On Character and Servant-Leadership

by Larry C. Spears, CEO

Our fundamental understanding of character has much to do with the essential traits exhibited by a person. In recent years there has been a growing interest in the nature of character and character education, based upon a belief that positive character traits can be both taught and learned. Many people today are familiar with the Character Counts! (SM) program of the Josephson Institute of Ethics. That program has been adopted by a number of schools and communities nationwide and teaches core values which they call “Six Pillars of Character.” Those six particular character values are: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

The nature of character and its relationship to leaders has also taken on increased significance in recent years. A number of noted leadership authors have looked at issues of a leader’s character. James Hillman, in The Soul’s Code: In Search of Character and Calling, describes the “invisible source of personal consistency, for which I am using the word ‘habit,’“ psychology today calls character. Character refers to deep structures of personality that are particularly resistant to change.” (p. 260)

The literature on leadership includes a number of different listings of character traits as practiced by leaders. I particularly like Warren Bennis’s short list as contained in his book, On Becoming a Leader, in which he identifies “vision, inspiration, empathy and trustworthiness” as key characteristics of effective leaders. (p. 140)

Much of the leadership literature includes as an implicit assumption the belief that positive characteristics can and should be encouraged and practiced by leaders. Robert Greenleaf, the originator of the term, “servant-leadership,” is someone who thought and wrote a great deal about the nature of servant-leadership and character.

Servant-Leadership and Character

The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?

—The Servant as Leader
Robert K. Greenleaf

With that definition in 1970, retired AT&T executive Robert K. Greenleaf

(Continued on page 3)

Servant-Leadership in Education and Academic Research is on the Rise

by Julie Beggs, Director of Outreach Services

Within the past three years the Greenleaf Center has witnessed significant growth in the program development and academic research focused on servant-leadership. Most of the growth in program development has occurred within colleges and universities, but high school programs are also being developed.

Each institution has taken a unique approach to the instruction and practice of servant-leadership on campus.

Columbus State University, located in Columbus, Georgia, has developed a four-year co-curricular program. Students in this program receive an academic stipend for each year in which they participate. They are involved in a number of activities throughout the year, including a year-long seminar, a retreat, and community service activities that complement other aspects of their college experience.

Another example can be seen at East Tennessee State University. Their program is now the third living unit at a college campus dedicated to the practice of servant-leadership and based upon Robert Greenleaf’s book, Teacher as Servant. The University of Southern Florida and Butler University are the other two institutions with servant-leadership living units.

In the area of academic research, a growing number of doctoral candidates from various disciplines have focused their research on servant-leadership. In so doing, they are creating a firm foundation for further research around servant-leadership and its impact on people and organizations. The Greenleaf Center has a small collection of full dissertations on hand, and it

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Education and Research

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continues to compile a listing of these and other dissertations relating to servant-leadership. A full listing of dissertation titles and abstracts should be available to you at your local library, or you can obtain a listing through the Bell & Howell organization on the web at www.umi.com. The following is a partial listing of servant-leadership dissertations published in the past few years:

Servant-Leadership: Belief and Practice in Women-Led Businesses, by Ruby Bay Heuwen, Walden University

Assessing the Servant-Organization Development of the Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment (SOLA) Instrument, by James Alan Laub, Florida Atlantic University

Images of Servant-Leadership in Education, by Diana Taylor Gillham, Northern Arizona University

The Elementary School Principal as Servant-Leader, by Carol M. Knicker, University of St. Thomas

A Case Study of Servant-Leadership, by Pamela D. Walker, The University of San Francisco

A Study of Servant-Leadership in Korea, by Sang Myeun Moon, Fuller Theological Seminary

An Investigation of Servant-Leadership in Public School Superintendents in the State of Indiana, by Michael Peter Livovich Jr., Indiana State University

Turning Points in the Development of Male Servant-Leaders, by Gregory Boyce Boyer, The Fielding Institute

Servant-Leadership and Community Building in Schools K-8, by Althea Cornder, University of Hartford

The Meaning of Servant-Leadership, by Antoinette Van Kulik, University of Manitoba

The Greenleaf Center’s annual Leadership Institute for Higher Education is now in its sixth year and offers educators, administrators and others who are interested a wonderful opportunity to learn and grow in their own work as servant-leaders. Our next Leadership Institute for Higher Education will be held in Indianapolis April 25-27, 2001. Primary facilitators will include Dr. Hamilton Beasley and Dr. Ruby Baye. Dr. Margaret Wheatly, author of Leadership and the New Science and other books, will be a featured presenter at this program. Contact the Greenleaf Center for a brochure and to request more information. The early-bird registration deadline for this program is December 31, 2000.

