



## *b r i e f s*

### Civility in the Workplace: It's a Matter of Character

by Michael L. Jacobs, Ed.D.  
Professor of Education,  
University of Northern Colorado

**"Our character is what we  
do when we think no one is  
looking."**

H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

All too often, civility is lacking in the workplace. Rude behavior, absent manners and poor taste are unwelcome and inappropriate, yet these problems crop up again and again. The lack of civility often causes reduced productivity and quality work; the alienation of colleagues and coworkers, constituents, employees, students, friends and family; stress and distress; grievances and lawsuits. This contemporary social issue is a critical one and deals with the nature and scope of what it means to be civilized and humane. It is an issue that needs to be addressed, not only by individuals and groups, but also by society as a whole.

The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, linked civility with character. He aligned character with right conduct – to other people and to oneself. Good character is

# Cultivating Civility

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## Looking at All of the Dimensions of Civility

by Cheryl Asmus, Coordinator, Family and Youth Institute

Every weekend since September 11, 2001, two corners on a busy intersection in Fort Collins, Colorado (not typically a town where demonstrations exist on a regular basis) host two different groups of people peacefully demonstrating their views. Though the signs vary on a weekly basis, one corner promotes "world peace, without war" and the other demands "world peace, with war if need be." A friend of mine pointed out that, fundamentally, they both want the same thing: a world where all can live safely. They both want to live in a civil world; yet, their beliefs in the necessary or unnecessary means to that end differ greatly.

Today, there are consulting firms that teach civility in the workplace, teachers (or parts of classes) in public schools who teach civility, and grassroots and national organizations that promote civility. George Washington, before the age of 16, wrote 110 doctrines

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Contact FYI at:

#### **Family and Youth Institute**

201 Gibbons Building

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, CO

80523-1501

Phone: 970-491-1936

Fax: 970-491-7859

E-mail: margaret.graham@

cahs.colostate.edu

www.cahs.colostate.edu/fyi/

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### **Civility in the Workplace** *continued from page 1*

demonstrated by acts of civility, treating others with respect and responsibility. Aristotelian logic tells us that *a civil person is a person who does what civil people do.*

The question then becomes...what do civil people do?

What are the acts and behaviors that would reflect *civilite*, the ethical and moral basis for respectful relationships between and among human beings?

To answer this question, common usage, as defined by Webster et al., makes an excellent starting point.

*Ci-vil'i-ty...n. 1. politeness, 2. a civil or polite act*

When a word is defined by other others, it helps to follow the trail.

*Po-lite...adj. 1. courteous, 2 respectful.*

The trail leads on...

*Cour-te-ous...adj. 1. a polite or considerate act or remark.*

*Respect...n. 1. to feel or show honor or esteem for, 2. to be considerate or to have regard.*

Continuing along the etymological trail, it comes to an end, of sorts.

*Con-side'er-ate...adj. 1. having regard for others and their feelings.*

Summarizing common usage, it makes sense to say that civility is a respect for others and their feelings, reflecting the moral injunction that mandates unconditionally doing to and for others what we would have done unconditionally for ourselves. A person illustrating civility is a giving, helping, empathic, and sensitive human being who genuinely values the worth and dignity of others.

What can individuals and organizations do to foster and enhance civility in the workplace?

- People need to reflect on what is the nature of their character, and the extent to which they, in fact, do unto others as they would like to be treated and done unto themselves. People need to be a part of the solution by taking responsibility for being civil and modeling personal civility.
- Organizations, in any form and fashion, need to invite their membership to engage in the introspective process.
- Organizations need to create atmospheres and environments that are conducive to pro-social and civil behavior by establishing policies and procedures – codes of conduct – that enhance and promote a respect for the integrity, dignity and worth of each and every human being.
- Continually monitor and assess the level of civility through ongoing communication in the form of dialogue and discussion. Work toward the goal of fostering a culture that is civil, respectful and considerate.

I'll leave you with a statement that I developed to cultivate my own civility: *I act and need to act as if I act for all mankind.*

## **Measuring Civility**

*by Elizabeth Garner, Coordinator, County Information Services, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension*

Finding statistics on civility is difficult, and unfortunately, the severe lack of civility is much easier to measure through violent and nonviolent crime rates. Adult and juvenile crime rates, school violence, and hate crimes paint a picture of a state and a country with growing civility, yet still in need of programs that promote civility.

