begin reflection through real life stories, movies, news reports, or documentaries. For example, one may begin discussions about ethical matters related to immigration by reading a short story on an immigrant, reviewing an immigration documentary, or hosting an immigrant as a speaker.



## **Topic: Youth Initiatives**

- Are military veterans good role models for America’s youth?
- What role should government play in teaching values to young people?
- Are national service initiatives (e.g., AmeriCorps) worthwhile public programs?

## **Topic: School Violence**

- To what extent does violence in the media contribute to school violence?
- Who should determine the values taught in public schools?
- Are safety locks and background checks sufficient to keep guns away from children?

## **Topic: Drugs**

- Is it important to tackle the drug problem from the supply side (e.g., military aid to Columbia) or the demand side (e.g., drug education programs)?
- What standards should be set for drug sentencing in order to combat drug crimes?

## **Topic: Community Sprawl**

- How does community sprawl relate to education, crime prevention, and environmental clean-up?
- What makes a community “livable”?

**Topic: Immigration**

- Should the United States rely on increased immigration to combat labor shortages?
- How will increased immigration affect both the economy and society of our nation?
- How should the United States respond to illegal immigration?

**Topic: Digital Divide**

- Is universal access to the Internet important?
- How should government funds be used to provide access to technology that is constantly changing?
- Should a universal standard be set for Internet access in public schools?

**Topic: Religion**

- Why is the separation of church and state important?
- Should religious beliefs influence policy decisions? How are religious beliefs different from moral codes and belief systems?

**Topic: Abortion**

- What right, if any, does the federal government have to dictate the choices a woman can make concerning her pregnancy?
- Should federal money be used to fund abortions?

**Topic: Affirmative Action**

- Does affirmative action bring us toward a greater level of equality in the United States? What does “equality” mean? Equality of opportunity? Equality of status?
- How can the federal government take steps towards equality for all while also preventing a new type of “reverse discrimination?”

**Topic: Gay Rights**

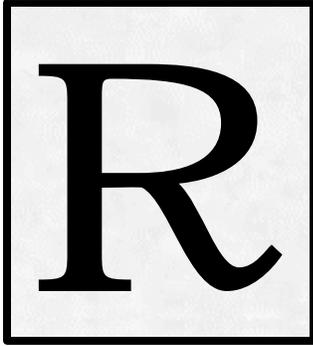
- Should gay couples receive the same legal protections as married couples?
- What steps should the federal government take to secure the rights of the gay community?
- How does the question of gay rights also involve other issues such as religion and the government, healthcare reform, and affirmative action?

**Topic: Death Penalty**

- Does the government have the right to punish its citizens with the death penalty?
- Is the death penalty an effective deterrent to crime?

**Topic: Accountability in the Education System**

- How important is accountability in the education system?
- If local governments use federal money to fund school programs, who is ultimately accountable if those programs fail? How are they accountable?
- Should a national standard be used to evaluate public schools?



# Respect

**"...All the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace... Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love."**

**-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Author Arthur Krop wrote in the *New York Times*, "The American ideal is not that we all agree with each other, or even like each other, every minute of the day. It is rather that we will respect each other's rights, especially the right to be different, and that, at the end of the day, we will understand that we are one people, one country, and one community. And our well-being is inextricably bound up with the well-being of each and every one of our fellow citizens."

It is important to respect the differences that each of us holds below the surface of our character. Just as one cannot judge a book by its cover, one cannot judge the content of another's character by his/her surface tones. The challenge in life is to discover the lesson that each stranger or friend has to share with us, and it remains a challenge because one must step outside his or her own comfort zone and explore the perspective of another equally gifted individual.



## Who Am I to Oppress?

Read the following speech excerpt\* by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and then discuss the questions that follow in groups of 5-7 individuals (youth or adult).

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification - one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join

\*Reprinted with the permission of the Douglass Archives of American Public Address and D. Oetting.



hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers. I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day, this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my father's died, land of the Pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring!"

