

Virtue In Action

From Tragedy Comes Triumph

VIRTUE IN ACTION

FOSTERING CITIZENSHIP THROUGH CHARACTER EDUCATION



JAY T. KENDALL PHOTO

**WHEN THE SAINTS
CAME MARCHING IN:
INSPIRATION ON AND
OFF THE FIELD**



The New Orleans Saints winning Super Bowl 2010 was a dream come true for the team and the city they represented.

The team made history by capturing their first Vincent Lombardi Trophy. The fans' rallying call of "who dat" rang out across the field as the Saints defeated the Indianapolis Colts at the Louisiana Super Dome. Trumpets blared. Football fans embraced. Confetti flew. Quarterback Drew Brees was named the MVP, and brought his adorable young son onto the field for the celebration. The excitement traveled far beyond the Superdome. The game turned out to be one of the most watched in television history, netting 106 million viewers, according to Nielsen ratings. But the win was thrilling for more reasons than the Saints' underdog victory.

Just over four years ago, the same stadium where the Saints won was the temporary refuge to New Orleans residents displaced by one of the worst natural disasters to hit the United States. After Hurricane Katrina ripped through the city, killing approximately 2,000 people and leaving much of New Orleans under water, rumors flew that the NFL might move the Saints to Texas. Few expected that this team, nicknamed the "aints" by some for their many losing seasons, could overcome their losing tradition and then a natural disaster to win a Super Bowl.

Yet the Saints did just that, providing inspiration and **hope** to their still-rebuilding city and the nation. CNN correspondent David Gergen wrote of the Super Bowl events: "The country took a well-deserved time-out last night from bleak news about jobs, deficits, health care, Iran and the like. Even if you were pulling for Peyton Manning and the Colts, you had to agree that the epic upset victory by the New Orleans Saints was the best feel-good moment for the country in more than a year."

Drew Brees: MVP for the Saints, New Orleans and Cancer Patients

There is no question that Brees is the man of the hour in New Orleans. The quarterback, who earned the MVP award for his Super Bowl contributions, is jokingly called "Breesus" by some in the media in reference to his seemingly miraculous plays and

athletic abilities during the big game. Yet, Brees is also known for his sense of **duty** and **responsibility** to his team and the city of New Orleans.

As the Saints began to prove in the regular season that they had turned the corner and had the potential to make it to "the big game," the residents of New Orleans began to look to the Saints as a symbol of their comeback as a city. New Orleans reporters discussed in a PBS News Hour interview how they asked Brees whether the expectations of the city for him to win are a burden. His response on behalf of the team was that "we look at it as a **responsibility**" and not as a burden. Fortunately, Brees and the Saints have lived up to this responsibility by rebuilding not only their team, but also by helping to rebuild the city of New Orleans by donating their time, talents and resources.



In 2003, Brees and his wife established the Brees Dream Foundation in order to raise funds to advance research in the fight against cancer and provide care, education and opportunities for kids. Once the Brees came to New Orleans in 2006, the foundation expanded its aims to building homes through Habitat for Humanity and lending support to the Children's Hospital and the American Cancer Society's Patrick F. Taylor Hope Lodge, the latter of which provides free housing for cancer patients and their caregivers. Other charitable acts by the Brees include rebuilding schools, public parks, and recreational areas in the cities of New Orleans, San Diego and Lafayette Indiana where he attended Purdue University.

That longtime work has not gone unnoticed, but Drew Brees and many Saints players exercise **humility** in the course of their charitable work. "They do things in the value of millions of dollars," New Orleans commentator Garland Robinette

said of Brees and his wife's work during a recent appearance on PBS's "The Lehrer Report." "They do things helping children and people that need help without a camera there, without the media knowing about it."

A strong sense of **solidarity** underpins the relationship between Brees and the people of New Orleans. "I've embraced the community of New Orleans just because it is a special place, and they've embraced me and my wife in a way that I can't even describe," Brees told The Associated Press in the days before the game. "There is nothing more that I want for them than a championship."

Fortunately, the Saints delivered just that. During a moving post Super Bowl speech, Brees commented:

“Four years ago, whoever thought this would be happening? Eighty-five percent of the city was under water. People were evacuating to places all over the country. Most people left not knowing if New Orleans would ever come back, or if the organization would ever come back. We just all looked at one other and said, ‘We are going to rebuild together. We are going to lean on each other.’ That’s what we’ve done the last four years, and this is the culmination in all that belief.”

