

Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



Volume XII, Issue XII

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Child Welfare Practice Update from the WA Supreme Court

By: DIAMONIQUE WALKER



On October 18th, three members of the Mockingbird Youth Network staff went to observe the Washington State Supreme Court hearing to determine youth's constitutional right to having an attorney while going through termination of parental rights proceedings at Seattle University. Casey Trupin from Columbia Legal Services as well as Marla Zink from the Washington Appellate Project (who represented the mother of the children that didn't have a lawyer in their termination court



Casey Trupin is a Mockingbird ally and tireless advocate for legal representation for youth in care.

proceedings) both argued that youth have a due process right to counsel in these hearings. The opposing counsel, arguing for the state and representing DSHS, was Allyson Zipp.

Arguments opposed to youth having this right include the fact that youth often have access to Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) or Guardians Ad Litem (GAL). Opponents often say that these roles are similar to a lawyer. Lawyers can play different roles depending on the age and abilities of the young

From my perspective, I believe providing legal representation for youth in termination proceedings could benefit youth and the system as a whole.

person. For example, some lawyers are "client directed" if the child or youth is coherent and can explain their stated interest to their lawyer. Others may provide "substitute judgment" for their client, which is relied upon in cases involving young children. In these cases, the attorney is responsible for advocating for what the child needs based on her age and developmental levels. Unlike CASAs or GALs, attorneys are rigorously trained in the application of laws, and they are required to put their child-clients on equal footing, from a legal perspective, with the other parties in the courtroom. Attorneys must also keep client confidentiality which other court appointed roles do not have to do.

By not requiring legal representation in termination hearings, Washington State is in the minority of states across the country. It has received one of the bottom ten scores in a national report card on the issue of child representation in both 2007 and 2009¹. A possible reason for the lag is that this issue hasn't been widely known by the community and the legislature until recently. The Mockingbird Youth Network, along with other partners and advocates, has been working to bring this issue to light and decision-makers are starting to notice. Our state Legislature has invested a lot of money in the CASA program over time, and legislators see how a CASA can help provide important information about a child's life to the court. However, more and more, stakeholders are recognizing that attorneys also have a very powerful and unique role in the courtroom for youth that they represent.

From my perspective, I believe providing legal representation for youth in termination proceedings could benefit youth and the system as a whole. A study in Florida on the issue of child representation showed that when younger children were provided with attorneys, they achieve permanency at a rate faster than those children without representation². If children are achieving permanency at a faster rate because they have

the support of an attorney, those children are no longer in foster care, which means savings to the system. The Florida study ultimately showed that providing attorneys to youth was likely a cost-neutral solution in that state.

In the event that this becomes required in Washington, funding would definitely be an issue initially. We all know that right now state government is strapped for money, so despite all of the positive aspects of youth being appointed lawyers the deficit dilemma might stand in the way. But in the long run, this could be a cost neutral way to make sure that youth in termination proceedings are on equal legal footing with other parties to the case, and ultimately reach permanency faster that they would if they weren't entitled to their own legal counsel.

¹In 2007, Washington received an F grade, obtaining only 31 out of 100 possible points and ranking among the bottom five states. Available at <http://www.firststar.org/documents/FIRSTSTARReportCard07.pdf>, at 10-11; 108-09. In 2009, Washington's grade bumped to a D grade (obtaining 61 out of 100 points), but that was primarily due to a change in First Star's grading method. Washington remained among the bottom nine states. Available at <http://www.firststar.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=TrMFoSlkF1%3d&tabid=74>; at 21-23; 126-27.

²Andrew E. Zinn & Jack Slowriver, *Expediting Permanency: Legal Representation for Foster Children in Palm Beach County 1* (2008), available at http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/old_reports/428.pdf, at 1-2.

Mockingbird and the YMCA: 10 years of partnership

By: SEÁN WALSH

Associate Executive Director, Downtown Seattle YMCA

The YMCA of Greater Seattle, at 135 years old, recently re-branded itself as part of a national effort to highlight and deepen its commitment to its core cause: building community. For our Y — which offers foster care alumni and homeless young adults housing and independent living coaching — this meant looking at new ways to encourage meaningful relationships among youth.

One of the Y's local inspirations has been The Mockingbird Society, a considerably younger organization promoting its own kind of community-building through innovative programs like the Mockingbird Family Model and The Mockingbird Youth Network.

