

# Mockingbird Times

Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth.



November 2005

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation  
Visit us online at [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org) or call 206-323-KIDS (5437)

Volume V, Issue 11

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## Mockingbird Meets Mayor

MISTY LOU COOK

Some of our own *Mockingbird Times* Reporters recently met with Mayor Nickels to discuss the city's "10-Year-Plan" to end homelessness. Nickels was focused on giving every age bracket equal opportunities and was surprisingly open to what *The Mockingbird Times* had to say in regards to helping the homeless people of Seattle. Anthony Guess, Echo Speed and I represented the young writers at the *Mockingbird Times* while Jim Theofelis and Najja Morris supported our questions and emphasized the importance of helping this city's marginalized youth.

Guess asked concrete questions about the foster care system and what Mayor Nickels was doing to help kids who were "aging out" of foster care. Presently, "aging out" is when youth in foster care reach the age of 18 and have earned their GED or High School Diploma. After this, they lose all state support, and, in many cases, end up homeless/on the streets and have no idea where to turn to for basic needs. Mayor Nickels seemed shocked to learn the truth about "aging out" and Mockingbird Society's Jim Theofelis was quick to introduce a solution to this problem: having full state support after foster youth graduate from High School/earn their GED, up until the age of 21. State support includes basic funding for clothes, hygiene products,

medical insurance, housing costs, food and other essentials necessary for a good foundation.

I asked Mayor Nickels to tell us what his understanding was of why youth generally become homeless and what he was doing to ensure the protection of these homeless youth. He replied that he knew there were various reasons that youth became homeless, but that he'd like to gain a better understanding of the reasons why. We all agreed that if the city could understand why youth became homeless, we could use our resources more effectively to prevent and end homelessness altogether. When we looked at preventative measures for his "10-Year-Plan" to end homelessness, I emphasized the importance of the Mockingbird Model (explained in the July issue of the *Mockingbird Times*). I related that, in my seven years of being on and off the streets, about half of the youth I met had "aged out" of the foster care system and the other half I had met were queer (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited, etc) youth who were kicked out of their homes. I told him that a large part of preventing homelessness was to



Seattle Mayor Nickels talks with MBT Reporter Anthony Guess

give youth a positive environment in which they could grow and be comfortable being themselves, and that the Mockingbird Model kept families together and was supportive to both youth and foster parents; building community and preventing homelessness. I related my own experience, to put a face to these statistics and Mayor Nickels seemed equally concerned after hearing this information.

It was pretty incredible to meet and speak with the Mayor of Seattle. We all felt positive about our visit with Mayor Nickels. We felt that he genuinely listened to our solutions in preventing youth homelessness here in Seattle, and really valued our experiences and perspectives.



Jim Theofelis, Najja Morris, Misty Lou Cook, Mayor Greg Nickels, Echo Speed and Anthony Guess

## Remember Us!

United Way is conducting their annual campaign during September-December. Please remember that you can designate that your donation to United Way be directed to the Mockingbird Society. Thanks for all your continued support.

## One Picture of Homelessness

COURTNEY KONIETZKO



On 45<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> in the University District of Seattle, there was a 10-year-old mural that was painted by street-involved youth that is now being repainted by street-involved youth because of it being vandalized by someone with a can of spray paint. It sucks when people vandalize something with that much meaning behind it. Channeling skills and feelings onto a blank overpass or a sketch pad is much more productive. The old mural represented homelessness to a point because there is a church behind the mural that gave shelter space to homeless youth and on the mural at the leftmost corner there is a painting of people's hands of all colors raised in the air underneath an archway with the words on the arch being, "in the shelter the people."

The wall where the old mural was painted, and the new one was created, is owned by the University Congregational Church. The church paid the youth who worked on the new mural a stipend. Art is valuable. People's time is valuable. The Metro Bus system also agreed to take down the glass in the bus shelter at this intersection to make the mural more visible. One of the most striking images is of a person's face painted in black with a beige cube around it, smack in the center of the bus shelter.

People's visions are important and working together on a group project can be a daunting task, but judging from what I saw by looking at the finished product, there was great communication to create this new mural. The picture doesn't do the mural justice because in order to see the fine details you actually have to go see it. So if you live in Seattle check it out! It is great! I didn't want to get hit by a car; that is why the photo only covers a portion of the mural. There are many murals within the big mural where you can see people put their personal touches to the project. There is Santa Claus, and Scooby Doo, and a heart with a music note inside of it.

