



## **TROUBLE IN THE PARK**

(Published June 2007)

**By Donna M. McDine**

I was psyched summer vacation was finally here. Especially now that we could use the rebuilt basketball courts at the park. I was the first to arrive at the courts, and I was admiring how great they looked with the new green and red pavement and white court lines. That's when I noticed a sign on the gate that read: "No playing without a town permit, by the order of Parks and Recreation, 555-8989." What the heck did that mean?

As I stood there baffled, Hayley came up behind me. "Hey, Megan why aren't you on the courts shootin' hoops?"

I pointed to the sign and said, "Cause of this and the gate is locked."

"What do we do now?" Hayley said.

Bouncing my basketball by the gate I said, "I'm not sure, but this is stupid. This is a neighborhood park, why can't we just use it?"

"I dunno. I guess we have to get a permit," Hayley said.

I rolled my eyes and said, "We always played here before without a permit. Let's call Parks and Recreation from my house."

As I dialed the phone, my heart was pounding. "Parks and Recreation, how may I help you?" said a woman.

"Um, my name is Megan and we'd like to know why we can't play on the new basketball courts without a town permit and where do we get the key," I asked.

“We’re trying to make sure that only town residents use the park, so a permit is necessary,” the faceless voice said.

“That doesn’t make any sense. How’s a kid suppose to get a permit? Why can’t we just go up to the courts anytime we feel like,” I demanded.

“Young lady, we make the rules for the benefit of the town residents. You’ll have to get a permit. Good-bye,” she said. Then she hung up.

I slammed down the phone and turned to Hayley. “She just totally ignored me cause I’m a kid,” I said.

“So can we play?” Hayley asked.

“She said something about rules for the town people. She didn’t say what we need to do to get a town permit to use the courts,” I said.

As we sat there in silence staring off into space, I remembered about the time when the 9<sup>th</sup> graders were told they couldn’t go on the annual trip to Philadelphia. The kids all joined together and wrote up why they thought it was important to go on the trip and had all the students sign it. They gave it to the school and the principal changed his mind and rescheduled the trip.

I snapped my fingers and said, “That’s it, we can write up a petition and have everyone sign it, and we’ll give it to the Parks and Recreation.”

“How do we write a petition,” Hayley asked.

“We just have to write up a paragraph saying what we want to change. Then we have people sign it and then we give it to Parks and Recreation. Hopefully, they get our point and change the rule,” I said.

After research on the Internet for petitions and many attempts to get the perfect wording we finally finished.

“Come on Hayley, let’s get Ryan and Victoria to help us go around to everyone and get signatures,” I said.

“Don’t you think we should have our parents go with us?” Hayley said.

“Yeah, that’s a good idea. Let’s go get them,” I said.

After hours of knocking on doors and explaining the reason for our petition we had over 300 signatures. My mom drove us to drop off our petition the next morning.

We handed our petition to the lady at the window and explained what it was for.

“Please give me your names and telephone numbers and someone will get back to you,” she said.

My hopes that we would be taken seriously washed away. “I really thought we’d get somewhere with our petition,” I said, my shoulders sagging like my hopes. When we got back home we flopped down on the couch. I picked up the remote and turned the T.V. on and said, “This is the pits. All of our hard work wasted.”

While we were watching T.V. the phone rang, but I didn’t bother to answer it. As we were flipping through the channels my mom came into the living room, drying her hands on a towel, and said, “Megan, the phone is for you.”

I slowly got up from the couch, picked up the phone, and said, “Hello.”

“Hello. Is this Miss Megan Tyler?” asked a man’s voice.

“Yeap, that’s me.”

“My name’s Mr. Sharkey and I am the Director of Parks and Recreation. I just finished reading your petition. Upon reviewing it, we have to agree with your point of view and by tomorrow morning the basketball courts will be open to all without the need for a permit.”

“Enjoy your summer and the basketball courts,” Mr. Sharkey said.

“Thanks, we will, bye,” I replied.

When I hung up the phone I shouted, “Hoorah!” I explained to Hayley and my mom what Mr. Sharkey said. We were so excited we started jumping up and down and hugged each other.

“Hayley, how ‘bout we meet at the basketball courts after breakfast tomorrow morning,” I said.

“Sounds like a plan. I can’t wait,” Hayley said.

***Donna McDine is a native of Rockland County, New York and lives with her husband and two daughters. Although her background is in office management, she focuses her creative energies on writing for children and young adults. Trouble in the Park was created for an assignment for the Writing for Children and Teenagers course at the Institute of Children’s Literature. [Contact Donna.](#)***