

# The Post and Courier

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## Summerville fair to teach children lesson in character

Published on 11/14/97

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**The Post and Courier**

SUMMERVILLE - Sincerity. Virtue. Gratefulness. Most people consider them character traits. On Saturday, they will be booths at a fair.

The Summerville Family Fair, which will be held in the Oakbrook Wal-Mart parking lot, won't be your typical ring toss and skee-ball type of event.

Though it will have games, the real prizes here will be character development, not cheap stuffed animals. It is geared toward elementary school children and their families.

"This was formed to really encourage individuals, families, and the community to raise a higher standard of conduct for themselves so that we wouldn't see so many children in situations that are harmful," said Anne Badgeley, who came up with the idea.

Badgeley started a company called Heritage Community Services two years ago. Companies contract Heritage to teach "life management series," a sort of character seminar. The series has been held at Pinewood Preparatory School and Santee Cooper and with the Navy, among others.

Heritage is a nonprofit corporation and will not benefit from the fair.

Roughly 30 local businesses and organizations - among them Dorchester District 2 schools and the Summerville Fire Department - are participating in the event. Some of the businesses have agreed to each sponsor and staff a booth.

"We wanted to get a lot of local businesses involved so that this really would be a community effort, not just the work of a few individuals," said Faye Hill, who is helping out Badgeley with the fair.

Company employees will create a game or display that teaches children a specific character trait.

For example, the "virtue" booth will give pretzels to children and ask them to dip part into a bitter-tasting liquid, part into a sweet liquid and taste them. Because the pretzels are porous, they soak up much of the liquid.

The lesson here is that children are just as porous as the pretzels. If they associate with people who are not virtuous, they will take on the characteristics of their friends.

The Charleston RiverDogs mascot and Bagee the Clown will also be there.

Badgeley saw the need for character education after working with the Lowcountry Crisis Pregnancy Center in North Charleston.

"We have seen so many thousands of young people in situations that are heartbreaking," Badgeley said. "We had to do something that might prevent them from happening in the future."

The Lowcountry Crisis Pregnancy Center is an anti-abortion organization, but Badgeley said the character fair is "absolutely not" geared toward an anti-abortion or religious agenda. WANT TO GO?

The Summerville Family Fair will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at the Oakbrook Wal-Mart parking lot.