

Morrow County 4-H Helps Build Character

Raising children to become decent and responsible adults is a complex and challenging job that is becoming increasingly difficult in our society. To be a person of good character, youth must develop strengths of the 4 "H's": head – they must know what is good; heart – they must desire to do the good; hands – they must be willing to do good; and health – they must develop a lifestyle that supports the desire and willingness to do good. The Morrow County 4-H program strives to develop good character in 4-H members.

Qualities that define good character have been debated by various groups but in 1992, the Josephson Institute of Ethics with the help of

scholars, parents, youth workers, and others published the Aspen Declaration. This Declaration has become the cornerstone for the character development education programs in the United States. The Aspen Declaration states:

1
The next generation will be the stewards of the world.

2
The well being of society needs citizens with good character.

3
People do not automatically develop good moral character. Children must be taught so that they develop the values and abilities necessary for moral decision making and conduct.

4
Character education is based on core ethical values – pillars of character development – trustworthiness, respect for others, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

5
These core values transcend cultural, religious, and socio-economic differences.

6
Although character education is first and



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foremost an obligation of faith communities, the community in general, schools, and youth and family serving organizations are also responsible.

7
Youth have a better chance of learning moral values if all groups work together to teach and reinforce moral values.

8
Every adult must take responsibility to model and teach the pillars of character development.

You can see that although this Declaration was only developed in 1992, 4-H, as the youth program of the land-grant Universities (Oregon State University) has been using similar guidelines for the past 98 years!!!!

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