

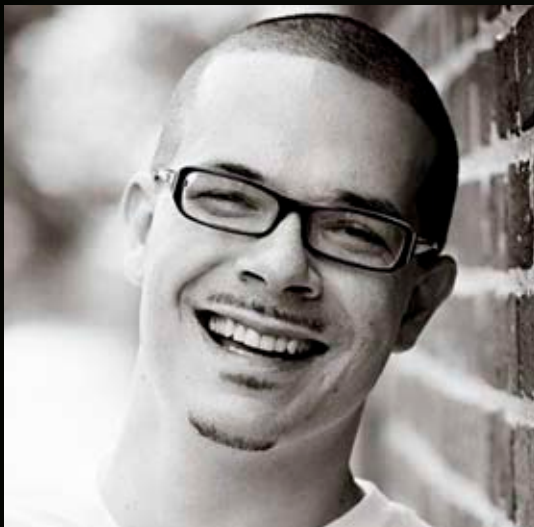
# Virtue In Action

Virtual Charity Impacts the Real World

VIRTUE IN ACTION

FOSTERING CITIZENSHIP THROUGH CHARACTER EDUCATION

*The efforts of Major Eric Egland and Pastor Shaun King impacted people's lives during the holidays and beyond. Both of these individuals exhibit the virtues of wisdom, empathy, generosity and solidarity, and show us how we too can turn technology into a powerful weapon against poverty and suffering.*





Atlanta children receive \$21,000 in new gifts and uniforms purchased by donations received via Pastor Shawn King.



U.S. soldiers deliver much needed supplies to families in Afghanistan.

## VIRTUAL CHARITY IMPACTS THE REAL WORLD

The Internet is an increasingly important part of American life. Millions of individuals use it for many reasons: reading newspapers and magazines, e-mailing friends, purchasing items, and recreating social networks online at sites including Facebook and MySpace.

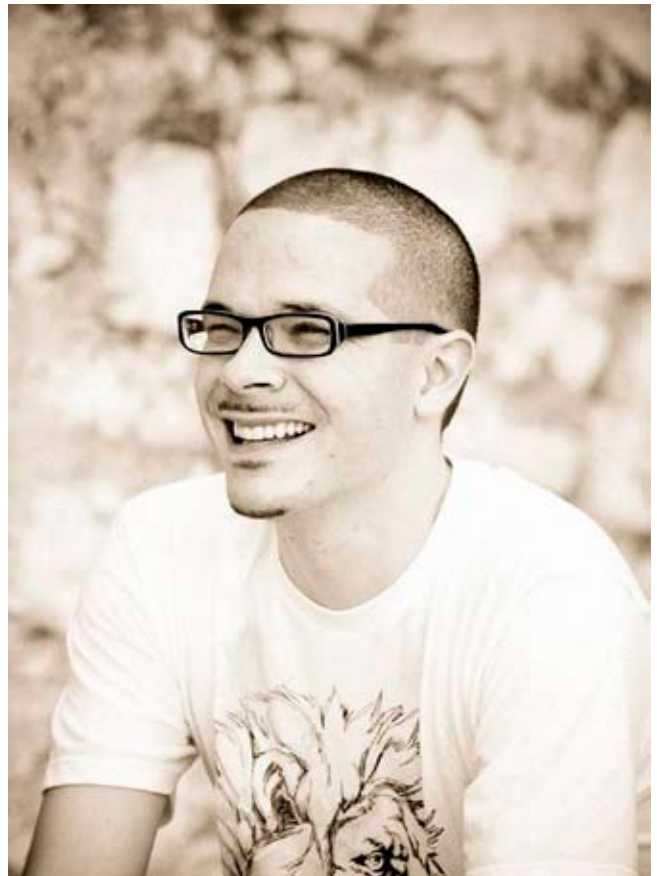
But there are also many people using the Internet to serve their fellow citizens, turning web pages or social networking sites into tools for raising awareness and money for important local, national and global causes. In this lesson, we will focus on two individuals, a “Facebook Pastor” and a U.S. soldier and author who each identified problems in his respective community, and then **leveraged** the Internet to find solutions.

The efforts of Pastor Shaun King and Major Eric Egland impacted people’s lives during the holidays and beyond. Both of these individuals exhibit the virtues of **wisdom**, **empathy**, **generosity** and **solidarity**, and show us how we too can turn technology into a powerful weapon against poverty and suffering.

### Ministering through MySpace

Shaun King, like many teens and young adults, is a member of social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook and the mini-blog service, Twitter. King, aka the Facebook Pastor, recently leveraged his social networks as well as the video-sharing site, YouTube, to raise approximately \$21,000 to purchase toys and uniforms for needy Atlanta children, the Associated Press reported.

“A lot of organizations that normally give toys and supplies to schools don’t have anything because of the way



Pastor Shawn King

the economy is,” King told Atlanta station, WGCL-TV, of his decision to launch [500uniforms.com](http://500uniforms.com) and raise money from social networking sites.

