

Responsible Youth in the News

Celebrating Civic Values

This activity was developed by Ruth Eichler, a teacher at Naples Central High School in Naples, N.Y., and is included in *Good Ideas to Help Young People Develop Good Character* available from the **CHARACTER COUNTS!** Coalition at the Josephson Institute of Ethics, 4640 Admiralty Way, #1001, Marina del Rey, CA 90292-6610. The Web site, www.charactercounts.org, includes exercises for primary through high school level.

Collect a dozen stories from news-magazines or newspapers about teenagers who have behaved either responsibly or irresponsibly.

Begin by discussing the meaning of responsibility. Write on the board the words and phrases used by the class in defining this term. You might show the "Responsibility" act from *The American Promise* and discuss what responsibility means in each of the video stories. Then, divide the class into groups of three or four and give each small group one article from your collection.

There are two guidelines for this exercise:

- Groups should divide their article so that each student is responsible for reading and understanding one small section of the article.
- Each group will be collectively responsible for understanding the whole article.

When the groups have read their articles, have each one report to the class, then ask the class to discuss these questions:

1. In what ways was the young person in the article responsible or irresponsible?
2. Did the young person's actions help or hurt others? How?
3. What are the lessons to be learned from this story?

After discussing these examples, ask the students if they wish to expand the class definition of responsibility.



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