

## “Megan’s Story”

The Power to Overcome the Assaults of Injustice  
From a Company, a Union and the Judicial System.

On May 13, 2003, 7-year old Megan sat close to her father on the couch in Baltimore, Maryland, waiting for her best friend to knock on the door of the only home Megan ever knew.

Upon hearing the knock, Megan didn’t jump to run and greet Sarah as she normally did. Things had changed and consciously or subconsciously she was aware of it.

Sarah and her father were waived in and Megan quickly told them, “My daddy was fired today.”

And so it was, Megan’s odyssey began.

Her father, less than two years from retirement as a 24-year employee of UPS and a member of the Teamsters Union was fired for allegedly violating policy that three years later was disclosed did not exist, denying him, his wife and Megan a retirement income that would have come at age 48 instead of 65.



Megan’s father’s discharge came after receiving approval of a workers compensation injury claim for a permanent injury to his back. Unable to find work because of the injury, their home had to be sold or all equity would have been lost.

Megan was forced to leave the only room she ever knew, the cocoon children have that protects them in a heartless world. Her family moved to Charleston, South Carolina and Megan was stripped from the life she knew, from her way of life, her home and her best friends.

For Megan, the move at age eight was very hard. Her family moved to Seabrook Island and it was a very lonely and isolated existence for her in the first year. There were no family neighborhood children to play with, no close school friends to visit as her school was 45 minutes away.

The isolation compounded upon itself as the first year continued, affecting her mentally, emotionally and physically. She lost any self-confidence she had making it extremely difficult to participate in anything publicly, and when called to do so she would break down in tears and become terribly sick with stomach convulsions.

It became such an issue that doctor trips could not heal her. Megan’s parents were advised to seek professional, psychological help for her, but her deterioration was so sudden and swift her parents had to act quickly.

They had to make a move and did so several months before the school year ended and moved from Seabrook (south of Charleston) to Isle of Palms, S.C. just north of Charleston and just across the connecting bridge to the town of Mount Pleasant.

By moving, Megan was able to make friends at her new school before the year ended, regaining that which she had before, neighborhood friends she so much enjoyed.



In the summer of 2006 Megan was encouraged to join the Wild Dunes Dolphins swim team, a Charleston-area summer league team. Despite the tears, emotional and physical trauma of having to engage in the public activity of swimming in front of her peers, parents and the summer audiences associated with the summer league swim teams, she continued to make small steps of ‘healing’, swimming in almost nothing but the exhibition events.

Her first big step was being invited by the swim team to include her in the Charleston city meet championships, mostly due to some of the better swimmers who would be on vacation. She swam one individual event and one relay event.

There is a picture of Megan at the start of her individual event worth more than a thousand words. The picture has her at the backstroke start, holding onto the grips waiting for the gun. In the background are the other competing swimmers, their caps indicating representation of the number of other local swim teams in the area. Not only is the picture evidence that her self-confidence had grown and healing had begun, but the picture was the glimpse indicating that...



“She’s going to be okay, she’s making it, she’s overcoming and the small seed planted that she can accomplish anything.”

In the fall of 2006 Megan decided to join the Mount Pleasant Swim Club, the Manatees.

Megan began to evolve into a decent swimmer, gaining self-confidence with each meet she attended.

Her parents could not help but be emotionally affected when she stood on the block prepared to swim in her first event at her first year-round swim meet in Columbia and see the University of South Carolina banner behind her, and her name brightly lit on the event scoreboard, “O’Shea, M.”



With each practice and with each meet she continued her improvement and then in Savannah, GA she made her first state cut. At Augusta, she started out with a great jump on all the other swimmers in the 100-free and increased her lead with her swimming and very good turns. In the final leg she was already up on the surface heading back when the closest swimmer was just making her turn. When she hit the wall, she had her second state cut.



Her parents could not help but think of how far Megan has persevered, she has stood alone in front of her entire school to give a speech. She has danced alone in front of her entire school for a talent show.

Before joining year-round swimming, even the mere thought of doing so was impossible. But the swimming block and the water breeds confidence and discipline.

No matter if Megan continues to swim for 2 years, 5 years or 10 years, her life has been altered and changed.

The powers that stripped her of her home and friends did not win. The shame of their actions exist within their courtroom papers, documents and opinions, filed evidence of the rules, procedures and laws they broke and failed to uphold American workers and detailed at [The Darker Side of Brown](http://TheDarkerSideofBrown.com). ([www.thedarkersideofbrown.com](http://www.thedarkersideofbrown.com)).



(Above - The Bolles Speedo Classic Meet in Jacksonville, FL.)

Megan's tribute is visible on USA Swimming.org's swimmer's timing page ([USA Swimming Timing](http://USA_Swimming_Timing)) and with each swim a testament to her ability to overcome those that assaulted her way of life beginning at age 7.

I know, for I am a direct witness, the subject I witnessed is on the right, my daughter Megan.

What I cannot imagine is how many American working families who have emailed me with stories of these same assaults upon their own spouses and children and whose children did not find that outlet needed to overcome.

Dan O'Shea





### **2007: The Story Continues - Commitment to Overcoming**

Megan couldn't wait for her Wild Dunes summer team to begin in summer league, not only to show others how much she had improved from her year-round swimming, but to prove to herself how far she had come.

She captured 21 first-place finishes and 9 second-place finishes (second-place finishes mainly because of another excellent year-round teammate). In 2006 Megan had none.