King knew that he first had to help people become aware of the need, so he posted online videos, photos and writings about the needs of the children he wanted to serve. These powerful images and messages enabled online viewers to practice **empathy** in placing themselves in the position of these disadvantaged children. By leveraging the message through several social networking sites, King was able to deliver his message to thousands of people across America.

King’s **wisdom** in using the power of technology in pursuit of a noble goal paid off as 300 people across 22 different states, were moved with a sense of **compassion** and expressed their **generosity** with donations. The endeavor **culminated** in a joyous celebration and gift-giving ceremony at Frank L. Stanton Elementary School in Atlanta on Dec. 17.

King reflected on how the Internet helped him inexpensively and effectively reach donors who, ordinarily, might not have even known about his cause. “What it took to get uniforms and toys for every child here was really beyond our grasp,” King told WGCL-TV. “But we knew if we used Facebook, Myspace, Twitter and blogs, all types of social technology, that we could bring together hundreds and hundreds of people.” Without knowing or even living near the children King wanted to help, King helped the donors develop a sense of **solidarity** with the children in need. In effect, King’s corner of the Web became a tight-knit community with a common purpose and goal: to help kids.

### **Troops Need You**

Major Eric Egland has been deployed multiple times in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and has served as a counter-terrorism consultant to the Department of Defense. From his experiences, Major Egland developed another mission – to empower American soldiers and Marines in addressing vital needs of the people of Iraq and Afghanistan. Egland’s strategy is to “equip our soldiers with the appropriate community-building supplies they need—generators, water purification systems, school books, even soccer equipment—to build trust and persuade the local people to stand up, so our troops can stand down and come home... victorious!” Egland believes that by establishing mutual trust and respect and

uniting around common goals, we will ultimately help Iraq and Afghanistan defeat the terrorists and insurgents, as well as protect our soldiers.

Rather than waiting for government programs to fill the needs of Iraqis and the Afghans, Egland took it upon himself two years ago to found Troops Need You. Egland explained in a recent press release. “Now, soldiers on the ground invite citizens to do more.” American military service members on the [troopsneedyou.com](http://troopsneedyou.com) web site post



Above, Major Eric Egland and wife Ania. Below, Afghan child receives gift of a new coat.





Major Eric Eglund at press conference with President Bush.

the needs they see as critical to the well being of the people in the local areas of Iraq and Afghanistan where they are serving. American citizens then have the opportunity to help satisfy these needs by donating the funds and items that the troops have requested.

At [www.troopsneedyou.com](http://www.troopsneedyou.com), visitors can see photos of families posing with shipments to be sent to Iraq and Afghanistan, and get instructions on how to donate to **battalions**, which will in turn, deliver the needed supplies. The power of the web site and Eglund's strategy has established **solidarity** – across millions of miles – among regular American citizens back home, our troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, and communities in need in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In December, Eglund expressed pride about the level of **empathy, compassion** and **generosity** that very young donors have expressed via Troops Need You. He showed off a shipment to CNN reporter

Jill Dougherty during a recent broadcast of a holiday delivery of school supplies to **impoverished** Iraqi children who lack basic items including book bags, pens, pencils and even glue.

“We’re going to deliver some school supplies that were picked out, not by **bureaucrats**, not by the government, not by adults, but by kids themselves in Northern California,” Eglund told CNN of the holiday shipment, just one of the many that come from across the United States.

Eglund and Troops Need You does not confine the spirit of **generosity** to the holidays. They continue to identify needs and mobilize the resources to meet those needs throughout the year.

The Internet has become a natural part of most of our lives as we use it for entertainment, connecting with friends and family, and in ways that make our lives more convenient. The stories of Pastor Shaun King and Major Eric Eglund remind us how the Internet and online communities can also be effective tools in creating online communities that can build awareness of the needs of others, and through our generosity establish solidarity with those in need.

It is important to remember that the endeavors of Pastor King and Major Eglund could not succeed without thousands of everyday citizens answering the call to help others in need. In this new year, we can resolve to be generous in looking for charitable causes that we want to be active in by supporting them financially, with our time and talents, or even by launching a new charitable venture to address a need that we believe is important.

### Vocabulary

**Compassion:** Feeling of sympathy for the distress of others, with the desire to help

**Wisdom:** ability to apply knowledge, experience, understanding in ways that are effective and good. The ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting.