Violent and nonviolent crime and arrest rates for both adults and juveniles have declined. Crime rate for both violent and property crimes in Colorado and the United States are at their lowest point in many years. Colorado, in particular, has seen a dramatic drop in offenses since its peak in the early 80s and 90s. The 1999 crime rate for Colorado is close to the lows reported in the late 1960s. Colorado's property crime rate has been above the U.S. rate since 1960 (when this series began) until 1999 when it was reported to be the same. Although the crime *rates* have decreased, the total *number* of crimes has increased along with the population. Property and violent crimes increased by over 400 percent and 600 percent respectively since 1960 in Colorado.

Among violent crimes in Colorado, murder and forcible rape rates, which are measured per 100,000, have remained relatively constant since the 1970s and are the lowest crime rates, averaging 6 and 45 per 100,000 respectively. Robberies have decreased since the 1970s, and had a rate of 75 in 1999. The largest component of

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violent crimes is aggravated assaults, which peaked in the early 1990s and since have decreased with a rate of 219 in 1999.

Property or non-violent crimes rates are much higher than violent crime rates. Motor vehicle theft rates remain constant since the 1970s, while theft and burglary both peaked in the early 1980s and have decreased.

Crime and arrest rates are quite different; however, their differential is closing. The total arrest rates for adults and juveniles follow the same pattern as crime rates and have decreased since the eighties (nonviolent) and early nineties (violent). However, certain arrest rates for crimes within each category have increased. For adults, most arrest rates decreased or remained relatively constant except for drug arrests, which increased from a rate of 200 per 100,000 in 1980 to 600 in 1999.

A trend that should alarm us is that for juveniles, forcible rapes, homicides and drug crimes have all increased. Drug arrest rates increased from 160 per 100,000 to 360 in 1999. Arrest rates for forcible rape, robbery, burglary, theft, auto theft and weapons carrying are all higher for juveniles than they are for adults.

Age is an important factor for both the victim and the offender. According to the *National Crime Victimization Survey 1999* by the U.S. Department of Justice, the victimization rate for all personal crimes for 16 to 19 year olds is higher than any other age group, followed by 12 to 15 year olds. Similarly, the same study showed that 32 percent of the offenders were perceived to be ages 12 to 20 and an additional 26 percent were 21 to 29. Thirty-six percent were perceived to be over 30 years old. (Source: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cvus99.pdf>)

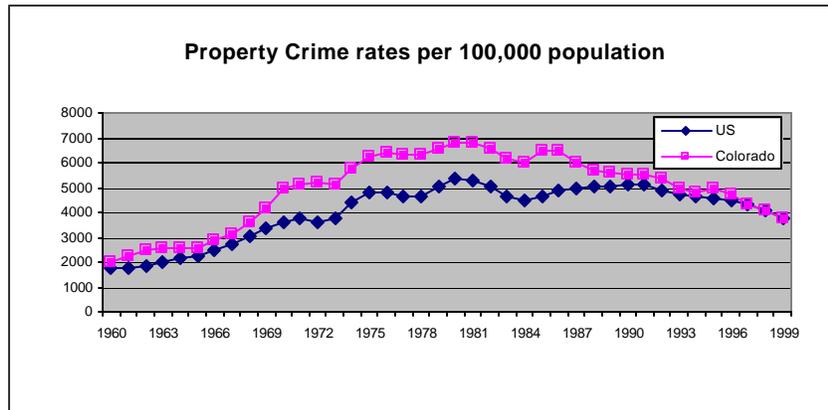
### School Safety

The safety of students, teachers, and staff at school continues to be the focus of considerable national attention. National indicators reported in *Indicators of School Crime and Safety, 2001* by the Department of Justice and Department of Education affirm that the level of crime in schools has continued to decline, that acts that promote fear and detract from learning are decreasing, and that students feel safer in school than they did a few years ago. Despite declining rates, students 12 to 18 were victims of about 2.5 million crimes of violence or theft at

school in 1999. Violence, theft, bullying, drugs, and firearms still remain problems in many schools throughout the country and periodically the news headlines relate the details of a tragic event in a school somewhere in America.

