

CHARACTER



Citizenship

November 2007

CITIZENSHIP: You can make a difference. So do it!

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

--Margaret Mead

Common dictionary definitions of citizenship read something like, “the duties and responsibilities that come with legal status within a state, nation, or kingdom.” However, I believe that citizenship means more than obligation and requirement. Citizenship should also include a sense of gratitude, a desire to serve, and a commitment to secure blessings for future citizens. I believe it was these same sentiments of devotion for country that prompted John F. Kennedy to proclaim, “And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.” I would like to recount the story of some humble Americans that are shining examples of true citizenship as defined by JFK—that of allegiance and assistance, of fondness and fidelity.

North Platte, Nebraska is a small, nondescript rural town in the middle of America. In fact, it is almost equidistant from New York and Los Angeles. This central location made North Platte an ideal spot for a train station along the lonely, quiet stretch of the Union Pacific Railroad between Omaha and Cheyenne. However, within a few days of the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, thousands of troops began crisscrossing the heartland of the country on their way to training facilities located throughout the country or to transport ships docked along both coasts.

Less than two weeks after Pearl Harbor, North Platte residents heard that Company D of the Nebraska National Guard (which had been training at Camp Robinson in Arkansas) would pass through the city on their way to southern California. About 500 residents, having relatives and friends in Company D, rushed to the train station with cookies, candy, and other treats. When Company D rolled into the station, however, the North Platte residents learned that this particular Company D was from

Kansas. It was not their boys from Nebraska. Nevertheless, they swept aside their disappointment and welcomed the troops from Kansas, showering them treats, cheers, and camaraderie.

The smiles of surprised, grateful servicemen prompted a miracle that day. Several of those gathered at the station decided to go beyond duty and decency, and committed to greet all of the troops that should pass through North Platte. They fittingly began their efforts on Christmas Day, 1941. As word of their efforts to greet the troops spread, so did the number of those willing to help. People came from small towns in the surrounding areas to assist in the monumental volunteer effort, organizing themselves into companies and shifts. At its peak, this small community-run hospitality center welcomed up to 5,000 troops a day. By April 1, 1946, when the volunteer efforts ceased, over 6 million troops had passed through North Platte and over 6 million troops had been treated to free drinks, sandwiches, dessert, and magazines during their short 10-minute stop.

The people of the tiny, isolated towns in central Nebraska asked what they could do to support their country, they flocked to North Platte to provide encouragement to the troops, and they did so without any mandate, proclamation, or legislation. May we follow their example of citizenship and seek out opportunities to assist our neighbors, our state, and our country. In particular, during this time of war, may we be moved to perform acts of service and appreciation for our troops and the anxious families they leave behind.

*Jason Theler, Principal
Lindon Elementary School*

“The most important office...that of private citizen.”

– Louis D. Brandeis

“A vote is not an object of art. It is the sacred and most important instrument of democracy and of freedom.”

– Abe Fortas

“Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

– John F. Kennedy

Book List

"Seven Brave Women"

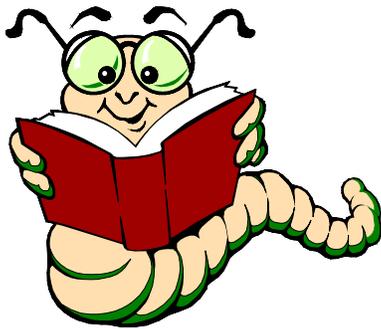
by Betsy Hearne

"The Courage of Sarah Noble"

by Alice Dalgliesh

"Officer Buckle and Gloria"

by Peggy Rathmann



Family Activities

-Visit a national park or historic site. Talk about the many natural and man-made wonders of our state, country and world. *What are our responsibilities to the environment? How can we help preserve history?*

-Play a game of matchbox cars, first with the rules of the road, then without. *What does obedience to laws have to do with being a good citizen?*

-Sir Winston Churchill, British statesman, was born on November 30, 1874. He once said, "At the bottom of all the tributes paid to democracy is the little person, walking into the little booth, with a little pencil, making a little cross on a little bit of paper - no amount of rhetoric or voluminous discussion can possibly diminish the overwhelming importance of the point." *What are the responsibilities of a citizen?*

By Laura Clement

Kid's Corner

Be grateful. Two simple words can take a lot of meaning if you just give them a go. It's mostly just a psychological basis of life. If you practice looking at the bad things than you'll mainly see just bad things, whereas if you put a good outlook in your everyday life you'll find just how delightful everything can be since that's all you're seeing. It changes your mood and opinions considerably and it's so much easier to work and play on your own or with others. Many experiences may seem incredibly hard if you think of them that way, but change your perspective and you could never be happier. Be happy, be strong, and be grateful.

Laura Goodrich
Oak Canyon Jr. High

We, at Character Connection would like to focus on helping parents access character materials by using the web site located at www.lindoncharacterconnection.com.

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c/o Alpine Foundation
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