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#### Essay Four

We have a specific problem regarding the North Kitsap Community pool in Poulsbo Washington. It would seem that the pool has been targeted as a waste of education monies and the school board would like to see it shut down to save the district money. What is not being recognized is the pool's potential to be a community asset not just a money draining facility with no community benefits.

In order to comprehend the benefits the pool can offer we should look at Katie Doe. Katie is a swimmer with hydrocephalus which is excess fluids in the brain. In a recent interview she voiced her opinion that the pool is her social outlet. This means making friends and having a place to go to meet with other swimmers. She has been involved in the pool programs and swims competitively for the high school. She also practices regularly with the Special Olympics squad. While her high school friends were just starting to seek employment Kathie applied for and accepted a job at the local pizza parlor. While others thought that transportation was a barrier and without a car they couldn't work, she simply learned how to ride the access bus, changing busses in Silverdale and transferring at the mall to go on to the Naval Hospital where she is also employed. In her leisure time she helps at a community nursing home where she assists the elderly in appointments and uses her skills in the areas needed by the staff. She is invaluable as a helper at the school with the handicapped group and her enthusiasm aids many a weary teacher. One should begin to wonder what does this have to do with community pool? Katie will tell you she learned her social skills and self discipline at the pool swimming competitively. Her life was influenced by the lessons of the pool.

Watching the "Katies" of the world we can see the lifelong benefits the pool provides. At the pool she has reached the full maturation of adulthood and several more of her peers are following in her steps. (Katie Doe)

The pool encompasses much more than just the handicapped. It is a resource to the whole Poulsbo community. Many social and life skills are developed here. The education of

numerous students who have gone on to become teachers, nurses, retail clerks and military service personal started here. Many physical therapy patients utilize the pool for their therapy programs prescribed by the medical community. More than a handful of local young people have reached their swimming potential and now compete at the national level while others train to participate in triathlons and cross train for other sports. The pool's effect on the North Kitsap community is significant.

In just a typical days programs you can see what the pool does to help the community. If a person were to open the North Kitsap Pool doors on any given day of the week the following could be observed. Arriving for the early bird shift, the pool opens for several senior swimmers at 5:55 am. This dedicated elderly group is faithful and ready to swim the aches and pains of the prior evening away. They rarely miss starting their day off at the pool even if they have to stand out in the pouring rain until the facility opens. Their medical conditions and difficulties drive them to this place for healing and freedom from pain. Often times their physicians suggest the pool as a means to exercise and encourage a weight reduction process. Their average age is sixty five and many are fast approaching the nineties. Immediately after the early swim the high school group arrives. For one hour they are instructed by Red Cross trained instructors on how to master the fundamentals of swimming. They are guided through a fun and educational process of learning how to be safe in the water at all depths. (Red Cross) Then a second high school class arrives and the class is repeated. After a small break the pool is filled with several women who form the arthritis class in the shallow end. Since many are suffering from pain they do a low level aerobic workout. The management team tries to maintain the usage of the entire pool and starts a lap swim in the deep end. Soon the business leaders from such corporations EDS, Electronic Data Systems, a leading corporation researching global information since 1962 and Boxlike who has been in business longer than any other in the digital projection industry or Paladin who has a technical engineering support contract with the Navy, arrive for their lunch time exercise and triathlon training or just to clear their minds and prepare for the afternoon meetings. While they shower the preschool playtime begins. This class is instructed by a woman with multiple sclerosis which is a chronic inflammatory disease affecting the central nervous system. She

helps the class learn to hold their infants properly. During this time other parents can spend family time with smaller children and parents are encouraged to swim with their families. Soon the water is filled with more swimming high school students some who come to take life guard training, water safety instruction or to swim make ups for classes missed. After 5:00 pm the pool is enlivened as the kids from 6-19 year old take over for swim team practice. To accommodate our newly formed synchronized swim team of 15-20 members the deep end is used to accommodate the Ester Williams swimming style of the past. After these activities the pool remains open until 10:00 pm.