Since Mockingbird opened its doors 10 years ago, the Y has tapped their team for consulting, and encouraged foster youth to write news and poetry for publication in the *Mockingbird Times*. And the partnership has been mutual; Mockingbird has continually referred young people to the Y for housing, internships, scholarships and other resources.

Over the last decade, the two organizations have grown their collaboration. Y program participants joined Mockingbird's Youth Advocacy Days in Olympia. Mockingbird recruited Y youth to become peer trainers and chapter leaders. Mailing day parties for the Times were held at the YMCA. A few young people even chose to work at both organizations.

Earlier this fall, Mockingbird and the Y began work toward a more unified, regional approach to peer connection, service and leadership — another way to build community together. Next up in 2012: a partnership with Casey Family Programs, Treehouse and Children's Administration to develop a peer training for youth about to exit foster care.

The Y has long viewed The Mockingbird Society as the high bar for authentic youth voice and leadership, and for seeing caring adults as allies. This is embedded in their organizational culture, and it ripples outward. From my perspective as a community partner, Mockingbird's legacy — even beyond its legislative achievements — will be its lasting influence on how the community respects the voice of youth, and how youth in turn build a stronger community.



The wildly successful "Boo Bash," held at the 2100 Building on October 27th, is a great example of how young adults from the YMCA and Mockingbird Society work together to positively engage the community.

Letter from the Editor

BY JIM THEOFELIS



Happy Holidays to you all! As 2011 comes to a close, it is important to take a moment to reflect on how much we have accomplished in the face of unprecedented challenges. I am so very thankful and proud of everyone who helped us continue our mission of building a world-class foster care system, from our outstanding staff and board members to our loyal *Mockingbird Times* readers.

This year's accomplishments span our entire scope of work at Mockingbird, and they have laid the foundation for continued progress in the future. Our legislative advocacy efforts resulted in several victories during the 2011 session, including increasing safety for youth in care through unannounced visits and our state's first step toward extending voluntary safe housing to age 21 for all youth exiting foster care. Our Mockingbird Youth Network continues to expand in its capacity and influence. Thanks to a grant from the Andrus Family Fund, we are developing a new training designed to help youth aging out of care succeed as independent adults. The Mockingbird Family Model continues to

show itself to be a safe and effective model for providing a supportive community for youth in care, presenting exciting opportunities for replication.

There is much work left to be done, as a special session of the legislature tasked with finding \$2 billion in savings is underway. The impact of yet another round of cuts would be devastating to our state's most vulnerable children, youth and families. The Mockingbird Society is working with its allies and champions in Olympia to find creative and effective solutions to protect critical resources and programs for our youth in care. In these challenging times it is more important than ever to remind our elected officials that youth in foster care are all OUR children and need our support.

Thank you for your continued support of children, youth and families and happy holidays to you and those you love.

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

December 2011 Mockingbird Times Thank You's

Casey Family Programs, Victor Gonzalez, Catholic Children and Family Services, Rick Butt, Reiko Rosenquist, Kara Estep, Alex Okerman, Heather Riley, Kathy Bannon and the Youth Services team, Shelby Everett, Andrus Family Fund, Steve Antonoff, Bank of America, James & Nancy Bardeen, An-Marie Bellows, Virginia Blayney, Michele & Richard Bolkovatz, Suzie Burke, Shirley Burns, Central Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, Donald Peter Chamberlain, Cooper Levy Trust, Adam Cornell, Karen Cowgill, Bruce Cross, Beverly Deckelmann, Susan Elizabeth, James & Rosemary Flaherty, Jillian Gross, Lura Harrison, Jo Ann Herbert, Barbara James, Michael Jolson, Olivia Jones, Chelsea Lidstrom, Quong & Terrence Louie, Patricia McCabe, Claire Miccio, Amy Miller, Thai Nguyen, Sessions Family Foundation, Anne St. Germain, John & Sharon Theofelis, Alicia Tonasket, Kayla Weiner, Paul Wirsing.

The Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, The Mockingbird Society. Atticus, the widowed father of Jem and Scout, joins Miss Maudie in teaching his kids that it's a sin to kill a mockingbird because "...Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us."

What if we created an organization, a community, indeed a world, in which our most vulnerable children and youth were protected and valued with the same commitment that Atticus had for mockingbirds? Join The Mockingbird Society today and help us give young people a safe place to nest and sing.

