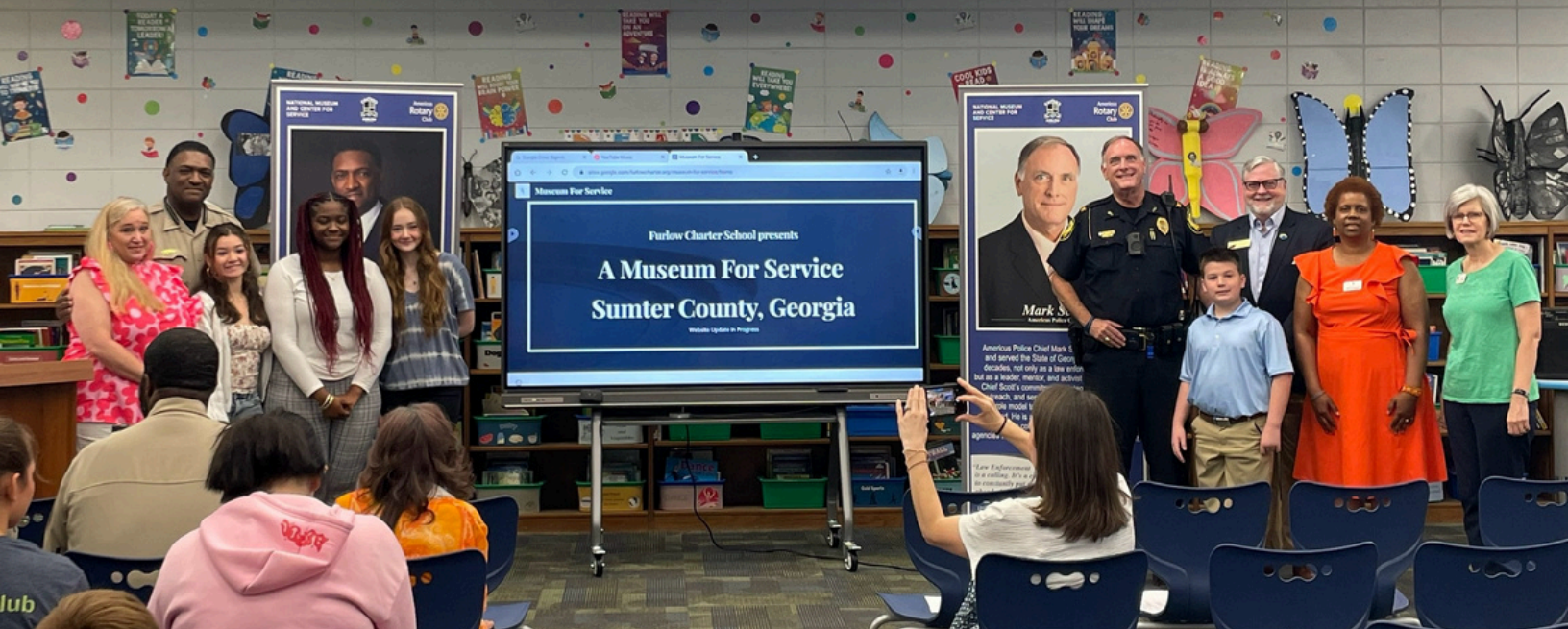
A close-up photograph of four children's hands drawing on a dark asphalt surface with yellow chalk. The children are of various ethnicities. They are drawing a large, stylized yellow letter 'A' that has some white chalk markings on it. The background is the dark, textured asphalt.

National Museum and Center for Service

Case Study:
Sumter Museum for Service
(Americus, GA)



An exhibition that keeps kids at the center of the work

Organizers:

JoAnna Arnold (Literacy Specialist, Chattahoochee-Flint RESA) and **Addison Drinnon** (Student Contributor)

Dates & Locations:

Furlow Charter School (Americus, GA), April 2023 to April 2025

Total Budget:

\$2,900 — includes a discounted initial cost of \$900 for three banners, followed by a \$2,000 Same House grant through the *JW Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at the University of Georgia* for four additional banners.

