

ABOUT THE MOVIE



Synopsis

Handicapped by a twisted foot and slow learning skills, Loretta Claiborne (Kimberly Elise) faces an unpromising future. Her hard-working mother, Rita (Tina Lifford), refuses to cater to Loretta's shortcomings and instead nurtures her daughter's fighting spirit. Picked on at school and resented by her pretty older sister, Christine (Nicole Ari Parker), Loretta sometimes resorts to using her fists in frustration. In grade school, a teacher encourages Loretta to excel in running, the one activity that brings her joy. In high school, fellow athletes encourage Loretta to raise funds and collect signatures for a female track team, all the while knowing that Loretta won't qualify to join because she's a Special Ed student. Loretta is expelled after she tackles her chief denigrator, and she sullenly defies the efforts of her caseworker, Janet McFarland (Camryn Manheim). But Janet is just as stubborn as Loretta and forces her to participate in the Special Olympics, where Loretta shines. Despite her newfound success, Loretta encounters a series of setbacks, including the departure of her beloved brother (Damon Cupton) for the armed services and Rita's reluctance to permit foot surgery. Then, after participating in the world-famous Boston Marathon, Loretta discovers that she's ineligible for the Special Olympics and must cope with the terminal illness of her mother, who has always been her guiding spirit. Instead of the usual cheery, sanitized triumph over adversity, this true-life tale poignantly emphasizes the fact that Loretta's suffering was the catalyst for her hard-won victories.

HOW CAN THE LORETTA CLAIBORNE STORY SPRINGBOARD TO SERVICE LEARNING?



“The Loretta Claiborne Story” is the true story of a girl who overcomes overwhelming obstacles to become a world-class athlete, a famous speaker, an honorary doctorate, and a true American hero. It's also a story about the impact that being different -- in this case, mentally retarded -- can have on a person, as well as the impact that the right kind of support can have.

From this story, students learn about diversity in many forms – in a person's abilities, age, race, gender, economic status, and outlook on life. Much of the story, however, focuses on Loretta's mental retardation and people's willingness or unwillingness to help her succeed.

Service learning connects to many of the themes in “The Loretta Claiborne Story.” With service learning, they will:

- Learn about different people, situations, problems, and organizations.
- Create solutions that help those who may be different from themselves.
- Overcome authentic obstacles.
- Become “I Can” people rather than “I Can't” people.



HOW TO ORDER

To order a copy of The Loretta Claiborne Story, visit edustation.com
[http://dep.disney.go.com/educational/store/detail?fromsearch=1&product_id=68E65VL00]

PROGRAMMING CALENDAR

Coming Summer '04.

Disney Channel will be airing The Loretta Claiborne Story during the '04-'05 school year. Our programming calendar is coming soon!

ABOUT THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Special Olympics is an international organization dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition. Special Olympics offers children and adults with intellectual disabilities year-round training and competition in **26 Olympic-type summer and winter sports** [http://www.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/English/Compete/Sports_Offered/default.htm]. There is no charge to participate in Special Olympics.

Special Olympics currently serves more than 1 million persons with intellectual disabilities in **more than 200 Programs** [http://www.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/English/Program_Locator/default.htm] in more than 150 countries. In 2000, Special Olympics made a bold commitment to reach 2 million athletes by the end of 2005, placing a renewed focus on building the movement's infrastructure and establishing tools to facilitate growth. An initial census of athlete participation conducted in that year established a baseline count of athletes worldwide.

At the end of 2002, the first annual incremental count was conducted, resulting in the **2002 Special Olympics Athlete Participation Report** [http://www.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/English/About_Us/Athlete+Participation+Report.htm]
— the first “report card” of progress toward the goal of reaching 2 million athletes. One hundred percent of Special Olympics Programs reported athlete counts in 2002, compared to 74 percent in 2000. To achieve the 2005 goal, Special Olympics must recruit and train at least 793,345 athletes in the next two and a half years.

Children and adults with intellectual disabilities who participate in Special Olympics develop improved physical fitness and motor skills, greater self-confidence and a more positive self-image. They grow mentally, socially and spiritually and, through their activities, exhibit boundless courage and enthusiasm, enjoy the rewards of friendship and ultimately discover not only new abilities and talents but “their voices” as well.

