

HOW I MET THE PRESIDENT

By Tommy Allred

**With
Alexandra Allred**

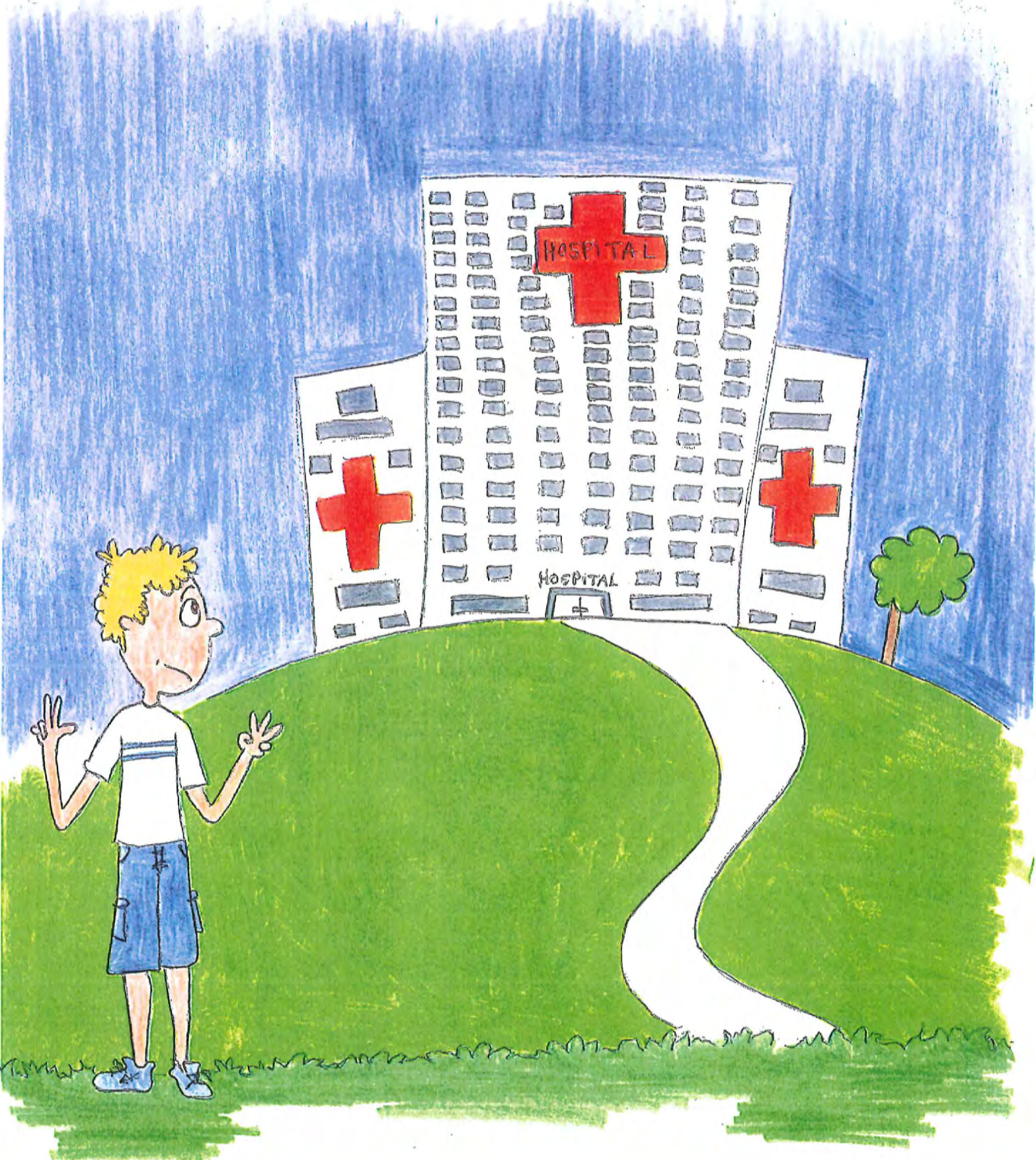
Illustrations

Kerri Leigh Allred





I have asthma.



I've been to the hospital more times than I can count.



