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Minnesota Character Council

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The MCC is administered by Synergy & Leadership Exchange.

To learn more visit www.synergyexchange.org/minnesota-character-council

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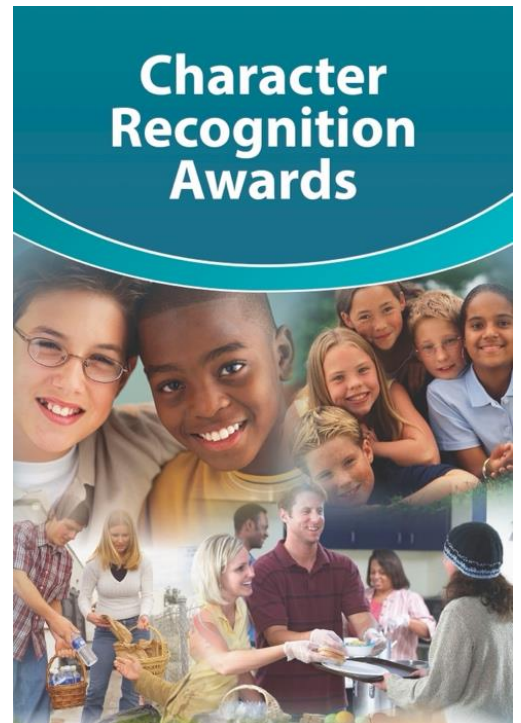## Celebrating Character as a Measure of Success
By Barb Bergseth

What does success mean? Is it fame, wealth, status, leaving the world better or living one's life with purpose? These are some of the questions Jason Merchey, founder of Values of the Wise, ponders in his blog post, "True Success is Primarily about Character." He believes character is the one tool that can really benefit us on our journey toward true success, be it at work, in the home, in the community, while volunteering or serving others.

Synergy & Leadership Exchange is a nonprofit organization in Minnesota that also believes positive character is an important tool and measure of true success. In 2008, it became the state sponsor of the Schools of Character program in partnership with Character.org, the national founder. The program offers a certification and improvement process to guide schools in developing a comprehensive character initiative that is intentional, involves all stakeholders, and is woven into all aspects of the school's culture, teaching and learning. Since taking on the role of Minnesota School of Character sponsor, Synergy has expanded its efforts to honor the development of positive character and ethical leadership skills in community programs and "champions of character."

The Character Recognition Awards are held annually to spotlight character and ethical leadership development as measures of success, celebrate honorees with exemplary efforts and motivate them for continued effort and success, and inspire others with examples to replicate.

Synergy & Leadership Exchange will partner with Saint Mary's University of Minnesota to host the 2024 Character Recognition Awards luncheon on May 22.

Celebrating Character as a Measure of Success . . . continued

Congratulations to the following schools, community organizations and individuals that will be celebrated at the event:

2024 Minnesota School of Character
- Community of Peace Academy, Saint Paul

2024 Minnesota Promising Practices
- Cologne Academy
- DECS North Star Academy, Duluth
- Northfield High School Student Success Center
- Roseville Area High School
- Waseca Area Learning Center

2024 Catholic Educator Award
- Ricky Austin, President, Aim Higher Foundation

2024 Minnesota Ethical Leadership Award
- ComMUSICation
- The Inner Hero

2024 Champions of Character
- Matt Bostrom, Ph.D.
- Todd Otis

The luncheon event will be held at the Saint Mary's University Center from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on May 22 and feature a presentation by Dr. Arthur Schwartz, president of Character.org. If you are interested in attending, register online by May 1 at https://www.eventsquid.com/register/24259.

Barb Bergseth is a program administrator for Synergy & Leadership Exchange, a program of the South Central Service Cooperative, and coordinator for the Minnesota Schools of Character.

How Do We Develop as Leaders? A Virtues Model for Ethical Leadership
By Chad Weinstein, Ethical Leaders in Action

How do we develop as ethical leaders? What core skills and ideas make us effective at empowering others to improve the world? This model by Ethical Leaders in Action (ELA) combines ancient concepts with modern terminology and situations as a framework for leadership development and discussion.

Aristotle (among others) observed that people flourish by cultivating certain traits, which he called *arete*, translated as "virtues." These virtues encompass a wide range of qualities: moral and practical, public and private. These virtues function together, so an excellent human being must exhibit the full set of virtues to some degree. This account of character development stands as an enduring and influential part of the Western philosophical tradition.

This set of virtues focuses on *ethical leadership*, which we describe as *empowering others to improve the world.* Our intent is for this virtue model to resonate with people of many cultures and backgrounds, perhaps with some level of translation or adaptation. Each virtue includes aspects of both motivation and capability – both "will" and "skill." We develop virtues through action, practice, and reflection, alone and especially in relationships with others. The following virtues are essential to ethical leadership (see descriptions and definitions on next page):

Virtues	Features	Feature Definitions
Service		
Service is the desire and ability to work with others toward a worthy purpose. It describes the core motives of an ethical leader, striving and enabling others to achieve positive outcomes.	Altruism	The belief in and practice of selfless concern for others.
	Empathy	The capacity to understand and share the feelings of another.
	Justice	A commitment to fairness, respect, and upholding the rights of others.
Competence		
Competence is command of relevant knowledge and skills. It includes specific information and knowhow, along with practical wisdom and sound judgment. It also includes more general leadership competencies, such as communication.	Knowledge	Information and skill from experience and education.
	Wisdom	Appreciation and understanding of essence and meaning.
	Judgement	The capacity to form an opinion or make a decision after careful thought.
Creativity		
Creativity drives us to build, to improve, and to solve problems. It features a desire for improvement and the capacities to generate possibilities and to create solutions.	Imagination	The capacity to think of new things.
	Problem Solving	The ability to understand and develop solutions to problems.
	Drive	A strong desire for achievement.
Clarity		
Clarity helps us to see and share what is truly important. It includes the capacities to craft and share vision, as well as to discern and evaluate reality. It also encompasses moral clarity with respect to our individual and shared values.	Vision	The capacity to see and describe a compelling picture of the future.
	Discernment	The ability to observe and understand people, things, or situations clearly.
	Morality	The capacity to embrace values and to make value-based decisions.
Courage		
Courage is the capacity to do what is right in the face of danger or difficulties. Courage enables us to overcome our fears in order to pursue our duties, and to act in accordance with our values and commitments.	Integrity	Honesty, consistency, and the thoughtful alignment of one's commitments, words, and deeds.
	Bravery	The capacity to take risks and to act truly despite one's fears.
	Tenacity	Persistence and endurance in the face of adversity.

The Virtues of Ethical Leadership rests on a foundation of excellent work by others, from ancient philosophers like Aristotle (who articulated a potent and enduring virtue set around 300 BCE) to contemporary thinkers like Peter Koestenbaum (whose similar model, called the *Leadership Diamond*, crystallizes around a commitment to greatness). As important, the model is informed by the real-life experiences of the leaders who use it every day. Please share your thoughts and comments with us.

Chad Weinstein is the founder of Ethical Leaders in Action, LLC. You can reach him at cweinstein@ethinact.com or visit the website at http://www.ethinact.com

"To see ethics as a repressive set of rules is to misunderstand terribly the moral dimension of life." —*Tom Morris*