Just by opening the doors to the pool you can see what one day is like. It is named the North Kitsap Community pool for a reason. It serves the community six days a week and facilitates groups of people from infants to the elderly. Yes, the community will be affected by the pool closure. Just ask the above groups it serves. Shutting the doors of the pool will affect everyone from the expectant mothers, to the infants, to the school age children, to the high school student, to their parents and to the elderly of our town. A community that is now using the pool will have no where to go, and we will have no programs to serve the needs of the community. Pulling the plug on an asset as strong as the pool will leave everyone out in the cold and our community will suffer the loss. They will endure a pain from losing a valuable community asset just to save a few dollars.

The problem of the pool is complex. It involves a lack of funding as well as a lack of vision and a lack of community involvement. Thus it may require more then one simple approach. Looking at alternatives we see a number of possible solutions.

One solution is to educate the school board on the effect the pool has on the community. The school board members, who do not generally frequent the pool, should have input from the public. Having swimmers appear and testify will help the board members understand the pool is not the money drain they visualize but is a positive asset for the community. It may take more then just budget numbers to convince this board. They will need to meet the swimmers face-to-face to grasp a full understanding of the value of the pool. The people affected by the closure of the pool are a sure testament to the goodness the pool brings to North Kitsap.

King County found itself in a similar position when they had built the Federal Way Aquatics Center and budget pressures were mounting to close it. Mayor Ron Sims held hearings for public input. An opinion sample of the public comments follows:

“Swimming not only offers great exercise for our children but it is the only non-cut sport offered at most high schools. Swimming can save your life or someone (cut off)”

“Pools are something that are very hard to replace down the line. Living in a state with so much water recreation pools need to be available so young people can learn to swim.”

“A pool serves many purposes for its community. We must keep them open to serve disabled, elderly, youth and families and athletes. Pools make themselves accessible to such a large and diverse community that to close them is criminal and discriminatory. The fact that a handicapped person can get out of the wheel chair in a weightless medium is irreplaceable. The only other opportunities that are available to that particular population are private and cost prohibitive, therapy massage, etc. Your budget must include money to maintain the pools even if the price for admission increases.”

“The county’s pools are essential to their surrounding communities. It is not just a waste of funding or for a few people, the pools are for everyone. From children learning to swim, to elderly keeping shape or utilizing arthritic exercise, adults keeping in shape, community events and more! We live in a region blessed with rivers lakes and streams, and for kids sake we should keep our indoor pools around in order to help teach swimming and water safety elements.”

“I know that swimming is an underappreciated sport. But the value of keeping pools open is a life line. Without adequate facilities our athletes in the Pacific Northwest will not be able to achieve their full abilities. Megan Quann was a great inspirational hero to many. But if she could not find pool space, then she may not have won those Olympic medals.” (Sims)

We can expect similar comments from our community members. One such comment was made by a former employee of North Community Kitsap Pool who grew up with a desire to swim. There was no pool in North Kitsap at that time. She traveled to Tacoma to train. Now she lives in Seabeck with her three children who are all swimmers. Her children have advanced through the lesson program at North Kitsap and one of them now is competing at the national level. Closing the pool would impact beyond just her kids being effected but will impact her entire family and many of her friends. She was present and very excited when the North Kitsap Pool opened its doors in 1979. She stated she does not want to be there to see the pool close its doors for the last time. (Noreen Doe).

A key point that must be stressed in all media contacts as well as to the school board is the public health and safety issue. The pool promotes public health and safety. The Miami Florida mayor wants to keep all pools open all year to allow all children to learn to swim because the drowning rate in Florida for under five years of age is around 300 children each year in residential pools. In residential pools these are "silent deaths" where there is no struggle for help or cries to be heard. (Parks Director Wants All to Learn to Swim.)

Swimming is life skill that can be learned and enjoyed through all phases of life. For example Roy Romin, one of the best known master swimmer coaches was a European champion in 1947. He won in the 200 butterfly in 2:40 seconds. He held the British records for butterfly in his age group when he was still competing in his 80s. This book speaks highly of training for swimming using fitness exercises that aid in weight loss. (Juba) Aerobics and Arthritis classes are offered to our community at the North Kitsap Pool to help lower weight and meet the medical needs of our seniors. Public testimony and input will bring life to these issue for the board at their meetings. It may expand the limited vision held by some board members of the pool and its role in the life of this community.

