

## The Power of Building Character

by

Debra Pratt

Professor of Education

Purdue University North Central



Do you believe that CHARACTER COUNTS? The Purdue University North Central Education students and their professor, Debra Pratt, along with Chip Cotman from Hours for Ours, Herb Higgin from Safe Harbor and Professor Roy Fowles from Purdue University North Central believe it is never too early to begin practicing the skills of being trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, caring, and good citizens. They share the belief that building character is an important concept for us to develop throughout our lifetime. Building character doesn't just happen overnight. It is something we practice and improve on throughout our lives. It is not something we can achieve on our own. Collaborating on this project will insure that the children from Michigan City Area Schools have positive experiences in learning the skills to develop the values needed to gain the power to develop good character.

Pratt and her education students have been working together with Professor Fowles, Chip Cotman, and Herb Higgin on a Service Learning Project that brings Purdue University North Central students into the Michigan City Area Schools where they mentor small groups of students and teach them that character does count. The project is being funded through a service learning grant that Pratt received from the Indiana Campus Compact.

The project started for Pratt's education students in the fall of 2010 and is continuing through April 2011. Two education students are paired up with small groups of eight to ten children who are involved in the Hours for Ours Mentoring Program and the Safe Harbor After School Program. Once a week the PNC students meet with their assigned elementary students for one hour and teach them the skills for building character. The college students plan lessons that address a specific character trait, and then connect the lesson to Indiana Academic Standards. They make learning fun, engage students and lead hands-on learning activities. The children report they LOVE working with their college mentors and are sad when the time comes to an end.