Project Team and Partners:

Americus Rotary Club, Global Graphics, local business community members, Furlow Charter School administration, and Andrew Greer (videographer), Chattahoochee-Flint Regional Educational Service Agency

The Spark

In September 2023, JoAnna Arnold attended a presentation by Congressman Brian Baird, founder of the National Museum and Center for Service. His message about servant leadership—that there are people who serve, people to serve, and people who can serve—resonated deeply. She immediately envisioned how her students at Furlow Charter School in Americus, Georgia, could bring the idea of a Museum of Service to life. “I could have just appreciated it as a powerful talk, but I knew I had to do more.” What stayed with her wasn’t just the concept of community museums, but the possibility of empowering students to lead something meaningful—something rooted in peace, identity, and service.

Community Context

Sumter County, Georgia, is home to Habitat for Humanity and the Fuller Center for Housing, organizations that embody grassroots change. It’s also the lifelong home of President Jimmy Carter and First Lady Rosalynn Carter, whose legacy of humanitarian work continues to shape the community. With two institutions of higher learning—Georgia Southwestern State University and South Georgia Technical College—the area also serves as a regional hub for education, innovation, and civic engagement. Furlow Charter School itself reflects that spirit, with a diverse student body that speaks more than 10 languages and a founding mission centered on project-based learning (PBL) and service learning. In many ways, the community’s culture of compassion and global citizenship provided the ideal backdrop for students to imagine, build, and share their own Museum of Service.

Exhibition Purpose

The exhibition’s purpose was to create a real-world, project-based learning experience for students—one that connects classroom learning with community impact. At Furlow Charter School, where both project-based learning and service learning are core to the culture, this initiative offered students creative opportunities to engage in something tangible and deeply meaningful. The museum allows students to research and recognize individuals in their community who embody servant leadership, while also applying academic skills across disciplines.

Whether designing exhibit materials, writing speeches, learning local history, or communicating in English and Spanish, students are developing literacy, design, public speaking, and interpersonal skills in an authentic, applied setting.

Beyond academics, the museum fosters meaningful relationships and civic-mindedness. Service, by nature, transcends political, cultural, and generational divisions—and the museum helps students see themselves as bridge-builders in that process.

Exhibition Content and Design

Each exhibit in the Museum of Service is a student-led tribute honoring individuals who exemplify servant leadership—designed to educate, inspire, and connect the school with the wider community. The very first exhibit was dedicated to Rosalynn Carter, honoring her work in mental health, caregiving, and environmental stewardship. Addison Drinnon, a student already active in Furlow Charter School's peace garden, took the lead. Inspired by Carter's advocacy for pollinators, Addison researched, wrote, and designed the exhibit, setting a powerful precedent for future contributors. Her work became the template for other students—demonstrating that with curiosity, purpose, and the right tools, meaningful storytelling is within reach for any young changemaker. (Six additional banners have since been created by students using the template.)



The exhibition's physical design is intentionally replicable and flexible. Based on guidance found through project research, the team chose large, retractable banners for their displays. These banners can be combined to form a triangle kiosk for greater visibility and portability. While the banners provide a polished, professional look, the project encourages creativity—schools can adapt the format to suit their own communities. The goal is to make the Museum of Service an accessible, student-led initiative that any school can take on, empowering students everywhere to document and celebrate service in action.

