

My favorite memory of Mt Clemens happened on a day that changed the course of my life.

As I came to the end of my freshman year of college, studying economics and journalism, I was hired as a Playground Supervisor at the Mt. Clemens Recreation Department.

Prior to starting work on the playground, Mr. Harold Rice held a training session. In addition to showing us some of the equipment we would have available and teaching us some games, Mr. Rice spoke about the importance of being a positive role model for children. He told us that all interaction we had with the children would affect them, and it was up to us to make the impact positive or negative; he told us about the ripple effect, and how the children we met would remember us for years to come. I remember him asking the group, "How do you want to be remembered?"

I had hoped to work at Seminole School, since it was near my home, but I was assigned to Lawndale Park. I had never been there, and didn't even know where it was.

Kids were already waiting when I got to the park. The kids and I got to know one another as we waited for the truck to show up with our supplies. As the day progressed, I was surprised by how enthusiastic the kids were, how many of their names I had learned, and how much fun I had as I learned how to make lanyards, how to hump-a-jump, and how to twirl for Double Dutch. (I never really quite got the hang of that.)

Near the end of my first day at Lawndale, as I sat on the picnic table with a group of children, one little girl climbed onto my lap and said, "I love you Miss Kasy. Can you come back and play with me tomorrow?"

In that moment, I understood what Mr. Rice had been talking about. I wanted the children to remember me as the person who came back to play, as the person who loved them before I met them. And I knew, that very first day, that I would not have a traditional job; I *had* to do *this*.

People told me that the feelings I had for the children would end as the summer dragged on, but I knew they wouldn't. Those feelings have never ended.

On that very first day of working on the playground, I learned more from 'my kids' than I could have ever taught them. I learned more about myself than I could have imagined. I went home, took another look through the college courses, and chose a new major: Recreation Leadership.

I moved from the Mt. Clemens area in 1988, and occasionally see some of the kids I worked with those many years ago. I can only hope that the ripples I created were positive, and that maybe I affected those kids in much the same way as they affected me.