

News Release

DuPage businesses set the pace in Illinois

Foundation of good character strengthens economy

DuPage businesses and Chambers of Commerce are collaborating to turn the tide on a decade of corporate struggles that shook the economy. These organizations have improved their productivity and workplace safety, retained good employees, and have a positive reputation in their communities by emphasizing and requiring good character.

The DuPage Character Business Committee, The Abraham Lincoln Center for Character Development, and the University of Illinois Extension began developing a model for the business community in 2005 by providing training, resources, tools and networking opportunities focused on implementing and sustaining a character initiative.

Tom Itrich, President of Huskie Tools in Glendale Heights is a member of the DuPage Character Business Committee. When asked why he got involved he stated, "I started my career as a teacher and felt that part of my job was modeling good character, and instilling it in my students." When Tom started his own business, he did the same with the employees and his customers. Tom said, "We are inundated with all the bad news about companies these days. It really bothers me. Character does count in a corporation!"

"Huskie Tools is a member of the Bloomingdale Chamber of Commerce. We believe business must give back to the community, so we got involved in the community *Character Counts!* Program. I attended their three-day seminar, and thought this would be great for business!"

Christina Foster, from the University of Illinois Extension, thought the same way and brought the idea back to her constituents at the University. After a number of meetings, a collaboration was formed to develop a one-day workshop and support program to do just that bring it to the business community.

There will be a panel discussion by business owners on how they implemented a character initiative and the positive impact it has on their businesses. It will be a continental breakfast session on Wednesday, July 26, from 7:30-8:45 a.m. at the ARAMARK Regional Offices, 2300 Warrenville Road, Downers Grove, Illinois. Details about the new workshop and support program will be included in the session.

"My three sons work in my business. How I treat my customers and my employees is directly tied to the bottom line, and it shapes the legacy I pass on to my family," stated committee member, Hosi Mehta of Mehta Motors in Elmhurst. "Networking with other business leaders on how to emphasize and recognize good character is important to me," continued Hosi.

Recently, Deputy Police Chief Mike Lebert spoke with all the employees at Woodland Windows & Doors on how their individual character impacts their company and their families. Deby Baker, Woodland Sales Associate said, "We were glued to every word he said. It really hit home for all of us."

Ken Mariotti, President and Co-Owner of Woodland Windows & Doors in Roselle, as well Mike Lebert will participate in the panel discussion. Steve Berning, President of Accurate Tank Technologies in Naperville; Bern Bertsche, CEO of Camcraft Engineering in Hanover Park; as well as other committee members will participate.

For further information, or to register for the session contact The Lincoln Center for Character: (630) 407-5808; info@LincolnCharacter.org

About the DuPage Character Business Committee

The DuPage Character Development Coalition was formed in November 2000 to provide a forum for community representatives to meet on a monthly basis to share ideas and work together in DuPage County to foster character development in youth. A business committee was formed in 2005 to provide businesses with character development strategies and tools.

About The Abraham Lincoln Center for Character Development

Formed on February 12, 2003, The Abraham Lincoln Center for Character Development is a not-for-profit organization created to foster character development in businesses, schools, and community organizations by providing training, support, resources and technical assistance to character development initiatives throughout the state of Illinois.

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About the University of Illinois Extension

As part of the nationwide Cooperative Extension System, U of I Extension is able to draw on research-based expertise from land-grant universities all across the country. Through learning partnerships that put knowledge to work, U of I Extension's programs are aimed at making life better, healthier, safer and more profitable for individuals and their communities.