



WENDT CHARACTER INITIATIVE
UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE

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Gratitude Week 2014

By Scholar Sharon Boer



Kasey Benson's group donated used golf balls to the Hempstead High School golf team.

Wendt Character Scholars celebrated Gratitude Week both on and off-campus November 10-14. They chose different ways to focus on individuals and departments that make a difference around campus but haven't been thanked lately. The Scholars wanted to show sincere appreciation for these departments' and individuals' dedication, hard work, and positive examples.

This year, the Scholars discussed various ways in which they are privileged and blessed, and how they are called to serve others. Out of that context, each of the five

groups of Scholars decided where to focus their gratitude, and developed plans of action to show their appreciation (cont'd on p. 4-5).

The discipline of gratitude is the explicit effort to acknowledge that all I am and have is given to me as a gift of love, a gift to be celebrated with joy.

Henri Nouwen

Wendt Character Scholars Service Projects

The Wendt Character Scholars have been busy this semester. So far, they have completed 589 hours of service. And there are more to come! One scholar has completed 39 hours of service this semester alone. Here is a sampling of some of the scholars' service projects:



Scholar Jack Lindsay

- Volunteering/collecting items for the Dubuque Rescue Mission and other shelters/food pantries
- Participating in "Make a Difference Day"
- Volunteering at the Dubuque Humane Society
- Participating in Mentor Dubuque
- Mentoring and tutoring at local schools
- Coaching youth in wrestling, lacrosse, football, soccer, and basketball
- Leading/helping with Bible studies and youth groups
- Raising awareness of Leukemia, Crohn's, and Colitis
- Serving at the Stem LEGO event.



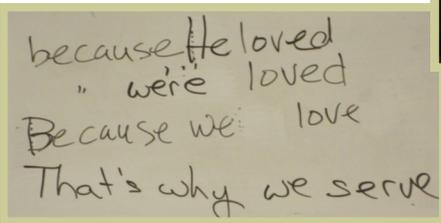
Several Wendt Character Scholars at "Make a Difference Day" on October 25. This group helped a local elderly woman (pictured) with her landscaping.

Carrie Newcomer and the Wendt Character Scholars



Carrie Newcomer

Singer, songwriter, and performer Carrie Newcomer spent time with the Wendt Character Scholars at their November 10 group meeting, themed “Music and Justice.” Newcomer shared her talents and



passion with the scholars, helping them to write a song embodying the spirit of the Wendt Character Initiative and

its participants. And, although the songwriting experience was foreign to most of the scholars, everyone enjoyed the process. The song they wrote, titled “That’s Why We Serve,” was an instant hit.

That’s Why We Serve

*by Carrie Newcomer
and the Wendt Character Scholars*

*Because He loved
Because we're loved
Because we love
That's why we serve*

*It was a simple thing
It was a small gift
It was something I could do
we cleaned the windows
we raked the leaves
we sat and talked all afternoon*

*Because He loved
Because we're loved
Because we love
That's why we serve*

*Pens and Pencils
Shoes that fit
Coming home to a warm meal
A hand to hold and a
complement
Someone who cares how you feel*

*Because He loved
Because we're loved
Because we love
That's why we serve*

*It's our connection to one another
Its grace that makes us whole,
Its gratitude and it is service
that moves us to a higher goal*

*Because He loved
Because we're loved
Because we love
That's why we serve*

Fall Wendt Character Lecture: Captain Jason Church



Captain (ret.) Jason Church visited campus on Monday, October 13 as our Fall Wendt Character Lecturer. Captain Church met with UD Veterans and ROTC participants, as well as visited a UD Biomechanics and

Anatomy and Kinesiology class, before giving his lecture on Monday evening.

In his lecture, titled “The Power of a Positive Attitude and Standing Up to Adversity,” Captain Church discussed how he lost his lower legs while serving in the military in Afghanistan, his long recovery, and the lessons he learned about the importance of reliability, candor, and the power of a positive attitude. Captain Church proved an inspiring lecturer and individual. We are grateful he shared his story with us!

Wendt & the Fairest of the Fair by Scholar Robyn Wittkopf

Next Semester...

The Spring Wendt Character Lecturer on March 30, 2015 will be Sister Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*.

The award-winning film, *Dead Man Walking*, will be screened at Mindframe Theaters on Monday, March 23, 2015 at 6:00 and 8:30 p.m. You won't want to miss it!