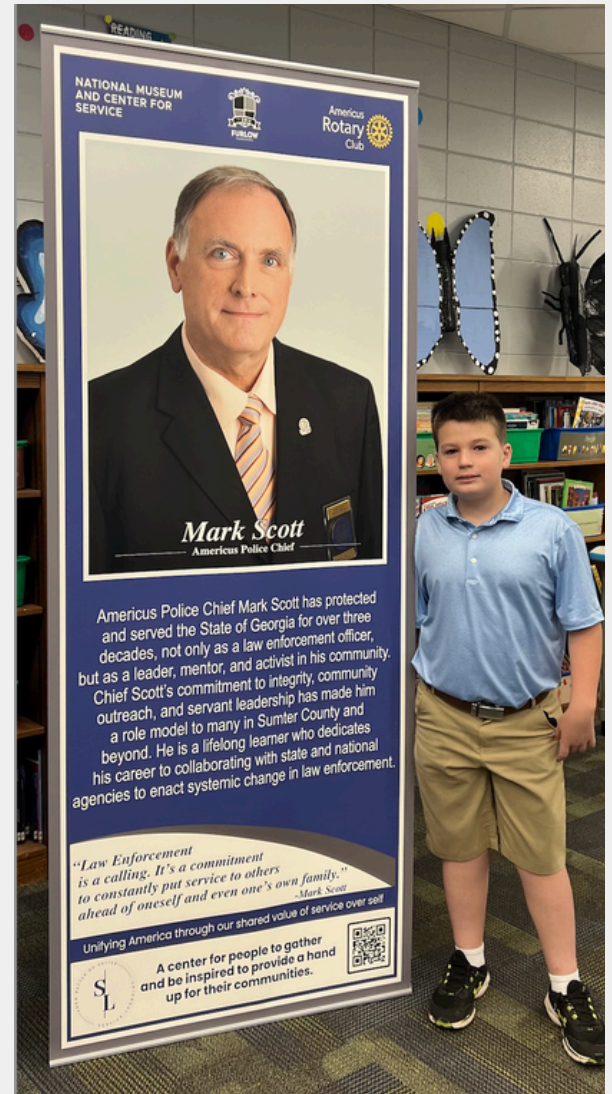
Each year, the museum will grow with student-led exhibits, beginning with the three in the first year, four more in the second, and a goal to expand to other counties in the future. The project is intentionally multimodal, combining physical banners, digital exhibits, and public presentations to reach a wider audience. Students have the opportunity to meet with community leaders, share information publicly, and build lasting relationships—transforming abstract lessons into lived experiences. Most importantly, the museum is accessible to any student with the spark and desire to serve, no matter their background or skillset. It exemplifies how service learning and project-based education, when woven together, can empower students to step beyond the classroom and into real leadership.

"Designing the first banner made me realize students can tell these stories in our own voices, it doesn't have to come from adults." – Addison Drinnon

"We realized we could honor leaders in our own community, not just the ones we read about in history books." – Student Reflection

Project Timeline

- **September 2023:** *Students Assemble* – Service learning students gathered to shape the project. They developed criteria for honoring servant leaders (respectful, compassionate, peaceful, dedicated, inclusive).
- **Winter 2024:** *First Honoree & Launch* – Student founder Addison Drinnon added a butterfly garden to the Peace Garden, connecting it to the Rosalynn Carter Butterfly Trail. Mrs. Carter was named the first honoree. Students designed the first banners, and the website launched in English and Spanish.
- **Spring 2024:** *Design & Printing* – Students partnered with Global Graphics to produce banners. Local leaders, including Sheriff Eric D. Bryant and Police Chief Mark Scott, were honored.
- **Fall 2024:** *Exhibit Shared Widely* – Addison presented the project at the 250 & Beyond Service Symposium. Banners were unveiled to a larger community audience at the Jubilee Peace Symposium.
- **Spring 2025:** *Refresh & Growth* – Four new honorees were added, expanding the Museum and showing the cycle of growth: Valerie Duff, Marcus Johnson, Elena Carné Lorenz, and Judy Parks. Other schools in the community expressed interest in starting similar exhibits.



Impact

Rather than turning the Museum of Service into a class assignment, JoAnna Arnold asked students who wanted to be a part of building something bigger. “Service leadership isn’t about dragging students along,” she explains. “It’s about matching their talents with a need.” The vision grew and students set real-world goals, built multimodal exhibits in English and Spanish, and worked across disciplines—merging art, science, history, and language. They wrote speeches, gave interviews, and built relationships throughout the community. “This is what project-based learning is supposed to be,” she says. “Not just knowledge retention, but transformational growth—learning what it means to serve, to lead, and to connect across differences.”

The Museum of Service has had a transformative impact on students, empowering them with the confidence and communication skills needed to engage with their community in meaningful ways. Through the process of networking with local leaders, writing press releases, and presenting their work publicly, students learned how to speak with professionals, face rejection with resilience, and take initiative. These soft skills—often overlooked in traditional classrooms—became an essential part of the project’s success.

