

Mockingbird Times



Recipient of 2005 Congressional Angels in Adoption Award
Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth.

February 2008

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation

Volume IX, Issue 2

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-KIDS (5437)

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Status of the Candidates by Samuel Martin

This is a very exciting time in the world of politics. We have seen several interesting things happen within the past few months. We have seen a lot of energy and passion put into primaries, caucuses, and debates. This year, there is a lot of history being made on the Democratic side. For the first time, we will most likely have either a black or a women candidate representing one of the major parties. There are also strong candidates coming from the Republican side. Some of the more interesting events have been the debates. If you have followed any of the debates you will see the heart these candidates put into it. It really reminds me of one of my football games because you are constantly proving yourself and fighting for something.

Coming out of the Democratic side are **Barack Obama** and **Hillary Clinton**, two people who have really gone at each others' throats the past few weeks. They are both very good candidates and both have great strong points. For example, Barack Obama is all about making sure we fix our education system and he wants to get the troops out of Iraq in a smart, timely matter. Hillary Clinton also has great goals. For example, she has made it clear that she will give everyone in America health care and that she would remove our troops from Iraq as soon as possible. Regardless of your political stance, these are all great goals that most Americans have on their minds.

Of course, the candidates also take a very different stance on a lot of issues. They both have been criticized severely about certain things, for example, " [Obama is] a newcomer to the national scene, so voters haven't had as much time to weigh his strengths and weak-

nesses. And Obama can't reassure voters by pointing out how he handled some high-profile personal or political crisis."¹ I honestly think that, if elected, they each could rise to the occasion, if need be. A lot of people wanted to see the "dream ticket" which would be Obama/Clinton or vice versa. "Clinton will not be overshadowed by an underling. Clinton is hugely popular in Democratic circles, but truth be told, that pales in comparison to the love and affection showered on Obama.... He has offered a vision of change, and having to answer to the years of strife under the Clintons would be too much."²

On the other side of affairs is the Republican Party, which also has a few top candidates such as **John McCain**, **Mitt Romney**, and **Mike Huckabee**. All have proven themselves and have developed some political influence. John McCain is known to be a more liberal Republican on some issues. "We disagree on a number of issues, and if you look at Sen. McCain's position on a number of issues, you have a hard time distinguishing him from Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama,"³ Mitt Romney has said. I have not had an opportunity to follow all of the Republican candidates' positions but I have had a chance to see McCain and Romney. John McCain feels that there should be troops in Iraq to provide long term consistency; he feels it will help the rebuilding process. Mitt Romney has taken a firm stance in ending illegal immigration and making stronger border control.

I believe all of these political figures have strong stances and great views. It is really up to you to choose who you feel is the best candidate based on your personal views. The best thing you can do in this election is to be

knowledgeable about the candidates.

There are a few dates to be aware of and ways to get involved. February 5th, also known as "Super Tuesday," there were 12 state primaries. Between Feb 9th-June 3rd there will be Democratic primaries throughout the remaining states. For Republicans, Feb 7th-June 9th will be the remainder of their primaries. June 28th there will be a PBS debate featuring the 2008 Democratic presidential candidates. August 25th -28th will be the National Democratic Convention in Denver. September 1st through 4th will be the National Republican Convention in Minneapolis. November 2nd, Nevada Democrats will host a presidential debate at the University of Las Vegas. November 4th is the national election day. Following these events and doing your own personal reading should give you enough knowledge to make an informed decision.

This is also very big for me as well: I get a chance to vote for the first time! Another huge difference-maker in this election is the youth vote. I have been talking to a lot of my peers and there are different views among them as to how they will be involved with the vote. It just goes to show that things are beginning to change and people are understanding the power of the individual. I once again would like to encourage you all to get involved, vote, and take control of the future of America. I know I will.

