

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERVISOR

Good Character - A Value We All Share

Dear Malta Residents:

This year as Chairman of the County Board of Supervisors I have the privilege of initiating Saratoga County's "Character First Program." The goal of the program is to promote civility, improve trust and good character in our communities, businesses, government and our lives. Guiding the County will be Jay C. Rifenburg of Rifenburg Training and Development of Saratoga Springs. Jay has conducted presentations globally on the importance of core values, accountability, integrity, personal honesty and other character traits in business, education and government. He is also a columnist and author of three books with his new release being "Return To Your Core - Principles for a Purposeful and Respected Life"

Each month in 2014, we will be inviting a student from a local school district to write an essay on different character traits, such as duty, courage, respect, trust, and tolerance.

The student will address why the character trait is important and the personal and civic benefits associated when applying that trait, as well as the consequences when that trait is violated.

The essay offers the student opportunities to not only showcase their writing skills and depth of understanding but to speak before the County Board of Supervisors on the specific character trait at its monthly meeting. Following the presentation, the essay will be submitted to the local papers and broadcast news for publication.

The following are the first 2 essays in the Character First Program series on "Trust" and "Respect". Future articles will be added when they are submitted.

For 2014 and beyond, please promote the importance of good character -- write about it; discuss it in homes and businesses and promote the "better angels of our nature."

Sincerely,

Paul J Sausville, Supervisor
Town of Malta

Duty --- a moral commitment to fulfill a mission without considering self-interest.

Courage --- the internal strength to confront danger or intimidation and to act rightly in the face of popular opposition or discouragement.

Respect -- courteous action or deference for something that is good, valuable or important.

Trust --- a firm belief and reliance on the honesty, integrity, strength, ability and surety of a person.

Tolerance -- a willingness to respect feelings, opinions, behavior or beliefs that are different from your own.

CHARACTER FIRST ESSAY #1 - TRUST
BY ELIZABETH ALTMAN

Steve Jobs is quoted to have said, "... you can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something – your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life."

Trust permeates every aspect of human nature. However, it is a delicate trait that we embrace blindly.

Among many other things, trust is the basis of achievement and change. The ability to aim high and achieve one's goals is rooted in a basic trust in oneself that you will not let yourself down, and trust in those around you that they will not drag you down. In order to make a change, you must have faith in the possibility of change – you must believe that your dots will connect themselves in a pattern that makes sense. The key to success lies in risking it all, while trusting that, one way or another, you will succeed in the end. By disguising itself as courage, trust becomes a universal requirement for personal and societal progress.

Therefore, logic would suggest that such an amazing quality would be in high demand. Yet one of the most remarkable aspects of trust is its intangibility. No one is able to buy trust off a shelf in the local grocery store or order it through an online catalogue. There is no instruction manual for connecting dots that cannot be seen. The person you are and the personality you exude makes you deserving of another's trust, even when no one can ensure that you will connect the right dots. As a variation on a common saying may go, in order to be trusted, you must be the type of person you would trust.

With that said, every up has a down, and the downside of trust is its fragility. When you trust another person wholeheartedly, you have given an unknown part of yourself away, unprotected. You have made yourself vulnerable to someone else's every wish and whim. This part of you is unadulterated – innocent in the finest sense of the word. What remains unknown or unrecognized is that this innocence can be exhausted in a matter of seconds. When attempting to connect your dots in a pattern that suits you, no matter how strong-willed you are, you will succumb to reality, and use your eraser at one point or another. A small mistake will not detract from the final image. On the other hand, veering off track for too long may result in irreparable damage. Eraser marks and small pencil lines will cover the previously blank page like scars, personally engraved reminders of how quickly trust became corrupted.

It is incredibly easy to lose another's trust with one mistake. A wonderful relationship can be torn apart in the blink of an eye - ripped to pieces, and merely left there, broken. A minor misdirection may not have serious ramifications, and the damage could be ignored. More serious issues will arise, however, if the mistake was large enough to demolish someone's trust.

At this time, a breaking point has been reached, and invisible scars will develop. These scars will always be present, just as pencil lines incorrectly connecting life's dots can never truly be deleted with an eraser.

Pain and scars serve as warnings for the human brain, reminders that harmful situations should be avoided at all costs in the name of survival. While unseen to the human eye, emotional scars heal no more efficiently than those on skin or paper, and are no less of a warning to the brain. In relation to trust, these warnings become a barrier. As soon as the trust between two people is broken, the damage is not easily repaired or forgotten. Both people leave the situation with unique scars, unable to ignore the events that occurred. While the issue will clear up with time, one person will remain hurt, and have difficulty trusting the one who caused their pain. No one would willingly put herself in harm's way

repetitively, but to regain someone's trust, you must convince her to do exactly that.

This is not an easy feat to accomplish, but it can be done. By demonstrating a caring personality, dedication to rebuilding a faithful relationship, and the will to put in the required effort, you may slowly move closer towards regaining trust and reconnecting the correct dots to have a successful relationship in the future.

