

Mockingbird Times



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

June 2008

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation

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

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This month we say good-bye to a person who has been invaluable to the growth of the Youth Lead program, as well as being here to usher in the "golden age" of The Mockingbird Society (MBS). **Najja Morris** is leaving MBS and I would like to first off say to her, "Thank you so much for everything that you have done. I personally am grateful to you for how much you have helped me learn as well as everything that you do and have done for the youth here." She has decided to go and pursue more education and that is something that MBS encourages. I can honestly say that she has really shown great leadership and an outstanding amount of love for us youth. I took the liberty of interviewing a few administrative staff about Najja and what their favorite memory of her is.

Jim Theofelis: "I have many wonderful memories with Najja and it's amazing how much growth has occurred during her time at MBS. I have many positive memories including taking youth to Washington, D.C., Baltimore and California, places young people have never been to both literally and metaphorically. My warmest wishes follow Najja."

Dr. Wanda Hackett: "The Youth Lead trip to California to visit the California Youth Connection was a great team building experience! I also enjoy Najja's zaniness; her laugh



As a foster care alumna, I have made decisions that have affected my life in a positive way and decisions that have made my life a little more difficult than it should have been. I don't want other youth in care to make the same errors I made when I decided to attend college which is that I under-utilized my resources. If you're a young adult who has been affected by the child welfare system, there are organizations that are able to help you make it through high school and provide you with money to attend college. There are thousands of dollars that people are willing to give you to go to school. Not only are there organizations that will pay your tuition, but there are universities in the state of Washington who will pay you to attend school as well.

I recently spoke with **Jennifer C. Schoen** from Outreach and Recruitment and **Eileen Robison** associate director of Financial Aid at the University of Washington. The university has developed a program called The Husky Promise designed to assist low to moderate income students who can't afford to attend the university. The program recognizes that every student should have the opportunity to have the college experience and finances shouldn't be the reason behind student's inability to attend school.

The Husky Promise provides full tuition coverage for students who need it the most, and the university has made the commitment to cover tuition even if the cost rises. Qualifying for the Husky Promise is dependent upon you as a student completing your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on time so you can qualify for the maximum amount of Pell Grant money available. The university then contributes any funds that your Pell Grants do not cover. This fall, the

Good-bye Najja! BY SAMUEL MARTIN

is infectious and always brings a smile to my face. I appreciate Najja's conscientiousness in working with our Youth Lead representatives to get a great paper out every month, on time!"

Marie Goines: "I have so many favorite memories of Najja, but the ones that stand out for me most are the teaching moments that we've shared. Thanks to Najja, I now know the value of laughter and the joy of connecting with and supporting the youth we serve."

We share many fond memories of Najja. The fact is that she has a job that isn't the easiest in the world. To train youth who come from the foster care system can be difficult because we're hurt and we really come with problems and stuff that we have to get over. The simple fact that she has helped us all learn to adapt to the business world is no easy feat. I can now say that I am literate in Microsoft Office, I know how to manage my time, how to make an agenda, how to lead a meeting, and other skills that are very hard to come by.

Najja has also assisted in leadership roles with Advocacy Day in Olympia, as well as the Leadership Summit. I have had the opportunity to work with her directly on many different things and she is, honestly, someone who I can call a great boss, as well as a friend. Often people don't feel as if they can be friends with their boss but I think it can be a good thing. Supervising is about developing

Continuing your Education after Care BY GEORGINA RAMIREZ

University of Washington will be implementing a program geared specifically for youth who have been in care and independent students. The coordinators of the program have recognized that youth who have been in care could benefit from a collegiate support system. The program is designed to navigate you through the programs and departments at the university that are knowledgeable about the child welfare system and the resources that are available. The underlying theme of this new program is not only to offer financial assistance but to create a general support system that includes peers and administrators to help you on your new collegiate journey.

Another resource provided for foster youth who have a desire to attend college is the College Success Foundation. The organization focuses on assisting youth through mentoring programs and providing financial assistance for secondary education. A resource that is specifically for foster youth, the Washington State Governors Scholarship Program is available for financial assistance with a possible award of \$1000-\$5000 dollars. If you are interested in finding out more information about the programs that the College Success Foundation offers, visit their Web site at www.collegesuccessfoundation.org. An umbrella of services provided to foster youth who have a desire to attend college can also be found at www.independence.wa.gov. The Independence for Foster Youth Web site has resources that may be needed for employment, education, financial aid, and housing.