1. www.seattletimes.com

2,3. www.cnn.com

Other sources referenced for this article:
www.barackobama.com, www.hillaryclinton.com,
www.johnmccain.com, www.mittromney.com,
www.wikipedia.org, www.boston.com

Don't forget to vote! The presidential primary for Washington State voters is February 19th.



Testimony to the Judiciary Committee on HB 3048 BY JIM THEOFELIS

The following is a transcript of Jim Theofelis's testimony to the Washington State House of Representatives Judiciary Committee on House Bill 3048: Legal Representation for Adolescents in Dependency Hearings, January 25th, 2008.

Good Morning. For the record, my name is **Jim Theofelis** and I am the founder and Executive Director of The Mockingbird Society. We are an advocacy based organization with a mission of building a world class foster care system through collaboration, innovation, and advocacy.

First, I would like to thank you, **Madame Chair**, and **Representative Goodman** for sponsoring HB 3048 and to all the members of the committee for hearing this important bill.

HB 3048 is clearly a bill whose time has come. As I mentioned earlier, our mission statement is to build a world class foster care system for the nearly 10,000 children and adolescents in Washington's system. One of the ways in which we define "world class" is the standard that kids in foster care receive the

same level of care and support that kids from intact families receive. I can tell you, as a parent, I would never, and assume most parents would never, allow a child to set foot into a court room without adequate legal representation. It is my contention that once the state has gone into a family's home and removed the children, the state then assumes a major responsibility as the parent. We have been very

HB 3048: Legal Representation for Adolescents in Dependency Hearings

Establishing a pilot project in two regions, this bill would provide youth 12 and older an attorney for their Dependency Hearings.

fortunate in that the Washington Legislature has viewed the responsibility of caring for kids in foster care as a bi-partisan issue. The Dependency Hearing is a very critical hearing in which major life decisions are made and we believe it is inappropriate and counter-

therapeutic to put kids in this type of position without adequate legal support.

You can see from the bill that we have worked hard to introduce this concept in a measured fashion. HB 3048 would begin as a pilot project that includes training, a cap on the number of clients an attorney can have, and a study to determine the benefits of this proposal. We further scaled the proposal back to only include youngsters age 12 and older. We believe we will see improved outcomes for the adolescents who participate in this program, including ensuring that court ordered services are indeed provided to kids and families, better educational outcomes, and increased placement stability.

In the words of James Baldwin: "For these are all of our children; and we will profit by or pay for whatever they become." I believe this bill is the right thing for our kids in foster care and, if given the opportunity, HB 3048 will clearly demonstrate its effectiveness. Again, I thank you for hearing HB 3048 and I encourage a "Do Pass" vote out of committee. Thank you.



Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS

The 2008 Washington legislative session is underway. The Mockingbird Society is once again proud to be actively involved in training and supporting youth to participate in the legislative process. We are especially excited about this year's Youth Advocacy Day on February 8th. This is a day when youth who are typically left out of the civic engagement process are able to meet directly with state legislators and share their voice, experiences, and perspectives regarding public policy. The youth are directly involved in planning the day's events, training other youth on salient legislative issues, and being powerful advocates while in Olympia.

While I believe this is a great experience for the young people who participate, I also believe it's proven to be immensely beneficial to the legislators themselves. I know this because so many legislators have expressed the power that comes from listening to the young people themselves who have been in foster care and/or homeless.

On another note, The Mockingbird Society is experiencing another growth spurt. We are expanding our Youth LEAD

program to truly be a state-wide program engaging youth in communities across the state. Additionally, our Mockingbird Family Model continues to receive high praise from caregivers and we have plans to replicate in a number of sites including some outside of Washington.

One very exciting development is what we are calling Prevention Models. Our plan is to implement the Mockingbird Family Model with birth parents in an effort to give them the support they need in order to prevent their children being placed in foster care. Another example of our Prevention Model is to support relatives who are raising a child in their family, e.g., grandparents, aunts and uncles, older siblings, etc. We believe that children will do better with a safe and healthy relative and we want to give these relatives the tangible supports they need in order to be able to keep their young relatives out of the foster care system.

