

A Look Behind 'The Blind Side'

Alcon Entertainment | Starring Sandra Bullock, Tim McGraw, Kathy Bates, Quinton Aaron | Rated PG-13

The Blind Side, starring Sandra Bullock and Tim McGraw, is undeniably inspirational. But Sean and Leigh Anne Tuohy, the Christian couple at the center of the film, hope the story of how they adopted a homeless black teenager who eventually became a first-round NFL draft pick does more than make people cry.

"We hope people walk out of the theater and want to do something for someone else," said the couple's daughter, Collins Tuohy.

Based on the true story of Baltimore Ravens rookie Michael Oher, *The Blind Side*—which opened Friday and is rated PG-13 for language, violence and depictions of drug use—chronicles how a handful of Christians helped change the life of a teen growing up in inner-city Memphis, Tenn.

First, administrators at a tiny Christian school on the opposite side of town admitted him as a student, despite a GPA that began with a zero, because it was "the right thing to do," as the school's football coach argued in the film. Then the Tuohys (played by Bullock and McGraw) took him into their home after seeing him walking down a road one night in the dead of winter wearing just shorts and a T-shirt.

The Tuohys eventually adopted Oher (played by newcomer Quinton Aaron) into their family, hired a tutor to help him improve his grades and encouraged him to play football. That led to a host of scholarship offers that landed him at the Tuohys' alma mater, The University of Mississippi, then the 2009 NFL draft.

For some viewers, the idea of a wealthy white family rescuing a disadvantaged black youth may seem paternalistic. Many of the African-Americans depicted in the film are poor, drug-addicted or involved in gangs, and seem in need of assistance.

But 22-year-old Collins, played in the film by Lily Collins, said her family wasn't trying to make any social statements. They just happened to be there when Oher needed someone and would have helped him if he was purple, she said.

"What we did for Michael was to give him tools to succeed and to have his back when he needed it and to love him," Collins said. "It's amazing what happens when you give a child a little bit of love."

"The fact that he is where he is now is not a testament to us, it's a testament to him," she added. "Because I, Collins Tuohy, would not have done what Michael did to get to where he is. There is no way I would have sat in my kitchen for seven hours and studied every night. There is no way that I could have done what should have been done in four years [of high school] in two years. There's no way I could have done that."

Although the Tuohys see adopting Oher as part of God's plan for their family, Collins says her mom was likely acting on impulse when she brought Oher into their home.

"When you see a child in snow with shorts and a T-shirt walking down the road, it's usually your immediate reaction to question, and then she just happened to react," Collins said. "And that's kind of the message of the movie. If more people would just react, this world might be a little bit better of a place. ... You don't have to adopt a child. Just help someone. Then we might be a little bit better off."