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

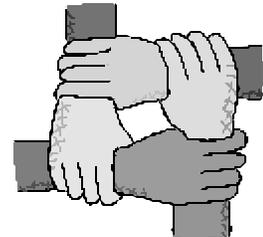
Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

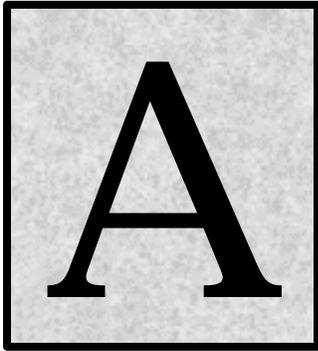
Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi - from every mountainside.

Let freedom ring. And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring - when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children - black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics - will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"



- For whom did Martin Luther King, Jr. show respect for in the above-quoted speech? Describe King's leadership style. Was he effective? Why or why not?
- What oppression existed in the context for which this speech was delivered? What oppression exists today?
- Describe an instance when you were oppressed.
- Describe an instance when you witnessed oppression and did not take action.
- Describe an instance when you oppressed someone.
- Describe an instance when you witnessed oppression and took action.

The objective of this exercise is to reflect on the oppression that exists among us and to illustrate that through simply respecting others, we are working to decrease the oppression that exists within our nation, our neighborhoods, our schools, and our families.



# Alliance

**“Reclaiming the next generation of Americans is a national challenge that requires a national response. That response is America’s Promise – The Alliance for Youth.”**

**-General Colin Powell**

Synergy is a powerful concept when it comes to building the character of a community. Granted, one individual can make a difference in the life of another; when several individuals are working towards a common goal, the results and success are often greater. It is challenging for all sectors of the community to unite around a common cause for various reasons. Unfortunately, some reasons are issues of ‘turf’, personal agendas, and miscommunication. However, when these issues are worked through and programs are actively supported by businesses, government, nonprofits, faith communities, and educational institutions, the character of a community develops into a respectable and admirable, synergistic model.

America’s Promise—the Alliance for Youth was developed in 1997 under the leadership of Retired General Colin Powell and the support of Presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton. The mission of America’s Promise is to mobilize people from every sector of American life to build the character and competence of our nation's youth by fulfilling Five Promises for young people:

- **Ongoing relationships with caring adults - parents, mentors, tutors, or coaches;**
- **Safe places with structured activities during non-school hours;**
- **Healthy start and future;**
- **Marketable skills through effective education; and**
- **Opportunities to give back through community service.**

America’s Promise has created a diverse and growing Alliance of nearly 500 national organizations called Partners, which make large-scale national commitments to fulfill one or more of the Five Promises. These organizations agree to expand existing youth programs or create new ones and hold themselves accountable by measuring their progress. Spanning all sectors of society, these groups include corporations, not-for-profits, higher-education and faith-based groups, associations and federal agencies, and arts and culture organizations. Most Partners expand the scale and impact of their efforts by collaborating with other groups, such as direct youth service providers.

More than 550 community and state partners across the nation have united to fulfill the Five Promises. These communities have formed grassroots coalitions among the public, private and not-for-profit sectors to generate more resources for young people who need them. Those who build community-wide alliances to fulfill all Five Promises for youth are known as Communities of Promise.

## **The Five Basic Promises: Guidelines for the Positive Development of Each Child and Young Person**

### **Ongoing relationship with a caring adult**

- Parents, relatives, and/or care givers are the primary source of positive adult relationships. With help, they can also serve as a key link to all five promises.
- For other adults that will serve as positive role models: face-to-face meeting with young person at least once a week (includes within groups) or structured one-on-one interaction scheduled bi-weekly or weekly.

