

## *Imagine..... “Creating a Culture of Character”*

By Suzanne McKenney

*Imagine.....* a 3 year-old little girl holding tightly to her father’s hand as they walk along the sidewalk in the Village of Hamburg. She spies a poster in the window of a convenience store.... **RESPECT**.. .....and she says “Daddy, what does that one mean?” .....and the conversation begins.

*Imagine.....* a 5 year-old boy climbs onto the big yellow school bus heading to his first day of kindergarten. As he scales the high steps he peers up to see a sign in the window.....**HONESTY**.....and he says “Hey Mr. Bus Driver, I can’t read yet! Can you explain?” .....and the conversation continues.

*Imagine.....* a rambunctious class of 8 year-olds! The Sunday school teacher pauses to write a phrase on the blackboard.... **ENTHUSIASM = God within!** The class calms as she explains....the children question.....and the conversation is nurtured.

*Imagine.....* a pair of 12 year-old best friends, one carrying two heavy book bags as the other hobbles along on crutches. Entering the school classroom, they notice a poster on the wall....**THANKFULNESS**. As the teacher incorporates the virtue into her lesson plan throughout the day, the grateful friend remembers to say “I really appreciated your help today!” .....and the conversation develops meaning.

*Imagine....* a high school student cut from his school’s hockey team in his freshman and sophomore years. Now a junior, as he laces his skates in the locker room before tryouts, he concentrates on a sign taped on the opposing wall....**DETERMINATION**. He reminiscences about his old goalie coach ....their conversation remembered.

*Imagine.....* a college student, home for the holidays and eager to finish his gift purchasing! The Christmas Eve shopping trip has a less harried pace as Grandma slows to appreciate each and every storefront decoration. The two happen upon a poster displayed amongst the holiday lights.....**PATIENCE**. The virtue rekindles an ancient childhood memory.....her story becomes a lesson....the lesson inspires a continuing conversation.

The mission of the Character Council of Hamburg is nicely encapsulated in the phrase “*Creating a Culture of Character*”. The meaning of the word “culture” is especially significant. It refers to the way a society chooses to raise its young. In Hamburg, we are purposing to create an environment that nurtures the development of exceptional character. Together we are working to reinstate community standards of respect, integrity and virtue. Schools and churches, businesses and government, civic groups and the media, are all striving toward this common goal by initiating character-building programs within their sphere of influence.

*Imagine* the process of “*Creating a Culture of Character*”.....

Hamburg’s character initiative is not merely about character education in a school setting aimed at children, but more about the grander picture....a change to quality of character initiated by way of societal concern and action, by and for, all citizens...particularly for adult society, because after all, we are the role models for America’s future.

The Character Council of Hamburg, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation working to “*Create a Culture of Character*” throughout our community.