

November 16, 2007

Dear CCES Community,

Thanksgiving is a perfect time to teach our children how to be generous. Like everything else we teach our children, learning to be generous does not always have an immediate impact, but it will pay dividends for generations. It is good to point out to our children all the wonderful things they have in their lives compared to other children who have so little. Look at the children of Sudan. Some children might respond, "Mom, you are making me feel guilty." Your response should not be about guilt. It should be, "No, I am helping you become generous."

Explain why it is good to be generous, and that generous kids do not grab, shove and push so they can be first in line or have the first hamburger or the biggest piece of cake. Generous kids share what they have with those who have less.

A song from the Depression goes like this: "We ain't got a barrel of money...But we're traveling along, singing a song, side by side." I like to teach that to our children. The fact that we have each other is important. It fills a void in our lives neither the biggest nor best of things can fill.

Years ago in junior high school, there was a Sunday school teacher whose simple act of spontaneous giving made a big impact in my life. I was working at a summer program. I forgot my sack lunch and did not have any money to buy something for lunch. This teacher noticed right away that I was distressed. She said, "Jody, wait a minute." Then she went into the kitchen area and came out with a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I hardly knew her, yet she cared enough to do that for a child she hardly knew. I remember going over to my dad's office, sharing what she had done and telling my dad: "I hope I am a giver like that."

Here are some ways to make this Thanksgiving a time for your family to experience real giving:

- Even when your children don't have everything they want for themselves, teach them to give to others.
- Before taking a cookie or snack for themselves, teach your children to pass the cookies to others first.
- Teach your children to feel sorry for others, not just for themselves.
- Teach your children to help others even when others don't help them.

At the start of each day, ask your children to do one act of generosity. At dinnertime, find out what it was and praise your children for doing these things. Eventually, teach them the acts of kindness are not for praise or feeling good about ourselves, but to take pride in being kind, generous and making the world a better place. Everyone knows a generous spirit is something we all admire. "One band, one sound!" Have a wonderful time with family and friends.

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