Highlights from the study show:

- Between 1995 and 1999, the percentage of students who reported being victims of crime at school decreased from 10 percent to 8 percent.
- Younger students (12 to 14) were more likely than older students



(15 to 18) to be victims of crime at school.

- Between 1995 and 1999, the percentages of students who felt unsafe while they were at school and while they were going to and from school fell from 9 percent to 5 percent.
- In 1999, about 13 percent of students 12 to 18 reported that someone at school had used hate-related words against them (derogatory words having to do with race/ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, or sexual orientation).
- Between 1995 and 1999, the percentage of students who reported that street gangs were present at their schools decreased. In 1995, 29 percent of students reported gangs being present in their schools. By 1999, this percentage had fallen to 17 percent.

(Source: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/iscs01.htm>)

### Hate Crimes

Hate crimes are criminal offenses committed against a person or property, motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, ethnicity/national origin, or sexual orientation.

Since 1996, the number of incidents per year has been up and down with a high of 146 reported in 1999 and a low of 98 in 2000. Fifty percent of the offenses in 2000 were "intimidation." The other most prevalent offenses were "damage to property" and "assault." Over 25 percent of the incidences occur at residences. Highways, roads, alleys, and streets, followed by parking lots and garages, are the next most common places for offenses to occur. In 2000, 50 percent of the bias motivation was racial followed by ethnicity at 25 percent. The remaining bias motivations were sexual orientation at 15 percent and religion at 10 percent. (Source:

[http://cbi.state.co.us/dr/cic2000/supplemental\\_reports/hate\\_crime.htm](http://cbi.state.co.us/dr/cic2000/supplemental_reports/hate_crime.htm))

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of civility that many believe laid the foundation for his moral life, and possibly, as the first President of the United States, some of our country's morality.

Though civility is a necessary work ethic in any situation that involves more than one person, one can argue that it limits certain individual freedoms. Taken too far, the conformity that civility often requires can appear as reticence, or not making a fuss or complaining, which causes conflict.

As Thomas Moore wrote in *Eros*, "Civilization hesitates to allow imagination to roam freely." In Singapore, because the government demands its citizens be civil and obey the rules, there are no slums, no ethnic strife and very little crime. However, films and television are censored and the Internet is monitored. In the name of social harmony, virtually all dissent is banned because the needs of the society are considered more important than the rights of the individual.

As the dilemma the demonstrators show so vividly on a street corner in Fort Collins, the task of shaping a positive place or world and dealing with discord (promoting civility), is not as simple as it seems.

This *Briefs* issue provides a snapshot of civility today. The first article, by Michael Jacobs, defines civility and specifically, civility in the workplace. He bulleted some workable actions that individuals and employers can implement to promote civility in the work environment. Elizabeth Garner's article provides statistics that result from a lack of civility in our state now and in the recent past. Notably, juvenile and school data show promising positive trends.

We follow this article with real-life examples of programs that possibly contribute to these trends. At the neighborhood and individual level, Colorado State Senator Doug Linkhart gives examples of how a small group of people and neighbors can positively impact the lives of others through a program called Civility Among Neighbors.

Laurie Klith describes the content and results of bully-proofing children at the elementary level, and a young woman shares her story of how a program has changed her attitudes, morals, and behavior.

## Civility Among Neighbors

*by Doug Linkhart, Executive Director of the Neighborhood Resource Center of Colorado and State Senator, Denver*

When one of his neighbors was stabbed by a burglar, Bob Acosta and his neighbors raised money to help pay for the medical bills by throwing a block party and yard sale. The idea of using the resources in the immediate community for worthy causes caught on and the neighbors continue to hold the same event every year for various projects.

Whenever there is a snowstorm, Andrew Martelon of Denver uses his snow blower to clean both sides of his block. He does this service voluntarily.

These are examples of what I call "good neighboring" – efforts by neighbors to create and maintain good relationships with their neighbors.

Contrast these instances of good neighboring with the bad things that happen elsewhere. Two years ago, a man in Douglas County shot his neighbor's dogs because they kept coming on his property. Another man in Aurora shot his neighbor and the neighbor's daughter over a parking dispute.

These are examples of what I call "neighbor rage." Similar to road rage, these events are more probable when people either do not know or respect one another.