Finally, I want to thank all of you who continue to provide financial support to our work and mission.

Jim Theofelis

jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Hi Jim,

I just wanted to thank you again for the presentation that you gave at the grandparents group yesterday; I got so much from it. I had been really feeling the weight of parenting lately and your words have given me more strength to keep doing what I am doing. When you said thanks to us for doing the parenting because it is keeping more kids from having to go into the system, it really made me rethink a few things. Sometimes it gets hard and you feel like you don't know if you can continue but,

with people like you, it can make a difference. I am really interested in the program that you were talking about in regards to giving parents support so that they don't lose their kids. That is something I have been thinking about for quite some time because I have seen so many and heard about so many losing their children to the state. Please put me on your email list. Keep on doing what you're doing because it's all good.

Sandra

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.

Become a Member of The Mockingbird Society

We welcome you to join us in making a difference in the lives of our nation's most vulnerable children, youth, and families. As a supporter, you'll receive a monthly edition of the *Mockingbird Times*. Thank you for your contribution.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITYSTATEZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Enclosed, please find my check made payable to **The Mockingbird Society** in the amount of (please note amount on appropriate line):

\$1,000 +	Protector	\$
\$500 - \$900	Champion	\$
\$250 - \$500	Advocate	\$
\$50 - \$250	Supporter	\$
\$25	Contributor	\$

My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.

I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.

Please do not include my name on published donor lists.

Please mail this completed form and your check to: The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South, Suite 240, Seattle, WA 98144. For questions or more information, call (206) 323-KIDS (5437) or visit www.mockingbirdsociety.org.



Meet the Staff: Rhonda Smith

My name is Rhonda Smith. I am 19 years old. I'm from all over Washington. I was born in Seattle. I moved to Port Orchard when I was three. From 11 through 13 I stayed all over Kitsap County. I moved to Tacoma around the age of 13. When I was 16, I moved to Snoqualmie. Around the age of 17, I moved to Burien. Since I turned 18, I've been staying all over Seattle. I currently live in the University District. I am a senior in high school. I attend an interagency school. I also go to Seattle Central Community College. I love music and hanging out with my friends. Writing is something I've wanted to do forever.

I've been in the system basically my whole life. I got taken away from my birth parents at birth because my mom and dad were both into drugs. I got adopted when I was three years old. That didn't work out for very long. I got taken out of that home for abuse and my behavior. I moved out of there when I was 11 years old. I started acting out when I was around 10. My first time in juvenile detention was about a week after my 11th birthday. I hated it, but I couldn't stop going. Every time I've been locked up it was for assaults. The first foster home I went to was the worst. It was the day before Christmas Eve, in a house I've never been to in my life, with some nice people who took me in but I had never met them in my life. It was all just scary and I hated that.

I started getting into more trouble in and out of foster homes and schools. I had to leave Kitsap County because there weren't

any foster homes who would take me. So, I got moved to Pierce County. Things did get a little better for a little while. I moved in with a foster parent that was older and cared for the worst kids in the program. I lived with her for a little over a year. I left there because my behavior was getting worse. I always kept in contact with her, though.

One day at school, my old foster sister said that my recent foster mom lost her license. I guess there were some allegations about all types of abuse. I almost started crying. It was crazy because I had told myself that maybe when I started to control my anger she would let me come back, but that didn't happen.

Everything went down hill from there. A couple of weeks after she lost her license she had a stroke. As soon as I found out, I went to the hospital. It was one of the most painful things I had ever seen. The woman who took me into her home and loved me like I was her own couldn't talk or move. Months later I got arrested and got 9 months in Echo Glen. When I was released I got sent to a group home and later got told that the foster mom who had the stroke had passed away. After I left Echo Glen, I decided I didn't ever want to be in a place like that ever again. I'm going to change, I thought, and, sure enough, I did. I haven't been in trouble with the law since then; I've just been working on myself.