There are a number of organizations that are willing to assist foster youth get through school and assist them with continuing their education. However, it does take a great deal of initiative on your behalf as a student. You have to make decisions that are geared to-

relationships. It's what bosses are supposed to do. So, after working with her for this amount of time, I can honestly say she is a friend.

My personal favorite memory of Najja was hearing her beat box for the first time. It was her happy and funny personality that meant the most to me. Hearing her say "HI SAM!" every time I come to work made a huge difference every day. A lot of youth have come through MBS in the past few years, and I can assure you all of them walked away with something learned and something gained. I remember when Youth LEAD was something that was just periodically busy and now is there is always stuff to do. I made the joke that I actually have my calendar filling up in July and August. It is just an indicator of what is going on and how things are changing which is why I say she helped usher in this age. So even though she may not be here to see what is going to happen next, she helped prepare the leaders who will get this off the ground.

So once again, I give her my good-byes and my blessing. Najja, I appreciate everything you have done on behalf of the staff and myself. We want to say "Thank you!" for everything you have done. You will be missed and I hope you come back to all major events. A lesson that everyone should heed: Don't forget to let your voice be heard. You have a purpose and a voice that deserves to be listened to. Thank you once again. I wish you the best.

ward your academic future which is in your hands. It will be tiresome and tedious but you can make it happen. **Samuel Martin**, Senior Youth Representative for the *Mockingbird Times* is transitioning from high school to The University of Washington. I conducted an interview with Sam to get a fresh perspective on the graduating senior's college preparation and provide you with a little more insight on some obstacles you may face.

MT: Why did you decide to attend college?

SM: I knew that it would be a necessity to enhance my career, as well as giving me the opportunity to learn more and find out things I never knew. There is always something to learn. Not to mention helping me to be financially stable.

MT: What has been the most difficult task in the process of applying for school?

SM: I would definitely say finding time. Applying is definitely hard, and you can't just turn in a college application the day before it's due. You have to really set aside a time that you plan to work on it.

MT: How much time did you spend preparing your financial plan?

SM: I didn't even know that I had to create a financial plan. This is the type of thing that I would have really enjoyed knowing when I began to apply.

MT: Which resources did you utilize to fund your education? Scholarships, grants, loans?

SM: I did get a lot of grants. Now I am applying for tons of last minute scholarships. I will still have to take out a few loans.

MT: Which resources do you wish were readily available to foster youth or youth that are affected by the system?

EDUCATION, CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS

It's June, so even though it's 53 degrees and raining as I write this, I want to wish you all Happy Summer! June is a special month for so many reasons, not the least of which are the celebrations that come with high school and other graduations. I want to express my congratulations to all of the young people in foster care who have beaten the odds and achieved their high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED). This is not an easy accomplishment and speaks to the resiliency and fortitude of these young people. As you can see by his article in this issue of the *Mockingbird Times*, our own Sam Martin has earned his high school diploma and has been accepted to the University of Washington. Congratulations, Sam!

I also want to express my congratulations to all of the foster parents, kinship caregivers, social workers and, of course, teachers who have supported the young

people in their charge to persevere and achieve. This is critical as all the research indicates that the road out of poverty is guided by furthering one's educational success. Again, congratulations to all of the 2008 graduates!

On another note, I want to take this opportunity to wish a fond farewell to Najja Morris who is leaving The Mockingbird Society to further her own education. Najja has been with The Mockingbird Society and Youth LEAD through some very significant growth and, on behalf of the entire Mockingbird team, I want to wish her well in her new pursuits.

Finally, I want to send best wishes to all of you for a fun filled, safe and WARM summer.

