

Pay it forward

by: MIKE AVERILL World Scene Writer
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New character coins designed to promote good deeds

OWASSO -- Don't be shocked if a stranger hands you a shiny gold coin for doing a good deed.

Just make sure to pass along the Character Coin.

Ken Grant and Melanie Hasty-Grant came up with the pay-it-forward-style Character Coin after Owasso city officials challenged business leaders to create partnerships to enhance the community.

"We were thinking about how we could reach out and touch people one at a time and make it infectious," Grant said.

The goal behind the Character Coin is to catch someone doing a good act and give them the coin, tell them why and instruct them to do the same.

"You don't have to perform heroic acts to make a difference; you just have to be willing to recognize the good in others and share a coin as appreciation," Grant said.

Truthfulness, generosity, respect and forgiveness are some of the character traits people should look for when deciding who to pass the coin to.

"If we watch for the positives instead of the negatives in people, it could create a synergy where the focus is on positives," Hasty-Grant said.

The couple, who also clip out newspaper articles featuring community members demonstrating good character and mail it to them with a thank-you note, thought passing out coins would be another way to recognize people for their positive efforts.

"You can carry them and they're readily available for when the moment arises," Hasty-Grant said. "I was at the airport recently, and I can think of several times that I was watching for the positives in people and thought if I had a coin, I would give it to them."

The couple had 30,000 coins made and hope other communities and businesses will join in the effort.

The coins have Owasso printed on them as well as the Web site where coin receivers can submit their stories.

"It would be cool if an Owasso coin ended up in Japan, or if we got one in our hands that had another town listed," Hasty-Grant said.

Additionally, Character Coin Awards will be given each year in youth, adult and civil servant categories.

This year's recipients, recognized at a recent ceremony, included the Owasso High School Student Council for its initiative during a recent school flood, the Oklahoma Air National Guard for its service

in Iraq and Owasso High School baseball coach Steve Holleman.

Holleman was recognized for his volunteer work with First Baptist Church, where he drives some of the older women to and from church, to doctor appointments and out to dinner on their birthdays.

"It's a labor of love. They depend on me and I learn so much from them," Holleman said of his volunteer work with the church, adding that he was honored to receive the Character Award. "It's not something where you say 'I'm going to go out and win a Character Award.' I'm humbled."

Mike Averill 581-8489

mike.averill@tulsaworld.com

Associate Images:



Owasso High School senior Kendal Turpen (center) holds a Character Coin award and releases a balloon during a ceremony at Owasso High School. The Owasso Student Council was recognized for quickly responding to a recent school flood. Turpen is Student Council president.



An Owasso couple had 30,000 Character Coins created to reward people for performing an act of truthfulness, generosity, respect or forgiveness.

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