Major milestones, such as the launch of the first exhibit in February 2024 and the public unveiling at the Jubilee Symposium in November, provided students with real-world platforms to showcase their work and their voices. The project’s structure encouraged sustained inquiry, cross-disciplinary learning, and creative expression, making space for every student—whether they were designing banners, writing speeches, or preparing songs—to contribute meaningfully.

“The beauty of this project was about matching the skills of the students with a need in the community - a need to identify and honor servant leadership.” - JoAnna Arnold

The museum also fostered a powerful sense of unity across grade levels and community sectors. What began as a high school initiative soon drew in elementary and middle school students, who were inspired to participate in dedications, performances, and song presentations. When the banner honoring Rosalynn Carter was presented to members of the Carter family, elementary students sang as a tribute, while students of all ages delivered speeches. The museum grew to include exhibits honoring Sumter County Sheriff Eric D. Bryant and Americus Police Chief Mark Scott—leaders who had made it a priority to build positive relationships with youth in rural southwest Georgia. Their active presence in schools, particularly in efforts to address youth gun violence, made them natural choices for recognition. This community collaboration reinforced the museum’s mission: to elevate student voice while honoring servant leadership that transcends generations, roles, and backgrounds. Now, with the support of Chattahoochee–Flint RESA School District (where Arnold now works), the project is expanding across 17 counties, offering even more students the opportunity to engage with project-based learning and service leadership.

Americus Times-Recorder

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Furlow Charter Students, Dignitaries and Teachers gather to Honor Rosalynn Carter

PHOTO BY JOSHUA WINDUS

Furlow Charter School Holds a Day of Remembrance Honoring Rosalynn Smith Carter

BY JOSHUA WINDUS

Principle Elisa Falco addressed those gathered. “I admired her work throughout my life and consider her personally a role model and a woman very much ahead of her time.”

JoAnna Arnold, language and literature coordinator, recounted hearing a Sunday school lesson taught by Rosalynn Carter.

“I don’t remember the Sunday School lesson. I wish I could say I did. But I learned another remarkable lesson, that she showed me that leadership is often most powerful in its simplest form, when it is one person, taking the time to speak, and to get to know someone else, in search of a way to help, or just to listen.”

Arnold stated that they were there to honor Rosalynn Carter but wanted to also recognize the efforts of the service learners from Furlow Charter School who put together the display honoring Rosalynn Carter.

“Last April, Furlow began working with the National Museum and Center for Service in Washington D.C. I had the pleasure of meeting former Congressman Bryan Baird, and he put out this call for communities around the United States to create a pop-up museum of sorts, but to focus on the people in the community who are leading through their servant leadership.”

Arnold thanked global graphics for working with student and service learner Addie Drinnon to design the exhibit, consisting of a banner highlighting Rosalynn Carter’s life and achievements. She

SEE FURLOW CHARTER, Page A13



600 STUDENTS, 10+ LANGUAGES AT FURLOW
CHARTER ENGAGED IN PROJECT-BASED LEARNING



OVER 60 STUDENTS DESIGNED BANNERS,
SPEECHES, MUSIC, AND RESEARCH (K-12
PARTICIPATION)



7 HONOREES RECOGNIZED ACROSS 2 YEARS (2024–
2025)

EXPANDING TO **17 COUNTIES** THROUGH
CHATTAHOOCHEE-FLINT RESA

BILINGUAL WEBSITE LAUNCHED IN **ENGLISH &
SPANISH**

Bilingual Student Curated Website

As part of the multimodal design, students created a bilingual (English and Spanish) website to accompany the exhibit. The site expands access to the Museum of Service, offering digital versions of exhibits, student research, and community stories. It also houses the video honoring Mrs. Rosalynn Carter, making it a central piece of the student-led storytelling.