Jim Theofelis

jim@mockingbirdsociety.org



Stages of Grief BY RHONDA SMITH

Throughout my life I have had a big problem with change. I am not exactly sure why, but I do have an idea. Maybe it is because of my parents running out of my life at such a young age. It could be because my adopted parents gave me up. Maybe it is because I was moved to over 50 placements while in the foster care system between the ages of 11 and 17. I think it is probably all of those reasons and more. Within the last couple of months, I have had some people I was really close to leave out of my life. Since I have had this happen to me so many times before, I have learned how to keep what I was feeling inside. I ignored the fact that these people were moving on and would no longer be apart of my life.

One day I was talking with my case manager. I was really stressed and sad because it seemed like everyone whom I had grown to trust and care about was leaving me. She told me about the five stages of grief which I had heard a little bit about before. As she was naming them, Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance, I was thinking to myself, "I have had all of these feelings." The one that I had always struggled with was acceptance. I don't think I ever used to accept the fact that people who I trusted or loved left me. I would just put it in the back of my mind like it never happened, even though I was well aware that it had happened. I just could never come to the point of accepting that reality.

When I was first introduced to the five stages of grief, I was thinking, "That's only what happens when a death occurs." I was wrong. The five stages of grief happen whenever you lose someone or even something close to you, for example friends, counselors, social workers, case managers, and foster parents. It can also be your house, car, job, or school, basically anything that means something to you.

The five stages of grief don't always go in any particular order, it just depends on the person and how they handle things. Denial is typically the first stage. Denial can be experienced as numbness, avoidance, isolation, or just straight up denial. This is the stage where you just cannot accept the fact that a loss is occurring. It basically does not feel like the situation is real. The next stage is generally anger. Usually at this stage you have gotten passed the denial stage. Now you are angry and you

might take it out on the people who are closest to you, which is what I used to do.

Bargaining is the next stage. In this stage, you tend to come up with ways to get back whatever you have lost. For example, some people might ask, "If I change this or that, will you not leave?" The depression stage is basically the time for sadness. This stage is generally fourth, coming after the first three stages. This stage is where you feel hopeless and helpless. It could also include crying, isolation or however you deal with your sadness. The last and final stage is acceptance. This stage is where you come to realize that the loss has happened and there is really nothing you can do about it. It can take awhile for you to reach the stage of acceptance. Even when you reach this stage you might still feel sadness and anger but you have come to accept the loss.

Knowing the five stages of grief will be very helpful all throughout your life, and will make you aware that the grief process takes time and support.

EDUCATION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

SM: I definitely wish there was a little bit more money in general for kids from kinship care. "The lost group" is what I like to refer to them as.

MT: Now that you have almost completed your preparations for school, what were the biggest gaps you observed as a foster youth?

SM: That guidance is not there. The most important thing you need is someone to walk through the entire process. It is almost like school counselors expect you to just graduate and not go to the next level.

MT: What advice would you give to foster youth preparing for college?

SM: I would have them find an adult mentor or coach to help them through the process. Someone who is familiar with the process as well, such as a mentor from Coaching to College. [Ed. note: Coaching to College is a Treehouse program. See www.treehouseforkids.org/whatwedo/coaching_to_college for more information.]

MT: If you had the opportunity to redo anything, as far as college prep was concerned, what would it be?

SM: Start a lot earlier; I didn't even familiarize myself with the process until October.

MT: Do you think there are enough resources available for you in the system as far as obtaining a college education in concerned?

SM: Yes actually I do, I wish that I were eligible for them, for example the Governors Scholarship, Fostering to College, and Educational Training Vouchers.

MT: What other resources do you think youth in care might need upon entering college?

SM: The same thing they needed all of their life: support. You can't send a kid to college without support so what makes you think foster youth are any different?

For anyone who may think that you are incapable of attending school, I'm here to let you know that you can as long as you bring some focus to it. Dedicate some time every day to your goals no matter how big or small they are. Value yourself and your future and you can make any dream a reality, so remember to dream big.

THANK YOU!