The mural project was collaboration between the Sanctuary Arts Center, street-involved youth, and Jeffrey, the mural's lead artist and mentor. Leslie Bourgoin of the Sanctuary Arts Center (SAC) put an ad on Craigslist and it received over twenty responses. Three people were interviewed and Jeffrey was the winner because he is part of the local community and has experience working with organized teams of people to create art. Jeffrey is a sculptural artist who works with metal and creates cities at Burning Man, a yearly festival held in the burning Black Rock Desert of Nevada where people come to create community and build art installations and create their own city which is burned down at the end. It really is an amazing event ([www.burningman.com](http://www.burningman.com)). There couldn't have been a better pick of an artist to help create this new mural. With Jeffrey's eye, experience, and the mutual enthusiasm between Jeffrey, SAC, and the youth, the new mural was completed in record time - 2 weeks. Miranda, a participant in the mural project, said about

MURAL Continued on Page 3

## Letter from the Editor

**JIM THEOFELIS**



As usual, November is a very busy month for Mockingbird Society and especially the youth involved in our Youth LEAD program. Several Mockingbird youth and staff will be attending the national **It's My Life** conference in Baltimore this month. Mockingbird will be presenting two workshops at the conference. Our youth will be facilitating a workshop focusing on their experiences with advocacy and leadership development through their participation with the *Mockingbird Times*, our Speakers' Panel, and the ASK-Y coalition. Degale Cooper (foster parent) and I will be facilitating a workshop focusing on the success and replication of the Mockingbird Family Model. This is a special opportunity for the youth to fly across the country, stay in a fancy hotel and see some of the sites in Washington, D.C. Special thanks to **Casey Family Programs** for sponsoring the conference and supporting our participation. Also this month, Mockingbird Society has completed a **short documentary** that we have been working on for several months, in partnership with **Wild Geese Productions**. It is a **compelling look at the issues facing the children and adolescents in foster/kinship care** as

well as the solutions and programs sponsored by Mockingbird Society. Several youth are featured throughout the video, and of course they are amazing. **We will have a premier showing at our annual fund raiser on the evening of March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006. This event includes a Silent Auction and we are hoping you will help us procure items for the auction and of course, attend the event.** More details to follow. November is also a month of holidays, including **Thanksgiving and Veterans' Day**. This month, I invite you to be mindful of the many blessings we have while also remembering those who are less fortunate but just as deserving. Also, independent of your feelings about the war, I hope you join me in sending our deepest gratitude and highest hopes for a **safe return** to all those men and women serving in uniform-many just kids themselves (at least when they left) who are away from their families and loved ones. Finally, I close by offering my admiration and deepest appreciation for the life of **Mrs. Rosa Parks** who had "enough," and by sitting down actually stood up for all Americans. Her single act of courage sparked the Civil Rights movement that brought a young **Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** to the forefront of American life and ultimately changed an entire nation and indeed the world. Thank you Mrs. Parks! May she rest in peace!

 Jim Theofelis  
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

## Letter to the Editor

To Whom It May Concern:

Enclosed please find a check for \$250 that we are contributing to your organization. We are pleased to make this donation on behalf of Najja Taylor from your organization who recently spoke at our National Community Voice Mail conference.

We appreciate the work that your organization does and found the discussions provided during our conference inspirational.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Brandon  
Executive Director

## Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, 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.

## Thank You's

Ms. Florence Manos; Tammy Clapp; Kevin and Rena O'Brien; Jennifer Brandon; Ruth Williams; Muir Public Relations; Lisa Dobson Gould, Attorney; Chris Marsh, Attorney; Greg Nickels, Seattle Mayor; Rollie Munger, Moss Adams LLC; Dean Robert Taylor, St. Mark's Cathedral, David Koopmans, Atty., Short Cressman & Burgess; Zorn B. Taylor, photographer.

## Free Advocacy Training! Presented by Children's Alliance & Hosted by Mockingbird Society and ASK-Y (Advocates for Systems Kids & Youth)

Monday, November 28th - 3:00-5:00 PM  
2100 24th Ave S, Community Room A  
Seattle, WA 98144

Topic: Training the Trainers by Jon Gould of Children's Alliance. Learn the basics of advocacy, and effective techniques for teaching others to be advocates.

This training will help us get ready for our Youth Advocacy Day in Olympia in February 3rd, when we will be taking a coalition of youth and providers to Olympia to advocate for funds to extend foster care through age 21. Anyone with an interest in advocacy and youth issues is welcome, including youth and staff from local agencies. Please RSVP to lauren@mockingbird-society.org by November 21.

### PLEASE REMEMBER TO VOTE ON NOV. 8!

Your voice does count! Don't let the thought of it being too hard to do get in the way!

