

BASED ON THE EXTRAORDINARY TRUE STORY



SANDRA BULLOCK
THE BLIND SIDE

ALCON ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS A GIL NETTER PRODUCTION A JOHN LEE HANCOCK FILM SANDRA BULLOCK "THE BLIND SIDE" TIM MCGRAW QUINTON AARON AND KATHY BATES MUSIC BY CARTER BURWELL PRODUCERS VOLANDA T. COCHRAN STEVEN P. WEGNER COSTUME DESIGNER DANIEL ORLANDI EDITOR MARK LIVOLSI, A.C.E. PRODUCTION DESIGNER MICHAEL CORENBLYTH DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ALAR KIVILTO, ASC, CSC EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MOLLY SMITH TIMOTHY M. BOURNE ERWIN STOFF PRODUCED BY GIL NETTER ANDREW A. KOSOVE BRODERICK JOHNSON BASED ON THE BOOK "EVOLUTION OF A GAME" BY MICHAEL LEWIS WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JOHN LEE HANCOCK

NOVEMBER 20

www.TheBlindSideMovie.com

WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Movie Art © Warner Bros. Ent. Inc.

A facilitator's guide for youth workers, leaders, educators and families to accompany the movie, *The Blind Side*.

F.I.L.M.
Finding Inspiration in Literature & Movies

Ages 13 and up
youthFILMproject.org

The Blind Side official website:
www.theblindsidemovie.com





Dear Facilitator:

This FILM curriculum for *The Blind Side* is structured for use in conjunction with seeing the movie and reading the *New York Times* Bestseller, *The Blind Side*, by Michael Lewis. The guide offers discussion topics, activities and service-project ideas for youth ages 13 and up. Exploring what family means, relationships with others, instinct and football are key themes in this guide.

Synopsis

Sandra Bullock (*The Proposal*), Tim McGraw (*Friday Night Lights*) and Oscar® winner Kathy Bates (*Misery*) star in Alcon Entertainment and Warner Bros. Pictures' *The Blind Side*, which depicts the remarkable true story of All-American football star Michael Oher.

Teenager Michael Oher (Quinton Aaron) is surviving on his own, virtually homeless, when he is spotted on the street by Leigh Anne Tuohy (Sandra Bullock). Learning that the young man is one of her daughter's classmates, Leigh Anne insists that Michael—wearing shorts and a t-shirt in the dead of winter—come out of the cold. Without a moment's hesitation, she invites him to stay at the Tuohy home for the night. What starts out as a gesture of kindness becomes much more as Michael becomes part of the Tuohy family despite the differences and backgrounds.

Living in his new environment, the teen faces a completely different set of challenges to overcome. And as the family helps Michael fulfill his potential, both on and off the football field, Michael's presence in the Tuohys' lives leads them to some insightful self-discoveries of their own.



FILM curriculum is made possible through the partnership of Heartland Truly Moving Pictures and the National Collaboration for Youth. Heartland is a non-profit organization that seeks to recognize and honor filmmakers whose work explores the human journey. The National Collaboration for Youth is a non-profit organization providing a unified voice for its coalition of more than 50 national, non-profit, youth development organizations, and concentrates on improving the conditions of youth in the United States and enabling youth to realize their full capabilities.



The **BLIND SIDE**

TABLE OF CONTENTS



| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Module One: Football | 5 |
| Section One: Playing the Game..... | 6 |
| Section Two: Teamwork | 7 |
| Module Two: Overcoming Obstacles | 9 |
| Section One: Stereotypes | 10 |
| Section Two: Expectations | 11 |
| Section Three: Individuals Who Inspire..... | 12 |
| Module Three: Helping Others | 13 |
| Section One: Strong Character | 14 |
| Section Two: Reaching Out..... | 15 |
| Section Three: Take Action | 16 |
| Post-Program Evaluation | 18 |

The **BLIND SIDE**

INTRODUCTION



Objectives for Youth

- Explore the evolution of the game of football
- Examine stereotypes and expectations
- Reach out to others

Step 1) Read the books and see the movie

The movie, *The Blind Side*, presented by Alcon Entertainment and Warner Bros. Pictures, opens in theaters November 20, 2009.

It is rated PG-13 for one scene involving brief violence, drug and sexual references.

Reading Materials:

- *The Blind Side* is based on the true story of NFL player Michael Oher's rise from a young man without a true family or a true home, to a successful athlete whose talents and remarkable aptitude for protection are fostered by the Tuohy family who bring him into their home.