Ways to Support The Greenleaf Center

Giftings to the Greenleaf Center provide important support for our work in servant-leadership. As a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization The Greenleaf Center benefits from your gift and you receive the fullest charitable deduction allowed by law. In addition to a gift by check, we invite you to consider the following gift options:

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For more information please contact Wendell J. Walls, Director of Development, at 317-259-1241.

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The Robert K. Greenleaf Center

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The Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership
On Character and Servant-Leadership

(Continued from page 1)

(1904-1990) coined the term “servant-leadership” and launched a quiet revolution in the way in which we view and practice leadership. Three decades later the concept of servant-leadership is increasingly viewed as an ideal leadership form to which untold numbers of people and organizations aspire. In fact, we are witnessing today an unparalleled explosion of interest in, and practice of, servant-leadership.

We are experiencing a rapid shift in many businesses and not-for-profit organizations—from the more traditional bureaucratic and hierarchical models of leadership and toward servant-leadership as a way of being in relationship with others. Servant-leadership seeks to involve others in decisionmaking, is strongly based in ethical and caring behavior, and it enhances the personal growth of workers while improving the caring and quality of organizational life.

The servant-leader is servant first.

The words servant and leader are usually thought of as being opposites. In deliberately bringing those words together in a meaningful way, Robert Greenleaf gave birth to the paradoxical term “servant-leadership.” In the years since then, many of today’s most creative thinkers are writing and speaking about servant-leadership as an emerging leadership paradigm for the twenty-first century. The list is long and includes: James Autry, Warren Bennis, Peter Block, John Carver, Stephen Covey, Max DePree, Joseph Jaworski, James Kouzes, Lorraine Matusak, Parker Palmer, M. Scott Peck, Peter Senge, Peter Vaill, Margaret Wheatley, and Danah Zohar, to name but a few of today’s cutting-edge leadership authors and advocates of servant-leadership. In her groundbreaking book on quantum sciences and leadership, Rewiring the Corporate Brain (Berrett-Koehler, 1997), Zohar goes so far as to state that, “Servant-leadership is the essence of quantum thinking and quantum leadership.” (p. 146)

After some years of carefully considering Greenleaf’s original writings, I have identified a set of ten characteristics of the servant-leader that I view as being of critical importance—central to the development of servant-leaders. My own work currently involves a deepening understanding of the following characteristics and how they contribute to the meaningful practice of servant-leadership. These ten characteristics include:

1. Listening: Leaders have traditionally been valued for their communication and decision-making skills. Although these are also important skills for the servant-leader, they need to be reinforced by a deep commitment to listening intently to others. The servant-leader seeks to identify the will of a group and helps to clarify that will. He or she listens receptively to what is being said and unsaid. Listening also encompasses getting in touch with one’s own inner voice. Listening, coupled with periods of reflection, are essential to the growth and well-being of the servant-leader.

2. Empathy: The servant-leader strives to understand and empathize with others. People need to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique spirits. One assumes the good intentions of co-workers and colleagues and does not reject them as people, even when one may be forced to refuse to accept certain behaviors or performance. The most successful servant-leaders are those who have become skilled empathetic listeners.

3. Healing: The healing of relationships is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant-leadership is the potential for healing one’s self and one’s relationship to others. Many people have broken spirits and have suffered from a variety of emotional hurts. Although this is a part of being human, servant-leaders recognize that they have an opportunity to help make whole those with whom they come in contact. In his essay, The Servant as Leader, Greenleaf writes, “There is something subtle communicated to one

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Ten Characteristics

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who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between servant-leader and led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something they share.

4. Awareness: General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant-leader. Awareness helps one in understanding issues involving ethics, power and values. It lends itself to being able to view most situations from a more integrated, holistic position. As Greenleaf observed: “Awareness is not a giver of solace—it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed. They are not seekers after solace. They have their own inner serenity.”

