

You've Got to be Kid-ding

By Reg P. Wydeven
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When I was a kid, I loved tagging along to my dad's Kimberly Recreation Association basketball games so I could watch him and his buddies play. One time, when I was in 8th grade, they didn't have enough players. Rather than forfeit, they let me play. I broke my nose, but it was still pretty cool.

After our basketball season ended my senior year of high school, I was lucky enough to play with my dad in the Kaukauna City League tournament. I still have the championship trophy in my office.

My best basketball memory with my dad, however, was a charity game he played in. It wasn't just any game, though – it was donkey basketball. All of the players rode donkeys, which weren't keen on being told where to go. The game was chaotic and a very low-scoring affair, but it was one of the funniest things I've ever seen.

Donkey basketball was the first thing I thought of when I learned about goat yoga for the first time this summer. I've heard of regular yoga, hot yoga, and yoga in the park, but I had never heard of goat yoga.

At first I thought it might be a pose, like downward dog. Then I thought it might be an acronym for yoga that was the Greatest Of All Time. It turns out that goat yoga is just regular yoga performed where goats happen to be milling about. Yes, that's a real thing.

Apparently, it's much more relaxing than regular old yoga. The playful goats have been shown to have a soothing effect on the participants, making it a tranquil, relaxing experience. Knowing this, Paul Williams sought to implement goat yoga as a fundraiser for a non-profit organization he runs.

Williams is president of the Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C. Seeing as the cemetery already has a yoga instructor, Kelly Carnes, who holds classes in the chapel, Williams felt having goat yoga classes on the cemetery grounds was a logical next step.

Strangely, it would not be the first time that goats visited the cemetery. On two prior occasions, Williams brought goats onto the property to eat an overgrowth of poison ivy and other plants as an eco-friendly alternative to lawn mowers. Like most local governments, Washington D.C. has laws regulating animals. Under D.C. law, goats are considered "exotic animals," which are banned in the District without a permit. Permits may be granted for "special events and educational purposes." Williams printed up leaflets and flyers promoting the event and was granted a permit because watching goats eat vegetation was deemed an "educational experience."

Williams tried the same tact with goat yoga, claiming that it would be edifying to learn about goats' unique impressive digestive systems while discussing how yoga can also aid human digestion. Vito DelVento, the Executive Director of the D.C. Department of Health, didn't bite, however, and sent Williams an email saying there was "no opportunity for this event to be considered an educational resource."

DelVento also explained that goat yoga would be "a violation of a 'NO TOUCH' policy by spectators for animals participating in District events." Finally, he expressed "concern for the safety of the animals should someone fall over on one." The one time I tried yoga, I hurt myself. So if people in the D.C. area have yoga skills comparable to mine, DelVento has a valid concern.

Despite the set-baaaa-ck, Williams and Carnes are going to continue to negotiate with the D.C. D.O.H to teach goat yoga classes on the grounds. Apparently people are dying to do yoga in cemeteries.

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