The Blind Side by Michael Lewis, published by W.W. Norton & Co. is the book upon which the movie is based and not only explores Oher's story, but also explores the people that impacted the game of football and made left tackle such a valued position.

- For those who have trouble accessing enough books for the entire group, suggested reading is "The Ballad of Big Mike" by Michael Lewis. This article is adapted from the book and is a comprehensive summary.

- "The Ballad of Big Mike" by Michael Lewis, *The New York Times*,
www.nytimes.com/2006/09/24/magazine/24football.html?pagewanted=all

- There are a number of articles online about Michael Oher, both his unique history and his success as a player. Below are a few links to get you started. Many contain quotes from Oher that can help individuals begin to better understand Oher's character and how he has dealt with his past and his current success.

- "From homeless to the NFL: Oher's journey to draft unique" by Jarrett Bell, *USA Today*,
www.usatoday.com/sports/football/nfl/2009-04-23-michael-ohr-cover_N.htm

- "Oher's Past Not Relevant to Payday" by Michael David Smith, *Fan House*,
nfl.fanhouse.com/2009/03/23/ridiculous-notion-money-would-ruin-michael-ohr

The **BLIND SIDE**

INTRODUCTION



- “Michael Lewis on Michael Oher,” *The Baltimore Sun*, weblogs.baltimoresun.com/sports/thetoydepartment/2009/04/michael_lewis_on_michael_oh.html
- “Oher’s Story ‘A Miracle,’” by Rick Maese, *The Baltimore Sun*, articles.baltimoresun.com/2009-04-26/sports/0904260020_1_oh.html

Step 2) Participate

Take part in meaningful discussions and activities:

- Learn about the evolution of the game of football
- Address overcoming stereotypes
- Explore the importance of family in many forms

Step 3) Take the lead to help others

Engage in a project within your community based on lessons learned in this curriculum. Project ideas are included in the curriculum; there is also a free, downloadable service-learning supplement to assist in the planning and managing of *The Blind Side* service projects. Please visit www.youthfilmproject.org/resources.htm to download the supplement.



The **BLIND SIDE**

MODULE ONE: FOOTBALL



Dear Facilitator,

Football, as with other sports, is a sport that has evolved over time. There are books that focus on the way the game spread across the United States, to the way the rules have changed, to the way it has become a truly American pastime.

The Blind Side by Michael Lewis takes a look at one player, Michael Oher, and his journey from being a nearly homeless high school student to being drafted by the Baltimore Ravens in the 2009 NFL draft. The book also takes an in-depth look at some of the coaches, players and strategies that helped evolve the game of football to what it is today, making a space for players like Michael Oher.

The Blind Side examines the importance of numerous people on the game of football and not a single individual. Lewis states, “Twenty-two players are involved in every football play. To value precisely the activity of any one of them, it is first necessary to account for the actions of the other twenty-one.” (Lewis, p. 113)

The following section examines a bit about football and looks at the importance of working as a team.

Objectives for Youth:

- Explore the game of American football
- Understand teamwork on and off the field

The **BLIND SIDE**

MODULE ONE: FOOTBALL

SECTION ONE: PLAYING THE GAME



The first rules of football were written down in 1876, and before that the game had been evolving from rugby and growing in popularity, particularly in schools on the East Coast. As popularity for football continued to grow, it became the nationally embraced sport it is today by the mid-1900s when it began to be televised.

*General History - Chronology (1869 to 1939), <http://football.about.com>

The National Football League (NFL) hosts a wide array of facts on their website for those who wish to learn more about the game of football. For starters, visit www.nfl.com/rulebook/beginnersguidetofootball to look at the Beginner's Guide to Football.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you follow football? Why? Do you enjoy the actual game or do you enjoy the experience and social aspect of watching a game?
- Who are some football players you admire? What about them do you appreciate? Is it their ability or their personal character? Why?
- When watching a game of football, what position do you pay the most attention to? Why do you focus on this particular position?

Writing Activity

Take a moment to sum up your thoughts on the game of football or another sport you enjoy. Think about what it means to you. Do you have more than a spectator's interest in the game? Do you play on an organized team or with your friends or family on special occasions? Describe the impact that your favorite sport has on your life and explain why it is important to you.

The **BLIND SIDE**

MODULE ONE: FOOTBALL

SECTION TWO: TEAMWORK



Football, like any other sport, requires teamwork. In the film we see Leigh Anne Tuohy approach Michael on the football field to help him understand his role in the game by comparing the players on the field to the people in Michael's personal life.