To get involved, contact your local Special Olympics Program. To locate a Program near you, use our **Program Locator** [http://www.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/English/Program_Locator/default.htm].



LINKS

Special Olympics Site

[<http://www.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/default.htm>]

Special Olympics Teacher Resources

[http://www.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/English/Initiatives/Schools_and_Youth/SOGII/Default.htm]

HOW SERVICE LEARNING CAN CHANGE SOMEONE'S LIFE: REAL STORIES FROM THOSE WHO TEACH AND SERVE

Profile #1

Rita Mulholland, former Special Educator, Rock Terrace Elementary, Rockville, MD, now an assistant professor in a special education teacher preparation program

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Student Description

Rock Terrace students are multi-handicapped with mild retardation, physical impairments, and language issues. This secondary school runs an outstanding work-oriented and transition program for multi-handicapped students. The goal of the school is to help students become as independent as possible as they reach adulthood. Many are fully employed by the time they graduate.

Service Learning Story

Since most students are typically on the receiving end of service, I started a program where students could be the providers of service. With a grant from Reading is Fundamental, I purchased children's books written in English and Spanish for Rock Terrace students to read to young children at Head Start Centers throughout Montgomery County. Each of my students learned two magic tricks to perform for the Head Start pupils. After they performed their magic show, they read stories to these pupils. Each Head Start pupil then chose a book that they could keep and take home.

Impact

There were many benefits for the Rock Terrace students. They were so proud and excited that they could perform a magic show. They practiced reading their children's books aloud with each other weeks before the show. They were pleasantly surprised at how friendly the Head Start pupils were, and they couldn't wait to go back and read more books each week to another group of Head Start pupils.

Potential Obstacles

Transportation is often an issue with service learning programs. My students usually traveled by public transportation but sometimes used the school's van. Money is also a potential obstacle. I was very grateful to Reading is Fundamental for their grant to purchase the books we distributed to Head Start pupils.



Profile #2

Marsha Robbins, Pioneer Education Center, Pittsburgh, PA

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Student Description

Students with multiple disabilities, many who are in group homes. Many are nonverbal and have limited involvement in the community at large.

Service Learning Story

The students at Pioneer Education Center go to the local Humane Society and socialize with the dogs, cats or rabbits – one animal at a time. They write up animal resumes, listing the animals’ strengths and weaknesses so that prospective families will know more about the animals they meet. These resumes help families know if an animal is good with kids, if it is obedience-trained, if it favors men over women, etc. These activities clearly support the goals of the students’ IEPs.

The original connection with the Humane Society was established to help a young man with autism find ways to connect with other human beings. His love of furry things led the teachers to take him to the shelter, and he responded in a very positive way. The teachers then wanted to expand that opportunity to other students. The program now touches students in five different classes.

Students who are able to pursue literacy goals write about their experiences, read about the various animals, and learn about responsible pet ownership. They calculate costs and buy the treats given to the animals. They learn cooking skills by preparing treats for the dogs. For the most capable students, there is a job training program.

Impact

- Helps the students develop new skills.
- Forces them to generalize the knowledge they acquire in school to the community placements.
- Helps meet student IEPs.
- Helps homeless animals find loving families.
- Some students have gotten jobs at the shelter.

Potential Obstacles

- Minimal obstacles have been encountered, because of a dynamic principal who is willing to try novel ideas if it benefits the kids. Some principals, however, may prefer to follow tried and true (if mundane) paths toward education.

Profile #3

Kathy Young, L.D. Resource Teacher, Meridian Middle School, Buffalo Grove, IL
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Student Description

Fifth and sixth grade students with learning disabilities.

Service Learning Story

Each year the students with learning disabilities at Meridian Middle School do these three learning projects.