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Executive Director

Jim Theofelis

Operations Manager

Ros Ghan

Mockingbird Family Programs Director

Dr. Wanda Hackett

Youth LEAD Director

Tiffany Washington

Development Director

Madelaine Thompson

Executive Assistant

Lauren Frederick

Public Relations/Fund Development

Darcie Gray

Youth LEAD Coordinator

Najja Morris

Mockingbird Family Model (MFM)

Coordinator

Marie Goines

Administrative Coordinator

Diana Clark

Administrative Assistant

Juan Ramirez

Youth LEAD Administrative Assistant

Milissa Morgan

MFM Administrative Assistant

Stephanie (Stevie) Glaberson

Senior Youth Representatives

Samuel Martin, Georgina Ramirez

Youth Representatives

Leona Bill, Jessica Garcia, Rhonda Smith, Diamonique Walker, Janisha Wright

Contributing Writers & Artists

Ashley Abbott, Anonymous, Emma Cummings, Thomas Darden, Anna Gonzalez

Volunteers

Chrissie Jackson

Editing and Layout

Kelly Hawkins



Why Religion? BY JESSICA GARCIA

What is religion and why do we have it? There is more than one definition of religion so it can mean a lot of things. In general, religion is a combination of gods or goddesses who are responsible for the creation of the universe and its continuing operations. Some define it as sacred or spiritual, or being devoted to a certain thing you do regularly like exercising, going to church, meditating, or even going to the mountains on a nature walk to be one with nature. Doing these things can be religious because it's something you do for your higher power or to have a source of spiritual energy which is also a form of religion.

We may ask ourselves why we need something to believe in. Well, maybe people need something to hold on to; something that will stay constant and not change in their lives because our lives are constantly changing even when we least expect it. Most people were born with some sort of religion, simply raised with their parents' beliefs and taught not to question those beliefs, basically "blind faith." Religion can give a feeling of community, friendship and support. Most religious people know there is something greater than us out there for the simple fact that this universe is here and we're here.

There are many religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam. There are many organized religions all over the world which can contain many different types of strengths and beliefs. Some people believe we come back reincarnated as an animal or another living thing. Others believe Christ Jesus will come to save us to be in a better place with no sin such as violence, anger, and hate. Others believe that when we die, we are dead, that we have one life to live.

What is the truth about religion? With so many different religions, there are lots of choices that might best fit you or you could just be an atheist which is basically where you don't believe that there is a god, you're just here on earth. It's not always clear what to believe. Some people believe in more than one religion. You can experiment by going to different churches and services and explore different types of religions and see what one best fits. You can go on the Internet to explore and learn more about religion and religious definitions and meanings.

I personally believe there is only one true religion and that is Christianity. I believe that there is a God and I believe Jesus died for our sins that we may be whole again. We are given the opportunity to make our own choices between good and evil. The consequence is on us. I go to church on Sunday which is a rest day, and I keep it holy by doing good deeds for other people and being positive. However, I do not think Christians should go around saying Christianity is the only way because Jesus, the son of God, did not want us to force religion on others. Some would say I'm Christian but I believe what I want and no one pushes stuff on me. I grew up Christian throughout my life and I was told God wouldn't love me if I do this or that or if I don't follow the ten commandments and that I will go to hell if I make a mistake. I do not believe this is true—I don't believe I will go to hell if I break a rule. We do what we have to do to survive and I believe that my God doesn't judge me for what I've done if I'm doing the best I can. My creator is a loving God and loves me no matter what.

So, good luck on finding your religion and may it help you in the best way on your journey through life.

Streetlight BY DRE

My name is Dre. Today I want to talk to you about my definition of street life. Street life is not just a word. It's a way to live. Doing drugs, selling drugs, killing, fighting—whatever your definition is, I've done it. I've been homeless. I've been housed. I've seen garbage you've only dreamed of. But I'm coming at you with no sugarcoat. No one is going to hold your hand through this process. If you want to know what street life is, come breathe it, listen to it, and taste it with me under this streetlight.

When I got high the same stuff would happen. I would just sit there and chill. I didn't care who was around me, what I looked like, what I did. Whatever I did had to do with drugs. I thought of killing myself plenty of times. It's what drugs do. They make you think irrational thoughts. I would end up getting caught and going to jail for a dumb drug. While I was locked up, I wanted to get out of there so I could get more drugs. I just wanted to get high. For six years I was in this mindset.

I went to treatment. I went to drug and alcohol classes and had my support system set up. Of course I relapsed, but that's a part of recovery. At times, I thought I'd go back to the old me, using drugs, not giving a care. But my support system kicked in like it's supposed to and got me back on track. My life dramatically changed with my support group. They taught me it's okay to be an addict. I continued on with my treatment, opted into drug court, and began my life as a new person.

