

2017 Iowa Character Award Recipients

EDUCATOR OF CHARACTER - DWIGHT BEYER

Dwight Beyer has dedicated the past 38 years to impacting the lives of Lynnville-Sully students in his secondary math class, and his reach extends far beyond the walls of his classroom. As noted by past and current students, Mr. Beyer demonstrates good character by being a leader in his school district and his community.

Mr. Beyer has played an active role on the Lynnville City Council, Lynnville Library Board, and supports the activities of the Lynnville Women's Club. His most visible community role can be witnessed on many nights as a broadcaster for all Lynnville-Sully athletic events. Mr. Beyer spends countless hours preparing for each game and enjoys scheduling halftime interviews with students and community members to promote positive happenings in the area.



Dwight is always willing to support students by planning trips, driving a bus for away games, or attending band concerts. He works to build relationships with students to show them that he cares about their success extending beyond the walls of the classroom.

ORGANIZATION OF CHARACTER - DRESS FOR SUCCESS DES MOINES

Dress for Success Des Moines is a nonprofit organization with a mission to empower women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire, and development tools to help women thrive in work and in life. Since opening their doors in June 2011, they have served more than 1,000 women who are supporting more than 2,500 children locally.

Led by a caring staff and volunteers, Dress for Success serves women who are transitioning from prison, immigrating to the United States, living in a homeless shelter, coming from a drug/alcohol rehabilitation program or a domestic violence situation. Each day a woman enters their boutique, their volunteers show kindness and the passion to help each woman take the next step towards securing a job and establishing financial independence.



DRESS FOR SUCCESS®
DES MOINES

STUDENT ORGANIZATION OF CHARACTER - STICK-TO-IT 4-H CLUB

Stick-To-It 4-H Club in Sigourney demonstrates good character by serving their community and inspiring young people. The club has been in existence for 90 years and is committed to helping members realize their potential to make a difference in the world.

With a mission to give back to their community, Stick-To-It 4-H Club contributes by keeping the county fairgrounds clean, delivering cookies to local nursing homes, collecting items for the local food pantry, and participating in other service projects. Members also have raised funds to restore the town fountain and replace flags at the extension office.

Many members of the Stick-To-It 4-H Club are second and third generation members, following in their parents and grandparents footsteps. Group leaders teach the value of hard work, perseverance, and how to work together as a group.

2017 Iowa Character Award Recipients

SCHOOL OF CHARACTER - NORTH RIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

North Ridge Elementary in the Dallas Center-Grimes Community School District shows good character every day by respecting others and demonstrating citizenship. Serving 650 K-5 grade students, the team of 65 team members focuses on providing an excellent learning experience and teaching good character skills to help their students be successful in life.



Walk the halls of North Ridge and you will see the Six Pillars of Character displayed proudly throughout the building. The students and staff of North Ridge Elementary enjoy being active in the community. They have raised over \$8,000 for the American Heart Association and Jump Rope for Heart, led a food drive for the local food pantry, and hosted a fundraiser for the Special Olympics among many other community service activities.

North Ridge Elementary was rated by the state of Iowa as a High Performing School in 2015 and a Commendable School in 2016. Students lead Character Assemblies each month focused on one of the Six Pillars of Character. This past year, a 3rd grade class ran a school election during the Presidential election and focused on citizenship.

CITIZEN OF CHARACTER -JJ KAPUR

Jeevanjot "JJ" Kapur is a junior at Valley High School who wants to break down stereotypical barriers and unite people to make the world a better place. He is a talented communicator and is nationally ranked as the top high school orator in the United States after defeating more than 240 orators at the Harvard National Forensics Speech Tournament. JJ's speech focused on the danger of reducing complex people to a single story, for example, thinking of all men with beards and turbans as terrorists. JJ has also attended the Hugh O'Brian World Leadership Conference and is a participant in the Jordan Scholar Institute.



JJ is the founder of the Iowa Turbinators, a youth initiative that uses charitable service to raise awareness about Sikhism. Under JJ's leadership, the Iowa Turbinators have facilitated meetings with the Iowa Interfaith Alliance, packaged 44,000 meals through Meals from the Heartland, and participated in countless other activities to connect community service to the Sikhism faith.