MEET OUR STAFF

Jim Theofelis, **Executive Director**
Ros Ghan, **Deputy Director**
Tiffany Washington, **Youth Programs Director**
Jon Brumbach, **Public Policy & Communications Coordinator**
Kylie Palzer, **Development Coordinator**
Brian Lawrence, **Development Director**
Beth Vance, **Finance Director**
Lauren Frederick, **Executive Assistant**

Fredrick Kingston, **Network Coordinator**
Aine Cowan-Kuist, **Administrative Coordinator**
David Forte, **Evaluations and Database Coordinator**
Bailey Buckingham, **Mockingbird Network Program Assistant**
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Youth Development Specialist: Georgina Ramirez
Senior Network Representatives: David Buck, Diamonique Walker
Network Representatives: Amanda Bevington, Asha Boucree, Brenda Ortega, Deonate Cruz, Mandy Urwiler, Samantha McDonald
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ABOUT US: *The Mockingbird Society* is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation leading advocacy for foster care reform built on youth-inspired solutions, powerful coalitions and public support for every child's right to a safe home and a bright future. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please consult your tax advisor regarding your specific tax situation. The *Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of *The Mockingbird Society* are paid between \$9.50 and \$12 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, and poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of over 25,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the USA, through a private distribution list and as an insert in *Real Change*, a Seattle-based community newspaper. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of *The Mockingbird Society* and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. Donations can be made online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or by calling our office at (206) 323-5437. Donations to *The Mockingbird Society* may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of *The Mockingbird Society*. All contents copyright ©2009, *The Mockingbird Society*.

Braam v. State of Washington — Personal Experiences and Reflections

BY: AMIE WATKINS

Editor's Note: Amie Watkins was one of the 13 plaintiffs in the 2004 landmark child welfare settlement *Braam v. the State of Washington*, which established the Braam panel and identified 22 specific standards that Washington state's child welfare system must work to meet. On November 1st 2011 the Braam panel and the State of Washington agreed to a 26 month extension to continue holding the child welfare system to a higher standard and improving care for children, youth and families.



Amie Watkins, shortly after entering the foster care system at age 3. Her experience in care has made her a tireless advocate for child welfare reform.

My name is Amie and I am a former foster child from Washington state. My story is not sensational; rather, it is similar to that of thousands of other foster children living in the world around us. I was born into an impoverished family in Washington state. There was much dysfunction, and little to no community support for the multitude of issues my family endured. At age six, three years after being removed from my biological parents and brother, the state Department of Social and Health Services successfully petitioned to terminate the parental rights of my parents. I immediately became a case number to the state foster care system, a frightened child with no family or clear path to recovery.

The child welfare and legal systems removed my entire identity. I felt I had no rights in legal proceedings, I was not asked what my opinion was, and the state controlled every aspect of the process. As my memories of my family faded away, I realized I had become a faceless case number in the system, not a child. I had a burden placed upon me that no one should ever have to carry as a child. I was placed in homes that limited inclusion into families, and provided little help in resolving my personal problems. Each time I was removed and placed in a new home or institution, I felt helpless and traumatized.

I almost gave up, but something gave me hope to continue the battle I waged every day to survive. As I moved to over thirty foster homes, and about one hundred schools, I vowed to find a family and focus on becoming successful.

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At age twelve, I met a therapeutic family, through Friends of Youth, who took me into their home. At first I was very happy, but I was well aware of the "honey moon" syndrome. There were pets, but no other children. I eventually learned that it was a home where I would be accepted as a family member. I learned this was a place I could recover and re-establish my life and identity. There were battles we overcame together. The family strongly advocated for me, established services, scheduled medical and mental tests; they worked hard to provide all the support I needed. We were able to identify my needs, as well as prognoses for success, which had not previously been established. I improved quickly and enrolled in the local school. My family worked with the special education department to design an academic and social plan for my success. I made friends and got a job. I began to believe I was finally a normal teenager, in a normal family, with a structured and loving environment. My social life was healthy. I graduated from school with a 3.9 GPA and earned the coveted Governor's Scholarship, which provided for a full education at any state university.

As one of the original thirteen plaintiffs in the Braam case, my objective in participating in the case was to make the foster care system better for other foster youth. As of today, many systemic improvements have been made. For example, youth in care have better access to medical and mental health services, and placement protocol for foster kids and their siblings has vastly improved. I am still a fierce advocate for foster kids, and for the full implementation of the Braam panel's recommendations, and though much has improved, we still have a long way to go. As I write this, I am conscious that I will never forget the impact foster care had on me — and consequently, I will continue the fight for improvements in the child welfare system.

