



WENDT CHARACTER INITIATIVE
UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE

Gratitude Week 2013

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Wendt Character Scholars celebrated Gratitude Week November 11-15, providing opportunities for others on campus to join them in thanking people who can often be overlooked.

The Scholars began this tradition a few years ago and continue to find it meaningful. When we take a few moments to reflect on God's grace in our lives, we can't help but be grateful. That these students find so much joy in hosting Gratitude Week encourages all of us!

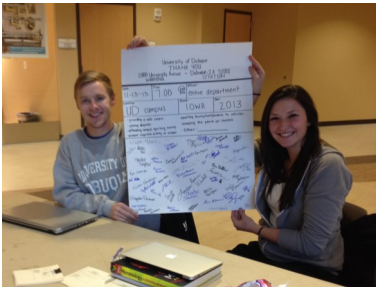


Photos courtesy of Eric Nie, Wendt Scholar

Whether it was writing a giant "citation" of gratitude issued to Security staff and signed by students from all over campus, or providing breakfast and notes to maintenance staff, or bringing treats and decorating the Academic Success Center, or creating a "Thank You" scrapbook for the Wendts, or serving Food service staff with dessert and thank you notes, or hosting a social for International students, the Scholars were busy.

Wendt Scholar Distance Seminary student, Suzanne Vogel carried it into her workplace. "Gratitude week at UD inspired me. I loved the ways it seemed to impact the community culture. While I can't put on an event like that at Vermeer [Corporation], I do have a little influence. The monthly newsletter goes out to all 3,000 employees in December, and it was my turn to write an article. So I'm trying a gratitude challenge and inviting feedback. I have no idea if I'll hear much, but excited to see."

"Kindness in words creates confidence.
Kindness in thinking creates profoundness.
Kindness in giving creates love."
— Lao Tzu



Scholars provide a light breakfast as they issue a thank you 'ticket' created for the Security staff and signed by students.



Gratitude Week 2013 cont.

Wendt Scholars were given two challenges for the month: keep a gratitude journal and ask anyone they came in contact with what they were most thankful for.

Scholar Jacob Ricketts reflects, "It was very humbling listening to people's responses about what they were thankful for. Often times we go through our days and get so worked up over little things, and we need to just step back and see how good we have it. Some people are facing major problems, but were able to tell me that they were thankful for the beautiful weather or a good meal."



Faculty, staff, and students shared what they were thankful for on a large sign displayed during the International Fair at the closing of Gratitude Week.



ASC treats

Our sincere gratitude to the Wendt Scholars for all of the amazingness in the ASC! The decorations and thank you notes are a much-welcomed boost to the spirit. This is such a sweet way to let our ASC staff know that our efforts are appreciated!

*~ Kay Smith, Administrative Assistant
Academic Success Center*



Social hosted by Wendt Scholars for International Students



Wendt Thank You scrap book



*Christmas Banquet
with the Bullocks*



Making a Difference

Wendt Scholars complete at least 15 hours of volunteer work each semester. Six students mentor in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. Below are a few reflections on their involvement.



I am a mentor at Fulton Elementary School.



I got into the Big Brothers Big Sisters program through my coach. One day my coach asked a few of us to play around with his "little." I had so much fun doing that, so I asked him how I could get my own little. I talked to the

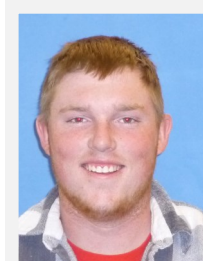
leader of the program and we set up a four year plan. I am scheduled to mentor my little for the four years I am at UD. By the time it is over my little will be heading to middle school.

What I do for my little is help him with any area of life he needs help with. I like to mix up what we do so were not just playing games all the time. Sometimes we read, do homework, and even research some things he is interested in. He doesn't always get to goof around and be a kid at home, so I like to let him have fun when we are together. He knows exactly when I am coming and lets me hear it when things change. It feels good to know that I am important in his life. This is the perfect service for me because I hope to make a difference in people's lives by being a teacher.

~ Zachary Marotta, Sophomore
Pre-Education, 1st Year Scholar

The relationships created with the littles really develop into something special. They begin to trust us and share their feelings and know they can come to us for anything. I chose BBBS because Coach Schmidt offered us this opportunity and I thought it would be a great idea. I originally mentored at Fulton school downtown, but this year I decided to continue mentoring my same little who is now attending Roosevelt Middle School.

BBBS has really impacted me for the better—I intended to help Isaiah (my little) grow, yet he has also helped me grow. I have had to continue to push myself to be a positive role model and set a good example for Isaiah. I've improved on coming up with activities for us to do. Lastly, I have learned to be better at teaching and communicating, whether it's teaching him rights or wrongs or life lessons it's been important.



I recommend BBBS, it has been a wonderful opportunity to grow and also to touch someone else's life, I have enjoyed every minute of mentoring and look forward to continuing.

~ Lucas Kahl, Sophomore
Business Administration, 2nd Year Scholar

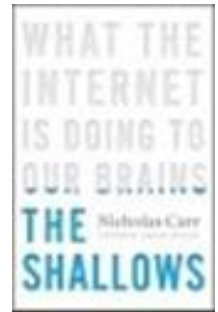
I chose the Big Brothers Big Sisters program because I really enjoy working with kids, I wanted the chance to make a difference in a young child's life, and as an elementary education major I knew this would also benefit me. I have been a Big Sister for over a year now with two different littles. My first unfortunately moved, but the experience has taught me so much and it really is a great program to be a part of.