The climax of the 2007 season came in one of the final meets, against the Hobcaw Swim team. In the final relay events, Megan was the third leg of the 9-10 year old girls freestyle relay.

When the second girl of Megan's relay team approached the wall, Megan stood ready to dive and when she did, her Hobcaw 3<sup>rd</sup> leg opponent was already leading by half a pool length. Megan dove and after her well-learned dolphin kicks, popped up a third of a pool length later. In moments, just before hitting the wall for her return...she led the race.

While Megan's 4<sup>th</sup> leg teammate stood ready on her return and when Megan touched on her finish, her Hobcaw relay opponent who initially had a half pool length lead was behind by that same half pool length.

The Hobcaw faithful who were initially cheering were stunned in muted silence, the Wild Dunes Dolphins fans were cheering wildly. One Wild Dunes parent was leaning over towards the pool and screamed as loud as she could, "That was awesome, I've got chills all over me!"

Another Wild Dunes Dolphins parent approached me after the meet and asked me how Megan had improved so well, was it simply talent. "No" I replied, "Megan practiced two days a week this past year with the year-round swim club and it was just a simple commitment."

## A Most Remarkable Picture

Later that night, a quite remarkable picture was uploaded from the camera to the computer.

Megan had already “proved” her ability to the other team having swum in an earlier event, before I began taking pictures of her prior to her butterfly event.

Megan stood beside the block looking out across the pool and down the swim lane she was to swim. When taking the picture I did not notice two girls on the other side of the pool looking at her, with a certain look that stated Megan was the topic of their conversation.



With a face of concern by one, and the pointing towards the water by the other, the picture spoke what the ears could not hear:

“That’s her, that’s the fast one.”

The night was a culmination of a year’s hard work and the picture was the culmination of how far Megan had come.

Megan a year ago couldn’t have me leave practice. Her self-confidence depleted, her hold on security was in seeing me there.

However, a year later and just recently on the way home, she said, “You know Dad, you don’t have to come to every practice.”

Momentarily hurt, I then chuckled to myself.

Little does she know that for a long time I’ve simply been witness to an amazing and rare opportunity to watch how this once 7-year old girl continues to overcome an assault not only on her family but upon herself as well.

## 2008 – From Assault, to Anxiety, to Accomplishment - An “A” Time.

In swimming, time accomplishments have grades - “B”, “BB”, “A” up to “AAAA”. After quad-A times, National and Olympic times become the grades.

In the first 18 months of swimming, Megan, while earning state times and a number of “BB” times, still had not reached the elusive “A” time.

In June of 2007 Megan moved into the 11-12 age-bracket arguably, one of the hardest aging-up groups in year-round swimming. The time-requirements for grades and state qualifications become harder.

Further, a young 11 next to an older 12 at times looked like a pre-teen standing next to a high school student, dependent upon the maturity growth of particular swimmers.



Megan attempted on four occasions to break the state qualifying time of 29.95 for the 50-yard freestyle, her fastest event. In January of 2008, on her last attempt before states, in February, she missed the cut by one-half second. The blink of an eye.

Undeterred, she resolved to improve. In February she began a daily routine of stretch cord workouts along with her swimming I researched and developed for her.

No meets, just hard work in swim practice and her “dry-land” stretch cord workout until summer league swimming. I told Megan it is possible she may see a startling result by the time the Charleston-area swimming championships come around in mid-July.



While the residue of the assault continued to affect her life in other areas such as opportunity, enjoyment and educationally, Megan had overcome so much emotionally and physically and now the time to see just how far she had come.

The July, 2008 Charleston-area championship was upon her as we drove to the first night’s meet. While we as her parents were cognizant of the competitive moment ahead, we weren’t sure of her emotions. We were confident of her ability, was she?

We simply told her, “Just have fun. That’s why you swim. Don’t swim for us or anyone else. When you stand on that block, just remember two things, you earned it, and you do it because you love swimming. Just have fun.”

So there she stood for the 50-meter butterfly event, in the well-earned 3<sup>rd</sup> lane of the six-lane pool, against swimmers she finished behind in last year's meet.



With the start, she popped up even with two others after their underwater dolphin kicks. By the time Megan hit the wall to return, she led. It was evident her dryland stretch cord workout had paid off. While the other swimmers appeared to tire, her muscles were screaming, "I'm not tired yet!"

When Megan finished, her time of 36 seconds while still just missing the elusive "A" time, put her ahead of the swimmers she finished behind the year before, and ahead of one swimmer who beat her by over 6 seconds the year before.

Megan placed 4<sup>th</sup> out of 40-plus swimmers in her age bracket. The three ahead of her were a year older. Megan was the highest finisher of all swimmers returning in this age group. It was a striking accomplishment.



With her butterfly event finished, Megan would swim one more individual event, the 50-meter freestyle event. This was the event Megan came up just short in January of the state cut.



There was nothing notable from the six swimmers in the first length of the 2-length lap of the 50-free, but as almost always happens, the turn is critical, and with that turn Megan led. Here was again, as in the butterfly, her stretch cord work appeared to kick in. She did not appear to tire as her opponents.

In touching the wall, she won her second heat event of the championship.

While the Colorado timing system worked, the scoreboard was dysfunctional that first day and the swimmers times were not immediately known. An hour later they were posted.

Megan's posted time? 32.25 for the 50-meter free (a 28.90 converted time in a 50-yard pool).

And there beside Megan's time of 32.25 was the all-elusive "a". Megan accomplished her first ever "A" time.