I think the foster care system has its ups and downs. I experienced a lot of downs but being in over 50 placements will do that to you. I am proud to be part of the Youth LEAD program because I love to write and I know what foster kids go through from personal experience. If I could give back anything or to anyone, it would be to foster kids.

THANK YOU!

ALFRED AND TILLIE SHEMANSKI TESTAMENTARY TRUST AND FOUNDATION; AMARA; PHOEBE AND JEFF ANDERSON; ANONYMOUS; LINDA AND BOB BENSON; HOWARD BERRY; VIRGINIA BLAYNEY; KATHRYN BROOKS; MICHAEL CAMPBELL; KAREN COWGILL; SANDI EVERLOVE; CLAIRE GHAN; JEANNE KOHL-WELLES; SANDRA KRAUS; MAUREEN MARINKOVICH; SPENCER NOLAND AND PATRICIA GRAY; NORTHWEST CHILDREN'S FUND; DEBRA AND KEITH RONNHOLM; KERRY ANNE SCHULLER; SESSIONS FAMILY FOUNDATION; JAMIE SMITH; STUART FOUNDATION; JOHN AND JANET WALKER; MARK AND BARBARA WHITEHURST; SUSAN WILLIS, M.D.; WYMAN YOUTH TRUST

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ABOUT US: *The Mockingbird Society* is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation developing innovative models for improving the outcomes of foster care, while advocating with decision makers for system reform. 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 50,000 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 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 ©2008, *The Mockingbird Society*.



Movie Review: Martian Child

BY KENNETH LARSON-RETTINGER

Martian Child is a movie that stars John Cusack, Joan Cusack, and Bobby Colman.

The plot in this movie isn't that great, but the motive behind the movie is really hard to miss. Perhaps it's the out of nowhere storyline, or maybe it's the fact that this movie isn't really based on anything, but truly, this movie is an inspiration.

The fact is, this movie probably isn't going to be that appealing to people that haven't experienced a lot of hardship in their life, but it really can move people that have had problems with their family. Perhaps it could even move people into thinking a little more about children in foster care because the child in the movie is in a foster home.

Children shouldn't have to think that they are from Mars because no one wants them. I think that is a good point in this movie because the child pretends to be from Mars and although that is not what all children in foster care do, it's not uncommon for a child to make up something about themselves since they don't feel like they belong. In my opinion, this movie is a must see if you have been in foster care or are adopted because this movie really touches on those points.

Martian Child reminded me of what it was like to be in foster care and finally finding the family that I was looking for. I cried at this movie because of the similarities that the title character experiences and the experiences of my life. One of the characters, Dennis, had a line that blew me away. He asks why parents leave you if you're a good kid; if they truly loved you, why do they leave. I used to wonder this, too, when I was younger. I hated when people would tell me that I was so smart and that my birth parents were so lucky to have a child like me. When I asked, "If I am so smart and likeable why did they get rid of me?" they replied that they didn't know. Once again, someone else didn't take that extra second to think about me.

This movie really helps you get the answers that you are looking for about your birth parents and about why, if you're truly as good a child as people say, someone would want to get rid of you. Also, it reminds you that you're just a child and you truly have no control over the actions of your parents, such as divorce or them abandoning you. If you need a little reminder of these things, or you just want to go see a really good movie, I would recommend Martian Child because it is a movie that will really make you think.

Photo Gallery



Senior Youth Representatives Andrea Roldan and Samuel Martin lead the Life Advocacy 101 training.



Youth Representatives Kenneth Larson-Rettinger and Jessica Garcia learn how to advocate for themselves.

Foster Youth Need You

Hundreds of children in our communities are in desperate need of a safe home.

Please call Foster Our Future at 1-866-958-KIDS

Foster Our Future is a contractor with Washington State Children's Administration. An experienced foster parent will answer your questions and mentor you through the foster licensing process.

"Some children need a home for a day; others will need a family forever."