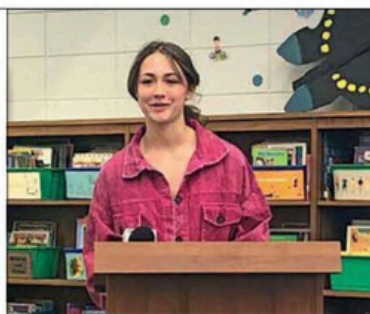
Lessons Learned

One of the most valuable lessons from building the Museum of Service was learning to respond thoughtfully to resistance from those who couldn't see the vision. By seeking out partners who believed in the project and committing to a "step of yes," the students moved from helping it happen to making it happen. Letting students lead was challenging at times, but essential. Giving them ownership—of research, design, and storytelling—became the key to the museum's authenticity and impact. Another lesson was that understanding the meaning of service was a critical starting point. Once that foundation was in place, students found their voice and grew in confidence, learning how to communicate, network, and advocate. For educators, this work reinforced the shift from deficit-based to asset-based thinking. And for everyone involved, the act of presenting and sharing the museum's story reminded them why it matters: It's not about control—it's about trust, collaboration, and giving students the space to lead with purpose.





Julia Walker, 10th grade service learners, presents on Rosalynn Carter



Elizabeth Arizmendi, 10th grade service learner, shares about Rosalynn Carter.



Addie Drinnon, 11th grade service learners, speaks about Rosalynn Carter.

FURLOW CHARTER From Page A1

also thanked Rotary for sponsoring the service learners.

Afterward Drinnon addressed those gathered.

"The former first lady was a writer, activist, and a humanitarian. Rosalynn Smith Carter was born in Plains Georgia on August 18th, 1927, and passed away on November 19th, 2023. She advocated for human rights, mental health, care giving and peace through the Carter Center in Atlanta Georgia and the Rosalynn Carter

Institute for Caregiving in Americus Georgia. A life long environmentalist, she created the Rosalynn Carter Butterfly Trail to protect Monarch butterflies."

She spoke of Rosalyn Carter's decades of service leadership, and her decision to incorporate Rosalynn Carter's love for the Monarch Butterfly into her project. "For my service learning project at Furlow, I have created a Monarch garden inside of our peace garden, to be a part of her trail. I want to take a moment to express my gratitude to everyone who helped and supported the gar-

den. Your willingness to lend a hand truly made a difference, and I'm so thankful for your help in honoring Rosalynn Carter."

Student and service learner Julia Walker also spoke of Rosalynn Carter's servant leadership, advocacy, and grace.

Student and service learner Elizabeth Arizmendi talked about meeting Rosalynn and Jimmy Carter. She told how the Carter's asked for her to be their waitress when she was working at a restaurant in Plains. "They actually came and talked with me and invited me to their

church."

Natalie English's third grade class, led by Music Advisor Judy Parks, sang "A Song of Peace" expressing their desire to bring peace and reconciliation through music.

Singer-song writer Andrew Greer also sang a song he wrote to commemorate Rosalynn Carter titled "Butterfly, fly." He described the value of following the example of Rosalynn Carter's gentle strength. "What an example for our lives today to model ourselves after that, because it's a strength that doesn't dominate or overpower, but it uplifts."

Mayor Lee Kinnamon gave an address. He told how to fully appreciate something; you have to imagine a world without it, speaking on the service of Rosalynn Carter. "Volunteering without the desire to receive financial compensation. Volunteering without the desire to receive any reward or recognition, simply doing it because it's the right thing to do. And what better model do we have in our own community than the life and legacy of Rosalynn Carter."

He left the students with the question as to what the community

would be like without Rosalynn Carter's service and sacrifice. Afterward, Mayor of Plains Kim Fuller and niece of Jimmy Carter spoke.

"She was the first lady of the United States, she was the first lady of Georgia, she was Rosie, she was Mom to her children and her grandchildren, she was Aunt Rosalynn to all of us."

Fuller talked of Rosalynn Carter's love of children and youth, and how the display by the students was probably one of the best honors she could have received. Fuller ended by thanking them for their efforts.

About us

The National Museum and Center for Service will be the first of its kind — a signature building in our nation’s capital to honor and inspire the American spirit of service in all its forms, and a truly national initiative to create and sustain exhibitions of service in nearly every school and community across the country. The result will be millions of people every day of the year encountering uplifting stories and examples of service and discovering how they too can participate. When more people learn about and are inspired to serve, every service and charitable organization stands to benefit and the democracy itself will be strengthened as people feel more connected to one another and to their communities.

Get in touch

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hello@nmcfs.org

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