Now I am going to school and getting my General Equivalency Diploma (GED) and living life as an adult. My life is going great. I am sober as day. I have never been

so happy and I never thought selling drugs and getting caught would be the best thing that would ever happen to me. When I was getting high, I forgot all my skills that I had learned in grade school like reading, writing, history, etc. Now I am trying to relearn those skills, slowly but surely.

Street life is more than a way of life. It's a way of thinking, breathing, living, and it was my life for six years. I could go on and on about how my life has dramatically changed. But I'm telling you this because there is actually someone who does care, and that's yourself. Don't ever let anybody tell you that you can't be something or you can't pass a test or you're a waste of good air and space. Keep your chin up, like I do. I'll never let my chin lower. The more you grow up, the harder life is. It's never going to get easy. But one thing is for sure: you will make it. Just look at me: a walking miracle. Don't do it for anybody else. Just do it for yourself. It is starting to get light outside. Hopefully I opened up your mind and explained something to you. The streetlight is going out so get up and go learn about it.

Come Work for The Mockingbird Society!

The Mockingbird Society is hiring for the following positions:

• Development Assistant

Foster care alumni and people of color encouraged to apply. See www.mockingbirdsociety.org/jobs for details.



My Senior Year, the End BY SAMUEL MARTIN

I left off talking about getting into the University of Washington (UW). It was almost too good to be true, I felt that I should actually be on the decline. However, I am actually on an incline. Of course, wrenches are thrown in the way all the time. Not to say that all hasn't been well. I was really on top of the world when I found out I got accepted to the UW. I felt accomplished, everyone was so proud and everything worked. The fire inside was strong. All I needed was one more French credit and I could take a few classes through Running Start at Seattle Central Community College (SCCC) that struck my interest. Yet that did not turn out to be the case; what happened was an example of being thrown for a loop.

During April, I rode the wave of being focused on school for a few weeks. Eight weeks before graduation I found out I needed an extra year of science as well as French. I also realized that Running Start wasn't conducive for my schedule. So I stopped. It wasn't the smartest thing I have ever done. I was back at Rainier Beach High School

once again. I signed up for quite a few classes there. I was in a completely different environment now that I was no longer at SCCC. Being away for a year made me really remember what the high school environment was like. Nothing against my school, it just took some adjusting to be there full time. In January of 2006, I wrote an article about why I left. I now remember why.

I also talked about knowing what I needed to do to succeed and, honestly, the only choice I had was to go back to Rainier Beach. I also knew that my plate was full: I had a year's worth of science and French to do in about 6 weeks. It was a little intimidating. It has been a constant struggle, especially if you have followed me through the journey and seen what the struggle has been. One of the reasons I struggle is my home life but at the same time I have to attempt to not let my home life rule me. April was a month of ups, downs, and in between. It took its toll and kind of threw everything out of alignment.

In May, everything went downhill. At first I lost complete motivation, I was told that I wasn't ready for university and I let that bring me down. I began to not believe in myself once again. Time after time I prove that I am worth it yet I still continue to believe that I don't have what it takes to succeed out in the world. It was a demoralizing blow which almost made me not even go to the University of Washington. I knew that it would be tough for me and having other people say that it would be as well was not helping me at all. I was having self-confidence issues, but soon I realized that I just needed to suck it up and deal with what needs to get done. I quickly

got my motivation back and began to do what I needed to do with school.

So I finally got the motivation, the fire, and had an entire plan set up for what needed to get done. Then, out of nowhere, a wrench gets thrown in my way once again. On May 19th I was told that I didn't have enough credits to graduate. Mind you, check out for seniors is June 6th. I was stuck, all hopes of graduation and college ended right there. I had already been told once that I had enough credit to graduate and now I was put in a position that completely inconvenienced me and my strategy for success. I had no idea what to do. So I went back to my guidance counselor and looked at my transcript. It appeared to have an error and be missing a credit. If I hadn't noticed that I would have been out of luck. I did what it took to advocate for myself in the given situation. Now I finally believe that I can move into what's next.