Small Charity Gives Big To Foster Kids BY SANDY MANN

In June of 2004, Owen Bunstine Sr. founded the NW Alliance For Foster Children, Inc. (NWAFFC) as a direct result of his personal experiences growing up in the foster care system. Seeing first hand how it felt to be deemed an outsider in society growing up as a foster child, Owen finds it very distressing to see how so many children in foster care are still labeled as outcast in our culture. "Children in foster care just want to have some kind of normalcy. It's bad enough that they don't have someone to call Mom or Dad, but they often have to leave home with only the clothes on their backs. They often get separated from their siblings and other relatives and are forced to live with strangers," says Owen.

The goal of the NWAFFC is to enhance the lives of those living in foster care within our community. They will make every effort to provide foster children with the fundamental things in life to help them feel better about their existence and fitting in with society. Owen started the NWAFFC with the vision of helping to

provide displaced kids and youth with things they might not otherwise be able to afford. "If we are able to help foster children with some of the little things in life that so many other kids take for granted, it would raise their morale and sense of well-being," Owen said.

The sole mission of the NWAFFC is to enhance the lives of children and youth in foster care throughout Pierce County, WA. With help from their network of donors and corporate sponsors, they work to enhance and enrich the lives of foster children through the programs they offer. They believe in the fundamental right of every child in foster care to have the opportunity to have a happy and healthy childhood. They are very proud of their programs such as the Wish Network, which gives foster children the opportunity to submit a wish which might seem impossible.

If you are a foster parent or youth in foster care living in Region 5 and would like assistance through the NWAFFC please visit them online at www.nwaffc.org.



Eating Disorders BY LEONA BILL

Eating disorders are more common among young adults and pre-teens. While they can affect both males and females, it's most often girls who have eating disorders.

Anorexia and bulimia are two types of eating disorders. Anorexia is characterized by emaciation caused by extreme eating behaviors like deliberate self-starvation. Bulimia is characterized by recurrent and frequent episodes of eating large amounts of food (binging) followed by purging behaviors such as vomiting and fasting.¹

Anorexia and bulimia may share some of the same symptoms, for example the obsession with food, but the way the obsession is handled is very different. A person who has bulimia will eat a lot but may later vomit while a person with anorexia will eat only very small amounts of food if they eat at all.

People with anorexia are worried about being fat. Even when a person with anorexia is dropping below the average weight for their age and height, they continue to obsess about gaining weight. An anorexic may be thin and still losing weight but in their own eyes they see themselves differently. An anorexic person looking at their reflection doesn't see how skinny they may be, they always see themselves as fat. A person with anorexia wants to lose weight and may over exercise to do it.

A person with bulimia will binge eat then purge by such methods as taking laxatives or making themselves vomit. When they throw up, they do it after they finish eating. People with bulimia may be at or above their healthy weight, but may have tooth decay from vomiting.

An eating disorder doesn't only mess up a person's body but also their mind as well. A person with an eating disorder may not realize that they have it. Most people with eating disorders have deeper emotional conflicts that need to be resolved. Depression can also be a possible cause of eating disorders. Some people, instead of turning to drugs or other substances to cover or hide their true feelings, develop an eating disorder. Like a person addicted to drugs, before a person with an eating disorder can quit, they have to realize that their habits are unhealthy and recognize that they have a problem. They must also be willing to admit that they have an eating disorder before they begin treatment. To get healthy, a person with an eating dis-

order must willingly address their problem as soon as they can.

The effects of either anorexia or bulimia are unhealthy and both can lead to death through health problems such as malnutrition or damage to their heart, liver, or kidneys, or losing potassium which can lead to heart problems. Females with eating disorders may lose their periods. People with an eating disorder might have stomach pain that they think are hunger but these pains can be caused by stomach damage. They may also have a lack of energy, feel light-headed or have anemia (a lack of iron).