Based upon interacting with the school board I feel this public input and testimony is only real way to reach the board and make this a living problem impacting people rather than just a financial decision. Educating the school board will be a hard task. Many are closed minded in regards to the pool and its cost. Citizen involvement will require a core of dedicated volunteers to publicize the meetings, to turn out the swimming community and organize the speakers who will testify at the meetings. All of this is difficult and time consuming. The key is we must reach those who simply want a quick fix and may wish to turn a deaf ear to the public input.

However, public input and comment to the board is not the only solution. Looking to others we see that a Red Cross employee, Brian Doe voiced his opinion that the Pool can be saved if we turned it back over to Parks and Recreational Department who managed the pool in the past. He, along with his wife and son, were employed by the North Kitsap Pool for several years. He was able to study first hand how the pool became less interested in the community and primarily involved in the school. He stated that the Park and Recreation Department was

able to successfully operate the pool before the School Department took it over. Park and Recreation implemented outreach programs to reach the entire community.

He believes in another time, when the pool was operated successfully by Parks and Recreation. Back then the programs to the community were enhanced; therefore profit was made. The Parks and Recreation also had outreach programs such as Calligraphy, computer classes, basketball and senior trips in addition to extensive swimming programs. All of these brought non-swimmers into the facility and sparked an interest in the swimming programs.

(Brian Doe)

An example of a successful parks and recreation program is the Bainbridge Island Pool which is run by the Department of Parks and Recreation. The Bainbridge Island Aquatic Center was built with local donations. One Bainbridge Island resident donated over one million dollars for the water slide for the children to enjoy. This pool is used for swimming and diving training but also by a large percentage of the community for general recreation, birthday parties and other special events, all which generate revenue. In addition, patrons come from all over the Olympic Peninsula to visit the only indoor water park on the Olympic Peninsula. The pool manager teaches sailing classes in the pool. The Washington State Ferry service rents the pool to train its employees. This pool operates within an acceptable income range. (BainbridgeIslandPool.com)

Another example of a successful Parks and Recreation program is the King County Aquatic Center which is in Federal Way. This pool was built for the Commonwealth Games in 1990. It has the most events in the state with over 50 events each year. These include Olympics trials, top nation and international competition, the Pacific Northwest Events, and the State Special Olympics to mention a few. The revenue from the events alone is estimated to be \$7.5 million dollars annually. (KCAC)

Although turning the North Kitsap Pool over to the Parks and Recreation seems like a viable solution there are a few challenges with the idea. First of all, since North Kitsap Pool does not have the space or the facilities to match the enormity of Federal Way or Bainbridge Island some complain that this takeover will not work. They could claim that the parks and recreation has taken the pool over in the past without success and that this is a useless solution. Others

say the pool does not have the deep pockets that other pools in larger populated areas and money will be a problem. Some swimmers prefer that we keep the pool simple and not over decorate the facility with multi attractions.

There are a few downside risks to the acquisition of our pool by the parks and recreation department. One problem in the past was the lack of security with their commitment. Will their budget be adequate or will they hand it back to the school board if they are unable to solve the budget crisis. Parks and recreation department may struggle with staffing the pool with Red Cross certified employees. Parks and recreation may lack the qualified staff to run the facility. Many certification do not come over night but take years of training to acquire. Currently North Kitsap is run by two full time managers. Their certification match the state requirements for pool management. These men support their families by the time invested here. The current staff employees of the school district. Will the parks and recreational department be sensitive to the educational needs of the students for aquatic classes and training? Will our parks and recreation have the same level of commitment that Bainbridge and King Country parks and recreational departments have? These are issues to consider when evaluating the take over of the pool by the parks and recreational department.

Naming rights is an interesting concept. Many corporations will buy the right to advertise their companies by putting their name up on public buildings. For example, in King County, the King Country Aquatic Center is called the Weyerhaeuser Pool. In the North Kitsap Community we could have the Electronic Data System (EDS) Community Pool or the Microsoft North West Pool or even the Alaska Airline Swim Center as examples. Some school districts in other states have sold the naming rights to various school building including the school kitchens and even the principal's office. (Keen)

To illustrate the potential of this solution we can look to what has been paid in the past for the naming rights of buildings. The money that is paid for naming rights is substantial.