There are several positions in football and each one of them has a crucial role in the performance of the team. While there are only 11 players from one team on the field at one time, there are more than 11 different positions on a football team.

There are different types of players on each of the three units that make up the entire team – offensive team, defensive team, and the special teams. The offensive unit plays when the team has possession of the ball, the defensive unit is on the field when the opposing team is in possession of the ball, and special teams are on the field in special kicking situations.

While no position in football can be neatly summed up for all the roles it plays, the following descriptions are a brief look at the main roles some of the players have on the field. For a more in-depth description of what each player does, visit www.nfl.com/rulebook/lineup for a visual representation of what each player's role is.

Read the description of some offensive positions on the football field below and then answer the questions that follow.



Right and Left Tackle

Both right and left tackle positions create holes in the opposite team's line of defense to protect their teammates on running plays and protect the ball on passing plays.

Quarterback

Quarterbacks have a great deal of responsibility and are the individuals on the team who call plays and lead the offensive team.

Halfback

The halfback is responsible for carrying the ball during most running plays, and on short passing plays can often be used as the receiver.

Fullback

The fullback does not often carry the ball, but primarily aids the offensive linemen in blocking.

Wide Receiver

The wide receiver's primary role is to catch passes from the quarterback and run downfield.

The **BLIND SIDE**

MODULE ONE: FOOTBALL

SECTION TWO: TEAMWORK



Discussion Questions:

- How are your friends or your family like a team? What roles does each person play?
- Taking into account each of the positions described on the previous page and how they work together, can you think of people in your own life who fill similar roles? Provide names and give examples of the situations in which these people have helped you.
 - Who clears the way for you when you need help in certain situations?
 - Who do you depend on heavily for follow-through or completion of tasks that are important?
 - Is there a certain person you work really well with who makes things possible that you wouldn't be able to do on your own? Who is this person and how do they make things possible?
- Which position on the football field best suits your personality and how you interact with others?
- Does knowing what each position's responsibility is change the way you view or appreciate football? Why?



The **BLIND SIDE**

MODULE TWO: OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



Dear Facilitator,

Over the course of the film, Michael Oher overcomes many obstacles through his own determination and also through the help of others. The character that he demonstrates is remarkable and is an important lesson for all people.

Everyone encounters adversity at some point during his or her life. Each group using this guide is made up of youth with very different life experiences. As the facilitator, identify common issues facing your youth and use the discussion prompts in each section to explore those issues.

Objectives for Youth:

- Explore stereotypes and the impact they have
- Discuss expectations people have for themselves and for others



The **BLIND SIDE**

MODULE TWO: OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

SECTION ONE: STEREOTYPES



Stereotypes are general assumptions about a group of people and can be both positive and negative. They surround everything from gender to race to social status to religion. They can be innocuous but also very powerful. Stereotypes impact the way people perceive themselves and others.

Michael confronts stereotypes throughout the film, not unlike those stereotypes that many of us experience each day.

Use Michael's situation to examine your own life and that of others around you as you consider stereotypes and the impact they have.

Discussion Questions:

- Based on stereotypes, what assumptions did some people make about Michael Oher?
- Were the stereotypes presented in the film similar to stereotypes that you, your friends or family members have experienced? How have you dealt with stereotypes in your life?
- How did Michael's character defy the stereotypes people assigned to him?
- Did you identify with the way people viewed Michael?
- What stereotypes were associated with the Tuohy family?
- How did stereotypes throughout the film impact the way people interacted with one another?
- How would certain situations have been different if characters in the film had been viewed by others and treated entirely independent of stereotypes?
- Have you ever made assumptions about an individual? If you took the opportunity to talk to this individual, what did you learn about him or her? Was your assumption accurate? Why or why not?
- Think of and then discuss in a group some of the instances in which individuals in the film confronted stereotypes. What were the results of these interactions?
- Why do you believe stereotypes exist and is there truth to stereotypes? What are some ways you can change negative stereotypes and embrace positive ones?

The **BLIND SIDE**

MODULE TWO: OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

SECTION TWO: EXPECTATIONS



Michael Oher's life is full of very difficult circumstances. Society often has different expectations for individuals or groups of people based on a variety of factors such as socioeconomic status, family structure or even race and gender.

Despite Oher's circumstances, he, with the help of others, manages to have a life that defies expectations.

Use Michael Oher's life and situation to discuss, as a group, expectations individuals have for themselves and for others.