### **Safe places and structures activities**

- Parents, family members, and/or care givers who provide quality time / structured activities
- Spend significant amount of non-school time every day in secure, supervised and adequately equipped sports programs, club activities, after school organizations, religious organizations, other community organizations
- Positive role models are present
- Accomplishments are recognized

### **Healthy Start**

- Pre-natal care and parenting support
- Access to “Success Six,” and Head Start,” or other early health interventions (children 0-6 years of age)
- Health insurance coverage— primary care, plus eye and dental
- Health education
- Served by a primary care physician
- Access to providers/facilities (school / healthcare professional)
- Nutritional access to “two square meals a day”

### **Marketable skills through effective education**

- Effective education with special emphasis on achieving and maintaining grade level in reading / mathematics
- Spend one hour per week (young people of working age) in an after school job or organized skill program
- Internship
- Apprenticeship
- Summer job

### **Opportunity to serve**

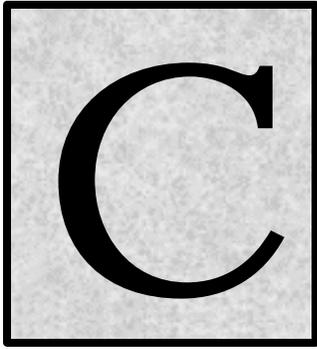
- Younger children exposed to service through family volunteering and school or faith service activities
- Serve in community / school 2 hrs or more per week or approximately 100 hrs per year (school aged youth)
- Service could help fulfill all five promises for additional children and young people

Through a partnership with America’s Promise, your organization is offered numerous resources that will connect and enhance your organization overall. These resources include assistance with communications (i.e., PSAs, radio spots, print ads), networking (i.e., Regional assistance, service trainings, conference workshops), and resource distribution (i.e., Report to the Nation, web site, Promise Bulletins). America’s Promise is a network itself, not defined or acting as an organization competing with others. Rather, America’s Promise helps you make the connection necessary for your growth, while paving a brighter future for youth across the nation.



**AMERICA'S PROMISE**  
THE ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH™

For additional information, contact  
[www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org) or 703-684-4500.



# Citizenship

**“The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all.”**

**-John F. Kennedy**

Through activism, we reflect on various social issues that surface internationally, nationally, or locally. Through our reflection, we often are motivated to take action and stand behind our opinions, demanding to be heard and respected. The critical key to effective activism is a thorough understanding of our citizenship. We must realize that our actions stimulate consequences that, in turn, affect more individuals and aspects of our society than we, as one individual, may comprehend.

The Center for Civic Education is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational corporation dedicated to fostering the development of informed, responsible participation in civic life by citizens committed to values and principles fundamental to American constitutional democracy. The mission of the Center is to promote an enlightened and responsible citizenry committed to democratic principles and actively engaged in the practice of democracy in the United States and other countries. Today, the Center administers a wide range of critically acclaimed curricular, teacher-training, and community-based programs. The principal goals of the Center's programs are to help students develop



- (1) an increased understanding of the institutions of American constitutional democracy and the fundamental principles and values upon which they are founded,
- (2) the skills necessary to participate as effective and responsible citizens, and
- (3) the willingness to use democratic procedures for making decisions and managing conflict.

## **National Standards for Civics and Government**

(The following questions are posed by the Center for Civic Education.)

### **What are the Basic Values and Principles of American Democracy?**

- What are the most important values and principles of American democracy?
- What are some important beliefs Americans have about themselves / government?
- Why is it important for Americans to share certain values, principles, and beliefs?
- What are the benefits of diversity in the United States?
- How should conflicts about diversity be prevented or managed?
- How can people work together to promote the values / principles of American democracy?

### **What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?**

- What does it mean to be a citizen of the United States?
- How does a person become a citizen?
- What are important rights in the United States?
- What are important responsibilities of Americans?
- What dispositions or traits of character are important to the preservation and improvement of American democracy?
- How can Americans participate in their government?
- What is the importance of political leadership and public service?
- How should Americans select leaders?



### **How Does the Government Established by the Constitution Embody the Purposes, Values, and Principles of American Democracy?**

- How are power and responsibility distributed, shared, and limited in the government established by the United States Constitution?
- What does the national government do?
- How are state and local governments organized and what do they do?
- Who represents you in local, state, and national governments?
- What is the place of law in the American constitutional system?
- How does the American political system provide for choice and opportunities for participation?

