



# Community of Character

## Background

Summer, 2003

### Background

### Character Qualities

- Perseverance (January)
- Unity (February)
- Integrity (March)
- Service (April)
- Moral Courage (May)
- Citizenship (June)
- Fairness (July)
- Self Control (August)
- Responsibility (September)
- Respect (October)
- Thankful (November)
- Caring (December)

City of Mission Viejo  
 200 Civic Center  
 Mission Viejo, CA 92691  
 Orange County

### Character Corner

#### Beginnings

In January, 2003, a volunteer group representing all segments of our community including schools, businesses, city, houses of faith, students, parents and civic organizations met to explore creating a Mission Viejo Community of Character Initiative. A suggested city resolution and mission statement were the key topics of discussion.

#### City Council Adoption

At the February, 3, 2003 City Council Meeting, council member, Trish Kelley, recommended the council adopt conceptual approval of the city becoming a City of Character. At the February 17<sup>th</sup> council meeting, a resolution was passed establishing The City of Mission Viejo as a Community of Character. On March 21, the council adopted a mission statement.

#### City of Character Mission Statement

"To create a positive environment in our community by using a framework that builds good character values and assets, thereby making Mission Viejo a stronger, healthier and safer community."

#### Selection of Community Core Qualities

What character qualities are important to the residents of our community? Over a three-month period from mid April to early July, input was requested through newspaper ads and voting forms that were distributed at the city library and at various community activities like Fun with Chalk and the July 4<sup>th</sup> Street Faire.

Individual groups were also invited to provide their ideas. When the voting closed on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 176 qualities had been presented from nearly 800 residents. Many of the words could be consolidated such as caring, compassion and kindness. Fourteen qualities were finally identified, representing those most voted upon by community residents. These fourteen character qualities were explored by the Community of Character committee in mid-July and combined into twelve.



#### The Community's Character Qualities

Twelve character qualities were selected. They are identified on this page. Each character quality will be highlighted monthly in our community beginning in September, 2003, with ***Responsibility***.

#### What's Next?

The first objective is to provide, during the next year, information and programs to individuals, families and all segments of our community about the twelve core qualities.

#### Getting Involved

If you would like to become a Community of Character committee volunteer, provide suggestions for programs, or help fund a special project, contact the City of Mission Viejo at 470-3061.



Mission Viejo

# Community of Character

## From Vision to Reality

### Update

### Character Qualities

Responsibility  
Respect  
Thankfulness  
Caring  
Perseverance  
Unity  
Integrity  
Service  
Moral Courage  
Citizenship  
Fairness  
Self Control

**“Character is the backbone of greatness. To achieve it, we must live it – for ourselves, for others, for our community.”**

*Mission Viejo  
Community of Character*

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### Update

Since its inception in February of 2003, the Community of Character program has grown and has made an impact on the community.

In 2003, with the challenge of implementing an unfunded program, the committee created and developed materials to promote each character word, and solicited local businesses to donate copies. Volunteers wrote two-page newsletters for each quality, which serve as resource kits for parents, teachers, students and organizations. Each newsletter explains the trait’s meaning, identifies books that promote the quality, gives specific examples of how to practice it, and includes inspirational quotes that help to give full meaning to each core trait. Colored posters depicting each of the 12 qualities were also created. These materials are provided for every teacher in our 25 Mission Viejo schools, and they are distributed to our various city facilities. The character word is also displayed on the City’s community message board, located at a busy intersection, and the poster is placed at the bus shelter in the heart of town.

The program’s success has been proven by the honors it has received and the interest of other cities and organizations. In 2004, the League of California Cities awarded the prestigious Helen Putnam Award of Excellence, Grand Prize, to the City for its Community of Character Program. Later that year, the Community of Character Program was showcased at the League of California Cities Annual Conference in Long Beach, California, where several cities expressed an interest in bringing similar programs to their own cities. In 2005, Council Member Trish Kelley, Director of Recreation and Community Services Kelly Doyle, and Community Services Supervisor Virginia Chavez presented a workshop at the California Parks and Recreation Services Conference in

Sacramento, to teach other cities how to bring character programs to their own communities.

But the comments from teachers, parents and principals provide the greatest measure of success.

An elementary school principal states, “As a principal, I truly love using the Mission Viejo Community of Character program and materials. It has helped our school coordinate and implement a model for teaching and practicing what it means to demonstrate good character. After repeating the monthly character trait each year, I feel that the students internalize the characteristics of each trait, and are able to apply the qualities of each trait in their daily lives.”

A high school principal shares, “The City of Mission Viejo’s Community of Character program came online just at the right time for our school. The posters provide help keeping character visible on our campus, and we use excerpts from the monthly newsletter as a source for our daily bulletin announcements to inspire kids to internalize each specific trait.”

In addition to providing the character materials to our schools and city facilities, the character newsletters are posted on the city website, the posters are displayed on Mission Viejo Television, and the character words are highlighted in the senior citizen newsletters which are mailed to several thousand seniors.

A Student Character Subcommittee was formed, and has been very creative, energetic, and successful. The students plan character activities, crafts, and support each of the City’s events as volunteers at our Character booths.

A Character Garden was developed at the trailhead of the Oso Creek Trail. The character words are displayed on stepping-stones leading to a fountain and this statement: **“Character is the backbone of greatness. To achieve it, we must live it—for ourselves, for others, for our community.”**