

May 2014 Character Trait – OBEDIENCE

Jan Gunter, Community Relations Specialist

The Character Trait for the Month of May, 2014 in the City of Opelika is OBEDIENCE. The definition offered for this character trait is as follows: Cheerfully carrying out the directions and wishes of those who are responsible for me. Obedience – like most of the positive character traits – is a choice that we make, rather than something we do “blindly without forethought or being continually submissive to others without any personal say-so,” in our day to day lives.

The positive attributes of obedience are engrained in care, not in the desire to control, and acts much like an umbrella of protection over us. Those attributes can be seen at just about every level of our lives. Society establishes laws for the safety and well-being of its citizens; the workplace has established rules to regulate safety and proficiency for its employees; and of course in families there are the established ground rules set by parents for children who are expected to be obedient to those instructions for their own safety and well-being.

In learning about obedience, one of the most important things that can be taught is that there is a consequence for every choice we make. If we choose to follow rules and “do the right thing” the consequences are good. Sadly, when people choose to disobey, the consequences can be disastrous – not only for the one who made the choice, but for those who have been affected by the choice made. For example, take the drinking & driving laws. Those who disobey those laws put themselves – and others – at great risk because of their poor choices. Their lack of obedience to the laws can result in accidents, injuries, death and heartache for many people whose lives were changed by the consequences of poor choices made, and not just the one who made the choice to drink and drive.

So how can we adults / parents / grandparents emphasize the importance of choosing obedience to our children? It’s as easy as teaching them games and then playing those games with them. Every game has its own organized set of rules in order for it to work. If everyone plays by the rules, the game is fun and enjoyed by most, even by small children, because everyone knows what to expect and where the perimeters of the game lay.

If your children receive a game or toy that requires “assembly”, this is another good time to point out the importance of obedience (i.e. following instructions), by showing them that if the proper steps aren’t followed in putting the toy together, it might not work at all – or if it does work, it might not work properly. That’s because the rules weren’t followed; and rules /instructions help all of us to achieve positive goals in our lives – like having a properly working toy at the end of assembly.

The most important thing we can teach our children is that whether we realize it or not, every one of us makes the choice to “be obedient” – or not – in our daily lives because every one of us has someone or something we answer to. Recognizing the importance of obedience can make all of the difference in how well our communities thrive.

###