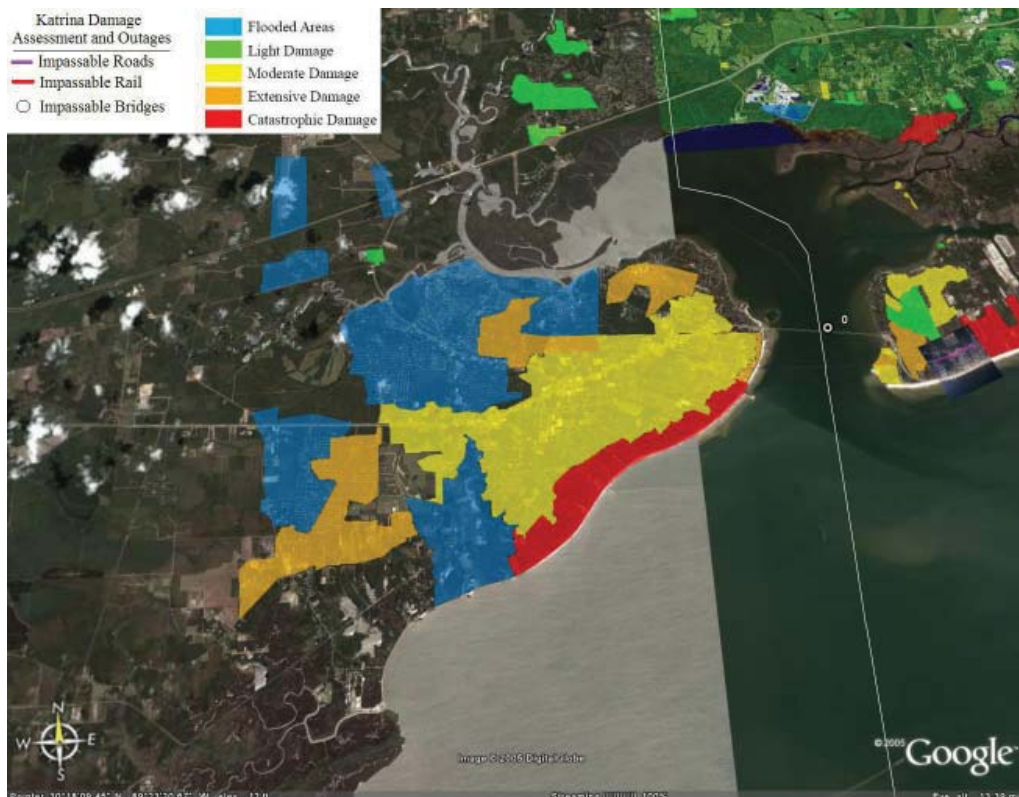
Brees' comments demonstrate the power of **solidarity** when different groups of a community band together with a unity of purpose.

Jonathan Vilma: Fighting to Rebuild New Orleans and Haiti

Saints linebacker Jonathan Vilma is another example of a role model, balancing his duties as a player in the Super Bowl with a personal responsibility to help his fellow Haitians in the wake of the earthquake that has killed approximately 200,000 people. "I was fortunate to learn pretty quickly that my family, my mom and dad, were OK," Vilma told Times-Picayune reporter Peter Finney. "That was a big relief. I was able to get back to football, but those pictures were so grim. They wouldn't go away."

Vilma was likely also able to **persevere** through the difficulties of his homeland's suffering and to maintain his focus on the Super Bowl because he quickly developed a plan on how to specifically help his fellow Haitians. Vilma came up with a T-shirt, which read "Domeland Defense" and sold them online to raise money for the Haiti relief effort. The specially designed shirts have since sold out. The next move, Vilma told the media, was to travel to Haiti as soon as his schedule permitted.

"A lot of people are going down there talking about all the devastation," Vilma said during a pre-game interview. "Anybody can do that. I want to go down there and contribute to the recovery left by a horrendous earthquake, whether it's clearing out the devastation or trying to help build homes. I want to make a difference." There is speculation he will join Jets players who have planned a trip for mid-March.



The red areas show the most heavy damage done by Hurricane Katrina. Extensive and moderate damage can be seen in orange and yellow, respectively.

Fortunately, the New Orleans Saints have already made a difference in New Orleans and their story of **persevering** through difficult times and maintaining **hope** offer inspiration to our nation as a whole. New Orleans' reporter Robinette commented, "We still need work, but we are proof that, no matter how bad your situation is, it is going to get better. New Orleans has done it. The Saints have done it. You are looking at a miracle that is also attainable by you."

Robinette is right. Miracles don't only come in Super Bowl victories. The Saints and New Orleans show us what we can accomplish within our families, schools

and communities when we live with a strong sense of **duty** and **responsibility** to help others in need, when we are generous in dedicating our time, talents and resources, and when we live out the virtue of **solidarity** in working with others in a shared sense of purpose.

