

Pieper: Why character counts

Richard R. Pieper Sr. 6:20 p.m. CDT October 3, 2016

Character costs nothing and requires no capital outlay. For people of character there is no finger-pointing, no blaming and no excuses. Mutual respect is the only requirement.



The recent eruptions in cities including our own have elicited many proposals. These proposals fall in to two anemic categories: talk or money. How many summits can we hold and see such feeble results? How much money can we throw at problems and still leave people in despair?

We need both short-term and long-term solutions: short term to give people hope and long term for fixing the problem permanently.

What costs nothing and guarantees results? Character development. Too simple, you say? Think again. Every culture has the equivalent of the Golden Rule. If absolutely everyone treated others as they want to be treated, imagine our city. We would eliminate crime as well as the inequalities of wage, race, education and gender, even road rage.

How does character development begin? Here's what happens when summits or money are the only calls for action: Individuals are let off the hook. We are left feeling unimportant and led to believe our personal actions don't matter. I believe collectively we are more influential than the so-called experts, discussion groups and governmental grants. Those take forever to come to fruition. We do not have the luxury of committee meetings.

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All of us can contribute. In fact, all must be engaged or nothing improves. All we have to do is treat others as we want to be treated.

Here are three areas we can improve immediately.

Education: Everyone goes to school so let's start here. Beginning immediately, teachers and staff will come to school every day eager to model responsible, caring adult behavior and deliver the best content for the students' future. Families will send their children to school well-rested, fed breakfast, homework done and with words of encouragement. Watch our schools improve under this plan with no hit to the budget. Ask Brown Deer High School Principal Tosha Womack about the efficacy of character development.

Law enforcement: Police will think of all people under their jurisdiction as neighbors, which, in the greater sense, they are. Citizens and neighborhoods will respect the efforts of law enforcement and fire departments when they come to their localities. Children will learn from their elders that the police are there to assist and protect them.

Employment: Help wanted signs for both skilled and entry level jobs are all over the city and state. Apprenticeship programs are in need of applicants. Businesses could hold more job fairs to facilitate applications. On the employees' side of the equation, they must show up on time appropriately dressed, and rarely miss work; they should consider themselves team players and constantly work to improve their knowledge. Finally, retired business executives, including CEOs, could volunteer their expertise at schools with problems. How about letting these proven executives manage the school building? The schools should readily accept the offers.

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We are told to be patient. I say we won't be patient, we know what to do: treat others as we want to be treated, it's powerful and infectious.

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