



Community of Character

From Vision to Reality

2018

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*

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

Since its inception in February 2003, the Community of Character program has grown and has made an impact on the community. With the challenge of implementing an unfunded program, co-founders Council Member Trish Kelley and resident Bill Klimek recruited a committee, created and developed materials to promote each character word, and solicited local businesses to donate copies. Trish Kelley and Bill Klimek initially wrote two-page information documents for each quality, and Council Member Trish Kelley re-wrote the documents in 2016. The information documents serve as resource kits for parents, teachers, students and organizations. Each guide 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. The committee also creates colored posters depicting each of the 12 qualities each month.

Volunteers deliver these materials to every teacher in our 25 Mission Viejo schools, and distribute them to our various city facilities. They are also included in our senior newsletters, City publications, and on the City website. The character word is 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 and two staff members presented a workshop at the California Park and Recreation Society Conference in Sacramento, to teach other cities how to bring character

programs to their own cities. In 2011, Mayor Trish Kelley and two committee members provided a training session to hundreds of representatives of schools and organizations from all over the country at the National Forum on Character Education. In 2014, the program received a Promising Practices Award from the national Character Education Partnership. Mayor Trish Kelley received the award and presented the program at the annual conference. In 2018, Council Member Kelley and Library and Cultural Services Coordinator Vickie Sullivan presented the session “Creating a Community of Character” at the National Forum on Character.

A “Films of Character” component is another feature of the program. Each month the Character Committee hosts a free movie to reinforce the character quality, followed by a discussion with the audience.

The Committee includes a large group of students from our local high schools. The students plan several character events and prepare activities for every City program.

Comments from teachers, students, parents, and principals provide the greatest measure of success.

An elementary school principal states, “As a principal, I 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 posters provide help keeping character visible on our campus, and we use excerpts from the monthly information guide as a source for our daily bulletin announcements to inspire kids to internalize each specific trait.”