Vocabulary

Duty: Something that one is expected or required to do according to one's own standards, moral or legal obligation, especially as it relates to one's status as a citizen and/or member of various communities

Generosity: Giving freely of our own possessions, time and or talent to someone else

Hope: Confident expectation of the fulfillment of a wish

Humility: Modest opinion of one's own position; an honest self appraisal of one's strengths and weaknesses; a lack of false pride

Perseverance: Trying hard and continuously in spite of obstacles and difficulties

Responsibility: Accepting and meeting the demands of our duty in life, being accountable, pursuing excellence

Solidarity: A shared common interest; unity of purpose; active loyalty within a group

www.virtueinaction.com

Copyright March 2010 Current Links in Education
1126 Dartmouth Rd. Flossmoor, IL 60422
Phone: 708.922.1075

Virtue In Action

From Tragedy Comes Triumph

VIRTUE IN ACTION

FOSTERING CITIZENSHIP THROUGH CHARACTER EDUCATION



AFP

Lesson goals

- Present students with positive role models from the world of sports and to help them understand the virtues that these athletes reflect, including duty, responsibility, generosity, humility, hope, perseverance and solidarity
- Develop within students a greater awareness of the power of these virtues in positively impacting individual lives and our larger communities
- Encourage students to consider how they can live out these virtues in their lives and communities, and to inspire them to lead lives of virtue

Highlighted Virtues

Duty: Something that one is expected or required to do according to one's own standards, moral or legal obligation, especially as it relates to one's status as a citizen and/or member of various communities

Generosity: Giving freely of our own possessions, time and or talent to someone else

Hope: Confident expectation of the fulfillment of a wish

Humility: Modest opinion of one's own position; an honest self appraisal of one's strengths and weaknesses; a lack of false pride

Perseverance: Trying hard and continuously in spite of obstacles and difficulties

Responsibility: Accepting and meeting the demands of our duty in life, being accountable, pursuing excellence

Solidarity: A shared common interest; unity of purpose; active loyalty within a group

Virtue In Action

Connecting Virtues to Our World
www.virtueinaction.com

Discussion Question Options

1. Why is the New Orleans Saints' Super Bowl win particularly noteworthy?
2. How is Drew Brees an MVP off the field? Name the foundation he started with his wife and at least two initiatives the foundation has undertaken.
3. What are some of the virtues that Brees is living out and why are those important?
4. What disaster did Jonathan Vilma have to deal with in the month before the Super Bowl? What did and is he planning on doing to assist with this disaster?
5. Name a virtue that Vilma is living out and why that is important.
6. Why are the city of New Orleans and many people throughout America so inspired by the Saints' Super Bowl victory?
7. Let's list specific virtues the Saints players are living out in their lives and how we can live out these virtues in our own lives.
8. Do you think the media and our own communities of friends and families focus enough on the positive aspects of athletes' lives, or are we too focused on the negatives?
9. Who are some other athletes, both presently playing and from the past who are good role models, and what specific virtues do or did they live out?

Writing Options

1. What does the New Orleans Saints victory mean to you personally? Specifically, which virtues have the Saints players lived out that you want to imitate, and what are some of your ideas for living out these virtues?
2. Does it mean more or less to you when an athlete volunteers or is active in their community? Do you consider that part of their job or is it special when they are charitable? Explain your answer using an athlete of your preference as an example.

Extended Learning Activities

1. Have each class member identify a current or past Olympic athlete that embodies virtues that they find inspiring. Write a short report on that athlete, the virtues they lived out and why their story inspires them. Please see the Web resource links below.
2. Organize the class into three teams, asking each team to make a class presentation on present and past athletes who are role models in one of the following areas: charity, promoting social justice issues, perseverance in overcoming adversity.

Internet Resources

PBS News Hour, Feb. 8, "Hope Healing for New Orleans after Super Bowl"

pbs.org/newshour/newshour_index.html

"New Orleans' Drew Brees is a Hero in Parts of Indiana"

nola.com/superbowl/index.ssf/2010/02/brees_a_hero_in_hoosier_enclav.html

"Brees Takes Leadership Role Beyond Football"

google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jy1yw-sfF971Tx9c1ui9WzWsV8rgD9DMSBBO0

"Jonathan Vilma has Haiti in his Heart, Football on his Mind"

nola.com/superbowl/index.ssf/2010/02/jonathan_vilma_column.html

"After Super Bowl, Vilma Plans Trip to Haiti to Help"

reuters.com/article/idUSTRE61263L20100203

Sports Illustrated Collection of Inspiring Olympic Stories

sportsillustrated.cnn.com/multimedia/photo_gallery/0807/olympics.top.inspirational.stories/content.5.html

Virtue In Action

Connecting Virtues to Our World

www.virtueinaction.com Current Links in Education

1126 Dartmouth Rd., Flossmoor, IL 60422 | 708 922 1075