

Adult Leaders/Volunteers are Nurturers

In a study entitled “What Matters Most,” *Newsweek* asked 506 parents with children ages 0-3 what their most important goal was as a parent. Forty-eight percent of the parents responded that they wanted their children to grow up with strong moral values (McDaniel, 1998). However, changes in society are making it more and more difficult to instill good morals and values in our young people. These changes include the growing number of single-parent families, peer pressure, and the negativity of media.

Many organizations try to give young people stable environments and character education. Two such organizations are 4-H and FFA. Young people who participate in these two organizations have the opportunity to learn about the Six Pillars of Character, which include:

- ◆ Trustworthiness
- ◆ Respect
- ◆ Responsibility
- ◆ Fairness
- ◆ Caring
- ◆ Citizenship

One way young people learn the importance of character development is through the raising and showing of livestock projects. They need the support and guidance of the adult leaders and parents who work with them. In preparation for that important role, leaders and parents should be familiar with the stages of development each child goes through. They should give positive reinforcement, inspire young people to pursue lifelong learning, and emphasize the importance of setting goals.

The stages of youth development.

Erik Erikson, one of the most noted educational theorists of all time, developed a theory based on eight stages of development. Erikson’s main goal was to determine how an individual’s personality and character develop in each of the eight stages. When an individual successfully progresses through the eight stages, his or her emotional, intellectual and physical growth are appropriate (Boeree, 2006). If this order of personal development is disrupted, it will inhibit the rest of the developmental process. Adults must recognize that children go through the stages at different rates. The more adult leaders and parents understand about