- A Learning Disabilities Simulation is conducted with 300 fifth graders in the fall. Each homeroom classroom is taught what it means to have a learning disability, how it feels to learn differently, modifications that help students learn, and why it is fair that some students receive accommodations. Participants view a display of famous people who are learning disabled and are taught that someone with a learning disability is a smart person who just needs to learn in a different way.
- Students work to help those who are in need. They have raised money to buy holiday gifts for low income families and for teenagers who live in a home for abandoned and abused children. They have written letters to local businesses requesting donations or discounts; made holiday crafts to sell; sold candy, school supplies, and their crafts at a local restaurant and at school. With their earnings they purchased and wrapped gloves, hats, socks, shirts, shoes, and toys.
- Students create bulletin boards about learning disabilities for a local restaurant. The restaurant's owner has a learning disability and each year she chooses the theme for the project.

Impact

Raising Student Awareness

- Each student completes graphs showing their strengths and weaknesses in academic areas (reading, math) and non-academic areas (attention, organization). We discuss the strategies and materials that enable them to learn.
- The Learning Disabilities Simulation gives other students the opportunity to experience what the learning disabled student experiences in the classroom. The result has been improved understanding of learning disabilities and greater acceptance of the learning disabled students by their peers.

Connecting to Others

- Students learned that there are kids in their own community who are less fortunate than them. Our kids were shocked that the main thing these needy kids wanted was a pair of gloves and that our gifts would be the only ones that these kids would be receiving. Students who sold items at the drive-thru restaurant learned that they could not predict how generous someone would be just by looking at their car or the clothes they were wearing.
- We usually raised about one thousand dollars and we would spend time in the pull-out math classes counting the money, making change, and figuring out the cost of our expenses to determine our profit.

Raising Awareness in the Community

- Customers visiting our restaurant display learned about learning differences and some discovered that they have a learning disability themselves.
- To create the boards about learning strategies, students from other schools were also asked to participate. Hundreds of kid-tested strategies were gathered. These strategies and these creative lessons were compiled into a book which was recently published.
- In order to create these boards my students had to read, research, write, and discuss learning disabilities. By teaching others, they have gained added insight into their own learning.

Obstacles

- It is hard to find enough adults to work at the Learning Disabilities Simulation.
- When doing the fundraising, it can be difficult to decide which items will sell. We sell at a restaurant on a Saturday so it can be hard to find enough kids who are “free” at that time since they have religious classes or sports activities. The parents have to provide the transportation to the restaurant and that makes it difficult for some families.
- Scheduling the time to create the bulletin board can be challenging.

Profile #4

Natasha Wright, Special Education Teacher, Clinton Middle School, Clinton, Tennessee
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Student Description

Middle school students, ranging from mild to profound disabilities

Service Learning Story

There are several ways that the “Can Do Crew” at Clinton Middle School helps their local community and their school community. They wash, dry, hang, and number order the school’s football uniforms each week; they pass out the school bulletins every day; they vacuum the band room and library carpet weekly; and run the school bookstore.

Impact

Social: This allows my students to have more interaction with regular education peers than they normally would due to their disabilities. The students learn to greet customers at the bookstore and how to initiate conversation about the products. They also learn appropriate behavior in a work setting. Service learning also raises their self-esteem.

Vocational: The students learn valuable job skills – staying on task, completing their work, taking pride in what they do, working cooperatively with others, and the list goes on!

Academic: You name it – from English to math to science and social studies, we incorporate the academics into our service learning. My students have written business letters, filed invoices, placed orders over the internet, made signs, used a map to find each classroom, used a checklist, counted money, made deposits, completed inventories, and made charts and graphs of profits.



School/Community: There are also many benefits to the people we service. The school considers my class to be very important. Because of my class, the football players have clean uniforms, the teachers get their bulletins on time, the custodians can attend to urgent tasks, and the students get cost benefits.

Potential Obstacles

Time: Service learning can be time consuming. Start out with a short activity before you take on washing the football uniforms for the season.

Money: Our PTSA has helped us on several occasions. There are also service learning organizations out there that will help. The Lions Club has offered to help, but we haven't used their services yet. Ask your local community to help you raise funds. You can also apply for grants online for service learning projects. Last but not least, you can have a good old fund-raiser.

Materials: Beg and borrow. That is what we do. We didn't have a cart for the bookstore, so the library loaned us one on a permanent basis. The school has been very helpful in providing materials.