**Culminated:** to reach the highest point; to come to a close

**Empathy:** entering into the feelings or spirit of others and imagining yourself in another person's situation.

**Solidarity:** A shared common interest; active loyalty within a group

**Generosity:** Giving freely of our own possessions, time and or talent to someone else

**Leverage:** to exert power or influence on

**Battalion:** a ground force unit composed of a headquarters and two or more companies or similar units

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1126 DARTMOUTH RD. FLOSSMOOR, IL 60422  
Phone: 708.922.1075 • Email: [virtueinaction@mac.com](mailto:virtueinaction@mac.com)

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## Virtual Charity Impacts the Real World

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### Highlighted Virtues:

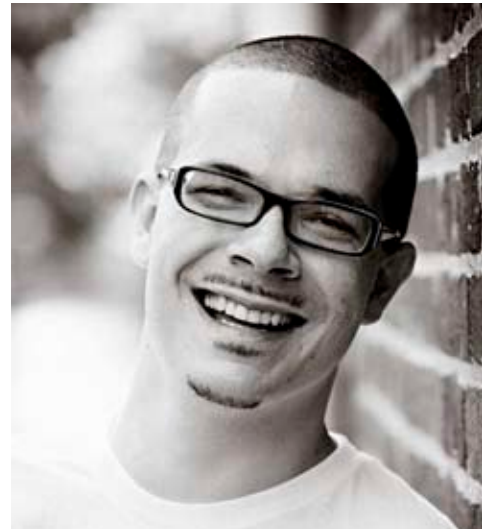
Compassion, Wisdom,  
Empathy, Solidarity,  
Generosity

### Lesson Goals:

- Help students understand how technology can be used to create a virtual community that identifies local needs, builds awareness of those needs beyond geographical boundaries, mobilizes resources to meet needs, and in the process builds communities that impact our world in very tangible ways.
- Help students understand the virtues of wisdom, empathy, compassion, generosity and solidarity, and to develop a sense of their power in pursuing charitable endeavors and in addressing important needs.
- Inspire students to make a resolution to live out the above virtues throughout the year, and not just during the holiday season.



Major Eric Egland



Pastor Shawn King

### Discussion Question Options:

1. What charitable endeavor did Pastor Shaun King champion by using social networking sites Facebook, MySpace and Twitter? How much money did he collect and how was it spent?
2. What is the purpose of the site troopsneedyou.com? Explain how it helps those in Iraq and Afghanistan, then explain how that helps the U.S. troops.
3. How do King and Major Eric Egland's actions relate to the virtue of wisdom? What is unique about their approach to charitable giving?
4. Charitable endeavors normally involve the virtues of **empathy** in placing ourselves in someone else's position to understand his or her need, **compassion** in desiring to help someone else in need, and then **generosity** in actually contributing out time, talent and / or resources to address the need. How does the Internet affect our ability to live out

each of these virtues in organizing and donating to a charitable endeavor?

5. In both charitable efforts presented in this lesson, there appears to be a strategy in place: (1) Identifying a need, (2) Defining how to effectively address the need; (3) Developing awareness of the need among potential donors and (4) Delivering assistance. Take each of the cases in the lesson and break down how King, and then Egland, implemented the 4-step strategy in their charitable endeavor.
6. Of the two charities discussed in this lesson, address which of these missions most appealed to you or would encourage your participation. Why?
7. Do you feel more driven to donate to charities during the holidays? What do you think would remind us to give more of our time, talents and resources throughout the year?

## Virtue In Action

*Connecting Virtues to Our World*

www.virtueinaction.com  
Current Links in Education  
1126 Dartmouth Rd.  
Flossmoor, IL 60422  
708 922 1075  
virtueinaction@mac.com

### Journal Writing:

1. Explain what, if anything, you did this holiday season to help out with a need in your community or elsewhere. In your writing, incorporate the three virtues of charity: empathy, compassion and generosity. If you did not get an opportunity to give, explain what charity you would like to contribute to in the future and why.

### Extended Learning Activities:

1. There are many opportunities for Americans to help in addressing critical needs in America and overseas. Organize students into groups and assign each group one of the organizations below (or others you assign) to make a presentation to the class on the organization's mission, history, present work and selection process.  
[www.Peacecorp.gov/](http://www.Peacecorp.gov/)  
[www.americorp.gov/](http://www.americorp.gov/)  
[www.salvationarmy.org](http://www.salvationarmy.org)  
[www.mercycorps.org](http://www.mercycorps.org)
2. Have students select one of the missions on [troopsneedyou.com](http://troopsneedyou.com) and, as a group, raise or collect funds to send a shipment to either Iraq or Afghanistan over the next month.
3. Organize students into groups, and ask each student to identify an online charitable endeavor that they believe is worthy of support in addressing an important need and is doing so effectively. Each student then presents the online cause to his/her group. Each group then votes on which online cause they will advocate. Each group then presents its adopted cause to the class for a class vote. The adopted class cause may then become the focus of a class charity campaign for 2009.
4. Have students break into groups and give them a hypothetical cause from among four or five, which could include collecting canned goods for a local food pantry, organizing a clothing drive for impoverished children; contributing to food and medical supplies for an animal shelter, collecting college funds for underprivileged high school students, donating toys to a daycare for needy children. Ask them to brainstorm a simple Web site that would help their selected or assigned cause. They should come up with a basic mission statement, information about their organization, and specifically name the kinds of donations they would seek, and what they would do to deliver the items or funds.



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