While shrouded in complexity, trust is one simple trait that can lead to incredible relationships and happiness. Whether it is between parent and child, friends, or coworkers, "trust[ing] that the dots will somehow connect" between two people will always improve a partnership. If life can only be lived by connecting the dots behind you, trusting in something to connect them in your future could make a considerable difference in your life and the lives of those around you.

Elizabeth Altman, the daughter of Steve and Cinthia Altman, is an outstanding 11th grade student leader at Ballston Spa High School. She has spearheaded the creation of an on-line school newspaper, is a peer-tutor, treasurer for the Year Book Club and was recently honored as a nominee for the Empire Girl's State program. She maintains a grade point average in the top 10% of her class while engaging in such activities that mold her upstanding character and citizenship.

CHARACTER FIRST ESSAY #2 - RESPECT

By Matthew Darling

There are many praiseworthy traits found within the human heart. Concepts such as responsibility, humility, and courage all stand out, prevailing over the everyday gloom with beautiful acts of **kindness**. These simple actions often brighten the world around us, showing that behind the greed and cruelty so often emphasized by the media are people that care for one another, people who value your life as much as they do **theirs**. They respect who you are and the decisions you make. This feeling of respect is possibly the best and most gratifying display that one can give or **receive**. It builds you up, making you feel valuable and of importance, and should the feeling be passed on, it may start something bigger and better than ever previously **conceived**. Respect is such a powerful feeling because it allows a precious bond to form, one that can progress into unimaginable accomplishments.

Respect is often a strong force in our lives, whether we notice it or **not**. The word itself is often watered down by dictionaries or other books when being defined, stating it only as a feeling of admiration for someone as a result of their abilities or qualifications. The fact is, this simpleminded definition does no justice to the true power of respect. Teachers, for example, stand in front of their new students on the first day of school often with little to no prior knowledge of the group, and yet they treat every person that walks into their room with the same kindness they would pay to one they've known for **years**. Local businesses scattered throughout the area respect their customers deeply, assisting them in any way **possible**. One might argue and say it is part of their line of work, but then again, do they act that way solely because it's in their job description? In my perspective, it is actually because of the appreciation they have for each one of us as **individuals**. They respect that you had the motivation to attend school or walk into that store, and show it by their kindness and willingness to **help**. They celebrate meeting for the first time by treating you as if you've met many times before and became good **friends**. The sudden admiration isn't because of some quality you display when you walk in the door, but a natural feeling of goodwill towards one you've yet to **know**. I've often been the recipient of such a warm welcome in our town, whether from a neighbor, friend, or other friendly **face**. It provokes an immediate sense of gratitude on the sender's behalf, and creates a warm feeling inside that makes you realize that others around you are thankful for your presence and that you happened to cross paths with **them**. It is one of the best feelings to know you are respected by others, and replicating such an action only increases the feeling. Eventually, if respect is passed on from person to person, a community-wide net of intertwined relationships **form**. This net, strengthened by the kindness and positive interactions between members, can fuel some amazing **things**. If one man falls, ten will be there to help him up, and if one man's house falls, the rest of the town will come together and help rebuild it. This kind of mentality, having respect for one another and supporting them through anything, has built incredible things in communities around the **world**. It increases what we can do as a species, and more importantly, as a global **family**. It may seem far-fetched with all the greed and selfishness in the world today, but it really can and does happen if you look close **enough**. Notice the neighbor trimming your hedges while they were doing theirs, the person in the coffee shop letting you pass by them to the counter because they were searching for their wallet, or even as simple as being given a complement by a stranger. It proves that we all share this quality if we dig deep enough, and that respect is more than a simple definition under the letter "R" in the **dictionary**. Basic in nature and yet extremely powerful, respect, the ultimate sign of admiration, can form something truly beautiful almost everywhere you go.

The word respect, when written, is unfairly **devalued**. It has not just a definition or a one-sided meaning, but a feeling attached to it, something that expands wider than anything that could be typed on a **page**. It is the feelings of kindness, humility, caring, and many others wrapped up and placed in your heart as you hold the door open for the person behind you. While many regard it as basic courtesy, it is in fact much more, for one act of respect towards another sends the subconscious message that you're inviting them in, taking them from the cold winds of isolation and sheltering **them**. It certainly has made my life brighter knowing someone out there subconsciously has my back and will help me in times of **need**. An act of respect doesn't need to be grand and majestic, or even heroic because life or some other items are in danger; an act of respect can be as simple as a little "How are you?" to be enough to start the spread of a virus of kindness. This virus, beautifully contagious, could push respect from a simple and subtle idea into the forefront of our minds and, hopefully, our actions towards one another.

Matthew Darling is a 14-year old freshman attending Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake High School. While he likes all of his classes, he especially enjoys participating in band, in which he plays percussion, as well as math, science, and engineering. He hopes to one day pursue a career in engineering and be a part of the growing world of technology.