Mockingbird Hub Home Needed

Ryther, a long-term partner with The Mockingbird Society, has an opening north of Seattle for an experienced foster family to provide Hub Home support for a constellation of eight foster homes. Please visit our websites:

www.ryther.org

www.mockingbirdsociety.org

and contact Heather Perry at (206) 517-0273 ext. 11 if interested. We look forward to hearing from you.

Ryther
Healthy Children. Stronger Families.

My Life Started Over When I Went Into Foster Care

By: SAMANTHA McDONALD



My name is Samantha McDonald and I am one of the new Youth Network Representatives. My life started over at the age of ten years old. I was placed in permanent foster care with foster parents that cared, supported and raised me as their own. I was extremely blessed to have this home to lay my head at night. From my experience in foster care I feel that every child and youth in care should have a positive experience. My hope is that I can be an example, a positive advocate for those in the foster care system through my own beliefs in healthy family relationships, embracing differences, and the power of positive thinking.

In the first few years of living with my foster family, I threatened to run away because I strongly felt like I was being emotionally transformed into believing that my biological family didn't want me. That was not case. In the transition I was split from my younger sisters and my brother, and I felt alone. As time passed, my perspective changed. My foster mom came to me with grace and gave me the option of counseling or moving to another family. She let me know the negatives and positives of both decisions but expressed her sorrow in my desire to run. My choice was counseling because in my heart I knew that my foster parents were helping me and my future. Now, not only do I have them as family, but I am able to have healthy relationships with my biological family as well. Healthy family relationships are important to my work at Mockingbird because I have experienced the love of being in a family, and I believe all kids in care deserve this experience.

Difference is what makes the world what it is, whether it's race, culture, or style. It takes a certain kind of person to embrace difference – a person that is able to learn from diversity. I grew up with a disability that limited my ability to do things other children could do. It set me back in my education and basic communication skills. I struggled with embracing that I was different and always was going to be. Then, during my sophomore year of high school, a fellow classmate told me that

Difference is what makes the world what it is, whether it's race, culture, or style. It takes a certain kind of person to embrace difference – a person that is able to learn from diversity.

I wasn't different. Surprisingly, I rejected what they said, and I insisted that I wasn't like everyone else. I realized I wanted to be different because it set me apart from those who were "average." Once I accepted the fact that I didn't walk or look like everyone else then I understood that difference is something to celebrate. I've learned that the experience of foster care is another example of difference because of the many backgrounds, families, children, and youth involved. It's a culture that defines difference in so many ways; my story is just one out of thousands.

I believe 100 percent in the power of positive thinking because it helps me keep going in the hardest of times. As I laid awake the first years of going into foster care I comforted myself in the knowledge that things were going to turn out okay. Being positive in any situation doesn't make someone naive, stupid or unaware; it simply helps them keep going. The power of thinking positively is important for my work as representative because I will be faced with challenging tasks.

My life is a journey, a joy, and I look forward to working as a Youth Network Rep here at Mockingbird.



My name is Mandy and I am seventeen years old. I am a new Youth Network Representative and I am excited to be

here and have the job I have been trying for since May of this year!!!

I was in foster care for fifteen months, starting when my son was four days old. I was scared when I entered foster care at fifteen, mainly because of a combination of having my two older brothers taken away and put into foster care when I was two (I haven't seen them since), and the horror stories I heard about foster care from peers. I was very lucky to be placed in a foster home where I felt like part of a real, working family.

Early this year, my foster father asked me to go to an Independent Living Services (ILS) meeting where I met Graham Parrington, Resource Specialist for the Olympia Mockingbird Youth Network Chapter. Graham told me about The Mockingbird Society, and got me hooked on advocacy. Within a month, I stepped up to help my friend with fulfilling his duties as Chapter Leader by filling in for him when needed.

Who I Am

By MANDY URWILER

Because I knew I was a strong leader with a powerful voice filled with passion, I worked to make my opinions heard through the MBS chapter in Olympia. As

As a parent in foster care, I realized that teen parents aren't always treated like we are capable of being proper parents at a young age. We aren't always given the respect that every parent deserves. I wanted to help change that as a Youth Network participant.

a parent in foster care, I realized that teen parents aren't always treated like we are capable of being proper parents at a young age. We aren't always given the respect that every parent deserves. I wanted to help change that as a Youth Network participant. For more details on my experiences as a teen parent in Foster care, feel free to refer to my article in the October 2011 edition of the *Mockingbird Times*.