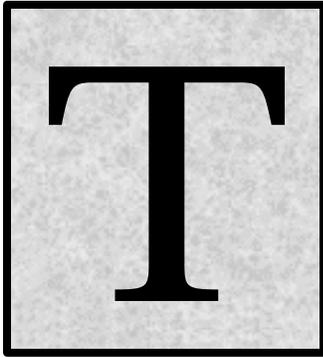
Another critical question, posed by the Content of Our Character Project, complements those questions listed above:

### **What shared values uphold the America of which you dream and for which you strive?**

Follow a popular four-step process of reflection to generate dialogue about this question:

1. **Think** individually about your own personal values and then the values you believe everyone should uphold.
2. **Write** down your reflections in either phrase or key word format.
3. **Pair** off with one individual and share your responses with him or her, allowing each other to both share before commenting or debating.
4. **Share** with the larger group your thoughts based on your own personal reflection and the reflections you have with your partner.

To contact the Center for Civic Education or to review their online curriculums, go to [www.civiced.org](http://www.civiced.org) or call 818-591-9321.



# Teach

**“You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give.”**

**—Winston Churchill**

The future of our communities and our nation depends upon the upbringing of our future leaders, our youth. It is often stated that this nation’s youth are our most valuable resource. If this is true, then we as a nation must be committed to inspiring a generation that says no to drugs and yes to peace, a generation that stands for its beliefs yet yearns to learn what it admittedly does not know. To raise such a generation, it will truly take the hands of a community, a community of caring adults seeking to better the lives of their children.

Big Brothers Big Sisters is the nation's oldest and largest youth mentoring organization. Since 1904, caring adult volunteers have been helping millions of children reach their full potential and fulfill their dreams. Our programs in all 50 states match kids with mentors who provide meaningful friendships and share fun experiences.

In a recent survey (conducted by Public/Private Ventures), children in mentoring relationships were:

- 46 percent less likely to begin using illegal drugs
- 27 percent less likely to begin using alcohol
- 53 percent less likely to skip school, and 37 percent less likely to skip a class
- more confident of their performance in schoolwork
- less likely to hit someone, and
- getting along better with their families.

There are numerous ways one can become actively involved in the life of a child as a caring adult, someone who truly teaches the lessons that open a child’s mind and helps them see their truest potential.

- Sign up today to serve as a Big Brother or Big Sister.
- Sponsor or participate in a Big for the Day event, a one-time, social and informal mentoring opportunity where an adult is matched with a child on the waiting list.
- Organize a mentoring program with your place of worship.
- Volunteer a few hours each week with a local after-school program.
- Read to children in a local pre-school or elementary school.
- Invite children to your place of employment during the national Job Shadow Day in February or on “Bring your children to work” day.
- Work in partnership with a local middle school or high school to sponsor a day of service in your community.

## “Ethics Mentor”

In an effort to promote dialogue about various social issues that are affecting the lives of our youth, there are endless possibilities to serve a youth as an “ethics mentor.” Often, youth are challenged by their family situation, peer group or simply the growing pains of life. An ethics mentor is an individual who is willing to combat life’s most profound questions as they relate to the healthy development of a child, including all aspects of his or her life. As part of an ethics mentoring relationship, you may be mentoring one-on-one or with a small group. Potential activities could include:

- Participation in community forums or “ethics hours”;
- Movie discussions that compare the challenges of film characters to real characters;
- Service projects designed to expose ourselves to a new culture or way of life;
- Book reviews that challenge the intellect in the processing of either fiction or nonfiction literature;
- Museum visits to explore various subjects and periods in time;
- Writing groups that share poetry, short stories, and other genres of literature in an effort to express ourselves to an outside population;
- Short chats in the coffeehouse over life’s burning issues for the week.

