



Robert Langston uses his experience in adjusting to the educational challenges of dyslexia to encourage young people who face the same obstacles. His For the Children Foundation has teamed up with organizations like the Professor Garfield Foundation (logo opposite page) to conduct motivational assemblies for more than 400,000 children nationwide.

"IF HE CAN DO IT, I CAN TOO..."

Robert Langston shares personal struggle to help others succeed

By Josh Sewell

When Robert Langston '93 arrived at West Georgia in the 1980s, a career in public speaking was not at the top of his list. He was more concerned with working out a system that could get him his degree.

His struggle with dyslexia made writing a severe challenge and his reading skills were on a third grade level. Clearly, his college experience was a bit different from the one his friends were living.

Thanks to his partnership with the university's Disability Services program, he was able to make his time at West Georgia an educational experience with long-lasting results. Namely, the fact that he is now a passionate advocate for people with learning disabilities

"When I started UWG, the Disability Services program was still in its infancy," Langston explained. "I was one of the first students they had to make accommodations for and together we set up a process that worked well for me."

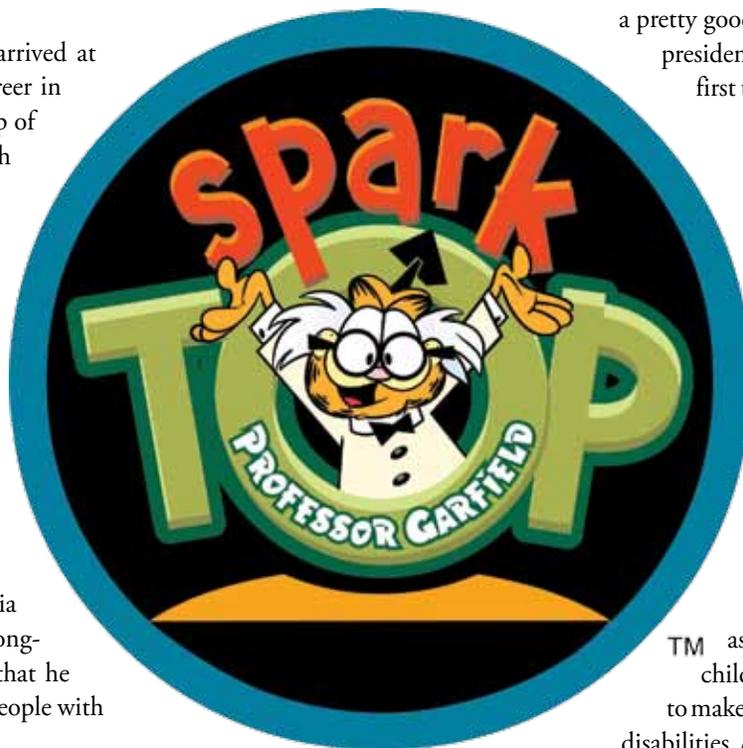
That process included adjustments now considered standard for students with learning disabilities, including untimed tests, oral exams and taking tests in separate classrooms to eliminate distractions. For day-to-day classroom instruction, Langston received assistance through note-takers and readers, people who would read textbooks and other class materials onto audiotape for study purposes.

He also took advantage of other methods for adapting to the college environment, including alternative classes to meet foreign language requirements and early registration to allow enough time for his professors to familiarize themselves with his situation.

"I always looked for a certain type of professor to teach me in a way that I could grasp the concepts of the class," he said. "Early registration allowed me the opportunity to meet with professors, explain my situation and help come up with a plan."

During his time at West Georgia, Langston interned as a recruiter for the admissions office. It was this job that gave him his first encounter with speaking in front of a big group on short notice, something that proved to be an unnerving experience.

"I almost passed out, to be honest," he said, laughing. "I was used to going to schools with my table, my tri-fold display and my brochures. Instead, this guy leads me to a room full of students who want to know why they should choose West Georgia for college. I was



a pretty good speaker thanks to being the vice president of my fraternity, but that was the first time I was really caught off guard."

Things have changed a bit since then. Now, as president of The Langston Company, Inc. and founder of the For the Children Foundation, he is a highly sought after keynote speaker who travels 100,000 miles annually to promote his message of inspiration in both education and business.

Teaming up with organizations like the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation and the Professor Garfield Foundation, he has conducted TM assemblies for more than 400,000 children across the country in an effort to make a difference for those with learning disabilities. A lot of that work includes working with teens in juvenile detention facilities.

"That's where a lot of LD children end up because people don't know how to handle them," said Langston. "I tell my story and hope it can get through to some of them. I try to explain that they can still find ways to contribute to society rather than just take from it."

He has written two books, *For the Children: Redefining Success in School and Success in Life* and *The Power of Dyslexic Thinking*, and he also blogs regularly for PsychologyToday.com. It's an experience he finds shocking, as the site approached him about it rather than the other way around.

"I kind of jumped off the deep end with the blog," he explained. "Because of the dyslexia, I've always worked better communicating my message through the stories I tell. Getting my thoughts down on paper has always been a big issue. But my editor helps me organize my articles into readable copy, and they've been very well-received."

Based on the responses he has received from all over the world, Langston is happy to know that his personal struggle is helping countless others overcome their learning disabilities by adjusting the way they approach their education.

"When I was a kid, my mother made sure I knew that I was smart even though I was struggling in school," he said. "A lot of people don't get that encouragement. I share my personal experience, which some might find potentially embarrassing, in an effort to motivate others going through the same thing. After they hear my message, I hope they're thinking, 'Hey, if he can graduate college on a third grade reading level, I can do it too.'"