Often described as compassionate and intellectual, JJ is an example of the meaningful impact that good character, persistence and initiative can make on a community, nation, and world

CITIZEN OF CHARACTER AWARD - JACK EHERENMAN

Jack Eherenman's work with wheelchair sports began when he identified a need to help his son be able to participate on the high school track team. His son, who was born with Spina Bifida, wanted to play sports. A loving and caring father of four boys, Jack turned a desire to help his son into a commitment to help everyone with physical disabilities experience the joy of sports.

Jack serves as the co-director of the SportAbility of Iowa Adapted Sports Camps at the University of Northern Iowa, coordinator of the Iowa Chariots wheelchair basketball team, director of the YMCA Blackhawk Adapted Sports Clinics, and is also involved with SportAbility of Iowa and Paralympic Sport Club of Eastern Iowa.

Jack's experience as a skilled carpenter has been helpful for adapting and repairing wheelchairs for various sports. He continues to be active in operating adaptive sports camps, ensuring they are funded, organized, and staffed.

Jayden, a student who attended a camp hosted by Jack, says "I learned that life's challenges are not overcome by one's talent, but by one's heart. I love you, Jack. Thank you for giving me my legs back."



2017 Iowa Character Award Recipients

PURSuing VICTORY WITH HONOR AWARD - GRANNY BASKETBALL

Granny Basketball is a nonprofit organization created to promote a spirit of camaraderie and be a model of good sportsmanship for women. As a method of preserving the history of six-on-six basketball and creating fun exercise for women over 50, Granny Basketball has raised more than \$300,000 for charities and booster clubs.

Granny Basketball began in Lansing, Iowa in 2005 when a group of friends came together to host an exhibition game. The goal was to raise money to preserve the old historic building, but they quickly discovered the interest in Granny Basketball was bigger than they had imagined. Granny Basketball now includes 13 teams in Iowa and has more than 300 players on 26 teams in 8 states. The women of the Granny Basketball league demonstrate good character by supporting one another, playing by the rules, and fundraising for important causes.



AARON EILERTS COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD - JACK FINK

Jack Fink, a recent graduate of Dowling Catholic High School, exemplifies good character through community service. Jack has completed over 350 service hours to improve his community, school, and church.

Earning the rank of Eagle Scout in 2014, Jack has a significant passion for supporting veterans for a very personal reason. Jack's father has had multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. As the oldest of three children in a military family, Jack played a special role at home in supporting his mother and younger siblings. He started a school club called Maroons for Veterans that raises funds and awareness for veterans affected by PTSD. Jack's Eagle Scout project was building an historical archives cabinet system at the Camp Dodge Gold Star Museum.

In addition to his commitment to volunteering, Jack is recognized by many as a leader. He served as cross country team captain, was a student ambassador, and a member of the National Honor Society. Jack plans to attend the University of Missouri and has been accepted into the Cornell Leadership Program.



COMMUNITY OF CHARACTER - URBANDALE

The Urbandale community works hard every day to demonstrate good character. With a sustained commitment to being a community of character, Urbandale is an example of how integrity and civility can positively impact the quality of life for residents and businesses.

Urbandale has been a national leader of CHARACTER COUNTS! and has embedded the Six Pillars of Character into all facets of their community. Urbandale uses the Six Pillars of Character every day to both navigate tough situations and celebrate their community.

Every municipal meeting in Urbandale opens with a statement that reiterates their commitment to demonstrate good character and act in a civil manner. The Urbandale Chamber of Commerce was the first to partner with The Ray Center on a workplace cultural assessment, which led to what is now known as the Human Capital Survey with the Greater Des Moines Partnership.

Developing core character competencies is important in the Urbandale Community School District. They partner with The Ray Center to use research-based programming and tools to develop students into ethical leaders.



2017 Iowa Character Award Recipients

CHARACTER CHAMPION- DR. BILL WATSON

Dr. Bill Watson has been an advocate, presenter, and a valued advisor of The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center for many years. He is currently the Director of Activities and Community Education at Urbandale High School, a position he has held in part since October 2002. Bill is committed to developing students into ethical leaders.

