



# Parent Page

The Trait of the Month is: **Citizenship**

*"Like the body that is made up of different limbs and organs, all moral creatures must depend on each other to exist."*

*--Hindu proverb*

**Citizenship** means helping others and becoming involved in such community activities as helping a friend with homework, recycling paper or cans, picking up trash on the playground, or donating food to a needy family. With your help, your child will:

- Become a better neighbor.
- Treat other people with respect.
- Participate in community service.
- Help take care of the environment.
- Follow the rules of your family, the school, and society.

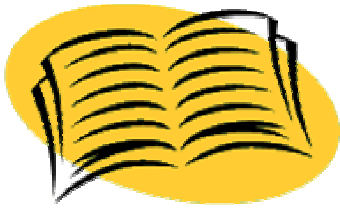


As parents/guardians, we should set aside time to teach our children character traits that will make them outstanding, admired citizens. Everyday is filled with opportunities for helping them to learn about the character traits we value and want to encourage.

This character trait package provides suggestions of good activities for citizenship. But you, as the child's most important teacher, are the best judge of which activities are the most appropriate.

## To Do List

1. Go over the **Citizenship Poster** together and put it on the refrigerator.
2. Read the attached **Story** with your child and discuss the **Questions** at the end.
3. Do at least one **Additional Activity** to reinforce the citizenship character trait.
4. Write a short comment on the **Puzzle Piece** about what your child has learned about citizenship, cut out the puzzle piece, and have your child return it to school.



# Truckload of Gifts

By Nicole Brambilla

Sitting on the carpet in front of the television in his room, Zachary Gomez jerks the video game controller back and forth. He's close to beating his high score on his favorite Nintendo game.

The room is kind of small. But Zac doesn't care about the size of his room or even that he has to share it with his little brother, Xavier. Zac knows some kids would think he has quite a lot.

His room is decorated with karate trophies—Zac 's an orange belt. He's also collected a ton of movie-related toys.

Zac knows the difference between wants and needs—probably better than most people living in North America. He understands because eight years ago Zac lived with his mom and baby brother in a shelter for more than six months.

Zac remembers employees at the shelter making huge stacks of clothes in the middle of a large room for the families to pick through. And he remembers how grateful everyone was.

Before coming to the shelter, Zac—who was just 4 years old at the time—had never owned any toys of his own.

"They had a huge room with stuffed animals," Zac recalls wide-eyed. "And I picked a Gumby. I had Gumby for four or five years. It was brand-new. It was my first toy."

And now he wants to help other kids. For the last two years instead of blowing out candles on his birthday, Zac has stood on his feet all day collecting blankets and toys for the family shelter.

The event all started as a Cub Scout project. His den leader asked the boys to give a blanket to the shelter for the chilly West Texas winter months. But Zac decided he wanted to do more.

He turned the pack's project into a citywide fund-raiser. Zac phoned local radio and television stations and a couple of national companies to help. In just three short weeks, he had collected enough donations to fill a 20-foot trailer.



## Truckload of Gifts (continued)

"I want to do this because I know how those people feel, and I want to reach out to others," the sixth-grader says. "Most people don't realize how little people have at the shelter. I just had a bed, some clothes and something to take a shower with."

The success of the drive surprised everyone, especially Zac.

"I thought it was going to be kind of small," he says. "I didn't think it would be big."

The collection brought in winter coats, blankets, toys and other items to help moms get back on their feet.

With all the interest the clothing drive received the first year, Zac decided he wanted do it again. But this time he started earlier, so it could be even bigger.

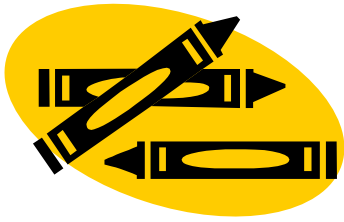
Several weeks before the big day, Zac jotted down a "To-Do List" in his journal. He made lots and lots of phone calls, and all his work paid off. Taco Bell, Wal-Mart and a local radio and television station jumped to take part in the event. And after an article about Zac appeared in the local paper, donations started coming even before the big collection day. Because of all the community support, Zac thinks he'll celebrate his December 9 birthday this way every year.

Now he has a new focus.

"I can't save the world," he says with a sigh. "But I can make it a better place."

## Story Questions

1. What motivates Zac to practice good citizenship?
2. Why would you want to practice good citizenship? What are the benefits?
3. Share the last time you, or somebody you know, practiced good citizenship.



# Additional Activities

1. Visit <http://www.pbs.org/democracy/kids/> with your child to help him/her learn about government, presidency, and voting in a child-friendly, interactive way.
2. Volunteer to help protect the environment! Organize a storage place and a space in your home to save and sort your recyclables (aluminum cans, glass bottles, paper, and/or plastic). Create a calendar for when to take the recyclables to a collection center twice a month.
3. Find each of the following words.

GIVE

VOTE

COURTEOUS

HELP

OFFER

POLITE

SHARE

DONATE

VOLUNTEER

CITIZENSHIP

CLEAN UP

RECYCLE