Contact the Wendt Center at wendt@dbq.edu or 563.589.3440 with questions.

part of the Wendt Character Scholars program for the past two years, and I am grateful for the ways it has helped me grow and succeed—including helping me become the 2014 Waukesha County Fairest of the Fair!

“The 2014 Waukesha County Fairest of the Fair is... Robyn Wittkopf!” I couldn't contain my excitement when, after participating in an all-day competition, I finally heard these words. What I had worked for finally paid off as I was crowned the 2014 Waukesha County Fairest of the Fair.

The Fairest is responsible for promoting the fair year-round and announcing bands on the main stage. She also walks around during the five-day-long fair, greeting people and announcing and participating in activities and events. I can confidently say my role as a Wendt Character Scholar differentiated me from the rest of the Fairest of the Fair contestants.

The Wendt Character Scholars program at the University of Dubuque is a program unlike any other. Its foundation is based upon becoming people of integrity, justice, and compassion, characterized by such things as truthfulness, service, and honesty. During the first interview I had with the judges for the Fairest of the Fair competition, one judge asked about the Wendt Character Scholars program, which I had mentioned in my application.

I told her all about the different service opportunities and events I have had the privilege of participating in, and what the Wendt Character Scholars stand for. She couldn't believe a program like this existed, and I could tell she was amazed that I was part of something so remarkable.

During the final part of the competition, I had to answer two questions on-the-spot in front of a large crowd of people. The first question the interviewer asked me was about the Wendt Character Scholars program. I couldn't believe it—the main quality people were interested in was my involvement as a Wendt Character Scholar! I am so blessed to have been a



Robyn Wittkopf



Wittkopf is no stranger to the ways of the fair. Pictured above, she prepares her sheep for showing at the Wisconsin State Fair.

Applications for prospective Wendt Character Scholars are now open. Find the application at <http://wendt.dbq.edu/Applying.cfm>. Applications close on January 31, 2015.

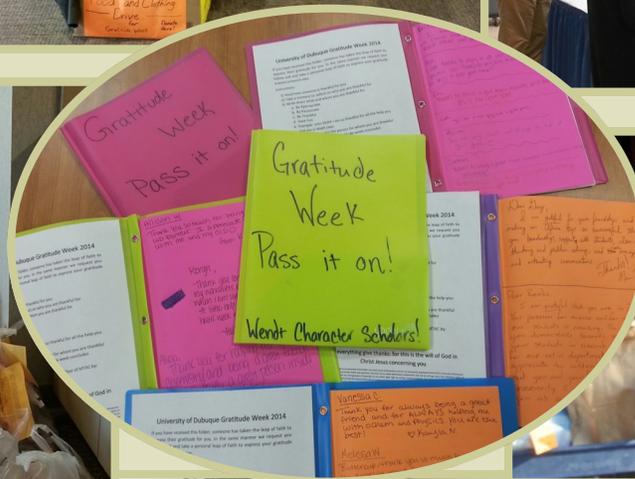
Wendt Gratitude Week Activities

Led by their mentors, each group of Wendt Character Scholars developed their own Gratitude Week projects to impact the UD and Dubuque communities. Every project was different, and each was successful!



● Campus Pass-it-on Gratitude folders

● Community Food Drive for the Dubuque Rescue Mission



● Food and Clothing Drive for the Multicultural Family Center

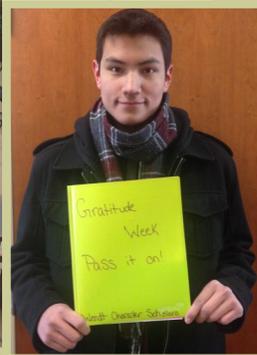


● Coaches and Trainers Thank You Posters, program ads, and collecting golf balls for local high school





● 2nd/3rd floor MTAC and Seminary Admissions Thank You Snack Break

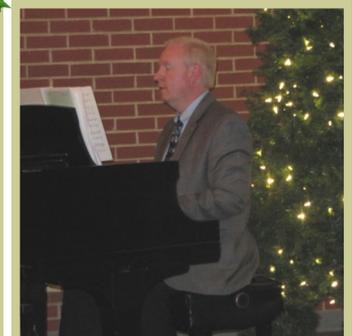
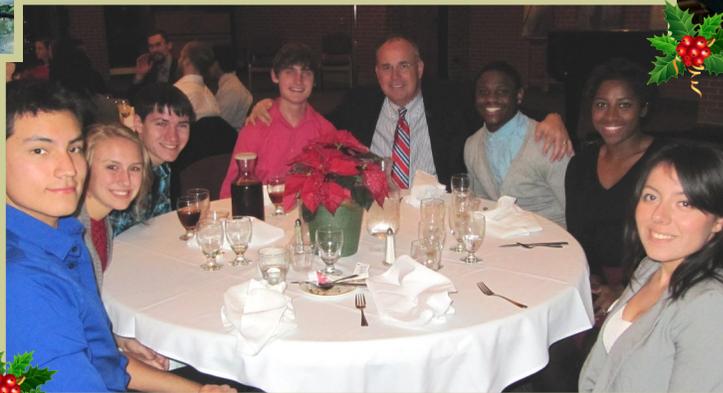