Discussion Questions:

- As the movie progressed and Michael's circumstances changed, do you believe people's expectations for him changed? Do you believe this is fair?
- Do you think that the Tuohys had a difficult job balancing the expectations for their biological children and for Oher? Do you believe they might have had different expectations for each of their children?
- Michael Oher went to Ole Miss after being recruited by a number of different colleges. Do you believe that the Tuohys impacted his decision to go to Ole Miss? Given Sean and Leigh Ann's history with the university, do you believe they swayed Michael's decision?
- Friends, teachers and family members all have certain expectations for you, whether they are major expectations or minor. What are some expectations people have created for you? Are these presumptions in line with what you expect from yourself?
- Why do you think that people might have different expectations for you than you do for yourself? When should you listen to what others believe you should be doing with your life and when should you go against their expectations? Why?
- As you have gotten older, have your expectations for yourself changed? In what way?

The **BLIND SIDE**

MODULE TWO: OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

SECTION THREE: INDIVIDUALS WHO INSPIRE



Michael Oher's story is remarkable, but there are many other people, including other players and coaches, who have inspirational stories as well. They have defied stereotypes and surpassed expectations by becoming successful individuals whose background stories demonstrate the ability every person has to strive to be successful and to aspire to live a good life.

Randy Shannon

Today Randy Shannon is the Head Coach at the University of Miami. As a young child his father was murdered and later his twin brothers became addicted to crack cocaine. Both his brothers and his sister died of AIDS.

Shannon's experience was difficult and he lost a large part of his family much too soon. Shannon uses these experiences in his role as head coach and acts as a mentor to the young men on his team.

For more information about Randy Shannon read "Miami's Randy Shannon brings real life experience to program" by Dave Hyde, http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2009/writers/dave_hyde/09/23/shannon/index.html

Larry Bird

Larry Bird is well-known for his basketball career with the Boston Celtics. Today he's the President of Basketball Operations for the Indiana Pacers.

Bird's family was very poor growing up and his father was an alcoholic who, just after Bird dropped out of college, committed suicide. After his father's suicide Bird returned to college where he played for Indiana State and later was drafted by the Celtics and even played on the USA Olympic Basketball team.

To learn more about Bird, visit: <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Be-Br/Bird-Larry.html>

Activity

Who is the athlete, either coach or player, you admire most? Write a paragraph about why you admire this person, and then do some research on this person's personal life. After your research, has your opinion on this athlete changed? Write another paragraph describing why or why not. Use these paragraphs to discuss with a group whether or not a person's past or personal life impacts the way you view them and why.

The **BLIND SIDE**

MODULE THREE: HELPING OTHERS



Dear Facilitator,

The Blind Side is a remarkable film that explores not only how the Tuohys helped Michael Oher, but also examines the impact he had on each of their lives. It's a story that sheds light on the fact that whatever people have to give, no matter how large or small, it can make a difference in the life of someone else.

Use the following section to discuss with youth the importance of character and the impact it has on relationships with friends, family and others.

Objectives for Youth:

- Examine strength of character
- Explore the value of helping others
- Find ways to reach out in your own community



The **BLIND SIDE**

MODULE THREE: HELPING OTHERS

SECTION ONE: STRONG CHARACTER



“I don’t dwell on anything. I’m not going to feel sorry for myself because I didn’t have a place to stay a lot of time. It is what it is. We’ve got to go through some things in life. Take it and run with it.”

Michael Oher

Excerpted from “From Homeless to the NFL: Oher’s journey to draft unique,”
by Jarret Bell, *USA Today*

Michael Oher’s ability to look to the future and not dwell in the past was key to the success he found as he moved forward in life. Along with this ability to focus on the future, Oher had many other fine qualities that helped define him.

Discussion Questions:

- Oher’s quote above is remarkable advice. If you had to give advice to someone else, what would it be?
- Michael doesn’t look at his past as an excuse for not achieving something. What things in your life might you use as an excuse to not meet your potential? Have you focused on the excuses or on looking ahead?
- What parts of Michael’s personality and character do you believe helped lead him to the success he has become?
- Michael’s protective instinct, discovered in a skills assessment test, manifests in different ways throughout the film. What are all the ways Michael demonstrates his protective nature throughout the film?
- Do you have a character trait such as Michael’s that helps define your personality?
- Where Michael ultimately ends up is based on his good character and on the decisions he makes in his life. Discuss some of the decisions he made throughout the film and how they helped him get to where he is today. How have decisions you have made in your life brought you to where you are now?
- What are some character traits that members of the Tuohy family have that stand out to you?

