

Submission for weekly column “Space for Reflection” in The Current

You Change the World

I’ve never been much of a bumper-sticker person. In fact, in all the years I’ve been driving, I think I’ve only put two bumper-stickers on my car. When I lived in New Hampshire, I proudly displayed the sticker for my favorite local ski area—Waterville Valley Ski Resort. This was important to me, because we locals liked to show our allegiance to one or the other of the two ski areas in our community: Waterville Valley or Loon Mountain.

The second time I put a bumper-sticker on my car was just yesterday. A friend gave me a sticker that reads: “Your CHARACTER changes the world.” I liked it so much that when I was leaving NSU to drive home last night, I stopped at my back bumper and pasted it right on! It’s powerful to realize that we impact the world directly in either a positive or negative way by the way we think and the way we lead our lives.

The sticker is printed in support of National Character Counts! Week, which runs from October 15-21. Character Counts! Week promotes the six pillars of character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. The organizers strive to highlight the importance of character and encourage people to find common ground with others—regardless of political, religious, or cultural identities—on the basis of valuing these pillars of character.

Having recently found out that some people I’ve been doing business with have been lying to me, trustworthiness stands out to me right now as a key aspect of character! And with the election coming up, citizenship is getting a lot of attention. What a difference it makes when respect and responsibility are demonstrated as important aspects of citizenship. What about fairness? This is an intriguing one—how do we define “fair”? Is it an absolute virtue, or are there times when having character involves treating one person (such as a loved one) better or differently than another?

Character counts. When someone treats me with caring and respect, I am more likely to be kind and respectful to those I deal with as well. If my friends know they can trust me, we establish deeper friendships. Throughout this week, there will be a variety of events highlighting character in support of Character Counts! Week. Enjoy the events, and let your good character change the world.

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