Student participation: For my students, it is required. I have had some parent complaints, but then I show them the curriculum I am covering and how it relates to the childrens' IEPs. Generally that works well.

People who don't believe your students can do the job: You might have to prove their abilities by doing small jobs first. Then build up to bigger projects. Plus it is all in your attitude. I always say they can do it and then back it up with their successes so far.

Good News: Mr. Myles Hebrard and I have started a service learning club at Clinton Middle called Hawks Helping Others. It has been a great success, and some of my students have joined the club. This gives them another opportunity to be with their regular education peers. We have fed the homeless at The Salvation Army, helped fill Salvation Army stockings, decorated the senior apartments here in town, and sang Christmas Carols at their Christmas party. Another tip is to get other organizations involved. We could not have been as successful with these events if it weren't for the help of Student Council, National Junior Honors Society, and the Teen Living Club. We also want to thank our administrators, Mrs. Sue Voskamp, Principal, Mr. Steve Reynolds, Vice Principal, and our Superintendent, Mr. Jim Stewart for their support in our program.

Profile #5

Cynthia McCauley, Bay High School, Service Learning Magnet School
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Student Description

Through service learning I work with students of all abilities. Officially I'm considered a teacher of the educable and trainable mentally handicapped, visually impaired, hearing impaired, the emotionally disturbed, autistic, physically impaired, brain-injured, health impaired, and severely emotionally disturbed. Of course, these are just funding labels for very unique, engaging students who have become committed to serving others while learning



skills for independent living.

Service Learning Story

We are not a center school for the disabled--we are a service learning magnet. Our school also hosts the first Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) program in America. This is a cooperative curriculum and testing program with Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. Other magnet programs at Bay High School include technology, performing arts, visual arts, business and finance, law, and culinary. Students travel from other districts to attend the magnet programs -- including our magnet. From every point on the ability spectrum and every academic interest, students work together through service learning.

Bay High School is a service learning school, but our Learn and Serve model is different and complex. The learning and the service must bring together this diverse mix of students. The concept of inclusive is a requirement. When a project begins, all students are acutely aware of where they stand in the academic or cognitive pecking order. Intellectual ability seems the only measure or standard. As a project progresses, there are many new yardsticks -- new measures of human value and ability. It is wonderful to watch the changing dynamics. An empowered, united humanity emerges.

Impact

The benefits are as numerous as our projects. I usually summarize our commitment to service learning and the extensive role individuals with disabilities play in that commitment by repeating the central premise of our program and our program name: “Let’s Keep Them All.” Developed around the premise that everyone needs deeply to be needed, and a vibrant community needs the energies of all its members, our service learning concept creates an inclusive society. This stands in sharp contrast to the policies like “No Child Left Behind” which are placing more and more students on the margins of society. Service learning also enhances the two-fold role of special education. First, special educators must totally prepare the students with disabilities for the world they are about to enter. Service learning is the perfect methodology because it allows students to learn, experience, and model concepts while they are helping others. Next, special educators must prepare the world for the disabled who are about to join the mainstream of life. Again, service learning is the perfect methodology.

Obstacles

A consistent obstacle might be time and money, but isn’t this true with all of education—all of life for that matter? Like the rest of life, you can find a way. The most serious obstacle to the success of service learning is administrative support. We are so fortunate. Our principal is an activist and advocate for service learning.

Profile #6

Kerri Myers Zannino, Special Education Teacher, Pine Grove Middle School, Baltimore County, MD, kmyers@bcps.org

Student Description

I teach in a self-contained, level V, classroom for students with autism. My students’ educational goals are based on acquiring functional life and academic skills. All of my students are working toward a certificate upon completion of school. Each one is verbal and functions at an approximate first to second grade level.