Speaking of what is next, I get to go to my Senior Prom, a privilege that most

Don't start living tomorrow, tomorrow never arrives. Start working on your dreams and ambitions today.

~Anonymous

foster youth don't even get. I am very grateful for being blessed with this opportunity to go. After Prom, I will finish up the last few programs that I am in and get some completion in most of them. Next up is graduation. It is really amazing that I have finally made it because I honestly lost all hope. Now, thanks to the support of those around me, and a diligence and knowing that I never wanted to give up, I will achieve my goal of graduating from high school. Now it just comes down to passing my last few classes. All focus is on these last couple of days and doing everything that it takes. But more importantly, I know will succeed, and the ember that I spoke of is now a steady flame.

The most important lesson I learned is to check in and keep records for what you have done in school. Make sure you know what classes you took and have a record of what you need to do to graduate. This applies anywhere. You don't want to be stuck in a situation where this could be an issue so keep track of the work you have done, not to mention if you feel that there is an error in your transcript or anything. It is important to step up for yourself and learn how to advocate. In The Mockingbird Society's Life Advocacy 101 class we talk about why it is important to address any dispute you may have. This is a good example because if I hadn't advocated for myself I wouldn't be graduating. So, lesson learned on my behalf.

It has been a long hard struggle and it isn't even complete yet. I have a lot of work to do but honestly, it all worked out before and I get this feeling that I will continue to be alright now. I would like to say, this has been a journey for me and I greatly appreciate you taking the time out to listen to me and go along for the ride. I hope that I painted a realistic picture for you.



SAVE THE DATE

Join The Mockingbird Society for our Second Annual Benefit Luncheon. Wednesday, October 1, 2008 • The Westin, Seattle

To be a table captain, reserve a seat, or sponsor this event, please contact Darcie Gray, darcie@mockingbirdsociety.org or 206.323.KIDS (5437).

We believe we can fly

2008 BENEFIT LUNCHEON | THE MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY

Creative Corner

Understanding

ANONYMOUS

You don't know my struggle
You can't feel my pain
You ain't heard about me?
I'm free flowing like the rain

You can't feel the intense pressure
Or the uncontrollable rising heat
That got me stressing, going crazy
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

What you know about me?
Please tell me, let me know
Can you say you know how I feel
From my head down to my toes?

You can't claim you understand
My self-defining pain
If you think you know me
You must be utterly insane

As Time Goes On

ASHLEY ABBOTT

As time goes on, you will realize that it's not all about you.
As time goes on, people will realize that it's not all about the streets.
As time goes on, you might just be in the wrong place at the wrong time.
As time goes on, people are going to change their ways of doing things.
As time goes on, you will know that your life is not going to change when you do not want it to change.
As time goes on, you will realize that when you're with your friends you might have to choose the right path.
As time goes on, there will be a change with every single person in the world.
As time goes on, you will know that your life will not change if you do not want it to.
As time goes on, everyone that's in a gang will realize that there are bigger and better things to do with your life and those around you.

Secret Hideout

EMMA CUMMINGS

I found a place within my soul
somewhere only I can go
whenever I feel the need arise
I spread my wings
and there I'll fly...
sometimes I feel this is all a test
pass or fail
I'll try my best...
I've always believed tomorrow
will be a brighter day
with the rising sun all that I fear
will float away...
Then I am brought back down to earth
with broken wings and thrown in the dirt...
All my dreams scattered
in the winds
left to pick everything back up again...

A Flower's Color

THOMAS DARDEN

With wind blowing
definition, captured in a
photo
A flower and the color is as
ravishing as the sensation of
Mrs. Owens in her essence

The sequence of its growth
The nature in its own
habitat!

The flower's own essence
is essential to take note,
because only in that would
you appreciate
It in fullness
Size, magnitude, color
Essence
Essence
Essence!

Losing a Best Friend

ANNA GONSALEZ

You are a great friend
A good friendship goes a long way.
I remember the good times we had.
You are a good friend, telling secrets, going shopping.
You mean a lot to me.
You care about my feelings as I care about yours.
You are a good friend.
I never meant to hurt you and I am really sorry.
I hoped this could have lasted longer.
A huge friendship becomes a huge miracle for everyone.
I miss you.
You are a friend.