5. Persuasion: Another characteristic of servant-leaders is a reliance on persuasion, rather than on one’s positional authority, in making decisions within an organization. The servant-leader seeks to convince others, rather than coerce compliance. This particular element offers one of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of servant-leadership. The servant-leader is effective at building consensus within groups. This emphasis on persuasion over coercion finds its roots in the beliefs of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)—the denominational body to which Robert Greenleaf belonged.

6. Conceptualization: Servant-leaders seek to nurture their abilities to dream great dreams. The ability to look at a problem or an organization from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. For many leaders, this is a characteristic that requires discipline and practice. The traditional leader is consumed by the need to achieve short-term operational goals. The leader who wishes to also be a servant-leader must stretch his or her thinking to encompass broader-based conceptual thinking. Within organizations, conceptualization is, by its very nature, the proper role of boards of trustees or directors. Unfortunately, boards can sometimes become involved in the day-to-day operations—something that should always be discouraged—and, thus, fail to provide the visionary concept for an institution. Trustees need to be mostly conceptual in their orientation, staff needs to be mostly operational in their perspective, and the most effective executive leaders probably need to develop both perspectives within themselves. Servant-leaders are called to seek a delicate balance between conceptual thinking and a day-to-day operational approach.

7. Foresight: Closely related to conceptualization, the ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation is hard to define, but easier to identify. One knows foresight when one experiences it. Foresight is a characteristic that enables the servant-leader to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future. It is also deeply rooted within the intuitive mind. Foresight remains a largely unexplored area in leadership studies, but one most deserving of careful attention.

8. Stewardship: Peter Block (author of Stewardship and The Empowered Manager) has defined stewardship as “holding something in trust for another.” Robert Greenleaf’s view of all institutions was one in which CEOs, staffs, and trustees all played significant roles in holding their institutions in trust for the greater good of society. Servant-leadership, like stewardship, assumes first and foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others. It also emphasizes the use of openness and persuasion, rather than control.

9. Commitment to the growth of people: Servant-leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, the servant-leader is deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual within his or her organization. The servant-leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to do everything in his or her power to nurture the personal and professional growth of employees and colleagues. In practice, this can include (but is not limited to) concrete actions such as making funds available for personal and professional development, taking a personal interest in the ideas and suggestions from everyone, encouraging worker involvement in decision-making, and actively assisting laid-off employees to find other positions.

10. Building community: The servant-leader senses that much has been lost in recent human history as a result of the shift from local communities to large institutions as the primary shaper of human lives. This awareness causes the servant-leader to seek to identify some means for building community among those who work within a given institution. Servant-leadership suggests that true community can be created among those who work in businesses and other institutions. Greenleaf said, “All that is needed to rebuild community as a viable life form for large numbers of people is for enough servant-leaders to show the way, not by mass movements, but by each servant-leader demonstrating his or her unlimited liability for a quite specific community-related group.”

These ten characteristics of servant-leadership are by no means exhaustive. However, they do serve to communicate the power and promise that this concept offers to those who are open to its invitation and challenge.

Interest in the meaning and practice of servant-leadership continues to grow. Hundreds of books, articles, and papers on the subject have now been published. Many of the companies named to Fortune magazine’s annual listing of “The 100 Best Companies to Work For” espouse servant-leadership and have integrated it into their corporate cultures. As more and more organizations and people have sought to put servant-leadership into practice, the work of The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership, now in its 36th year, continues to expand in order to help meet that need.

Servant-leadership characteristics often occur naturally within many individuals; and, like many natural tendencies, they can be enhanced through learning and practice. Servant-leadership offers great hope for the future in creating better, more caring, institutions.

This article first appeared in Concepts & Connections (Vol. 8, Issue 3, 2000), a newsletter of the National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs, located at the University of Maryland.
VOICES OF SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

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by John C. Bogle (essay), $5.00

The author is the founder of The Vanguard Group, the second-largest mutual funds organization in the world. Bogle notes that in the mutual fund industry, and throughout the business world, the central idea of serving others first is being proven in the marketplace. He contends that servant-leadership is on the "right side" of history, and that its power and influence continue to grow.

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On The Road and In the News With the Greenleaf Center

Listed below are some of the recent programs and outreach activities involving Greenleaf Center personnel. The Greenleaf Center offers a wide array of workshops, institutes, retreats, speakers, and consultative services. Please contact Nancy Ruschman, Program Director, at 317-259-1241, extension 29, or e-mail her at nruschman@greenleaf.org if you are interested in our providing servant-leadership programs or speakers for your group or conference.