My Medicine



My breathing machine



My inhaler

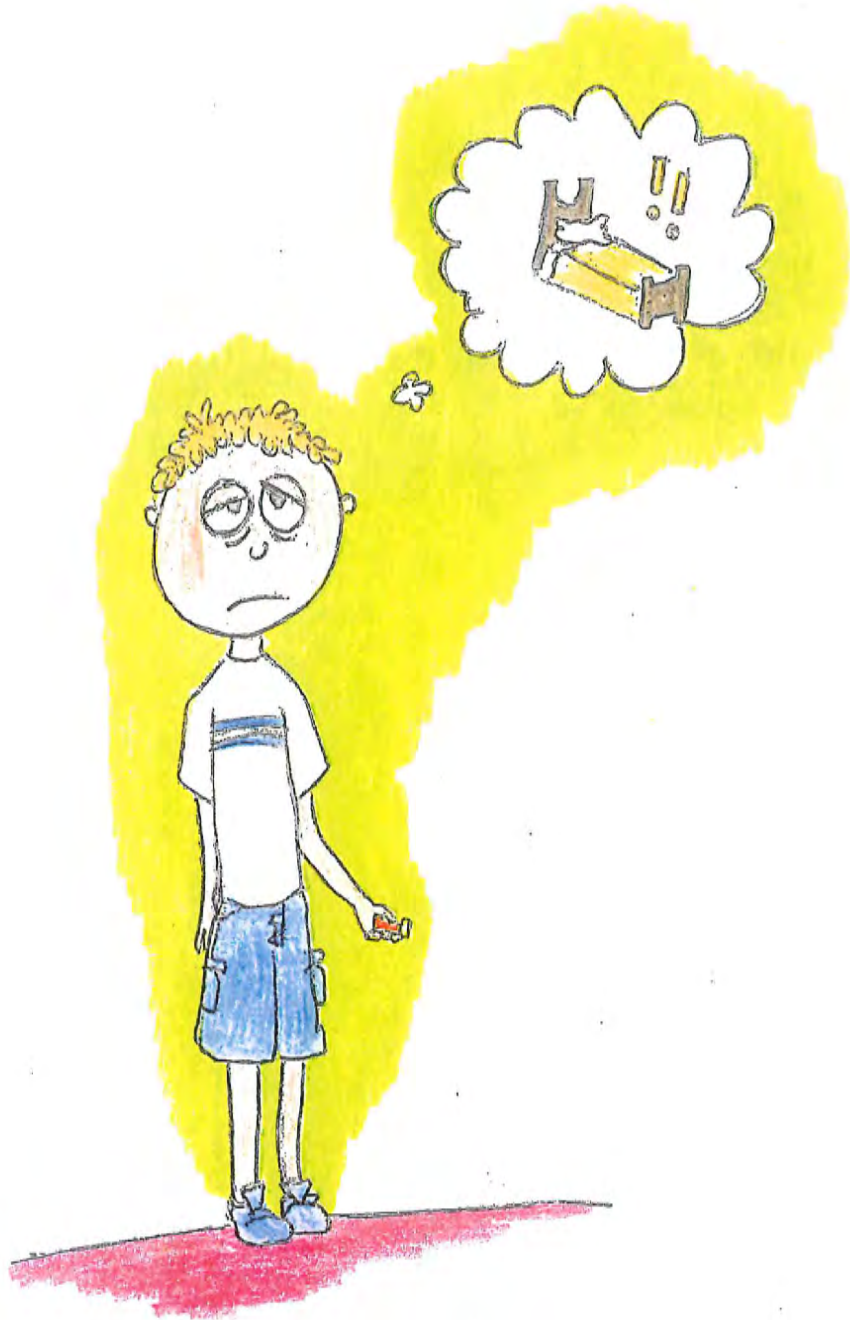


My mask for bad days

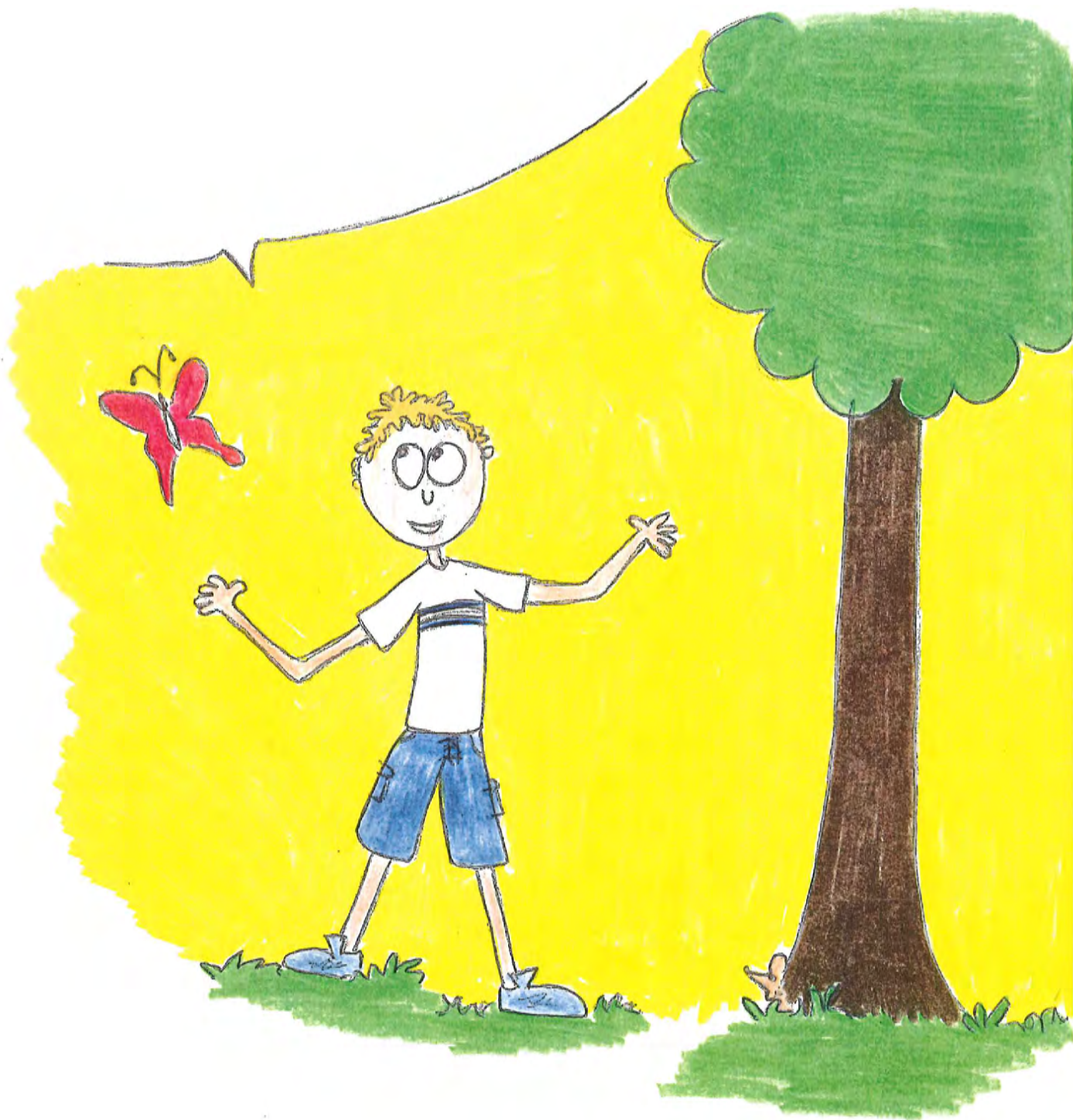
My mask for my breathing machine



If you've never had an asthma attack, let me tell you about it.



It is very scary and sometimes when you can't breathe, you think you're going to die. Then, when the attack is over, you feel like you have to go to bed.



Some people are just born with asthma. Others, like me, just develop it from the environment they live in.



I live in a town where dust from the cement plants is so heavy that it can settle in my lungs and it is hard to breathe sometimes. This is when we think I developed asthma.



My family and I began to research things like cement kiln dust, hazardous and non-hazardous waste, and other things that are burned to help make cement.



HACK
HACK!



COUGH!

COUGH!
COUGH!

COUGH

Cough
cough

It's not just cement but any big industries that burn things and let it into the air can sometimes cause problems for people who live around the plants. That's called putting emissions into the atmosphere.



When my mother learned how bad these emissions were for the air and the people who breathe this air, she said, "This is wrong!"



We wrote letters to the mayor of our town, to our state senators and state representatives, and to reporters. We made signs and got people to sign our petition for cleaner air.