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.

No person is your friend who demands your silence, or denies your right to grow.

~ Alice Walker



Keeping Busy This Summer BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER

This summer, there will be tons of programs and activities to do. For teens especially, this could be a good time to get your community service hours to graduate. As far as the summer goes, there will be a lot of great opportunities for volunteering and having fun, while keeping busy.

The YMCA has fun and free activities to do all summer. They go on monthly trips throughout the summer and they are all expenses paid. If you are a member of the YMCA then you may be interested in these trips and activities. If you want to be a part of them sign up at any YMCA. The Center at the 2100 Building, run by the YMCA, is a drop-in center for ages 17 through 24. Participation is free for those who are eligible and includes a free YMCA membership. Some of the activities the YMCA is offering this summer include whitewater rafting in June, sea kayaking in the San

Juan Islands in July, backpacking in the North Cascades in August and Sailing with the Orion Center in early September. Whitewater rafting is a challenging activity, where you use a raft to navigate down a river or other rough body of water. Backpacking is a combination of hiking and camping. You carry everything that you need in a pack on your back, including food, clothes, sleeping gear and such.

www.volunteermatch.org has a lot of opportunities for many different interests. Volunteering doesn't have to be boring. If you volunteer for a cause that you believe or do something you enjoy, the time will pass and it could even be fun. At public libraries, community centers, schools, and many more places, you can find an opportunity for volunteering that suits you. One summer, I volunteered on Mount Rainer where I helped preserve a hiking path by carrying very large pieces of wood up a trail. We put them along the edges of the

path so that the trail wouldn't erode. I got to camp on Mount Rainier at night, which was my first time camping, and I thought it was pretty fun.

Another idea for the summer is to keep a diary or a journal. When you look back you may want to remember the good, the bad, and the ugly things that happened over the summer. When you read back on what you wrote, you could be reminded of an experience that you may have forgotten. Writing down your feelings is also a healthy way of releasing. With your journal, taking pictures to remember every detail of a moment is a good idea too. A picture is worth a thousand words. You can go back and relive the moment just like you were there again.

There are summer day camp programs at almost every community center. I participated in one a few years back and it was pretty fun. We did different stuff every day and it was always exciting. If you need help paying for it, you can get that as well.

There are scholarship funds and DSHS can help as well. If there is something that you really want to do, you shouldn't let money get in the way. There is usually always a way to help with that.

Some additional local activities for Seattle are:

Seafair

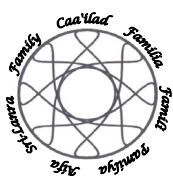
7/5-8/3 there are many events throughout Seafair including the Torchlight Parade, hydroplane races, the Bite of Seattle, and so many more. www.seafair.com

Umoja Fest

8/2 celebrating African heritage with a festival and parade. It will be located in the Central District from 23rd & Union to Judkins Park. www.umojafamilyfest.com

Seattle International Film Festival

Now through June 15th. There will be 25 days of viewing throughout several different theatres including the Egyptian, Harvard Exit, AMC Pacific Place 11 Theatres, Broadway Performance Hall, Cinerama and Paramount Theatre. www.siff.net



King County Kinship Gathering

**Saturday
October 18, 2008**

9:00 TO 5:00 PM

African American Academy
8311 Beacon Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98118

Save the Date

The King County Kinship Care Gathering is an opportunity for kinship caregivers, families, service providers, community advocates and policy makers to share information and ideas, find resources and support and celebrate **families caring for families**.

For more information contact Barb at the
King County Kinship Collaboration at 206-268-6785 or
barbaraw@seniorservices.org

The Mockingbird Society's Youth LEAD Program Presents

LIFE ADVOCACY 101

Learn how to be your OWN best advocate in all areas of your life. Participate in activities that will give you the skills you need to "make things happen" for your personal success!

Receive your own personal Life Advocacy 101 TOOL!

Contact us to today to schedule your FREE Life Advocacy 101 Training for your group or organization! *Open to all youth and young adults ages 14 to 23.*

Contact Sam at samm_mockingbird@yahoo.com or Najja at najja@mockingbirdsociety.org for more information and details.