Bill leads the Urbandale Foundations and Emerging Leaders programs at Urbandale High School. Urbandale Foundations is open to all high school students and teaches important character skills to help students be successful in their activities, school, and life. Emerging Leaders is a program of a select number of students with sessions focusing on personal development and leading with good character. Bill is instrumental in Urbandale's Seeds of Success program. Seeds of Success takes high school students into several elementary schools where students teach some of the strategies and tools they use for goal achievement, integrity, attitude, and effort.

A native of Des Moines, Bill is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and veteran of the United States Army. He holds a Masters in Teaching from Drake University and a Ph.D. in Education from Iowa State University.



PARTNER OF THE YEAR - THE DES MOINES REGISTER

The Des Moines Register has been a Six Pillar Partner of The Ray Center since 2011. As an avid supporter of good character and civility, The Des Moines Register has helped The Ray Center recognize and acknowledge individuals across the state of Iowa making a positive impact on others.

The Des Moines Register offers a content-rich environment full of news and information to Iowa readers. Using their platform and statewide presence, The Des Moines Register works hard to demonstrate good character and spread The Ray Center's mission to improve civility and develop ethical leaders throughout the world.

In 2011, The Des Moines Register consulted with The Ray Center on the issue of incivility being displayed with their online comments section. Determined to set an example of accountability, The Des Moines Register was one of the first large chain U.S. news outlets to require commenters to log in using their Facebook accounts to post comments instead of using anonymous usernames.

The Des Moines Register

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

2017 Iowa Character Award Recipients

ROBERT D. RAY PILLAR OF CHARACTER AWARD - JOY CORNING (POSTHUMOUSLY)

Joy C. Corning was a passionate advocate and founding board member of Character Counts In Iowa in 1997, now The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University. She served on the board in both active and honorary roles until her passing in May 2017. Joy played an important role in the strategic planning of The Ray Center and valued the importance of recognizing and acknowledging good character.

First elected in 1990, Joy served two terms as the Lieutenant Governor of Iowa under Governor Terry Branstad. She was a great role model for women in politics. Joy was the first Republican woman to run for governor in 1998 and served on the board of 50-50 in 2020, an organization committed to putting more women into political office.

Joy was passionate about serving others, including nine years on the Cedar Falls school board and six years in the Iowa Senate. As said best by her three daughters – Carol, Claudia, and Ann – “Besides being the most wonderful mother any of us could ask for, we are proudest that Mother’s life was a model of class and grace, kindness and cooperation, service and civility.”



Robert D. Ray Pillar Of Character Award Recipients

The Robert D. Ray Awards are our organization’s highest honor and reflect former Governor Ray’s lifelong commitment to civility and character development.

The Pillar of Character Award was presented to Governor Ray in 2003 for his visionary leadership and inspiration to meet our mission as well as the exemplary character he demonstrates. The Award was then named in honor of Governor Ray as the founder and board chairman of The Ray Center.

2017	Ashton Kutcher (E)	2009	Jim Hallihan (L)
2016	Jim & Patty Cownie (L)	2009	Shawn Johnson (E)
2016	Casey Blake (E)	2008	Marvin Pomerantz (L)
2015	Suku Radia (L)	2008	Dr. Tom Davis (E)
2015	Rich Willis (L)	2007	Bernie Saggau (L)
2015	Sandy Hatfield Clubb (E)	2007	Hayden Fry (E)
2014	Jim Aipperspach (L)	2006	Joe D. Batten (L)
2014	Dan Gable (E)	2005	Dr. Troyce Fisher (L)
2013	Dr. Don Adams (L)	2003	Robert D. Ray (E, L)
2013	Fred Hoiberg (E)	2002	Michael Josephson (L)
2012	Dr. David Maxwell (L)	2001	Dr. Michael Cheney (L)
2012	Aaron Kampman (E)	2001	Jim Mayse (L)
2011	Deb Chiodo (L)	2001	Dr. Norman Borlaug (E)
2011	Coach Ed Thomas (E)		
2010	Dr. Matt Davidson (L)		
2010	Dr. Thomas Lickona (L)		
2010	Dallas Clark (E)		

(E) – Exemplar Award recipient

(L) – Legacy Award recipient