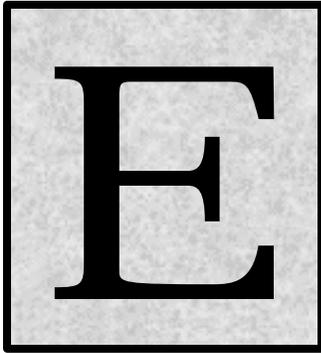
Regardless of where you go or what the foundation of your conversation is, those involved in an ethics mentoring relationship are learning from one another and opening each other’s eyes to a new experience, a new thought process, and a new perspective.

To learn more about mentoring in general, contact the following organizations:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America  
[www.bbbsa.org](http://www.bbbsa.org)  
215-567-7000

The National Mentoring Partnership  
[www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)  
703-224-2200





# Ethics

**“In law a man is guilty when he violates the rights of others.  
In ethics he is guilty if he only thinks of doing so.”**

**— Immanuel Kant**

To build the character of our community and ourselves, we must understand the critical need for a core set of principles that will guide our decision-making processes. These principles are necessary if we are to make ethical decisions.

The Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University supports the study and teaching of ethics and promotes moral reflection and commitment in personal, professional, community, and civic life. The Institute encourages moral inquiry across intellectual disciplines and professions and moral reflection about campus practices and policies. They also support efforts to address ethical questions of public concern within and across communities. Their work is guided by the conviction that universities have a responsibility to prepare students for lives of personal integrity and reflective citizenship by nurturing their capacities for critical thinking, compassion, courage, and their concern for justice. The Kenan Institute for Ethics can be reviewed online at [www.kenan.ethics.duke.edu](http://www.kenan.ethics.duke.edu).

The Joseph & Edna Josephson Institute of Ethics is a public-benefit, nonpartisan, nonprofit membership organization founded by Michael Josephson in honor of his parents to improve the ethical quality of society by advocating principled reasoning and ethical decision making. Since 1987, the Institute has conducted programs and workshops for over 100,000 influential leaders including legislators and mayors, high-ranking public executives, congressional staff, editors and reporters, senior corporate and nonprofit executives, judges and lawyers, and military and police officers. The CHARACTER COUNTS!<sup>SM</sup> youth-education initiative is a project of the Institute.

To promote ethics in schools, youth groups, and sporting teams, CHARACTER COUNTS!<sup>SM</sup> offers the following suggestions:

## **School-Wide Activities**

- Word/Trait of the Month/Week
- Morning Announcements
- Posters / Pride Campaigns
- Mottos/Slogans/Quotations of the Week
- Library Exhibits and Booklets
- Codes and Rules of Conduct
- Pledges



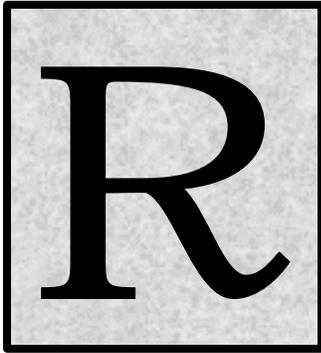
- Theme Assemblies
- Awards and Prizes
- Contests
- Ceremonies and Rituals
- Cafeteria "Table Tents" and Signs
- Recognition Wall for Student Achievement
- Hallway Displays
- Student/Faculty Task Forces
- Six Pillars of Character Clubs
- Faculty Trainings/Discussions
- Parent Meetings/Workshops
- Parent/Faculty Task Forces
- Peer Counseling/Mentoring
- Cross-Age Tutoring/Mentoring
- Community Service Projects
- Charity Fundraisers
- Student-Designed T-Shirts
- School Murals
- Authorized Positive Graffiti/Tagging Walls
- Cartoon drawing
- Picture books (for younger children)
- Song writing and performing
- Play writing and performing
- Video making
- Commercial writing
- Journalistic-style interviews
- Speech presentations



All of the above ideas can be used to further increase awareness of ethical issues taking place internationally, nationally, and often times, in our own backyards.