For example.

Facility	Key Tenants	Term	Total
3Com Park at Candlestick Point	San Francisco 49ers & Giants	5	\$4,500,000
Adelphia Coliseum	Tennessee Titans	15	\$30,000,000
Canadian Airlines Saddledome	Calgary Flames	20	\$20,000,000
Cinergy Field	Cincinnati Bengals & Reds	5	\$6,000,000
CMGI Field	New England Patriots	15	\$120,000,000
Compaq Center	Houston Rockets	6	\$5,400,000
Edison International Field of Anaheim	Anaheim Angels	20	\$50,000,000
Enron Field	Houston Astros	30	\$100,000,000
Ericsson Stadium	Carolina Panthers	9	\$27,000,000
Great Western Forum	Los Angeles Kings & Lakers	15	\$17,800,000
Houlihan's Stadium	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	5	\$10,000,000
JetForm Field	Ottawa Lynx	15	\$1,750,000
Labatt Park	Montreal Expos	20	\$100,000,000
Molson Centre	Montreal Canadiens	20	\$150,000,000
National Car Rental Center	Florida Panthers	10	\$25,000,000
NorthAmericare Park	Buffalo Bisons	13	\$3,900,000
Pacific Coast Net Place	Victoria Spiders	15	\$10,000,000
P & C Stadium	Syracuse Skychiefs	25	\$3,500,000
Pilot Field	Buffalo Bisons	20	\$1,020,000
Pro Player Stadium	Florida Marlins & Miami Dolphins	10	\$20,000,000
PSINet Stadium	Baltimore Ravens	20	\$105,500,000
Rich Stadium	Buffalo Bills	25	\$1,500,000
Seafirst Stadium	Spokane Indians	n/a	n/a
Skyreach Place	Kelowna Rockets	10	\$1,000,000
Skyreach Center	Edmonton Oilers	5	\$3,300,000
SOL Communications Coliseum	Rio Grande Valley Killer Bees	10	\$1,800,000
SSM Health Care Arena	Missouri River Otters	25	\$8,750,000
Tom Gill Chevrolet Field	Florence Freedom	n/a	n/a
Trans World Dome	St. Louis Rams	20	\$36,500,000
UMAX Coliseum	Oakland Athletics & Raiders	10	\$17,500,000
Walson Stadium	Allentown Ambassadors	10	\$3,000,000

*Source: Various published reports and Naming Rights Online research.*

. Selling the naming rights is controversial. Not everyone agrees. Naming rights has proven in other cities to be a controversial solution. School personnel have a hard time with the commercialization of the pool as a business contract and not a publicly funded governmental agency. Selling the naming rights may be considered to detract from the honor of naming a school after a civic leader. Many oppose the commercialization of schools and oppose such agreements as exclusive soft drink contracts. Selling the naming rights can give the taxpayers the idea they are no longer responsible for funding public education. However, it is happening in

more and more school districts and it is widely being discussed in many communities. Selling the naming rights can provide a quick fix but it is a one time fix and will not address ongoing funding. When competition for wall space and usage of the building for advertising become up for grabs by anyone some would say this is unfair to the students. It detracts from the academic nature of the schools. Few will initially understand the naming rights as an agenda and they will need to be further educated on this solution and potential problems of this alternative as a quick fix for instant money to solve the immediate problem. (naming rights on line)

How do you obtain a corporate name sponsor? There are a number of steps in the process. First you must carefully analyze your situation and decide what you want to sell. Are you selling the building or the manager's office or as in one school district the principal's office. In addition, you must insure you have the legal right to sell the name. You need to review how to handle the sale. If this done by a public agency such as a school board they may be legal processes you must adhere to when conducting the sale. You need to qualify potential buyers. Some may not be acceptable for high school pool. For example you would not sell to a beer or wine company as that would give the wrong message to the students. You should have a market survey to determine the current market value of your naming rights. This will require a marketing/appraisal professional. You need to determine how long you want the contract to run and how you will service it at the renewal points.