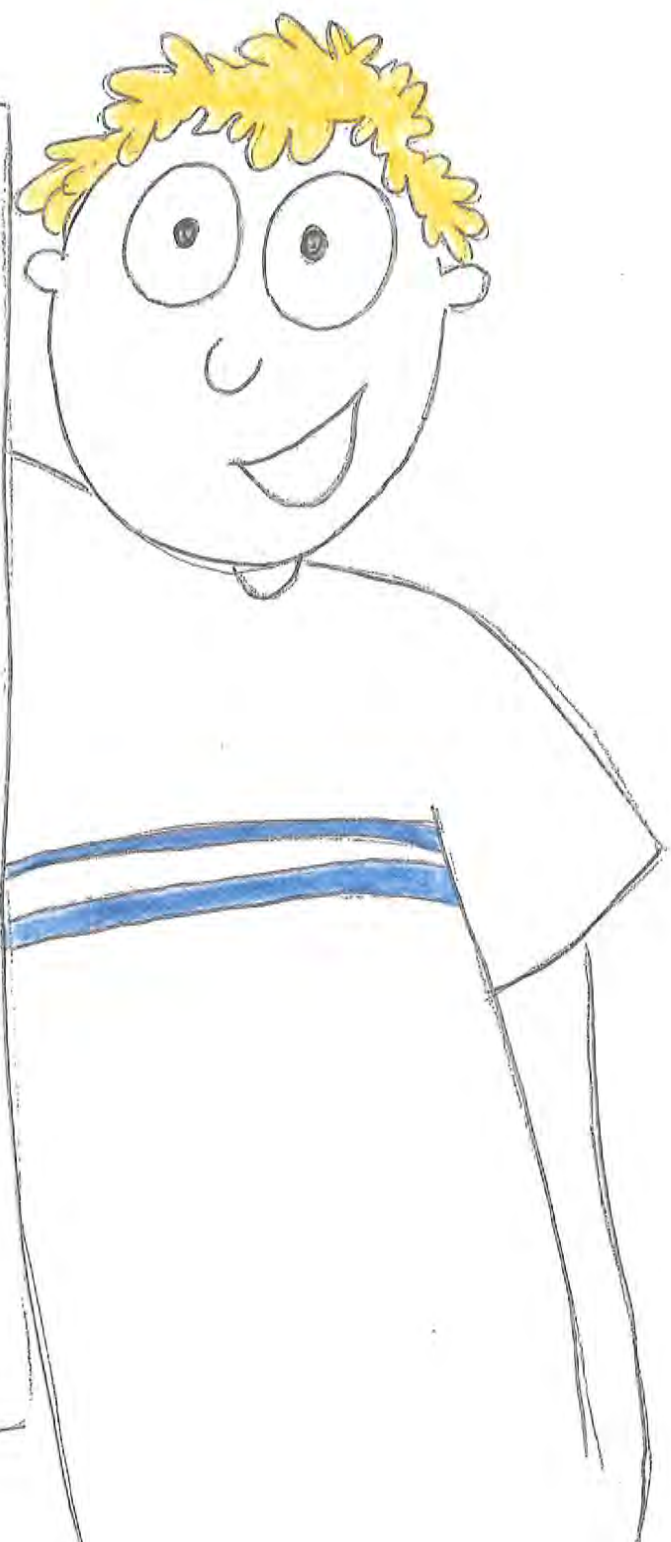


Mr. President



igned

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| <u>Irews</u> | <u>Bob Marcus</u> | <u>P. Mousey</u> ✎ |
| <u>Hlips</u> | <u>Mulon Chang</u> | <u>S. Ratty</u> |
| <u>res</u> | <u>Ersha Watts</u> | <u>Shertock Kate</u> |
| <u>Abe</u> | <u>Svek Mouse</u> | <u>Brooke Courson</u> |
| <u>Kman</u> | <u>Brandon Bob</u> | <u>Twinkle Star</u> |
| <u>Hill</u> | <u>Sue Reeds</u> | <u>John Handchicken</u> |
| <u>Dinkleberg</u> | <u>Jane Lyle</u> | <u>Suzie Anderson</u> |
| <u>RS</u> | <u>Felipe Sverman</u> | <u>Justin Grueber</u> |
| <u>by</u> | <u>Joe Bally</u> | <u>Robin Hoode</u> |
| <u>urshall</u> | <u>Lyndon Josee</u> | <u>S. Mousie</u> |
| <u>Valderez</u> | | |



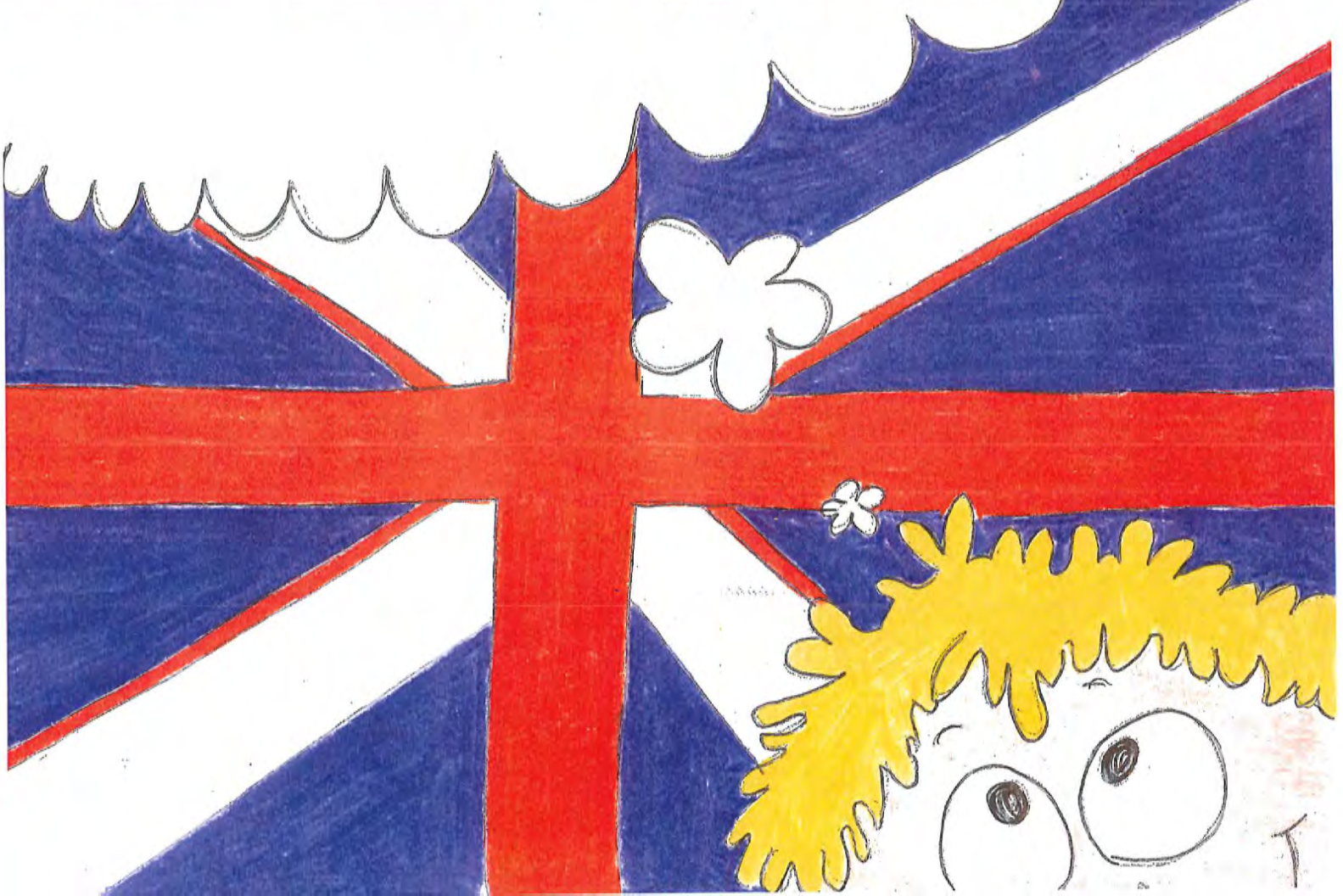
A petition is an official letter addressed to a government official, like the president or the U.S. congress, asking for a change in the law or a whole new law. When a bunch of people sign the petition it shows the government how many people want a change. This is called a democracy.

I would,
I dare say!

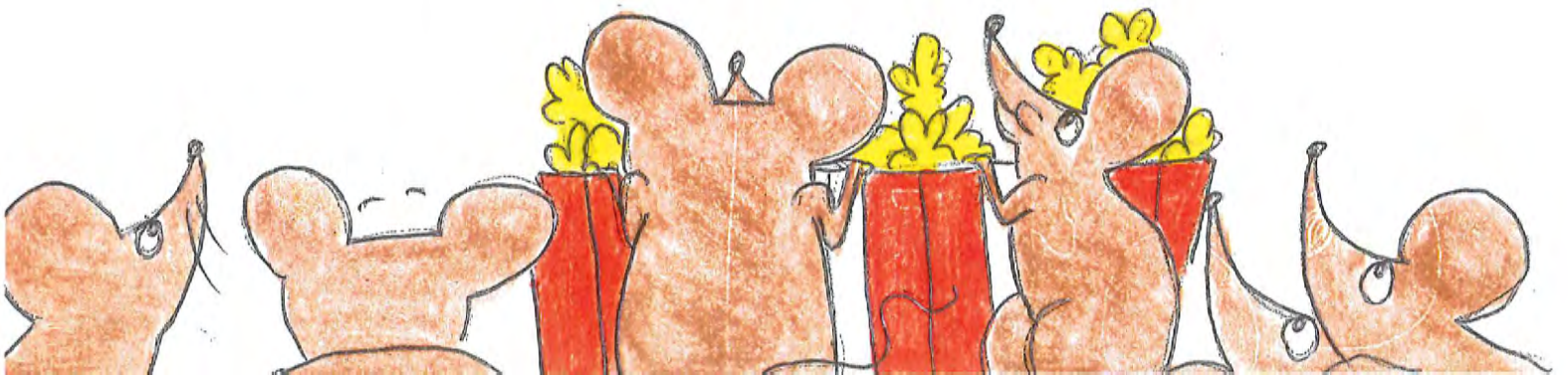
I say!
Magna
corta!

The
Magna
Corta,
indeed!

Cheese and
chips, my
dear chaps?
Hmm?

