

**Intro:**

What if you could make a difference? What if you could help a child discover new things, be a good role model, or build self confidence? What if you could show children you care about them, offer them hope for the future, or help a child succeed? What if?

**Discovering new things:**

My name is Adrienne Sumney. I work in the 1- year-old LOFT room. One of the things that I think is really remarkable at this school is that the kids are kids. They aren't treated like they are deaf or that they have communication issues. They aren't treated any differently than any other child. So far some of my favorite experiences have been watching a couple of our children learn to walk. They've come into the program not walking and now they are taking steps. It's just so exciting. It's like watching your own child take steps for the first time. We cheer for them and we yell and they get all happy. They keep trying, and they keep falling, and they keep trying. It's just so fun to watch them explore their environment. We just jump around, read books, count and dance. Our kids love to dance and sing songs. It's just fun. It's amazing to see what these kids can actually do and to know that they are not limited. The teachers expect so much of them and they can do it. It's not a matter of them not being able to do it. You have to come and just look and see what a fantastic place St. Rita is...because it really is fantastic. My name is Adrienne Sumney, and I make a difference.

**Good role models:**

My name is Ted Jewell. I'm the Technology Coordinator here at St. Rita. I know I'm making a difference because as a deaf adult I know I can be a good role model to the students. I know that I can help them with life skills and motivate them to become good or better than me later. I know I'm making a difference in the students' lives.

**Building self confidence:**

My name is Pat Evans and I teach English and literature at the high school at St. Rita. For me, I think the kids first need confidence to express themselves. And that is obviously present here that they have the confidence. You see one of the high school seniors getting up and speaking to the entire senior class. A person that might or might not be naturally a leader becomes a leader instantly. And it's because they have the support and the confidence that is in the environment. When they are interacting with teachers, or with friends, or with parents...it's an environment where they feel most comfortable. And like reading, the more you communicate the better you become. At St. Rita the focus is always for the kids to do their best. So many kids go on to college and I think that's a real statement of the goals that St. Rita has, as well as, the potential the children have that would very likely be unrealized in another environment. I'm very proud to be a part of that, and I see that as a very positive goal for St. Rita...to help the children become the very best they can. My name is Pat Evans, and I make a difference.

**Caring about students:**

Many times deaf students come to St. Rita from other schools where people have said they can't learn or be successful. At St. Rita, students can see deaf role models who are successful and begin to realize that their futures are not limited. St. Rita is special

because it provides students with opportunities to interact with other deaf students. They can share common experiences that help them feel connected and understood. My best experience here is when a student with a tough or difficult background has a rough day or something. I can show that student that I care. I know for one day they are able to experience someone who appreciates and cares for them. My name is Matt Belwood, and I make a difference.

**Hope for the future:**

My name is Roberta Keller. I work as a teacher at St. Rita and I coach the girls' volleyball team. To me, St. Rita is a special place for many reasons. The class sizes are small so students get a lot of individual attention and they can really get to know one another. St. Rita School really feels like a family where students can learn and receive a lot of personal growth. Technology has been very important to me when teaching, especially the white boards. With the white board I'm able to help my students understand real life experiences through pictures and the internet. It has been a great visual learning opportunity for them. I think we are preparing students for a successful future by encouraging them to make good choices, whether that's at school, with their family, or about their education. Years ago, this school taught me when I was growing up. Now I feel it's my time to give back by helping the children learn. I want to teach them so they will have a better future.

**Helping students succeed:**

My name is Holly Dainton and my job here is the teacher of the VOC II Program which is our multi-handicapped high school program. Starting last year we chose to get involved with our local Hamilton County Special Olympics which has provided our kids with a lot of really unique recreational activities. It kind of evens the playing field between them and their peers. We go once a week right now to gymnastics. They are actually getting formal training by the same people who train some of our United States Women's Gymnastics Olympians. We are going for eight weeks and at the end of eight weeks they will actually have a real competition. They will be judged on all the events that they are in and they will all receive their placements and awards. It has been a fantastic opportunity for them, and you know, something that they have really been surprised with how much they have been capable of...mostly just because they have never had the opportunity to do things like that before. I think St. Rita School is making a difference with our students by truly caring about them as individuals. One of the unique things about this school is that it is small and because it's small we are allowed the opportunity to truly get to know the students, their unique needs and their strengths. We can be their friends, as well as, their teachers. My name is Holly Dainton, and I make a difference.