The **BLIND SIDE**

MODULE THREE: HELPING OTHERS

SECTION TWO: REACHING OUT



The Tuohy family takes in Michael Oher during his sophomore year of high school and their love and support directly impacts his life forever. However, Oher's presence in the Tuohy family had a tremendous and lasting impact on them in ways they might not have anticipated.

Use the questions below to talk about the value of giving to others and the unexpected results that can come from that.

Discussion Questions:

- The Tuohys and Michael Oher have very little in common to begin with. Discuss their differences and then discuss their similarities.
- Material possessions were very easy for the Tuohys to give to Michael, but they gave him much more than that. What were the immaterial things they provided for Michael?
- Do you think Michael would have had the same opportunity if he'd been taken in by a family of lesser means than the Tuohys, but who had just as much love and support to offer him? Why?
- The Tuohy family learned a lot from Michael's presence in their home and in their lives. What do you believe were some of the key lessons that Michael taught them?
- What does Michael's impact on each of the Tuohys lives teach you about what you have to offer others?

The **BLIND SIDE**

MODULE THREE: HELPING OTHERS

SECTION THREE: TAKE ACTION



There are people making a difference in households, schools, communities and countries around the world. Some notable individuals in the world of sports are making a difference in the lives of others as well. Read the examples below to learn how these individuals are using their success to make sure that others have good lives.

Warrick Dunn

Dunn, a player for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, founded the Warrick Dunn Foundation and Home for the Holidays. Based on his personal experiences growing up with a single mother who worked long hours to provide for her family, this foundation's mission statement is "Dedicated to providing opportunities for economically-disadvantaged single parents and children who have demonstrated a commitment to achieve financial independence and stability."

Learn more about Warrick Dunn and his foundation here: www.warrickdunnfoundation.org

Drew Brees

Brees, player for the New Orleans Saints, founded The Brees Dream Foundation. The Brees Dream Foundation was founded in 2003 with a mission to advance research in the fight against cancer and provide care, education and opportunities for children in need.

Learn more about Drew Brees and his foundation here: www.drewbrees.com

Tony Dungy

All Pro Dad is a fatherhood program of Family First that Dungy helped launch in 1997. Dungy, along with other NFL players, coaches and alumni, speak about the importance of being a good father.

Learn more about Tony Dungy and All Pro Dad here: www.coachdungy.com/charity.asp

The **BLIND SIDE**

MODULE THREE: HELPING OTHERS

SECTION THREE: TAKE ACTION



Take Action

As you can see from the examples on the previous page there are many ways to impact someone else's life.

Think about things you are good at and those things you enjoy. Pair that with things that others are lacking in their lives and come up with a service project that helps you reach out and impact the life of another, like the Tuohys did for Michael and like Michael did for the Tuohys.

Here are some suggestions to get you started:

- Teach young kids in your school or community the game of football. They might not be ready to play on a real team quite yet, but learning skills and the teamwork that come with the game, they will benefit from this experience.
- There are some kids who are unable to play sports because they can't afford the equipment required. Collect old equipment such as pads and helmets from people who no longer play or who have grown out of their equipment, and then donate it to a school sports program or a Little League team.
- In the movie, the Tuohy children share their memories of some children's books with Michael and then as a family they all begin to read together. Become a book buddy with a peer or younger child in your school or community to encourage the importance of reading.
- There are people in need in every community. Take inventory of those things that you rely on every day to survive such as food, shelter, or warmth and develop a fundraiser or charity drive to raise money or necessities to donate to a local shelter.

Whatever service project you choose, make certain to pay attention to what you can learn from those people you help. Share your service projects with others by sending them to FILMinfo@trulymovingpictures.org.

The **BLIND SIDE**

POST-PROGRAM EVALUATION



Dear Facilitator,

Please take a few moments to answer the questions in the evaluation for the *The Blind Side* Discussion Guide at www.youthFILMproject.org and click on “Evaluations.”

We value your feedback, and your comments and stories can help inspire others and keep the FILM Project alive.

Please visit www.youthFILMproject.org at the completion of this curriculum and tell us what you think. You can also send your stories to FILMinfo@trulymovingpictures.org.

Thank you for your support!

Sincerely yours,

The FILM team

The FILM Team

FILM curriculum is made possible through the partnership of Heartland Truly Moving Pictures and the National Collaboration for Youth. Heartland is a non-profit organization that seeks to recognize and honor filmmakers whose work explores the human journey. The National Collaboration for Youth is a non-profit organization providing a unified voice for its coalition of more than 50 national, non-profit, youth development organizations, and concentrates on improving the conditions of youth in the United States and enabling youth to realize their full capabilities.