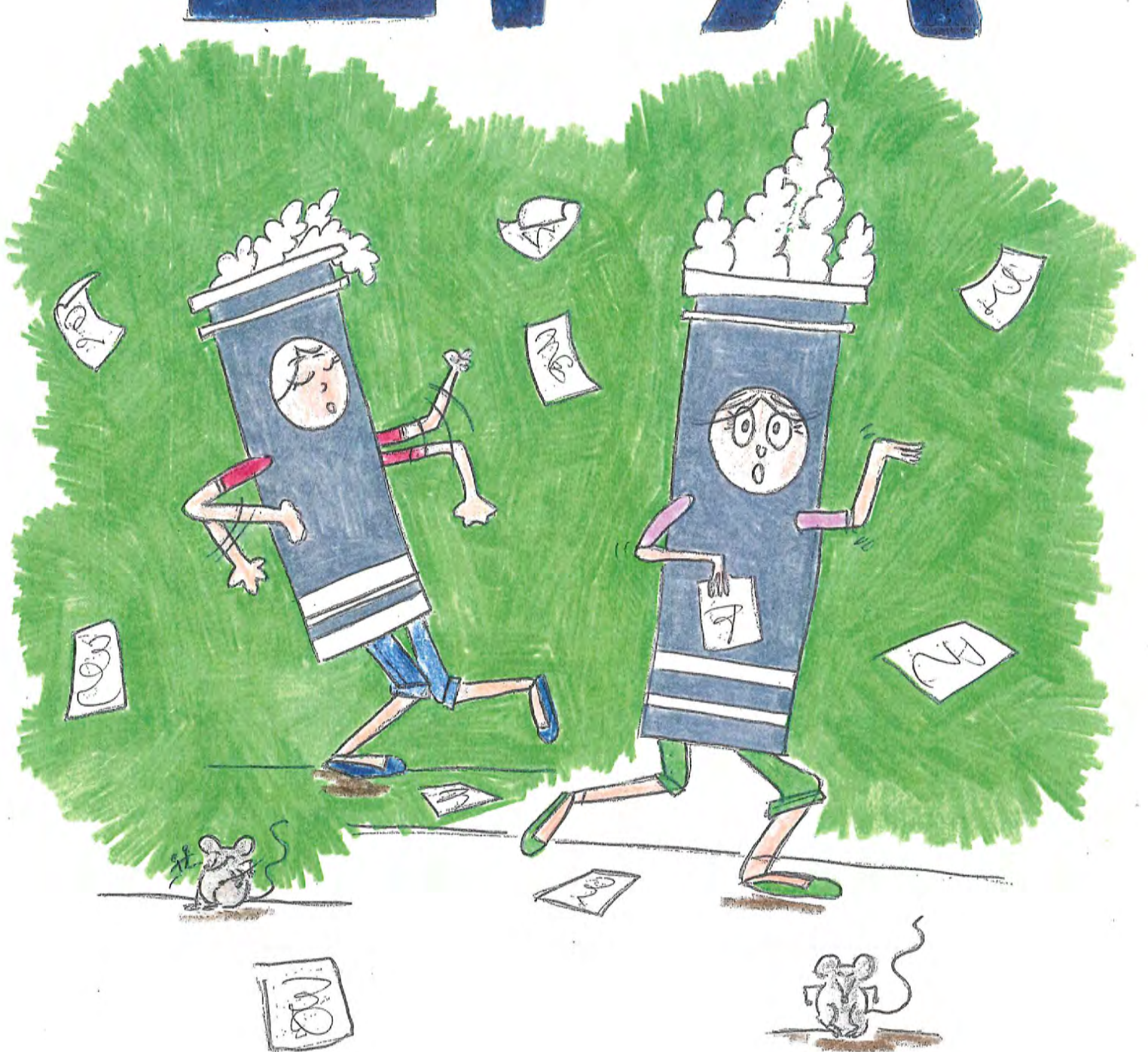


The right to petition goes all the way back to the Magna Carta in England.

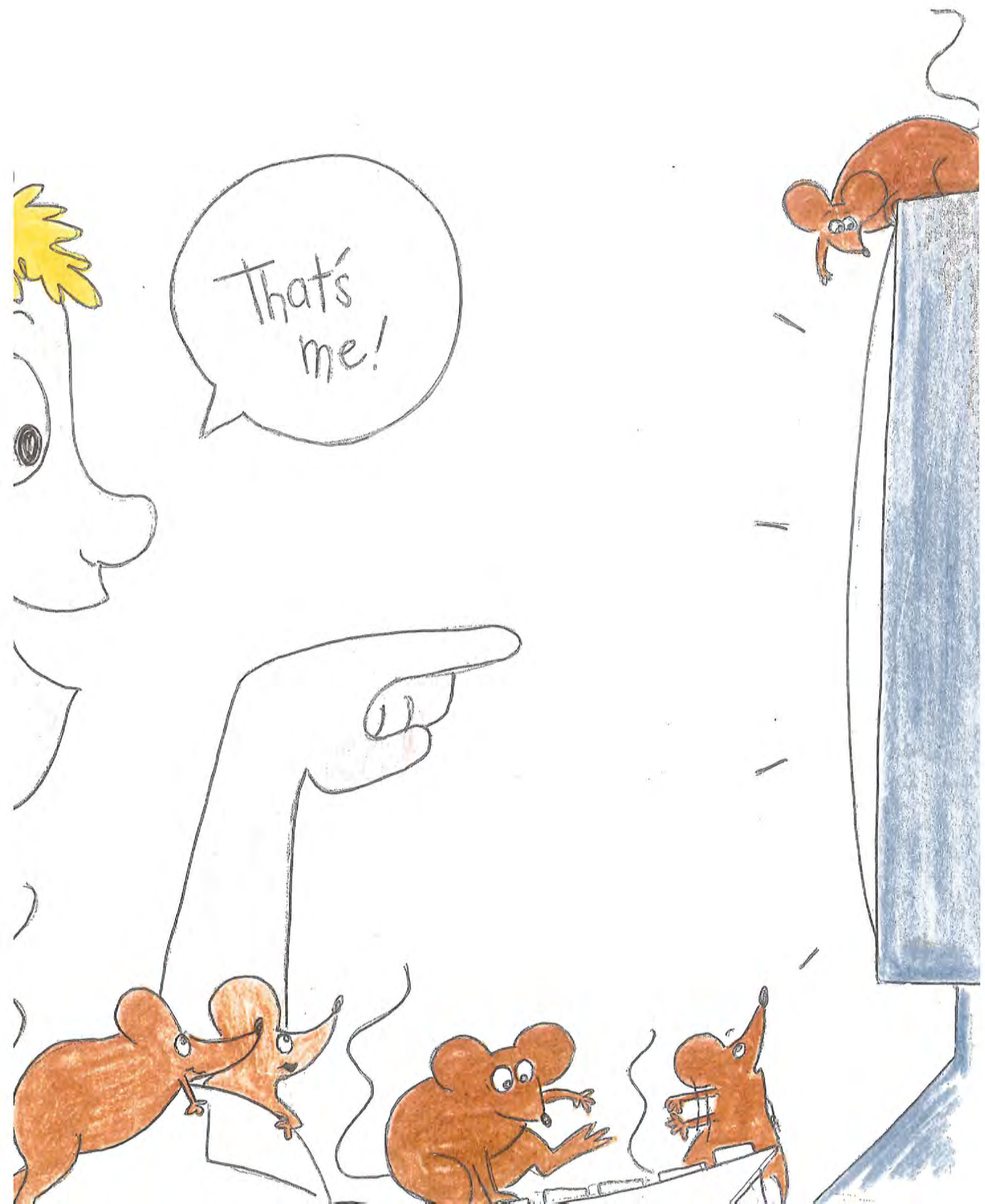


We went to parks and schools and concerts. We talked to people about my asthma and air quality. We had so many signatures that we were on the news and in newspapers. We got to meet some famous people and I told my story all over the United States.

EPA



My sister, Kerri, made signs and drew amazing pictures. She made flyers and became a member of an environmental group to make more people listen. My other sister, Katie, dressed up as a cement stack and danced around. Katie and her best friend, Katie B., danced all the way to Washington D.C. and danced in front of the Environmental Protection Agency, a really big building where people decide about how clean to keep our air and water. They were known as the dancing cement stacks and they danced at town hall meetings and around town to get signatures.



