

The Citizenship Challenge

Objectives: HCE Members will be able to:

1. describe good citizenship.
2. list the responsibilities of being a good citizen.
3. plan an individual or a club citizenship activity in their community.

Say

Introduction: Each year, Manitowoc County HCE members plan a study focus based on what was learned at the annual HCE Leadership Institute held in September. Today's study focus is a lesson that was taken from that conference titled "The Citizenship Challenge", presented by Linda Olson, Shawano County UW-Extension Family Living Educator.

We will discuss what citizenship means to you, learn from local agency representatives how we can be good citizens by assisting them in their efforts and, then, take "the citizenship challenge". The "citizenship challenge" will involve identifying a project that each club or individual member will take on in 2005 to demonstrate good citizenship.

What does Citizenship Mean to You?

We know that being a good citizen is a privilege, an opportunity, and a responsibility. Citizenship means different things to different people. Let's spend 3-4 minutes at our tables discussing what citizenship means to you. (Share in small groups then, list on a flipchart.)

Just as happiness has many different meanings, so does citizenship.

What is Good Citizenship?

(Read the newspaper article provided or a local article of your own here)

For some, citizenship signifies where one resides, simply the country where one was born or has immigrated to. We owe our allegiance to the government of that country and in return we receive services such as police protection, roads, and assistance for the needy.

However, good citizenship is based on much more than residence. The key to good citizenship is that it is not passive. A good citizen is not content to be an anonymous face in the crowd. Citizenship means participation, involvement, and contribution. No one can make a difference without being involved.

Do

Distribute a labeled manila folder to collect all the information for re-teaching.

(Share in small groups, then list on a flipchart.)

Here are some examples members may mention:

Performing a public service
Volunteering
Being a good neighbor
Running for public office
Serving in the armed forces
Campaigning for a candidate
Holding a job
Paying taxes
Obeying the law
Being born or a naturalized
"citizen" of a country

The good citizen knows the laws and obeys them. They volunteer and stay informed about the issues of the day. They do more than their “fair” share to make society work, now and for the future generations. And beyond respecting the law, reporting crimes, serving on juries, voting, and paying taxes, the good citizen protects the environment by conserving resources, recycling, and cleaning up litter. They never take more than they give.

In short, good citizens are ethical people. They go beyond their own interests, demonstrate a concern for the needs of others, and recognize their obligations to make their home, school, neighborhood, and country the best it can be.

Who is someone in your community who demonstrates good citizenship?

Citizenship Means Responsibility

Good citizenship in practice is understanding, appreciating, and doing things, which make life better for self and for other people. Responsibility means thinking of the results or consequences of our actions. Citizenship is not just doing the thing that looks good. It is doing the thing that will really result in helping people. The good citizen thinks of the situation and the person, and tries to do what will help the most.

In her book, *Finding Your Voice -Learning to Lead... Anywhere You Want to Make a Difference*, Lorraine Matusak says, “*Good Citizenship is our responsibility! One aspect of good citizenship is being willing to lead when our talents are needed. Everyone has a contribution to make, a passion to fulfill, an idea, an experience, time, specialized skills, personal contacts, wisdom, enthusiasm and so on.*”

Good Citizenship is Learned

Good citizenship requires understanding the various educational, social, economic, service and decision-making systems in the community and caring enough to put our knowledge, talents and energy to use to make them function more effectively. Sometimes we can better see changes when we look at the community through “new eyes”. We can educate ourselves about local concerns in many ways. Here is a piece that will identify families who don’t always have enough money for food. What are other ways you can educate yourself about your community and county?

h(Share who and why.)

Skim through the UW-Extension “Hunger Close to Home” handout highlighting stats unique to the county. This piece provides local information on food insecurity and hunger and is available at: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/demographics/hunger/pdfs/manitowoc.pdf>

Citizenship is Educating Yourself on Ways to Become Involved

Some people feel they would like to do something in their community but rather not do it alone. Connecting with members in your club and asking individual members to join your efforts will be a comfortable approach to being a good citizen.