Service Learning Story

Each of the following service learning projects has been infused into the functional domains of our curriculum:

United Way Campaign

- Used word processor to create faculty chart
- Tallied daily donations
- Wrote thank you notes
- Organized necessary paper work to be sent to the Office of Communications

Bagged Lunches for the Homeless

- Made lunches to be sent to the homeless shelter
- Created shopping lists
- Traveled to grocery store to purchase items
- Made bologna and cheese sandwiches
- Prepared bagged lunches using an assembly line
- Decorated and personalized lunch bags

Breakfast for the Homeless

- Baked muffins to be sent to the local homeless shelter
- Followed a recipe
- Used kitchen appliances
- Packaged muffins

Red, White, and Blue Beaded Bracelets

- Made 400 beaded bracelets to be sold at lunch
- Tallied money
- Interacted with a wide variety of peers and staff
- Donated profits to a special education school in NYC (which was directly affected by the events of 9/11)

Christmas Stocking for the Salvation Army

- Created shopping lists
- Traveled to department store to shop for items
- Used money to make purchases
- Packaged stocking to be donated

Toiletries for the Homeless

- Created shopping lists
- Traveled to department store to shop for items
- Used money to make purchases
- Made fabric toiletry bags in family studies
- Decorated bags in art class
- Packaged toiletry bags to be donated

New Project for this school year:

Garden of Hope (Dedicated to the American Cancer Society)

Students will:

- Tend garden (pull weeds, water plants, etc.)
- Sell daffodils to faculty members
- Plant flowers in garden
- Donate proceeds to the American Cancer Society

Impact

In the spring of 2001, the students earned the “Meritorious Service Learning Award” for the entire county. This recognition was a huge incentive for the students to continue their focus on service learning. My students present a wide variety of challenging needs. The opportunity to participate in service learning has instilled what it truly means to “help” others. Because of their disabilities, my students have become accustomed to “being helped” rather than realizing they have the ability to reach out to others in need. It is quite an astounding realization! I am extremely proud of their successes and will continue to inspire growth in this area.

Potential Obstacles

My school has embraced the special needs that my students present. This has positively impacted the success of our service learning experience. Unfortunately, this is not true for all comprehensive schools. Other teachers may face obstacles with fostering a school-wide understanding of the special qualities of students with special needs.

Profile #7

Susan Millen, Special Education Teacher, Tucker High School, DeKalb County, GA,
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Student Description

I teach five different subjects of special education classes, including study skills, science, math, American history, and personalized reading. Students in all five classes are required to do class and individual service projects. Students primarily have mild intellectual disabilities, but some have other health impairments, traumatic brain injury and autism.

Service Learning Story

The classes created a special fund in a school bank account called Helping Other People Everywhere (HOPE). All the proceeds, from any of the class fundraisers, are placed in that account. The math class handles the budgeting and deposits. Students begin the semester by brainstorming ideas for service learning projects; they then research which are feasible. This allows students to feel vested in the projects. Examples of projects we have completed include:

- Students raised money through the sale of a poetry book they wrote. The proceeds from that sale were then used to plant a vegetable garden. The vegetables from that garden were donated to Plant a Row for the Hungry. Last year, the science class donated close to 50 pounds of vegetables to various organizations serving the hungry, while also learning about composting, planting seasons, and the science of growing vegetables.
- Students conducted a student voter registration drive that registered 77 students. During this drive, they



researched various times in history when one vote made the difference in an election. They also made “Get Out the Vote” flyers and distributed them in the school and at other public places.

- Each week, students read to students in the severe and profound class at our high school. This has helped to improve my students’ reading fluency, while also helping the students in the severe and profound class. Students in the reading class also wrote holiday poems and presented them in a program to patients in a nursing home and then presented a holiday program to other special education classes. The math class joined these presentations using their skills with fractions to double and triple recipes for baked goods.
- The study skills class made 80 cards for the meals on wheels program, which were delivered with the meals to the elderly. The project helped improve my students’ grammar and spelling.
- Students do reflective journal writing at the end of each exercise in the process.

Impact

- Students realize that there are many, many ways they can make a contribution to their community.
- They learn coursework in a concrete, hands-on way.
- Service learning empowers students who may have developed a learned helplessness in other situations.
- The journal process allows them to reflect on how they have made a difference through service learning.
- Students learn that it is important for each and every citizen, regardless of their ability level, to seek and find ways to contribute to society.

Potential Obstacles

- The two biggest obstacles are time and money.
- The frantic standardized testing schedule and federal initiatives like “No Child Left Behind” can make it difficult for teachers to include creative programs like service learning. It takes creative thinking and planning to relate service learning to the students’ lessons.