Recent Programs
CEO Larry Spears addressed the 97th Interagency Institute for Federal Health Care Executives, speaking to a group of 55 medical and health service executives from the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Airforce, U.S. Public Health Service, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. He spoke on servant-leadership and served on a panel with Dr. Victor Walsby, Director, VHA Office of Special Projects, and Admiral James Zimble, President, Uniform Services University of Health Sciences. The Institute was held at George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

Outreach Director Julie Beggs addressed the faculty and staff of Cathedral High School in Indianapolis, IN.

Facilitator Dr. Jim Boyd conducted Building Highly Effective Educational Organizations through Servant-Leadership at Chicago State University in Chicago, IL.

Greenleaf Center Trustee Linda Chezem presented a keynote speech on servant-leadership and K-12 educators for the Michigan Leadership Institute in Midland, MI.

Julie Beggs conducted a workshop on servant-leadership for the University of Dubuque in Dubuque, IA.

Facilitator Dr. Jeff Miller presented a talk on servant-leadership at the Ohio Quality & Productivity Forum in Covington, KY.

Director of Development Wendell Walls and Larry Spears participated in meetings in Ann Arbor, MI and Grand Rapids, MI.

Julie Beggs conducted a special session for the Indiana Department of Parks and Recreation Association at Indiana State University in Terre Haute, IN.

Greenleaf Center United Kingdom Director John Noble and Larry Spears interviewed James Autry (author of Love and Profit, Real Power, and other books) in Des Moines, IA. Autry will be a featured speaker at the June 2001 conference. Excerpts from that interview will appear in the Winter 2001 issue of The Servant-Leader.

Facilitator Jamie Showkeir conducted Building the Business Case for Servant-Leadership through Distributing Organizational Power for Norstan Consulting in Minnetonka, MN.

Julie Beggs conducted a session on servant-leadership and non-profit organizations at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, OK.

Facilitator Tammy Freeman conducted the Ten Characteristics of Servant-Leadership workshop for the Gungaware Center at Indiana State University in Terre Haute, IN.

Larry Spears and Wendell Walls participated in a series of meetings in New Haven, CT and Boston, MA.

Jamie Showkieir conducted Building the Business Case for Servant-Leadership through Distributing Organizational Power for Pieper Electric in Milwaukee, WI.

Board Chair Jack Lowe Jr., GC-United Kingdom Director John Noble, and Larry Spears were among the scheduled featured presenters at the first servant-leadership conference to be held in Melbourne, Australia on November 16-17, 2000, sponsored by the Greenleaf Centre-Australia/New Zealand.

Upcoming Events
Chapman University will host its third annual servant-leadership retreat in Orange, California, on Feb. 1-2, 2001 and will include Director of Outreach Julie Beggs as a featured presenter. For more information call 1-800-392-8704.

The Greenleaf Center-Asia will hold its first conference in Singapore on Feb. 12-13, 2001. For more information contact Low Guat Tin or Sally Chew-Ong Gek Tee at gtlow@nie.edu.sg or gektee@tp.edu.sg.

The Greenleaf Center-United Kingdom will hold a one-day program in London, England on Feb. 16, 2001. This program will be held in conjunction with the Greenleaf Center's board of trustees meeting, also in London. For more information contact John Noble at jnoble@greenleaf.netconnect.co.uk.

The Greenleaf Center's 6th annual Leadership Institute for Higher Education will be held April 25-27, 2001 in Indianapolis. This two-day program for educators and educational administrators will be facilitated by Dr. Hamilton Beazley and Dr. Rubye Braye and will include a special presentation by Dr. Margaret Wheatley (author of Leadership and the New Science). For more information contact Julie Beggs at The Greenleaf Center.

The Greenleaf Center's 11th annual International Conference on Servant-Leadership takes place in Indianapolis on June 7-9, 2001. Featured speakers include James Autry (author, Love and Profit), Michele Hunt (author, Dream Makers), Peter Senge (author, The Fifth Discipline), and Danah Zohar (author, Rewiring the Corporate Brain). Registration brochures will be available for the Greenleaf Center in January, 2001. For more information contact Michele Lawrence at The Greenleaf Center.