That's me!

I made a video and am on YouTube.

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ga4LanhTS4o>)

Me, being
like
George
Washington!



Then, a group from Washington D.C. called Earthjustice called my mom on the phone and asked if we would like to come to Washington D.C. to tell our story. I walked the same hallways and climbed the same stairs as Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson and George Washington.

cameras
and
reporters,



SENATORS!

I saw U.S. senators and I even recognized some of them from being on the news.

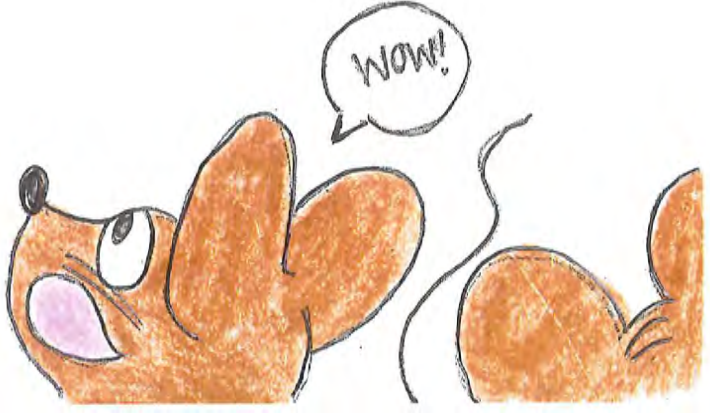
We have
come too far
not to be
heard!



We tried to see the Texas senators but they could not see us. My mom and my sister said, "We have come too far to not be heard" and that was when a senator named Barack Obama said he would meet with us.



LOOK!



WOW!

Senator Obama got down on one knee and talked to me about my asthma. He asked me how it felt and told me he understood because his daughter, Malia, has asthma, too. At that time, his family was living in Chicago and he said he thought that the pollution in Chicago caused Malia's asthma. It felt really good to know that he understood. He also knows how important it is to breathe clean air.



We took pictures and walked around the Capital building. We saw the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials, the Washington Monument and the White House. We rode the Metro but I think my favorite part was when we went to the National Zoo to see the panda bears.

My mom, my
sisters, and
lobbyists.



HA
CHA
CHA!