Because of the importance of neighbor-to-neighbor relationships, the Neighborhood Resource Center of Colorado sponsors an annual program called the Good Neighboring Project. Through this effort, we encourage Colorado residents to build better relationships with their neighbors by hosting block parties and participating in other activities with their neighbors.

Each summer we publish and distribute a Good Neighboring Resource Guide, which contains ideas and incentives for block parties and other neighborhood activities. This year we will emphasize the health benefits of social cohesiveness and, particularly, the ability of residents to get along with neighbors from other cultures.

As our state grows more diverse, communication and understanding among people from different cultures is becoming more critical. Often, misunderstandings and problems among neighbors occur as a result of residents not understanding one another's differences.

At the Neighborhood Resource Center, we have seen many instances of cultural differences leading to conflict. In some of the neighborhoods that experienced heavy immigration, we have witnessed many more calls to local authorities about barking dogs, loud music, unkempt yards and other problems. If neighbors know, for example, that a large celebration occurs on Cinco de Mayo, and they know the significance of this holiday, they are less likely to complain about the crowded parking in their apartment complex on the day of the celebration.

Through good neighboring activities, we encourage people to communicate with one another about their values to avoid unnecessary conflicts. When neighbors let one another know in a kind way how they feel about the neighborhood and its characteristics, they often encourage others to accommodate their interests.

For more information on the Good Neighboring Project, please call us at (303) 477-0023 or visit our web site at [www.nrc-neighbor.org](http://www.nrc-neighbor.org).

# Bully-Proofing an Elementary School

by Laurie Klith, Director, The Center for Community Justice Partnerships, Fort Collins

An innovative bully-proofing program at Laurel Elementary School in Fort Collins provides the educational opportunities of a lifetime to many young children. In a world of accelerating social change, overpopulation, and juvenile delinquency, students often experience inconsistent discipline and eroding moral values, and often respond by rejecting civility. The Center's Bully Prevention Program addresses these issues and teaches students to live in a world of violence by bucking the violent trend, cultivating harmony and empathizing with victims rather than aggressors.

The program is based on a model developed by the Cherry Creek School District called "Bully-Proofing Your School, A Comprehensive Approach for Elementary Schools." After being trained on the program by the Poudre School District, I modified it to include character education, and in March 2000, funding from the Schatz Family Fund launched the program at Laurel Elementary.

Statistics from Fort Collins Police Department, the Larimer County Sheriff's Department and a census report describe the school's neighborhood as high-density and low on the socioeconomic scale. Over half of the 440 students receive free and reduced lunches, and the mean income for the families of this particular group is \$13,439. Laurel serves the city's two homeless shelters, and in a largely Caucasian, homogenous city, it has a 46 percent Hispanic population.

Prior to the program's inception, students had many negative educational experiences, were frustrated with school, and suffered a lack of academic support from home. The program's goals are to reduce students' fear of failure and delinquency and create a safe environment, one without physical and emotional aggression. The unique features of our program include:

- techniques on how to stop bullying,
- ideas on how to mediate difficult situations, and
- instruction on understanding victimization.

All of the instruction is specifically tailored to elementary school students. All Laurel students, kindergarten through sixth grade, receive instruction once

a week for 25 minutes throughout the school year. Most of the instruction consists of role-playing, discussion groups, games, demonstrating conflict resolution, and victim empathy.

The program incorporates community partnerships to support a safe learning environment, dovetailing with other programs. Prevention, intervention and diversion also are emphasized. The program also recognizes that creating healthier students and families lowers the incidence of bullying so wraparound services and a family referral support system were implemented. Wraparound services provide a continuum of care for the whole family, including such services as family or individual counseling, food stamps, employment training, and medical and dental assistance.

Following one year of the program, we achieved a 66 percent decrease in behavioral infractions, defined as harassment, assault, damaging of school property, racial discriminations, and truancy. Because of the fewer classroom disruptions, students were also able to devote more time to academic endeavors.

We have made tremendous strides in the way children treat one another at Laurel. We have taught them how to effectively deal with bullies, and students now have a better understanding of victim empathy. Our instruction has emphasized treating others with respect, being responsible for our actions, and behaving in a way that allows others to trust us. The program's success was built on direct instruction, consistent messages from all staff, and zero tolerance for physical and emotional aggression. In addition, students learned how to vent their anger in a healthy manner.

