

Everyday school day, I wake up and do my usual morning routine. There is only one problem: The school bus. My school bus only stops at the entrance of my neighborhood. It doesn't come inside the neighborhood to drop off students at their houses. Most of your school buses probably stop at your house, but mine doesn't. It's almost half a mile of walk to my home from the bus stop, and part of it is uphill. That's a HUGE inconvenience and safety issue for all of us students in my neighborhood that go to Arlington school district.

It's very hard for me and our neighborhood children to walk home from the bus stop especially in the winter when it is cold. Parents are not always available to pick up children at 2.30 pm. My parents are at work, so I've had to walk in rain, snow, and hail. It is also bad that we have to carry heavy backpacks, while walking up half a mile uphill. There is also hazard for our safety. Anything can happen to us when we're walking home alone by ourselves. Actually, there was a scary incident of a van following a student that happened last year, although thankfully the student was safe.

As a girl scout, I wanted to bring change in our neighborhood community by taking action to bring the school bus into our neighborhood. I decided to take this on as a silver award project. This would benefit us all students from my neighborhood that attend Arlington School District. I first thought that we could talk to the school bus transportation and request them to send the school bus inside our neighborhood. But, I was told that because our neighborhood is still being developed by a builder, the roads inside our neighborhood are private. If the roads are not public, the school buses are not allowed to come inside the neighborhood.

My first step was to approach the town of Poughkeepsie to urge them to make our neighborhood roads public. I thought that should be easy! With some help, I learned how to write a petition, and wrote one to the town of Poughkeepsie, urging them to make our neighborhood roads private. I went door to door in our neighborhood to get the petition signed. I got around 30 signatures from all neighbors who are strongly in support of this change. Now the hard step was to present it to the Town Hall! I was very nervous, because I was going to talk in front of professional people in a town hall meeting. Some people in my neighborhood came to support me, and that made me feel somewhat comfortable. I had to speak on a mic, but I was able to talk confidently. The town supervisor and other officials were very encouraging of me.

Even though the town board was understanding of my neighborhood's problem, they explained that they couldn't make the road public, because it was in the hands of the builder. They told me to talk to the builder to remind him that he needs to develop the roads according to the requirements of the town. Now I had another challenge, and I began to realize bringing about change wasn't as easy as I had thought. I didn't want to give up. I made another petition to the builder to urge him to develop the neighborhood roads, so the school bus could come inside the neighborhood. I again collected signatures from the whole neighborhood for this second petition. The builder has not replied to my petition yet, but the building of more houses seems to be going at a faster pace. Hopefully this means that the builder has heard my neighborhood's concerns.

This take action process helped me realize that even the smallest actions can have a positive impact on the community, and even a young person like me can be the one to start the change and make their voice heard.