Wendt Character Scholars Christmas Banquet

The Wendt Character Scholars gathered on December 1st to cap off the semester at their annual Christmas Banquet, hosted by President Jeffrey and Dana Bullock. Music was provided by Dr. Charles Barland, UD's Fine and Performing Arts Department Head.



Everyone had a great time celebrating the end of the semester and the beginning of the Christmas season. And the food was delicious!



Character in Action

By Mike Schmidt, UD Football Defensive Coordinator and Wendt Advisory Board Member

Recently, a woman conducted a social experiment where she took video of herself walking around New York City for ten hours. The title of the video is “10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman.” The harassment she experienced was overwhelming. As I type this article, the video has over 36 million views on YouTube. It’s safe to say that the video has gone viral, and I am sure many of you have seen it. The footage brings up many ethical issues regarding friendly greetings vs. harassment and has been a lightning rod for ethical discussion.



Cassandra Berger

I am a simple guy from a simple, small town in West Central Wisconsin. I grew up knowing every person in my high school. When walking around the community, it was custom to say, “Hello” and acknowledge our neighbors as they walked past. I think acknowledging our fellow students and faculty at UD as we walk by them on campus is a great practice we should all adhere to. While I walk around campus, I try to say hello and give a smile to every person I walk by (If I miss you someday, please grab me and say hello).

There is one particular person on campus that should be lifted up for her vibrant personality and the character she shows throughout campus every day. This young woman is Cassandra Berger: a junior from Waukon, IA who is majoring in Accounting and Business Administration, a Wendt Character Scholar, and a member of the Women’s Lacrosse team. Cassandra always has something positive to say, and she always carries a smile around with her. The positive attitude she brings everywhere is infectious and has a way of energizing the people she is around.

To me, a part of character is how you make people feel by your own actions. We can all do better and be held to a higher standard while we interact with people around campus. The example of a woman who gets catcalled and harassed over 100 times in ten hours while she walks around New York City shows how people feel when they are not treated with dignity, and so illustrates the importance of exhibiting good character in our interactions with others.

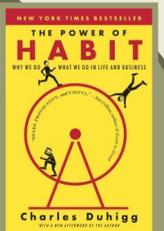
Cassandra Berger makes all of us here at UD better simply because of the character she exhibits on a daily basis. She leaves us all with a positive outlook, a kind word, and a helpful smile. We should take from her lead and hold ourselves to the highest of standards while we give a stranger a word of encouragement, a big smile, or a simple hello. Cassandra, thank you for your example, and for your good character!



Mike Schmidt

... a part of character is how you make people feel by your own actions.
Mike Schmidt

Fall Wendt Book Discussion Recap: *The Power of Habit*



The fall Wendt Book Discussion Group was all about *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business* by author Charles Duhigg. Duhigg discusses how our habits shape our perspectives, achievements, failures, and experiences. Over 40 faculty and staff from 26 different offices read the book. Three groups met bi-weekly over a two-month period to discuss *The Power of Habit* and its application on campus and in their lives.

UDTS’s Pastor Beth McCaw said of the book, “. . . it was a terrific wake-up call to realize the extent to which most of us have been groomed into mindless routines that serve ends that we would not consciously choose. And I was empowered in recognizing the choice we have to intentionally build habits that will be life-giving and fruitful.” UD’s Dr. Adam Hoffman said, “I am [now] trying to create new habits, modify old ones, and in general I’m more aware of what I’m doing and why.” (cont. p. 7)

Small Steps toward Character

By Dr. Roger Ebertz, Chair of Philosophy, Theology, and History and Wendt Advisory Board Member

In our efforts to encourage character on campus, the Wendt Character Initiative sponsors great programs and helps fund many more. But in the last few days, I've been reminded that there are also many "small" ways members of our community work toward the goal of helping us all develop in integrity, justice, and compassion. This fall, for example, a criminal justice faculty member took a step toward helping students think about social fairness by including new assignments focused on on-going racial inequality in our society and having discussions in class about them. In conversation about a different course, one of my colleagues reflected to me about how a particular student had grown in the ability to speak out appropriately on ethical concerns, even during moments of tension in the discussion. In still another discussion, I and my colleagues reflected on specific conversations in our classes about inequality, drawing on students' experiences and thinking about how they could respond in ways that are fair and just.



A cake one group of Wendt Scholars provided for a dessert reception during Gratitude Week to thank some of UD/UDTS's faculty/staff for their work.



Roger Ebertz

As I reflect back over this semester, I remember hearing of students reaching out to other students who have experienced crises in their lives, faculty and staff showing concern for students, members of the community praying for and supporting others in need. Finally, during this past Gratitude Week, the Wendt Character Scholars have been reminding us of the importance of gratitude: saying "thank you" to those around us, showing compassion for the person beside us, learning how to treat others fairly.

Character is built through our day-to-day actions and interactions. Like a child learning to walk, we grow in character by taking small steps (and sometimes falling down!). By encouraging ongoing conversation about character, the Wendt Center for Character Education is helping create a campus environment where "small" character-building steps can be taken. The Wendt Character Initiative seeks to "foster intellectual understanding of and personal commitment to leading lives of purpose and excellent moral character."

Character is built through our day-to-day actions and interactions. Like a child learning to walk, we grow in character by taking small steps (and sometimes falling down!).

Dr. Roger Ebertz

Not only are the readings and discussions interesting, but it is a great chance to get to know others on campus, who we might not otherwise interact with.

Ann Kendell,
Academic Affairs
Coordinator

The Power of Habit (cont'd)

The book not only discussed personal habits, but social and institutional habits as well. "[It] was a great book for teachers, coaches, and leaders wanting to leverage the best practices for achieving outcomes with individuals or teams and organizations," said UD's Head Wrestling Coach, Jon McGovern. UD Library Director, Mary Anne Knepel, said of the book, ". . . now I know how habits are formed as well as the importance of 'weak ties' in creating social movements."

The Wendt Center's book discussions have proven instrumental to our mission to engage UD's community in striving for excellent moral character. Director of First-year Experience Lindsey Ward said, "It's a great way to get to know colleagues better and learn about something fascinating!" The book discussions have certainly proven valuable. As Assistant Professor of Business Rafic Sinno put it, "The Wendt Center is a catalyst for personal transformation and empowerment . . . The lessons, perspectives, and insights gained from our meetings are applicable personally and professionally."

Winter 2014

Wendt Center for Character Education

Dr. Annalee Ward,
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A Note from the Director



A vigorous moral imagination widens capacity for sympathy, opens eyes to difference, and softens hearts to plights of pain. This fall, the Wendt Character Scholars have begun an exploration of issues of character and justice, hopefully broadening our vision. Our discussions take place in safe, supportive environments; all the while, the charged issues of Ferguson, privilege, racism, classism, and justice swirl around us.

In one exercise, a “privilege circle,” we explored difference in the form of privilege and referenced the challenges that continue for many. Later, the scholars reflected on their experience.

What is Justice?

*Justice is getting what one deserves **and** Justice is getting what one needs.*

What is Privilege?

*Privilege has been defined as a right **or** benefit that is given to some people and not to others.*

From R. Ebertz and A Hoffman lectures

“I don’t want people to look at me as a middle class white girl who’s never had to work for anything because I’m not and I have had to work for things,” pleads Wendt Scholar Alyssa Sajnaj. “I want people to look at me and see someone who is kind, someone who looks out for others and someone who cares. I don’t see myself as lacking privilege. I see people who look at people and see color, class and social status as people who are lacking privilege.”

Scholar Reggie Cole writes, “What I took away from our discussion [on privilege] is that we have a duty to use our circumstances to be better, well rounded, compassionate, and empathetic people. I shouldn't just recognize that change in an area can improve the overall circumstances for the whole. Action is expected and required.”

Scholar Daniel Morillo sums it up this way: “Privileges do not define who we are. We have the option to let it define us or not. I hope we choose the latter because it is our character that defines us, not our privileges.”

As we move into the spring, we will continue to probe questions of justice and character formation as we look at issues of incarceration, capital punishment, restorative justice, and forgiveness.

Here at UD, may we continue to grow as a community that values each person—each carrier of God’s image. And may we live out God’s call to be people characterized by integrity, justice, and compassion.



Revival performance of *Sol and Paul*, with a panel discussion.