There are a variety of ways we can be a good citizen in our communities. We have asked three community representatives to share ways we can become involved through their organizations. Because we want you to be able to remember suggestions given by the speakers we will give you a list of ideas that you can add to.

Kim Jacquart is the new Director of the Lakeshore Interfaith Hospitality Network. There are ten churches throughout the county that she will identify as places where you could volunteer time or resources. I will let Kim describe this brand new community service.

Now, I would like to introduce Keeley Crowley from the Domestic Violence Center to share with you a bit about the shelter and their needs. Please feel free to jot down ideas you think either you or your club might be interested in doing on the “Citizenship Ideas” sheet.

Our final presenter today, who will talk about ways to become involved in government, is Lauren Reed, the Assistant County Administrator. We don’t have a good female representation on our County Board or in Towns and Village Association leadership roles. Let’s identify ways we can become involved and talk about ways we can encourage women to become involved.

Before we begin to take a look at what we can do as a citizenship challenge, are there any other ideas you would like to add to our list?

Taking the Citizenship Challenge

We are asking each club and individual member to decide what they can do in 2005 for “the citizenship challenge”. If you are representing a club today, you will need to go back and use this lesson to determine what your club would like to take on as a project. There is an action sheet (show) that will help you in determining what you will do once you decide on the project you want to do. (show) If you are an individual member and wish to work with a club rather than taking something on yourself, we can provide you with a list of clubs in your area that you can connect with.

Distribute the “Citizenship Ideas” handout and pens.

During the roll call at the Spring Association meeting in May (after the Salad Supper), we will ask each individual member and club to respond with their “citizenship challenge” idea. At that meeting, we will ask that you turn in your Citizenship Action Plan as well. We will use the information you provide for articles for the state HCE newsletter, “Update” and to get a good idea of what the Manitowoc County HCE Association is doing.

An exciting opportunity for us is to encourage one club to apply for a State HCE Service Award. This is a new award and only one club in a county is eligible. At the Spring Association meeting, we will ask if any club will be interested in applying.

Conclusion

Oftentimes, problems can seem overwhelming and you may think you can’t do enough to really make a difference. Consider this story about a boy and a starfish.

One morning an elderly man was walking along a beach and saw a younger man in the distance who appeared to be dancing in the sand.

As the older man got closer he saw that the young man was not dancing, but was picking up starfish from the beach and throwing them back into the sea.

As the older man came upon the younger man he asked, “Young man, what are you doing?” The younger man turned to the older man and said, “Well, you see, the sun is up and the tide is out and if these starfish do not get back into the sea they will die.”

“But young fellow,” the older man said, “Look ahead of you. There are miles and miles of beach and thousands of starfish. You can’t possibly make a difference.”

The young man looked at the older man and then looked at the starfish in this hand. He gently tossed the starfish into the sea and then turned to the older man and said, “Well, sir, I made a difference to that one.”

Taking It Back

Let’s use the HCE Study Focus Outline form to determine how to re-teach this lesson.

The purpose of this award is to recognize individual clubs for volunteering and providing services to their local community. If interested, a copy of the award application is available at www.wahceinc.org

Handout provided.

(Share possibilities with one another).

Resources:

Finding your Voice, Lorraine R. Matusak, W.K. Kellogg Foundation 1977

More Good Ideas, Josephson Institute of Ethics, Los Angeles, CA, 2004

Focus on Character, University of Illinois Extension

HCE Study Focus outline, Manitowoc County HCE

Enthusiasm of New Citizens Contagious, Mary Eckardt, Sheboygan Press, November 15, 2004

Hunger Close to Home, UW-Extension Food Security Specialist, Kadi Row, 2003

The Citizenship Challenge, Linda Olson, Shawano County UW-Extension Family Living Educator, 2004