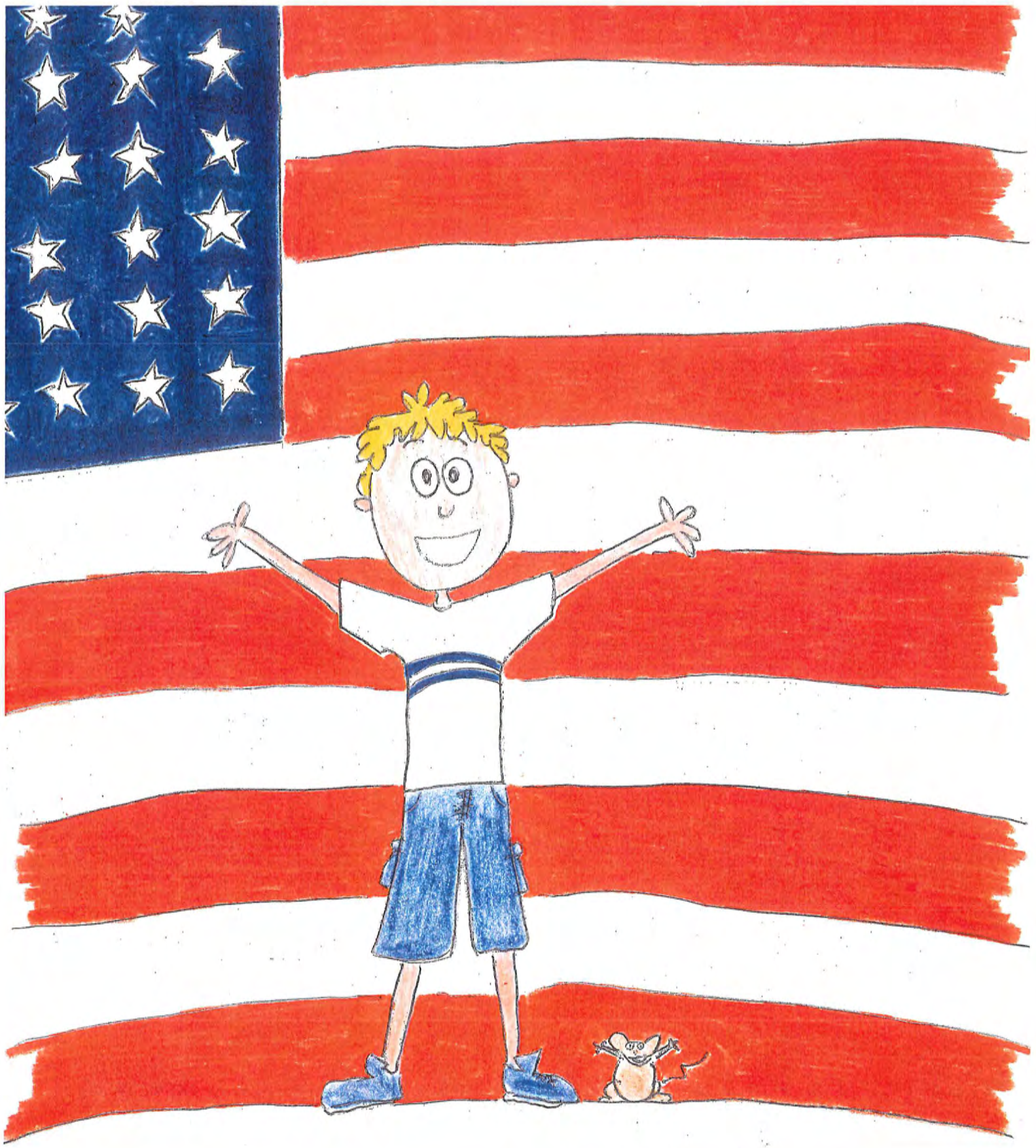


My mom and my sisters talked to a bunch of senators. And they worked hard with the lobbyists to get a new law for cleaner air.

(Airplane)



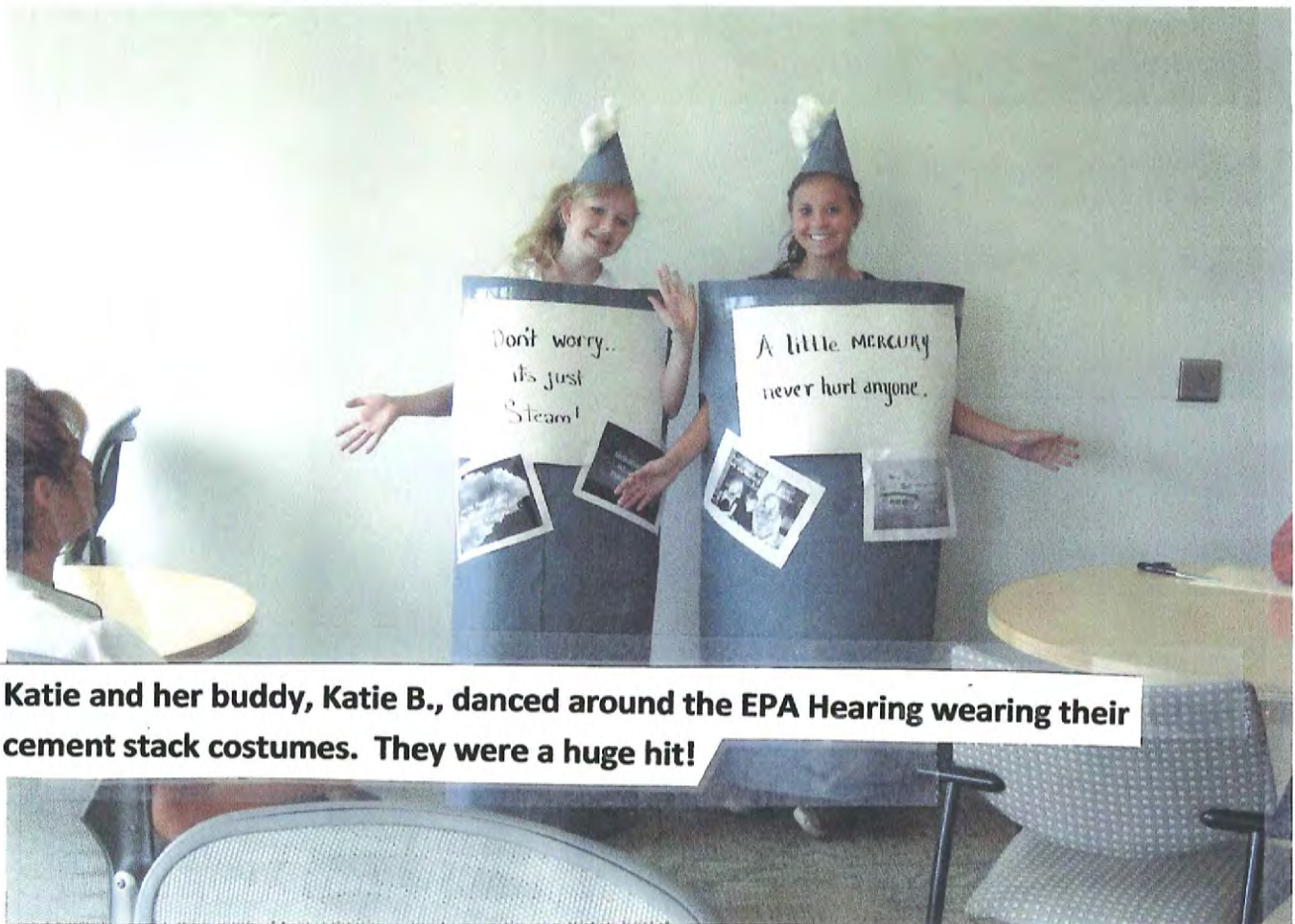
It didn't go exactly the way we wanted it to but at least we tried to make a difference.



In America, we have the right to stand up and speak out. Whether you put out flyers or dress up in costumes or testify before government officials, you never know who you could be talking to and that was how I met the future president of the United States.



Tommy meets Barack Obama and Senator Dick Durbin with his family and friends from Earthjustice.



Katie and her buddy, Katie B., danced around the EPA Hearing wearing their cement stack costumes. They were a huge hit!