We may want to get corporate sponsors for pool. This can be part of or totally separate from the selling the naming rights. Local companies looking to build good will within the community may make donations to a fund raising program to save the pool. This would tie in with demonstrations and other actions to raise citizen involvement and community awareness around the pool.

Public demonstrations could also help keep our pool alive. They will raise citizen awareness and bring political pressure to bear on the decision makers. Many factors contribute to how effective a demonstration is. Depending upon the organization of detail, how many people participate, how much other outlets contribute, a demonstration can be effective tool of media activism. I feel this would draw attention to the problem of losing the pool. It will increase

community awareness and community involvement. It will serve the purpose of informing our community that there is a problem. The goal is to motivate the citizens of out complacency and to motivate them to become involved and help solve the funding and policy problems. More involved citizens may lead to additional resources to solve the problems. The best place to start the solutions is in the media. Publicizing the demonstration by passing out flyers, alerting newspapers and calling to radio stations will start the process in motion. (FAIR)

With demonstrations we could also stand a risk of letting the pools solution take on a negative impact. Demonstrations have a way of getting out of hand and causing chaos's. It cost money to organize a protest which can be a process of solving a problem. If time restraints are small a demonstration will not fit the perimeter of the boundary of short-term answers. The media involvement can be an additional challenge. TV stations and news radio can be hard to involve in such a small community effort.

Professional marketing of the pool's programs is one key. Since the pool is an asset to the community we should have an aggressive marketing campaign to increase pool use. For example; many people may not be aware of the synchronized swimming, Special Olympics, water aerobics, and swim teams for various ages which meet at the pool. Cross training benefits can be stressed to reach non-swimmers. Water walking for seniors can be implemented. Printed brochures can be passed out to the grade school students to let the parents know about the new enhanced programs at the community pool as well as at senior centers and private schools. (Crawford)

Marketing cost money and the board may chose to cut promotional spending in order to funnel the money into operating expense. This can be a self defeating strategy and the pool spirals down as patronage declines. Public awareness and word of mouth may offset an under funded program promotional plan in the short run but as the world of commerce shows us – it pays to advertise.

Additional possibilities include raising the user fees for the general public. This is an increase to establish a restricted fund to help supplement expenses. However, the North Kitsap Pool does not have all features of the Bainbridge Pool. No water slide and walk in entrance so

the market may not be as friendly to increasing general admissions. However, increasing charges for swim teams etc could help produce additional revenue.

The resolutions discussed above are not mutually exclusive so we can combine them in many different ways. No single tactic may answer the problem completely but by combining them we can. These strategies include public involvement in the monthly meeting and the decision process; turning the pool back to Parks and Recreation; selling the naming rights and an aggressive outreach program to increase community use for recreation and training.

In conclusion, I feel that demonstrations and naming rights could assist our local pool. The demonstrations would give us chance to get our problem out and since we are near a high school and junior high if held after school we could incorporate a lot of students. Selling the naming rights to the pool could produce a large amount of cash to help immediately. All of the above solutions call for interaction. To save our pool we must activate several plans.

As any good cook will tell you in order to make a proper stew you will need more than just the meat. The meat of this issue is that demonstrations and citizen involvement were the solutions to the problem of the pool closure. In order to add flavor to the final recipe we need to remember that a sample of each solution can be thrown into the pot and then a delicious meal can be served. We can add a little of the naming rights, along with proper marketing of the pool. Add a pinch of Public Health and Safety concerns for richness. Then we cut parts from the park and recreations solution along with a small increase in fees to supplement pool funds. We can be a part of crafting the actual solution to save the pool from imminent destruction.

No one appreciates a half cooked stew but by calling individuals to increase community awareness we can put the idea that the pool is a fast draining financial hole to rest and prove that is an asset to our community. The answer therefore lies in community action – action that makes a complacent town change to become a viable force responsible for taking action and producing results. Together we can make our North Kitsap Community Pool one of the communities leading assets.

Note – names of people interviewed have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals.