

John Winthrop Wright Ethics in Action Award

2007 Ethics in Action Award to Mr. James C. Smith, President and CEO of Webster Bank

SEE's first Character Celebration was hosted on May 3, 2007 at the Rocky Hill Marriott. The event was a great success and attracted 110 participants to celebrate SEE's Laws of Life essay winners and Mr. James C. Smith (Chair and CEO of Webster Bank) recipient of the first annual John Winthrop Wright Ethics in Action Award.

The John Winthrop Wright *Ethics in Action* award honors a Connecticut leader who has authentically demonstrated ethics in action through his/her activities.

During the celebration, ten student essayists were recognized as Connecticut finalists for their writing about values and character traits that help people live successful lives. Two students read their essays and Mr. Smith proceeded to weave a reference to all ten essays into his keynote address. In addition, Mr. Smith's keynote made a clear connection between the value of character and ethics as they are learned in the home and school and translated into life within the business world. He emphasized that character and ethics is one thing that can bridge the generation gap as it applies to successful living.



Mr. Smith is the Chairman and CEO of the Webster Financial Corporation. He was elected president of Webster Bank in 1982 and named CEO in 1987. Under Mr. Smith's leadership, Webster Bank has become the largest independent bank based in New England with over 14 billion dollars in assets. He was presented with the John Winthrop Wright Ethics in Action award for his consistent support for character education in Connecticut. He and his wife Cathy personally supported the founding of the first Character Counts coalition in the 1990s and have continued to support character initiatives in Connecticut through SEE. The same support for character and ethics translates into The Webster Way, a statement of values that is prominently displayed in each Webster Bank in support of customer service that highlights the bank's choice to respect the dignity of each individual.

The Character Celebration was the first of hopefully many annual events and was instrumental in beginning a dialogue with multiple individuals and organizations in support of ethics in action.