CHARACTER COUNTS! is a service mark of the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics. For further information on CHARACTER COUNTS! or the Josephson Institute, contact:

cc@jiethics.org  
 www.charactercounts.org  
 310-306-1868



# Reflection

**“We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done.”**

**— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

The final piece presented in this ethics toolbox is perhaps the most important and that is reflection. Throughout life there is a process of development. Whether it be in the form of a curriculum at school or a business proposal at work, we all grow from our experiences. These stepping stones throughout life provide for us the ability to enhance our emotions, mind, body, and spirit. By evaluating our personal developmental process often, we are able to identify more clearly our strengths, weaknesses, dreams, goals, values, and principles.

Taken directly from *The Content of Our Character: Voices of Generation X*:

From institutions to individuals, community involvement to national action, the constant adherence to two principles - human dignity and accountability - poses our greatest opportunity for meeting the goal of a truly civil society.

## ***Human Dignity***

A civil society recognizes the potential inherent in each of its members. This recognition, this accordance of respect, is human dignity. Yet, without providing the attendant fixtures, ethical leadership fails in its mission. Ethical leaders serve with an eye to both constitutional feasibility and the greatest imagined reality. Human dignity means not only a right to the fundamentals such as health care, education, shelter and subsistence, but it should also mean access to attentive physicians, viable public schools, adequate housing, and healthy food. Human dignity is achieved through civil institutions, community organizations, nonprofits, and individual effort. As Americans, we spend hours each day, working to guarantee our families, and those with whom we share this nation, the trappings of personal respect. America's civil society finds its moral center when we incorporate the principle of human dignity, when we act to make human dignity a reality for all. Ethical leadership can tolerate nothing less.

## ***Accountability***

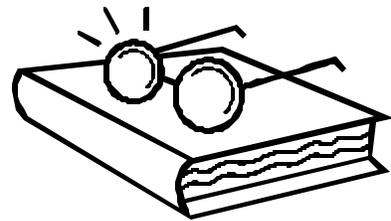
Ensuring the sustenance of a civil society, accountability serves as an antidote to moral stagnation. Leaders, both elected and self-selected, function best and for the best when every action is reasoned and justified. Whether the actors are caregivers, councilpersons, or concerned citizens, they are obligated to remain answerable to their constituents. Even more, they should act in ways that adhere to their own concepts of moral behavior. Humanity promises mistakes and blunders, departures from the path of good and right. Accountability in ethical leadership serves, then, to guide us back to the higher road.



Ethical leadership promotes and demands accountability. As members of American society, we are bound by our covenant as citizens to agitate for the good of all. Without clamor for actors of conscience, however, we collectively suffer. Accountability is not merely the province of a minority, nor is it focused solely on leaders, but rather it trains its eye on each of us. Accountability is about voting and attending and serving and asking questions.

With human dignity as our constant mission and accountability as our instrument of measure, we can realize ethical leadership in America's civil society. The foci for our discussion are (1) community service- tapping the American spirit of service; (2) civic leadership and nonprofits-engaging community organizations and their leaders in the exercise of ethical leadership; (3) civil institutions-modernizing the role of political entities, media, and technology in a transformative society; and (4) society's marginalized - identifying and prescribing ways to foster a truly civil society for all members.

- In regards to human dignity, what resources do you identify as essential for your survival? The survival of humankind?
- Who holds power within our society? How does this individual or group obtain power?
- If human dignity is not present in our lives, who is responsible?
- Who holds citizens accountable for their actions?
- What is missing from your generation? What is missing from our society?
- What groups are marginalized in society? Who places these individuals in such roles?
- What story or legacy will your generation leave behind?
- What values do you strive to obtain and uphold in your pursuit of the American Dream?



The Content of Our Character Project  
can be reached by contacting:

The Content of Our Character Project  
c/o The Kenan Institute for Ethics  
Duke University  
Box 90432  
Durham, NC 27708  
(919) 660-3033  
[www.contentofourcharacter.org](http://www.contentofourcharacter.org)

## **The Making of an Ethical Decision**

*According to the Josephson Institute of Ethics*

Making consistently ethical decisions is difficult. Most decisions have to be made in the context of economic, professional and social pressures which can sometimes challenge our ethical goals and conceal or confuse the moral issues.