Through the program's instruction, Laurel students also receive positive images, contradicting the violence messages they find in the media and possible poor role models. Teaching children how to work with anger in healthy ways is an essential component to a civil society, and this bully-proofing program shows promise for the future. The Center for Community Justice Partnerships can be contacted by calling 970-495-0084.

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## Chantell's Story

*In an interview with Margaret Graham, Chantell Archer describes her experience at the Center for Community Justice Partnerships' Young Women Coming Together, a life enhancement skills programs for girls.*

Two years ago, I was a different person. I was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and I wanted to defend my friend at school. I ended up getting into a fight and had third degree assault charges brought against me. I had to pay \$84 in restitution and had a year's probation along with 24 hours of community service. Last time I had harassment charges, I had to pick up trash on the side of the road to complete my 16 hours of community service. This time, my probation officer told me about some classes that I could take that would count as community service.

That was the first time I came here [The Center for Community Justice Partnerships], and I met Laurie [Klith, the director]. My attitude at first was like "I don't care, I just want to get these classes over with and get out of here." But after a while, I realized that Laurie was listening to me and understanding me and I wanted to come back. I wanted to learn more. I decided that I would stick around.

The classes here last 10 weeks. On Tuesdays, we have someone come in and teach us something like what happens

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when you take certain drugs, how to manage money, or we do crafts with women and talk. On Thursdays, we just talk and give advice to each other if something is going wrong in our lives.

After I finished the classes, Laurie told my probation officer I was doing well and she decided that since I had gotten everything done at five months I would be able to get off early. Still, I kept coming to the classes because I would meet different girls and I would get attached. I wanted to learn more.

Now, my anger's gone down, I don't do drugs or alcohol anymore, and I'm getting ready for my baby to be born in October. I have some goals. I want to get a job before my baby is born, and getting my GED is a big goal, too, with my baby on the way. Laurie's going to help me. I want something laid back, maybe some secretarial work or something like that.

I come to "group" now really to mentor the other girls. I'm 17 and most of them are between 13 and 15. Right now, there are maybe eight or nine girls in the group and I try to tell them about what it's been like for me. It seems to me that a lot of the girls look up to me (they would probably second that) they see what I've been through and they think, "If she can change her ways, why can't I?" They see how much better off I am now

I tell them how it is from my perspective. I tell them things like "Drugs are nothing to me. They might get me away from my problems for two hours, but then my problems come right back." The last time I used alcohol was about three or four months ago. I got really drunk and high, and a lot of things happened that I didn't want to happen. I asked myself, "Do I want those things to happen again?" The answer is no, so I quit.

The biggest change in me has been my anger. If I disagree with people, I tell them. I won't do it in a snobby way. And I

won't fight. I just walk away. These days, you can't just walk up to a girl and try to talk things out. All she is thinking about is making someone hurt, so I figure if you can't talk it out, walk it out. So I just walk away.

I'm lucky because I have a lot of support. I have a lot of friends, and I know they care about me. I can talk to Laurie and Theresa [Ramos-Garcia, one of The Center's board members] if I'm having trouble with someone or if I'm having a problem.

I live with my mom and my dad, my sister and my boyfriend. It's relaxed and I can talk to my mom. There are some things I can tell her that I won't tell Laurie, and there are some things I can tell Laurie that I won't tell my mom. With Laurie, I don't know why, but I can talk to her easily. I like the way she does things. I can also go and talk to Theresa. She is also there to talk to, and she also understands everything.

I still have a lot of stress, people asking me this or that and in my face, and my boyfriend is a lot of stress, too. I'm scared that we'll drift apart. But I know that he'll be a good father and he'll take care of the baby. I don't worry about that at all.

Even with all of my stress, things are a lot better for me now than two years ago. If I didn't come to these classes, and meet Laurie and Theresa, I would probably still be on probation. This program has really helped me. It's a lot better than community service hours that may be picking up trash because it's something the girls can do to better themselves.

*Now, a month after my interview with Maggie, I am dealing with a recent miscarriage, and it is really hard on me and my boyfriend. My boyfriend is still with me, which is a good thing. We are going through this together, and in the future, we plan on getting married. This is what I really need.*

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