In addition to being an advocate, I am a musician at heart. I was born into music, and learned that music is the one friend that will never die and never leave me. You can get rid of every instrument in the world and

cut out my vocal chords, but you can never take the music that is intertwined with my soul.

I also am a parent and I love to spend time with my son, Nicky, and my absolutely amazing fiancé. Nicky just turned two and he is WAY too smart for his own good. He is the light in my life, my world, my very being. My fiancé has been a tremendous help in dealing with the stress of the "terrible twos" and working on my own transition to adulthood.

Personally, I have many ambitious longer term goals, which include continuing my education and earning an engineering degree with a specialty in medical engineering.

I can't wait to see what is in store for me as one of the newest Network Representatives. I am truly proud to be a member of the Mockingbird team. Thank you to all who believed that I could make it.



Meet Mockingbird's two newest Youth Network Representatives, Mandy and Samantha!

Support Youth and Alumni of Foster Care this Holiday Season!



The *Mockingbird Times* is distributed free of charge to people with a passion for improving the lives of children, youth and families. Please support our youth reporters with a holiday gift to The Mockingbird Society. Make a gift today and help empower our next generation!

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We Welcome Your Work!

We welcome submissions of articles, poetry, artwork, and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or homelessness. If you want to be published in the *Mockingbird Times* visit www.mockingbirdsociety.org, or contact us at (206) 407-2134 or via email at mbt@mockingbirdsociety.org. If you have submitted something before that hasn't been published, we may need your submission agreement in order to publish your work. Please submit materials and completed agreement again via the email address listed above.

Note: Any incoming letters to the editor and any correspondence to youth under 18 years of age should be addressed to the *Mockingbird Times* and will be opened first by adult editorial staff.

Creative Corner

If Only Someone Had Told Me

BY COURTNEY CANOVA

But, there was no need to be ashamed of tears, for tears bore witness that a man had the greatest of courage, the courage to suffer.

-Viktor E. Frankl

Someone once told me that emotional pain only lasts for 12 minutes, everything after that is self-inflicted. Well I wish they would have told me that years ago.

Nobody told me life would be easy, but I wish they would have warned me of how hard it would be. I wish someone would've told me that almost every day I would wake up to something that would change my life once again...something that usually wasn't for the better.

I wish someone would have told me that my mom would be a drug addict and go to prison, and that I would have to raise my little sister at the age of 12. If someone would have told me that my dad would have a stroke when I was 15, I would have been more prepared; I would make sure I told him just how much he meant to me.

I wonder if anybody thought of stopping to help me when I was homeless and living on the streets. I wonder if I could've stayed in high school if I had a stable home. I wonder if my sister will grow up knowing that I did everything I could to protect her. I hope she doesn't think I abandoned her.

I wonder if I will ever learn how to trust or truly love. But mostly I wonder if life would have been different had I known what was coming next.

Looking at me now you would have never guessed that at one point I wanted to be six feet under; you would have no idea that I had a dark fire burning inside me fueled by a mixture of loneliness, anger, fear and hopelessness. You would not have guessed that I had attended over 13 different schools, and you wouldn't think that I had lost hope in ever finding a place to call home.

Now, you see a girl that keeps her head high and hides her pain behind her smile – what you wouldn't see is the girl who had everything she's ever known or loved ripped away from her; a girl who literally had to do what she could to survive, and who now is paying the consequences for it.

You don't know me; for a period of time I didn't know myself. Nobody has held my hand through life, and in some ways, that is what makes me who I am today: a strong, beautiful, young college student who has the world at her fingertips.



REGIONAL CHAPTER UPDATES

Region 1 North (Spokane) Chapter Update

BY KRISTINA THOMASON

What's going down in Spokane? Well glad you asked, let me fill you in: This month I was excited to present the Life Advocacy training, along with Courtney Canova, at our chapter meeting at Volunteers of America on Tuesday, November 15th. With Thanksgiving approaching, we decided that our community outreach project this month would be doing our annual holiday kickoff on Wednesday, November 16th. We partnered up with Crosswalk to provide sack lunches to the homeless who come through the downtown plaza. We were really excited to spend time together and give back! We were happy to see our usual faces, as well as new ones, at both our chapter meeting and at the community service project!