~ Megan Loes, Sophomore, Pre-Education, 2nd Year Scholar



Wendt Book Club News

The internet now shapes our habits, our relationships, our learning, our diets, our very lives. What physiological changes occur in our brains because of it? How are cultural patterns and experiences impacted by it? Featured on TED Talks, Nicholas Carr, speaks to organizations around the world about his research, and he's coming to UD in March!



Endless internet distractions take their toll on our very character. Some scholars now “indicate that the more distracted we become, the less able we are to experience the subtlest, most distinctively human forms of empathy, compassion, and other emotions” (221). What might this mean for our work in education?

This spring's Wendt Book club groups focus on Nicholas Carr's ***The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to our Brains***. We look forward to lively conversations in the month of February.

Carr will be on campus as our spring Wendt Lecturer March 10, 7:00 p.m., Butler Hall, Heritage Center.

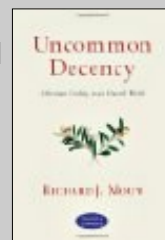
Nicholas Carr
Wendt Character Initiative Lecturer

The Mind in the Net: How Our Gadgets Shape Our Thoughts

March 10, 2014
Butler Hall,
Heritage Center
7:00 p.m.

Fall Book Clubs

Nearly 20 faculty and staff members were involved in the fall book discussions of *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*. Seminary and UD faculty along with staff shared reactions, questions and comments, while encouraging each other to work together to bring civility to our campus.



Homecoming 2013

This year, the Wendt Center hosted an Alumni Affinity event during Homecoming. At the Grand River Center, Wendt Alumni Scholars joined a few current

Scholars, sharing stories and reminiscing. It was a great opportunity to hear how the Wendt Initiative impacted the lives of these Scholars and to hear the difference they are making in their communities.



What is Character? By Roger Ebertz



The Wendt Initiative seeks to develop a culture of character at the University of Dubuque. Our goals are to help all members of the U D Community be people of character leading lives of purpose. But just what is “character”? What is a “culture of character”? What does it mean to be a person of character?

The Greek work that is often translated ‘virtue’ means ‘excellence.’ So, to be a person of character is to be excellent as a person. It is not about making sure one doesn’t violate some ethics code. It is not about mediocrity. Character is not about being good enough.

Character is about excellence . . . as a whole human being . . . in every aspect of one’s life. It is, in short, to be all that God created us to be.

Character is about excellence. It is not just about being excellent in one area, such as in one’s profession, or in one’s personal life, or even in one’s religious devotion. It is about being excellent as a whole human being. It is about being excellent in every aspect of one’s life. It is about being the best person that one can be. It is, in short, to be all that God created us to be.

That is what we seek to be and to help our students to be: excellent persons. As Christians, we realize that every single one of us falls short of the excellence that God intends for us. Yet, in God’s grace, we strive toward the goal of excellence.

Our goal is not just to do good things but to be good people. For character is not just about what a person does, it is about what a person is. As Jesus suggests, it is the state of one’s heart that determines whether what flows into one’s life is good or evil. As Paul says, we are to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds.”

Our goal, then, is to help form hearts and minds out of which flow acts of human excellence, acts of virtue. The Wendt Initiative, in particular aims to help students, faculty and staff at the University of Dubuque become people of integrity, justice and compassion.

Character is not just about what a person does, it is about what a person is.

- ◇ We seek to be people of integrity, whose lives are characterized by honesty and truthfulness.
- ◇ We seek to be people of justice, who treat all people fairly in all circumstances.
- ◇ We seek to be people of compassion, who do to others as we would want others to do to us.

Wendt Center for Character Education



Dr. Annalee Ward
Director, Wendt Center for
Character Education

2000 University Avenue
Dubuque, IA 52001

Phone: 563-589-3440
Fax: 563-589-3243
E-mail: wendt@dbq.edu

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A Note from the Director

What are YOU thankful for? Did YOU have a good Thanksgiving? What do YOU want for Christmas? How will YOU celebrate? All around us we are told that it's all about "me." It's no wonder that the Oxford Dictionary's word of the year for 2013 is "selfie." With smart phones and tablets we now have the ability to take pictures of ourselves anytime, anywhere. Yes, we love our iPads, our iMacs, our iPhones. They keep the "i" center front.

I hope that after reading this issue, you'll see that the Wendt Character Initiative is about something bigger than self-gratification. Wendt Scholars work to encourage the campus community, promoting a spirit of gratitude. Book discussions seek to build community and grow knowledge of character. Lecturers illustrate care for the world that is so much bigger than "I."

Becoming people of integrity, justice, and compassion, as Dr. Ebertz writes, is our goal. Those words challenge me constantly. How do we create a campus environment where that is the norm? It certainly is counter-cultural.

But we can counter the self-centeredness of the commercialized season by holding fast to the truth that this is God's world, and we are given the gifts to work with God to bring about more integrity, justice and compassion.

I'm reminded of the verse in Hebrews that says, "let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." As we move into this Christmas season, may our word of the year be "selfless." Be the blessing in the lives of those around you. Be the hope. Be the light. Blessed Christmas!



Annalee—"selfie"



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