

FaxForumResults

JUNE'S QUESTION:

Who Is Your Hero?

A hero can be just about anyone—for example, a relative or a rock star—who has some quality or achievement that inspires you. So say the respondents to our June “FaxForum” question, “Who is your hero?”

Most of our respondents’ heroes are ordinary people with extraordinary qualities. J.J. Grier of Bristol, Pennsylvania, cited a grandfather who was the “stalwart support of three families” and who possessed the qualities of optimism, steadfastness, and ingenuity.

Letha Acker, a medical library technician in Washington, D.C., named a friend and business associate, Linda Katheryn Turnquist, for her “unrelenting love for people and for working at being a good citizen.” A hero, says Acker, “is someone I can send against a foe.”

Irene M. Ward, of Columbus, Ohio, praised the heroic qualities of Beverly Rackett, “a former welfare recipient in a wheelchair who formed a strong advocacy organization.” Rackett, said Ward, is executive director of Mobile, an advocacy group for the disabled. “Rackett has unlimited energy, an unflinching sense of humor, the patience of Job, the ability to bring out the best in people, the guts to stand up against the system, the creative ability to parlay scarce resources to build something 100 times bigger than the next person, very crisp values, consummate networking skills, and she is an excellent educator.”

Among the qualities that make someone a hero, courage ranked highest, followed by the exercise of leadership. Achievement and self-sacrifice were mentioned about half as often. Respondents also praised the qualities of honesty, integrity, humility, and the willingness to share.

No one cited fame or power as heroic qualities, yet some people’s nominees have plenty of both. Three media stars were mentioned: Garth Brooks, the country-and-western singer, because “he isn’t afraid to show the world who he is”; Oprah Winfrey, the TV talk-show host, because “she overcame a lot to be successful and then shared her wealth”; and actress Mary Tyler Moore for such qualities as courage, energy, and upholding the truth.

One respondent’s hero is the economist Robert Reich, now U.S. Secretary of Labor. Why? “He tells it like it is. He brings people together to make improvements. He sets an example. And he has a great sense of humor.”

Diana Mitchell, who works for the Orange County, Florida, government, praised the heroism of Septima Clark, who taught literacy and community-organizing skills in the South before

and during the civil-rights movement. “She was organized, witty, creative, and flexible in training scared, tired, and despairing students. Her efforts produced great results!”

(Clark’s work is highlighted in *Ready From Within* by Clark and Cynthia Stokes Brown, published by Wild Trees Press, Navarro, California.)

Some respondents named religious leaders as heroes. One wrote “Spencer Kimball (the former head of the Mormon Church) is the kind of man I want to be.” Paul R. Nolte, of Westminster, Colorado, named his pastor, Jeff Voth. Quite a few people mentioned Gandhi and Jesus Christ as their heroes. One named Albert Schweitzer, the theologian, musician, and doctor known for his work in Africa. Others listed Joan of Arc and Saint Francis.

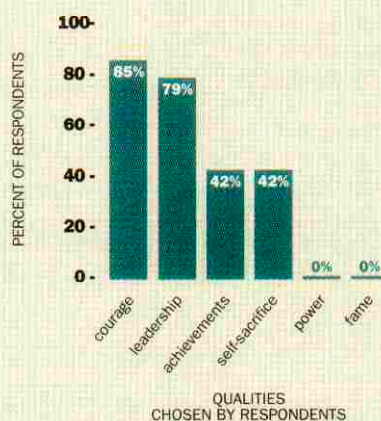
More than half the respondents believe there is a difference between a hero and a role model. A hero is to be admired, they said, and a role model is to be emulated. “My heroes have always been at a distance,” wrote Ann Maddox of Memphis, Tennessee. “My role models have been close up.”

“A hero is often worshiped,” explained another respondent, who said that heroes have “qualities above those of average people,” while “a role model is a little more down-to-earth.”

Respondent Irene Ward summed it up this way: “Although we may as youngsters have fictional or superhuman heroes, we graduate to a more realistic admiration for people we meet in the course of our lives. True heroes are role models—individuals who have crystal-clear values and do strong deeds. We should feel blessed when they touch our lives and we should work hard to emulate those qualities that strike us so deeply.” ■

Next month, “Fax Forum” asks readers, “What’s Healthy Health-Care Reform?” and discusses responses to “Did You Hear It Through the Grapevine?” July’s survey on office gossip.

What Qualities Make Someone a Hero?



Percents add up to more than 100 because many respondents selected more than one quality.