Region 1 South (Yakima) Chapter Update

BY BRANDY BAXLEY

On October 29th ACT FIRST had our 3rd annual Harvest Party! We had 13 youth in attendance, plus many of their family members. We had 3 new members come and join in our fun. Tiffany (one of our participants) won our big raffle for the MP3 Player. It was a great time. On November 11th our planning team gathered together to prepare for facilitating the Culture of Foster Care Training. Then myself, Brenda, Luis, Stevie, and Jacob facilitated the training on Wednesday November 16th at Casey Family Programs in Yakima for about 35 CASA volunteers from Region 1 South. It was very empowering to conduct the training for the group, and our team was happy to help the CASAs learn from our experiences in care.

Region 2 South (Seattle) Chapter Update

BY MAX REAM

On Thursday November 10th my fellow chapter members Christina Koshney, Lakeshia Schiner, and Miriam Mboya, and our Resource Specialist Jerry Bobo, facilitated the Culture of Foster Care Training to about 15 state social workers at the Children's Administration office in West Seattle. They were very pleased and excited to receive a training about foster youth given by foster youth. November marks the start of the holiday season,

and in our region, to start off the holiday festivities, we go and visit with the senior residents at the Kawabe Memorial House. The day before our November 15th visit, a group of chapter members baked pies, which we then delivered to the seniors during our visit. This was the 4th year that we have spent time with them during the holidays. We enjoy this visit every year because the Kawabe residents are so kind hearted, and they love telling stories about their lives, and telling us young people how we should not take our youthful years for granted. It is a good feeling knowing that volunteering in "OUR" community at the Kawabe Memorial House changes someone life in a good way.

Region 2 North (Everett) Chapter Update

BY VALERIE SKELTON

HEYMAC held our latest chapter meeting on 10/27/2011. It had a great turn out; chapter participants attended with enthusiasm and were prepared for the event. Youthnet board members and staff enjoyed meeting the chapter participants, and our legislative guest Representative Kirk Pearson gave very positive feedback on the event. Garrett, Valerie, Janell, Monique, and Marta and Maria were the featured leaders for the night. After giving an overview of the Youth Network and our advocacy topic, sibling connections, to our adult visitors, we had a guest speaker. Amie Watkins, an alumna of care and participant in the original Braam lawsuit, spoke about Braam's history, how she became involved, and the advocacy work she still does today. To conclude the meeting, Georgina read some letters from a fellow chapter participant who recently joined the military. We all took time to write him back to support him in his efforts; the chapter was really excited to hear from him.

Region 3 North (Tacoma) Chapter Update

BY TIANNA OLIVER

For November's chapter meeting we hosted a community service event, and said a sad goodbye to our Resource Specialist Samantha Valle, who, after years of advocating for the rights of foster youth right along with us, is now transitioning to a new job. After the announcement of her resignation, we got right down to business. Our chapter made twenty warm sack lunches to hand out to people in

our community who looked in need of a hot meal. We also had a volunteer from Fox Island join us. She is trying to make her community more aware of foster care issues, and we were grateful for her attendance. Our next Chapter meeting will be in December, and the date is to be announced. Hope to see you for some Christmas fun.

In the spirit of saying farewell, we will miss Samantha dearly, but we'll never forget her sassy attitude or her giving ways. She's definitely one of a kind, and we were lucky to have her.

Region 3 South (Olympia) Chapter Update

BY MANDY URWILER

Hello from Olympia! Recently, the chapter has been discussing a few ideas on how to facilitate a community service project. One of our ideas was to rent out Skateland and have a party as a fundraiser. Another idea was to volunteer at Rosie's Place, a drop-in center for homeless youth in Olympia. In Seattle, there is something we affectionately call the World Map, which is a flier that lists all resources for homeless youth, including where youth can take showers, wash their laundry, eat hot meals, get "new to them" clothes, and sign up for case management. We are thinking of creating something similar for Mason, Thurston, and Lewis counties, starting with Olympia, and working our way out. Our last Chapter meeting was on September 15th, and the next meeting is still to be determined since we are still interviewing candidates for our Resource Specialist position.

I, Mandy Urwiler, left my position as Chapter Leader to take a new position as a Network Representative at Mockingbird headquarters on November 7th. We plan to take new applications for Chapter Leader at the next chapter meeting.



Seattle Youth Network participants were delighted to share pies and origami with seniors at the Kawabe Center on November 15th



Everett chapter leader Valerie Skelton connects with Representative Kirk Pearson during a recent chapter meeting at YouthNet in Mt. Vernon.