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Wave

LETTER: Basketball Not Just About Throwing a Ball



When the Planning Commission approved the rezoning of park property for an apartment house, it stipulated that the basketball court be replaced. Town Manager Bob Panek ordered basketball backboards and nets removed December 26, 2012, for “safekeeping,” and nothing more was done other than a brief effort by Shanty owner John Dempster to spearhead civic involvement in building a new court. Town Councilman Steve Bennett later reported that according to a survey he conducted, only 12 percent of town residents were in favor of a basketball court. (Wave photo)

February 2, 2015

DEAR EDITOR,

A few years ago we discovered the gem that is Cape Charles and purchased a house on the north side of Peach Street. One of the selling features for me was the proximity to the park and basketball court. Although my basketball-playing days are drawing to a close I enjoyed ambling over to the court in the early evening to observe the games, offering tips to the younger players and engaging in playful banter with those closer to my age.

I was quite surprised when I learned the rims and backboard had been removed without notice and there was no replacement location identified for the court. Where will the community youth be able to play basketball? I wondered. After a few moments of reflection, I realized that the importance of the basketball court was expanded beyond simply a recreational location. The basketball court is a place where participants can learn life-skills.

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When the uninitiated watch a street game, they frequently make comments about the perceived chaotic nature of the game. But from an insider's point of view, it's a spontaneous dance that follows certain fundamental rules. Because of its structure, basketball is more than just bouncing a ball and throwing it through a hoop. It is a scalable therapeutic activity that demands focus, promotes problem solving in a constantly changing environment, mandates continual skills development, and requires a reasonable level of cardiovascular fitness and agility. Imagine how much we could reduce the costs of chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and hypertension if more people played basketball.

Additionally, basketball develops communication skills and teamwork (two traits that are essential for success in today's knowledge-based society), conflict resolution skills, and promotes cross-cultural collaboration by breaking down the barriers between "us" and "them" (no matter who the "us" and "them" represent). It doesn't matter where you're from or how rich or poor you are — the basketball court is truly a meritocracy.

So, in an effort to move from kvetching to action, I ask, "what can we do to create a safe location for Cape Charles youth (and our seasonal guests) to learn conflict resolution, teamwork, communication, and cross-cultural collaboration?" I can think of a few approaches, and I'd love to share them with a committed group of concerned