In addition, making ethical choices is complex because in many situations there are a multitude of competing interests and values. Other times, crucial facts are unknown or ambiguous. Since many actions are likely to benefit some people at the expense of others, the decision maker must prioritize competing moral claims and must be proficient at predicting the likely consequences of various choices. An ethical person often chooses to do more than the law requires and less than the law allows. The ethical person is concerned with what is right to do, not with what she has a right to do.

### **The Ethical Perspective**

Any decision affecting other people has ethical implications, and virtually all important decisions reflect the decision maker's sensitivity and commitment to ethics. These decisions can be evaluated in terms of adherence to the six core ethical principles — trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

### **The Process of Ethical Decision Making**

Ethical decision making refers to the process of evaluating and choosing among alternatives in a manner consistent with ethical principles. In making ethical decisions it is necessary to: Perceive and eliminate unethical options. These options subordinate ethical values to non-ethical or unethical values.

Select the best ethical alternative. Although there may be several ethical responses to a situation, all are not equal.

Ethical decision making requires more than a belief in the importance of ethics. It also requires sensitivity to perceive the ethical implications of decisions, the ability to evaluate complex, ambiguous and incomplete facts and the skill to implement ethical decisions without unduly jeopardizing a career. Ethical decision making requires ethical commitment, ethical consciousness, and ethical competency.

### **Ethical Commitment**

Ethical commitment refers to a strong desire to do the right thing, especially when behaving ethically imposes financial, social or emotional costs. Surveys taken by the Josephson Institute reveal that, regardless of profession, almost all people believe that they are, or should be, ethical. While most are not satisfied with the ethical quality of society as a whole, they believe that their profession is more ethical than others and that they are at least as ethical as those in their profession. Unfortunately, behavior does not consistently conform to self-image and moral ambitions. As a result, a substantial number of decent people, committed to ethical values, regularly compromise these values — often because they lack the fortitude to follow their conscience.

People need to understand that ethical principles are ground rules of decision making — not just factors to consider. It is OK to lose; in fact, it is preferable to lose than to lie, steal, or cheat in order to win. People who are unwilling to lose have to be willing to do whatever it takes to win. Ethics has a price and sometimes people must choose between what they want and what they want to be. But ethics also has a value, which makes self-restraint and sacrifice, service and charity, worthwhile.

### **Ethical Consciousness**

While weakness of will explains a good deal of improper conduct, a much greater problem arises from the failure to perceive the ethical implications of conduct. Many people simply fail to apply their moral convictions to daily behavior. And some tend to develop a kind of professional tunnel vision that blinds them to ethical issues that everyone else sees.

Some people don't always see ethical issues that are likely to trouble outsiders. They don't seem to recognize that perfectly legal conduct often appears to be improper or inappropriate to those who expect them to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

### **Ethical Competency**

Noticing the ethical issues and being committed to act ethically is not always enough. In complex situations, reasoning and problem-solving skills are also necessary.

***Evaluation*** — the ability to collect and evaluate relevant facts and to know when to stop and how to make prudent decisions based on incomplete and ambiguous information.

***Creativity*** — the capacity to develop alternative means of accomplishing goals in ways which avoid or minimize ethical problems.

***Prediction*** — the ability to foresee potential consequences of conduct and assess the likelihood or risk that people will be helped or harmed by an act.

### **The Stakeholder Concept**

A person concerned with being ethical has a moral obligation to consider the ethical implications of all decisions. Each person, group or institution (sometimes referred to as a constituency) likely to be affected by a decision is a “stakeholder” with a moral claim on the decision maker. The stakeholder concept is a system of evaluating these interests in such a way as to bring about the greatest good. The stakeholder concept reinforces our obligation to make all reasonable efforts to foresee possible consequences and take reasonable steps to avoid unjustified harm to others.

