

Character Action Media

Unsung Heroes –breaking the barriers between students and school workers

This lesson can be presented over 1-2 sessions. If you choose 2 sessions you can use the discussions questions, journal writing and extended activities designated by session (A), and session (B). Instructors, feel free to use whichever activities you think best for your class or group. We advise giving students the sheet with the definitions of the virtues and an overview of the story before each session.

Lesson Goals

Encourage students to:

- Notice more of the people who touch their lives on a daily basis.
- See each person they encounter in their life as an individual with a unique life story and aspirations.
- Realize the importance of simple gestures such as a “thank you,” wishes for a good day, and conversations that enable us to learn about others, and how these simple gestures are ways we can live out respect for others.
- Live out the virtue of solidarity in helping establish a true sense of unity, support, and community with others.
- Evaluate their own lives and to assess whether the “normal” ways they interact with others should change.
- Appreciate how social media can be used for the good in communicating positive messages and generating support for good causes.
- Appreciate how one person can make a difference in the lives of many others through caring, creativity, and wisdom.

Primary Virtues

- **Solidarity**—establishing unity with others, often through a shared common experience, purpose, and / or interest; mutual support within a group; being present with others.
- **Respect for Others**—showing full appreciation of the worth and dignity of others.

Secondary Virtues

- **Caring**—to help others; a caring person lives with empathy in trying to understand another person’s situation, compassion in desiring to help others, and then with generosity in acting to help.
- **Hero**—a person who is regarded as a model due to his/her acts of courage, or nobility of purpose and noble qualities.
- **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.

Leader Introduction

Today we're going to learn about a college student, Febin Bellamy, who has launched a new project called "Unsung Heroes" that strives to bring down the walls that separate students from those who help us and impact our lives at school on a daily basis. Let's see how "Unsung Heroes" is helping to create a true sense of solidarity and friendship among students and those who work within our school.

Film Clip: Paying Back the Unsung Heroes of Georgetown University

<http://www.nbcnews.com/nightly-news/video/paying-back-the-unsung-heroes-of-georgetown-university-791232067788>

This second clip isn't necessary but provides good additional background on Febin's motivations in launching *Unsung Heroes*. Best to start the clip at 45 seconds.

<http://wgntv.com/2016/10/25/georgetown-student-creates-unsung-heroes-to-recognize-workers-on-campus/>

Leader Summary

The story of Bellamy and "Unsung Heroes" shows us how one person can make a difference in the lives of many. Instead of Bellamy accepting the normal environment of students not paying much attention to those who work in their school, Bellamy chooses a different path, and in creating "Unsung Heroes" enables other students to do the same. Bellamy's story encourages us to consider how we can improve in establishing a greater level of solidarity, caring, and respect with others who touch our lives on a daily basis, both within our school and community as a whole.

Discussion Question Options *(discussion prompts / answers are in parentheses if needed)*

Before beginning our discussion, let's read over the virtues and their definitions *(included within the online lesson as a separate document)*.

1. What are some examples of the vital functions workers in our school serve, not including teachers, coaches, and administrators? If these workers were not around to serve these roles, what would happen to our school?
(Cafeteria workers safely prepare and serve meals to students; Janitors help keep hallways, classrooms and bathroom clean; Maintenance workers keep the heat / cooling systems and plumbing working; Crossing guards stop traffic so students can safely cross the street) (A)
2. What do you think was the motivation behind Febin's idea to reach out to O'Neil? What was the issue he saw that he wanted to change?
(Febin may have felt a little guilty seeing the same person serving him and his fellow students most evenings and not personally thanking him and not knowing him even by name. Febin may have been motivated to simply demonstrate respect and care for another person he saw on a regular basis. Febin wanted to end the separation between students and those that serve them, and to develop true relationships among them.) (A)

3. In the video, we hear the line “learning is rooted in caring.” How does Febin live out this mission of caring? To answer this, let’s think about what concrete action did he took to a) show empathy, b) compassion and c) generosity based on our definition of caring.

(Febin showed empathy by trying to understand O’Neil’s story of how he came to Georgetown and his dream to open a restaurant, compassion by feeling moved to help O’Neil achieve his dream, and generosity by actively sharing O’Neil’s dream with his peers and working to help O’Neil achieve it.)

Do you think Febin’s caring and actions have been successful in making an impact and instituting change? (A)

4. *(This question may not be applicable to some students and youth groups due to age)* To what extent do you think social media is effective in starting a project like “Unsung Heroes”? How can other social media outlets be used to spread the word about Georgetown’s “Unsung Heroes”?

(Students can interact with “Unsung Heroes” in a Q&A style interview over Twitter. Instagram can provide pictures and quotes from Unsung Heroes, like Humans of New York. School-affiliated YouTube channels and blogs featuring “Unsung Heroes” can spread their stories to students and community partners alike.)

If you were to start a project similar to “Unsung Heroes” at school, what social media outlet(s) would you choose and why? (B)

5. Students quickly caught on to the idea of learning about the campus workers they see on a daily basis. Do you think students at our school would catch on to the idea of learning more about our “Unsung Heroes”? Why or why not?

How can we establish a greater level of solidarity with people in our school on a daily basis?

(Saying “thank you,” wishing others a good day, occasionally striking up a conversation) (B)

6. Are there people who work in our community outside of our school who are important to our everyday lives and with whom we can express greater solidarity? What are their jobs?

(mailmen, sanitation workers, store workers) (B)

Journal Writing Options

1. Write out how many people you know by name who you see daily or weekly within your community, and who aren’t your friends, teachers, coaches or family members. Write out their names and how you know them. It’s okay if this number is zero as it’s more important to focus on where we are going in the future. Next, write a goal for how many new people’s names you will learn this year, and write out how you presently see them. For example “my mailman” or “the clerk in the ____ store.” (A)

2. Are there people you see every day / frequently that you feel drawn to talk to but hesitate to begin the conversation? What worries or insecurities hold you back from initiating a conversation? What do you think you can try to remember at those moments to have the conversation? (A)
3. Write about someone you regard as a hero, either an “unsung hero” from within our school or outside of school. A hero is a person who is regarded as a model due to their acts of courage, or nobility of purpose and noble qualities. Your hero can be someone in your family, someone who works at our school, a teacher, a coach, a person in your community, or someone you learned about in the news. Write about how this person inspires you, what virtues this person lives out and in what ways you want to follow them. (B)

Extended Activities Options

1. Divide into groups of 3. Your task is to begin creating your own version of “Unsung Heroes” for your school. Come up with a list of your first four (4) potential “Heroes” to interview. Then make a list of five (5) “Get to Know You” questions that would bring these “Heroes” stories to light. Decide how you will spread these interviews (*social media, school newspaper, reporting back to your class / group etc.*) (A)
2. Break into pairs. Each student will have 3 minutes to talk about the hero they described in Journal Writing Question 3. While the speaker is sharing, listen carefully and save questions until after both have shared. Take 5 minutes to discuss and identify virtues each hero displays. Each person in the pair will then share with the group one of the virtues that their heroes had in common and how they lived it out. All virtues will be written on a chalk/white board.

If your students didn't do the journal, writing you can still do this activity by first asking students to choose and think about a hero in their lives. Please provide them with the definition of a hero. (B)

3. Ask each student to go to the “Unsung Heroes” site and read through the stories of the “Unsung Heroes” at Georgetown. Ask each student to choose an “Unsung Hero” who speaks to them. Each student can then either write out or give a presentation to the group outlining the person's story they chose, what virtues that person lives out, and how they can inspire us or communicate a good message to us. <https://www.facebook.com/unsung.heroes.organization/> (B)

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