Integrity Essay
By: Grace Farley

Integrity, the antonym is dishonesty and the synonym is honor. This paints a fairly clear picture within these two words. Honesty is a pure ethical principle through which a person can earn respect and honor. Respect and honor from others helps build lasting personal and business relationships, which leads to long-term success. Ethics and success are deeply linked.

Ethics are the foundation on which long-term success is built. Integrity is defined as the adherence to moral and ethical principles. Integrity is, therefore, the result of strong ethics. It is a quality I strive to uphold. Since I was little, integrity was not something merely encouraged by my family, it was expected. Honesty was the only policy and responsibility was something to be demonstrated daily. My family has not only encouraged, but demanded that I grow to be an ethical young woman. I am grateful for my parents’ high standards and good example because it has laid the foundation for my success in and out of the classroom.

My father was part of a committee to formulate the guiding principles of his company. They wrote this statement as a cornerstone for their business: “We will demand honesty and integrity in everything we do.” Beneath this statement they included a “Why this is important?” clause that states “By consistently doing the right thing with conviction, candor, compassion, and courage, we will earn and keep the respect of our clients and coworkers. We must always be respectful of and accountable to our clients, our coworkers, and ourselves.”

The guiding principle is powerful. It stresses the importance of accountability as a part of maintaining integrity. Time after time I have found this to be true. By taking leadership roles in my extracurricular activities, not only have I needed to be accountable to members of my clubs, but I have to hold them accountable as well. For example, as president of a large county-wide 4-H group, I am expected to be prepared for meetings with an agenda and be aware of the club and county events. The members must expect this from me for the meetings to be run successfully. As president, I must also hold the members accountable to their commitments. I follow-up with people who have volunteered for committees to ensure they have their roles fulfilled. Sometimes when I follow-up, the member is not prepared. I must remind them of their responsibility and expectations set before them and guide them so they follow through in order to benefit the group.

As I previously stated, ethics are the foundation on which long-term success is built. Although taking moral shortcuts can lead to immediate success, it is only brief. Long-term success results from sound judgment and strong ethics. This idea is demonstrated everywhere from the classroom to the conference room. Copying homework assignments may get good daily grades, but when the test comes it catches the person unprepared and they are set up for failure. A recent example in the business world is the Peanut Corporation of America. They knowingly distributed peanuts contaminated with salmonella and two years worth of over four hundred different products containing their peanuts have been recalled. They compromised the integrity of their product for profit and now have filed for bankruptcy. The penalty for their poor moral decisions is the demise of their company and possibly prosecution.

The Peanut Corporation of America is an extreme example, but an individual’s ability to grow in or keep a job is based on the same principle. Relationships develop with trust and trust comes from honesty. Coworkers cannot trust you if integrity is taken out of the relationship.
“Maintain a commitment to honesty, fairness, and the highest level of ethics in every interaction. Our actions demonstrate our integrity.” This is one of the tactic statements in the guiding principle document my father helped create. I learned this lesson from my parents as a way to live my life. As I continue to expand my world, I will seek success with only the highest standards of integrity.