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A Little Company Make a Big Difference

Laura Scher

San Francisco, California

☀ Values

- Compassion
- Courage
- Honesty
- Commitment
- Vision
- Social Emotional Learning

☀ Reflection Questions

Do you think it's important for business people to have a social conscience? Why?

What is meant by "democracy in action"?

What does Laura Scher mean when she talks about "a more just and equitable world?"

☀ Lessons Learned

Business savvy and skills can be used to create positive social change.

When you create ways for people to give back to society, the rewards are amazing.

Consumers will make buying decision based on their social and political beliefs.

When Laura Scher received her MBA from Harvard, she could have gone work to for a prestigious Fortune 500 company and made a lot of money. Instead, she decided to do something to make an impact on the causes she cared about. By she created Working Assets, a telephone long-distance and credit card company that gives Americans the opportunity to give a percentage of their bills to charities of their choice. "People in the business world have a hard time believing that consumers will make buying decision based on their social convictions," Laura says. But the success of Working Assets proves that they will. "Everyone doesn't have the basic comforts of life," Laura adds, "so it's up to the rest of us to create a more just and equitable world."

☀ Language Arts: SEL & Diversity

Create a fake credit card that students can use to role-play purchasing imaginary products. Have them create a shopping list, go on a shopping spree and then give 10% percentage to charity. Total the class purchases and the donation. Develop a list of local, national or international organizations that support young people

☀ Social Studies: Diversity

Research innovative methods companies use to help charities. Working Assets practices "rounding up." Oxfam in Cambridge, England offers tourists a listing of Bed & Breakfast who donate a percentage of each overnight stay to their organization; the United Way and UNICEF invite working people to donate a small percentage of their paychecks; some credit card companies give a percentage of every purchase to a charitable cause. Write a story for the student and community newspapers encouraging others to send in their ideas. Compare costs of Working Assets phone company vs. your current long distance carrier. Conduct a study of recent Harvard graduates and their jobs. Create a list of possible jobs.

☀ Community Service: Service Learning

Practice "rounding up" when students make purchases, putting extra change in a container. Have them nominate and vote for a charity each month to receive money raised. Consider changing your family's or school's phone service to Working Assets. Have students complete the nomination and voting forms for their favorite issues (www.workingassets.com). Create a "Citizen Letter" about an important issue and send it to your congresspersons.



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