## Ethics Codes\*

### MA'AT....Right Way

Truth. Order  
Harmony  
Justice  
Reciprocity  
Dignity  
Propriety  
Integrity, Focus  
Compassion

The goddess Ma'at stood at the top of the Egyptian hierarchy of the universe, which was very orderly and rational. Indeed, Ma'at meant "truth" or "order." The idea that the universe is rational originated with the Egyptians, influenced the Greeks, and remains a fundamental feature of Western culture.

### BOY SCOUTS

Trustworthy  
Loyal  
Helpful  
Courteous  
Kind  
Obedient  
Cheerful  
Thrifty  
Brave  
Clean  
Reverent

### CHARACTER COUNTS!

Trustworthiness  
Respect  
Responsibility  
Fairness  
Caring  
Citizenship

### THE EIGHT CONFUCIAN VIRTUES

Filiality  
Fraternity  
Loyalty  
Trustworthiness  
Propriety  
Righteousness  
Incorruptibility  
Sense of Shame

**4H Clubs, "I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service and my health to better living, for my club, my community, my country & my world."**

Head  
Heart  
Hand  
Health

### 7 PRINCIPLES OF KWANZAA

Purpose (Nia)  
Self-determination (Kujichagulia)  
Unity (Umoja)  
Responsibility (Ujima)  
Creativity (Kuumba)  
Faith (Imani)  
Co-operation (Ujamaa)

### TAEKWON-DO (developed by Gen. Choi, 1954, Korea)

Courtesy  
Humility  
Integrity  
Perseverance  
Self-control  
Indomitable spirit  
Community Service (added by founder in USA)  
Jhoon Rhee)

### YMCA, "We build strong kids, strong families, strong communities."

Caring  
Honesty  
Respect  
Responsibility

### YWCA (13 Preliminary Core Values)

Empowerment  
Balance  
Diversity  
Joy  
Openness  
Honesty  
Leadership  
Accountability  
Extreme Self-Care  
Level Playing Field  
Respect  
Kindness  
Competence

\*As found on [www.heartwoodethics.org](http://www.heartwoodethics.org).

## ***A Special Thank You to:***

*Allegheny County's Promise—the Alliance for Youth  
America's Promise*

*Big Brothers Big Sisters of America*

*Boston Young Leaders Forum*

*Buchanan Ingersoll P.C.*

*Center for Civic Education*

***CHARACTER COUNTS!***

*Content of Our Character Project*

*The Giraffe Project*

*The Heartwood Institute*

*The Josephson Institute for Ethics*

*The Kenan Institute for Ethics*

*The National Mentoring Partnership*

### ***Editor***

*Daniel Horgan*

**The Content of Our Character Project** is a nationwide initiative designed to facilitate substantive, public deliberation on ethical leadership, primarily among youth, young adults, and young professionals. The initiative was borne with the simple aims of affirming and cultivating a demand for ethical leadership, as well as placing ethical leadership at the forefront of public and private discourse. With enormous resolve and support from organizations nationwide, the *Content of Our Character Project* ignited dialogue in places across America, providing public spaces for youth to test ideas and learn from one another while exploring contemporary ethical challenges. The original and continuing mission remains: to foster dialogue, encourage teaching, and communicate ideas on matters of ethics. To review more information, log onto [www.contentofourcharacter.org](http://www.contentofourcharacter.org).

**Allegheny County's Promise** is a partner with America's Promise—the Alliance for Youth in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, and strives to build the character and competence of our nation's youth by providing for them five fundamental resources: caring adults, safe places, healthy starts, marketable skills, and service opportunities. We fulfill this mission by establishing and enhancing a network among government, business, education, nonprofit, and faith communities. To contact Allegheny County's Promise, email Daniel Horgan at [alleghenypromise@hotmail.org](mailto:alleghenypromise@hotmail.org).

If you hope to be somebody, be yourself- constantly,  
and then make yourself to be the best somebody  
your potential will allow- continually.

What lies behind us and what lies before us  
are small matters compared to what lies within us.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson