

Character Counts at HCN by Bethany Hobbs

We are focused on developing our children at HCN in a holistic manner. With that in mind, this year we have been incorporating a character development program into the activities at the center. Every 6 weeks, we focus on a different character trait. John C. Maxwell, in *Leadership 101*, emphasizes the significance of character by saying, "People will forgive occasional mistakes based on ability, especially if they can see that you're still growing as a leader. But they won't trust someone who has slips in character.... Character makes trust possible. And trust makes leadership possible." As we are partnering with the Nicaraguan people to bring about change, raising the leaders of the future here at our very own center must involve teaching and building character.

Our first value of the year was honesty. Of course, even though we moved our focus to obedience at the end of February, I was reminded of the importance of reinforcing valuable lessons already learned!

A team was with us giving out flip flops, which is a very precious gift since our children grow faster than weeds, constantly needing new shoe sizes. As the kids were searching through the endless mounds of "chinelas," it was difficult to determine who had received their shoes and who still needed a pair. I normally cringe at the children's tattletail tendencies, but when Valerie pointed her finger at Kimberly and accused her in a Judge Judy type way by saying "You have more than one pair!", I couldn't let an opportunity like that pass without a little heart-to-heart.

I knelt down to Kimberly's level and looked her in the eyes. I asked her if she could remember what we had talked about in English class, and she nodded yes.

"Kimberly, what is honesty?"

"No decir mentiras, solo la verdad," she whispered in a little pouty way. (Not to tell lies, only the truth).

"Kimberly, do you think that taking more than one pair of flip flops is honest if the team told you to only get one pair?" She nodded no in an understanding way, and then ran to her room and returned the extra pair she had hoarded.

I hugged her and congratulated her on her excellence in telling the truth, but before I had the chance to stand up, I heard one of the boys yelling, "Jacob has 3 pair! Jacob has 3 pair!" The next thing I knew, Kimberly glanced at

me and said, "Don't worry, I'll take care of this." I saw her run toward Jacob, and standing on her tip toes in order to stretch her arm around Jacob's shoulders, she started saying, "Jacob, do you know what honesty is?" In no time at all, Jacob was handing me his two extra pair.



Following is the outline for the Character Development Program at HCN. This program is also being utilized by mission teams as they minister to children in the communities where they serve.

Honesty January 7- February 18

Focus on children telling the truth, being true to their word, living their lives in a way that demonstrates a pattern of believability, communicating things in their entirety, and doing what they say they will do.

Obedience February 19- April 1

Children will obey their teachers in school, the laws and authority of the government, and their parents. Most importantly, the kids will see that obedience is something that God designed for us as we learn to live in the boundaries that HE has set for us.

Patience April 2- May 15

The children will be capable to endure waiting or being delayed without becoming annoyed or upset. Also, children will be able to continue calmly when faced with difficulties.

Love May 15- June 26

Children will discover that the greatest of all commands is love. They will treat others as they would want to be treated, they will be kind and considerate, they will share and take turns, and they will also, most importantly, learn about the one who loves us more than anyone else in an unconditional manner, our Heavenly Father.

Responsibility June 27- August 8

Children will feel a sense of duty to fulfill tasks with reliability, dependability, and commitment. Children will be helpful, ready to give assistance when it is asked for or needed. Children will be considerate, careful not to cause hurt or inconvenience to someone else. Children will be responsible by caring for the things they have, whether it be homework, toys, or their physical health. They will become good stewards of the things they have. Children will also feel capable and realize they have the ability to achieve whatever goals they set.

Appreciation August 9- September 20

Children will say "thank you" when they receive something, and they will not ask for more unless it is an appropriate time. Children will see that it is a great blessing when needs are met and wants are granted.

Humility September 21- November 2

Children will learn to honor others with an attitude of service. Children will look out for each other and be mindful of what is in the best interest of everyone. They should accomplish things and feel confident, but never display an attitude of pride.

Self-Discipline November 3- December 15

The children will demonstrate hard work in school, house-hold chores, and daily care, as well as thorough completion of tasks. They will be taught how to control emotions, words, actions, impulses, and desires. They will learn to give their best in all situations.