Dr. Gregory Jantz describes Britney Spears as having a "binge personality" and being very compulsive. He says, "She'll do mega workouts and watch what she eats for two months and then return to her bingeing behavior, giving her temporary comfort." Spears has confessed to doctors that she has been suffering from the eating disorder bulimia since she was 16 years old.

The following are warning signs that might indicate a person has an eating disorder:

Anorexia

- Is significantly below normal weight
- Denies feeling hungry
- Exercises excessively
- Feels fat
- Withdraws from social activities

Bulimia

- Finds or makes excuses to go to the bathroom after eating
- Eats large amounts of food and doesn't gain weight
- Uses laxatives or diuretics
- Withdraws from social activities

For further reading, see the following Websites: www.kidshealth.org, www.something-fishy.org, www.caringonline.com

1. www.nlm.nih.gov/science-news/2007/study-tracks-prevalence-of-eating-disorders.shtml

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If you have recently moved, need to change the number of issues you receive, or if the address we are mailing the *Mockingbird Times* to needs to be corrected, please complete and mail the subscription request form found on page 2 so we can update our records.

100% OF THE PROCEEDS FROM THIS BOOK HELP SUPPORT YOUTH LIVING IN FOSTER CARE.



Nine

The Extraordinary Story of One of the Worst Cases of Multiple Child Molestation in Washington State.

Owen J. Bunstine, Sr.

Follow Owen Bunstine, Sr., in this gripping and horrifying true story of child rape and molestation at the hands of nine adults and juveniles. By the time he was placed in foster care at the age of thirteen, Owen had already learned not to trust anyone, even those close to him. Having spent his whole childhood being molested and used by other people whose job it was to care for him, Owen was later abused by the very system designed to protect and save him from this horrific life. According to Owen's social worker with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), as well as his Washington State appointed attorney, Owen suffered one of the worst cases of multiple child molestation in Washington State history.

If you are interested in purchasing Owen's book, it can be purchased at any Barne's & Noble Bookseller or visit www.ninebook.org for autographed copies. 100% of the proceeds are used to help support youth living in foster care.

Without a Family

EMMA M CUMMINGS

Without a family
Without a home
Have you ever spent your birthday alone??

Do you know how it feels to leave a sister?
To call her and tell her you're sorry
And tell your mother you miss her?

Do you have a little brother?
Have you ever woken to his screams?
Because his dreams are filled with visions
Of your drugged up father
Beating your drunken mother?

Have you ever sat in a corner
Curled in a ball crying
Wishing the voices would just go away?
Then popped little white pills
Hoping to die before the dawn of another
terrifying day?

Is your life a cloud of smoke
From a pipe containing purple haze
Or the bottom of the Bacardi bottle
That you cling to in your drunken stupor
Though it's been empty for half the day?

Have you ever wished that time would stop?
That a hole in the floor would open
And you would just drop?
Do you ever wonder why you still live?
Maybe it's time for you to learn to forgive...

Spend the Nyte

MYKAL HAUNTED

I caught a glimpse of shadows,
Moving like spiders.
I take a deep breath,
Then phantom coldly.
I am the city.
The nyte life.
Is the day against me?
Or do I long for the cloak-of-darkness beneath the sky?
I stand open handed.
I talk to the rain.
The call of the wild.
The after-hour king.
Running from the sun.
Hiding from the shadows.
If they find me,
Tell her not to cry for me,
For it keeps me up at nyte.
That's all.
While some dance under bright lights.
I sing about how I spend the night.

This Is Who I Am

RHONDA SMITH

This is who I am, I don't need to hide
This is who I am, no more tears to cry
This is who I am, I know I will rise
This who I am, I stand tall with pride
This is who I am, ready to let go of the past
This is who I am, I will never be last again
This is who I am, I've made it through the pain
This is who I am, my life is no longer a game
This is who I am, I'm getting stronger every day
This is who I am, successful at everything I do
This is who I am, real and improved
This is who I am, ready to face the world
This is who I am, shining like a pearl
This is who I am, not ready to give up
This is who I am, letting you all know what's up
THIS IS WHO I AM

Arrows

LYSE M.C.

