Guest post by Sue Duris, President of M4 Communications, an organization that works with K-12 schools on their branding initiatives.

This year marks the 21st CC! Week, which the White House and U.S. Senate have officially declared each year. (See the unanimously passed 2014 Senate resolution here.)

But character education is not something one can point to as a singular accomplishment. It must be a sustained campaign to win hearts and minds. And to win, it takes a community of leaders, parents, teachers and students working together to drive change.

Effective character education involves helping schools build good kids — kids who demonstrate basic ethical values in their choices each day. But it doesn't end in the schools. Parents and community groups must also get on board to be sure good character isn't only an on-campus activity. Ethical values must be reinforced everywhere, all the time. In the case of CHARACTER COUNTS!, those values are the Six Pillars of Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and good citizenship.

Digital citizenship is a relatively new concept. The idea is that teachers, technology leaders, parents and students come together to develop norms of respectful and responsible behavior with regard to technology. Many schools have adopted digital citizenship policies to teach students how to protect themselves and their peers online.

So how do character education and digital citizenship work together?

The answer is found in the Six Pillars:

Trustworthiness

- *Having good character*: Be honest. Don't deceive, cheat or steal. Be reliable (do what you say you will do). Have the courage to do the right thing. Build a good reputation. Be loyal.

- *Being a good digital citizen*: Be the type of person online that you are offline. Expect the same trustworthiness in others. If you feel someone isn't trustworthy online, don't interact with them. Protect yourself online by making your digital footprint (social media accounts, passwords, etc.) safe and secure. Your digital footprint is your personal brand so make sure to promote yourself positively and protect your online reputation. Keep safe by using your gut feelings and common sense when posting online. Share things with only those who you can

trust fully. Don't share passwords. Keep your computer and mobile devices safe at all times. Remember people may not be who they seem online so if you are meeting with someone, tell someone where you are going and meet in a public place.

Respect

- *Having good character*: Treat others with respect. Follow the Golden Rule. Be tolerant and accept people's differences. Use good manners and good language. Be considerate of others' feelings. Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone. Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements.

- *Being a good digital citizen*: Post respectful and meaningful comments online. Show respect to others when you are in online communities. Be polite online. Embrace people's differences, respect them and debate with them in a civil manner. Use kind and proper words at all times when you're online. And, don't shout.

Responsibility

- *Having good character*: Do what you are supposed to do. Plan ahead. Persevere, keep on trying. Always do your best. Use self-control. Be self-disciplined. Think before you act – consider the consequences. Set a good example for others. Be accountable for your attitudes, words and actions.

- *Being a good digital citizen*: Practice good digital etiquette. Do only things online you wouldn't be embarrassed to tell your parents or friends about.

Think before you share that post or image online and be careful who you share it with. Don't be anonymous or take on a false identity. Remember, these accounts can be traced back to you.

When posting online, follow Google's "Think" guide:

T – Is it true?
H – Is it helpful?
I – Is it inspiring?
N – Is it necessary?
K – Is it kind?

Fairness

- *Having good character*: Play by the rules. Take turns and share. Be open-minded and listen to others. Don't take advantage others. Don't blame others. Treat everyone fairly.

- *Being a good digital citizen*: Follow social media and online community rules. When you share, be fair – give credit to others for creating something.

Caring

- *Having good character*: Be kind. Be compassionate and show you care. Express gratitude. Help people in need.

- *Being a good digital citizen*: If you see cyberbullying happen to you or others, stand up to it or ask a teacher or adult for help. There are Internet predators and "trolls" on the Internet. Don't fall prey. Don't reply to them. Report them. Don't be a troll, either. Don't get personal and attack someone.

Citizenship

- *Having good character*: Do your share to make your school and community better. Cooperate. Get involved in community affairs. Stay informed. Be a good neighbor. Obey laws and rules. Protect the environment. Volunteer.

- *Being a good digital citizen*: Follow copyright laws. Follow site rules. Don't engage in illegal downloading or sharing. Make sure you have permission to download or share content. Monitor and report bad online behavior.