Arrows all point at me
Lies at me
Truth at me
Hate at me
Love at me
Everything it's crazy at me
Pain and hurt at me
Fight toward me
Anger
Haters at me
Heartache at me
Heartbreak toward me
Soaking into me
The reality of Seattle
The reality of stupid, jealous, loving people
Insecurity, hate, hurt and pain of reality

Once I had a friend

EMMA M CUMMINGS

Once I had a friend
He betrayed my trust
I blindly offered him all my love
In return
He disguised his lust
Mistakenly I accepted it...
While my heart turned into dust

Get Published ~ Get Paid!

We are looking for 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 Times, contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org. For more info and to check us out, go to www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

So now is the time, more than ever, for those who truly value all the principles of democracy, especially including dissent, to be the most forceful in speaking up, standing up and speaking out.

~ Jim Hightower

**Changing for the Better** BY JESSICA GARCIA

I believe that when I went to treatment, it didn't help as much as I thought. My problem is that I keep failing and failing. I went to a clean and sober house, but it just got too hard for me because I had to do so many things that didn't seem to help with my situation. I felt over-watched and mistrusted like no one believed that I wasn't going to use or had faith in me.

I was put in a situation I couldn't handle and I began to fall way back, hanging around new people who I didn't drink with before but who basically do the same things as I did with my old using friends. I feel like I'm in a situation that is so hard and difficult, and I can't get away from it. But now, I finally realize something: It's me I keep running from. I'm not accepting change and not wanting to change.

I feel as though I'm distant from all my good friends and the people who love, care about, and respect me. I'm becoming a person who doesn't care about life. I'm just going with the flow, hanging with random guys, putting myself in risky situations and not caring about myself. I had to leave the place where I was living because I didn't come back when I was supposed to and I had relapsed. When I returned, I didn't lie. I'm honest so I admitted I relapsed. They told me that I knew the rules and could no longer stay there.

I really don't want to be a person with no future, in and out of jails. I want to be

back on track and not fall down. A part of me doesn't want to use but another part says, "Yes, I'm in a messed up position so I might as well." Before I got out, I was blessed by my higher power with so many things. I was still with the person I am in love with and he stayed and supported me. I got paid to go into treatment by The Mockingbird Society, which was such a blessing. I had tears of joy. The Mockingbird Society supports me so much and they don't give up on me. They also tell me not to give up on myself which keeps my hopes up higher. I don't want to give up on myself. I have come so far but I feel like I can't get out of the situation I'm in. The truth is, though, that I can. I have to put those things in my life what I want in it.

They say you are who you hang around and I believe that is so. Right now, most of the people I hang around are gang affiliated or drug dealers or on drugs and they feel miserable and don't care about themselves and don't want to go to college or have plans. I don't want that for myself. When I'm around these people, I'm unhappy, I feel stressed, I feel judged behind my back, and I feel used. I feel as though, in the end, I have no friends, just myself and God. I have faith in my higher power, but not enough to change.

I have great goals and good plans for my life and I want to get back to meetings and not give up on myself. I'm a good person with a good heart but when I'm using

I don't have a heart or mind. I don't care about anything but getting my drugs. I don't want to be like that, that's not who I am and I don't want to destroy the good me. I don't want this lifestyle of hating and deceiving anymore.

I'm going to let everyone who I think are my friends go and change my ways. It's the only way I can help myself. I can't give up on me. I'm going to stop going to the clubs and change everything. I'm going to college. I'm going to find a nighttime job

and keep working here at The Mockingbird Society, go to support meetings and change everything. I'm going to respect myself and be more and forget everyone else. I'm living here for me and I have to change. I can't keep getting messed up, not knowing what I did the night before. I want to respect myself and hanging with people who just want to party isn't for me. They won't get me anywhere and people who try to put me down won't get anywhere. I'm leaving those people alone.

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