1. Bring your ID with you to the polls.
2. If you vote by absentee ballot make sure you mail it in on time.
3. If you don't know where your poll is go to <https://www.metrokc.gov/elections/pollingplace/voterlookup.aspx> to find it.
4. Do your research before going to the polls! Go to <http://www.metrokc.gov/elections/2005Nov/votersguide.htm>

Also look into other media sources because the more you read the better informed you will be to make a choice.

**All incoming Letters to the Editor should be addressed to Mockingbird Editorial Staff and will be opened by Editorial Staff. All incoming correspondence to reporting staff under 18 years of age will be opened first by Mockingbird Editorial Staff.**

### A Mockingbird In Your Inbox!

Mockingbird Times is now Available by email!  
If you want to:

- add email to your subscription
- change solely to email
- reduce number of hard copies and add email
- begin a new subscription

Please contact us at:  
subscription@mockingbirdsociety.org

### MEET OUR STAFF

**Executive Director**  
Jim Theofelis

**Youth LEAD Coordinator**  
Najja Morris

**Operations Manager**  
Ros Ghan

**Administrative Assistant**  
Darcie Gray

**Executive Assistant**  
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**Americorps Member**  
Dietra Clayton

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**Staff Reporters**  
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**Contributing Writers**  
Natashija Ashton-Allen, Raheem Fennell, Thomas Harris

**Volunteers**  
Patricia Gray, Dietra Clayton, Anna Trombley

**ABOUT US:** The Mockingbird Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to building a world class foster care system and improving the other systems that serve children and adolescents involved in homelessness and foster care. 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 Mockingbird Society are paid between \$7.50 and \$8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The Mockingbird Times has a monthly circulation of 40,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the U.S.A, 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 2005 The Mockingbird Society.

## A Mockingbird Inside Your Mailbox

Make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable youth and support the Mockingbird Society!

Donations may be tax deductible and all donors receive the *Mockingbird Times*. Enclosed, please find my check made payable to Mockingbird Society in the amount of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Suggested Donations:

\$ 1,000+.....Protector    \$500-999.....Caretaker    \$250-500.....Organizations    \$50+.....Supporter    \$25.....Foster Parent

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Please do not include my name on published donor lists.

Please bill me for the amount indicated.

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 fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to: The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South Suite 240, Seattle WA 98144

**MURAL Continued from Page 1**

her experience, "I liked working on the mural because of the fact that I love art and I love the Sanctuary Art Center. It was super productive and it was the first time I started something and actually finished it and didn't quit in the middle. It felt really good. Working together with the group was good. We came up with the ideas together and everybody was very helpful."

The Sanctuary Art Center has really grown since I first started going there,

which was something like 5 years ago. Projects like turning youth's poems into music, the poetry project which happened last month, and now this mural project. The new mural's theme is a mixture of urban city-scapes with bursts of color everywhere and nature - Mt. Rainer with trees in soothing blue and green. Leslie wanted it to be all nature but the youth were not going for it. One thing that is great about the mural is that it is murals within murals. There are mini-murals in the urban landscape part of the mural, painted within the buildings. One thing I really liked was

Rat's idea (Rat's paintings were featured in a previous article, he has a really good eye for color) to have 4 concepts: think, dream, create, food.

Go check it out, look at it more than once and you will see different things pop out at you. I noticed the more I looked at it, the more there was to see. The colors are vibrant and brilliant. It's amazing what people can accomplish as a group. Artega, a participant in the mural project commented, "Working on the mural was fun, good, and exciting."



The CDs and Chap books of homeless youth reading their poetry from the poetry project are now available. Proceed benefit the youth and more art projects through SAC. If you are interested please contact Leslie Bourgoin at (206) 914-3956 or write her at sac@drizzle.com I HIGHLY recommend this CD, I got the privilege to preview it and was blown away mentally by some of the tracks because they hit me right in my heart.

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](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org).

## My Life as a Young Mother

NATASHIJA ASHTON-ALLEN - SEATTLE, WA, 20 YEARS OLD

Four days after my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, I got the shock of my life. I was pregnant. My chest was burning with disbelief, I could not breathe. I was so surprised I could not think. My son's father was talking to me, but I could not hear him. At first I did not know if I wanted a baby or if I could see myself being responsible for this child's life. For two weeks, I cried myself to sleep. I had always wanted someone to love me, but would a baby fill that void? I could not see myself going through with an abortion. I had made up my mind, I was keeping my baby.

When I was 2 months along, my son's father and I started to have problems. We did not know each other long enough to have a baby. I tried to become happy with my pregnancy, and he decided

to move on with his life, but every once in a while would come in and out of my life. Never before had I been so confused.

When I was growing up, I had a mother and father that were only there when they wanted to be. This was something that I did not want to expose my son to. I had a hope that everything would work out with my son's father, so we could be a family. Every time I saw Jayden's dad, I set myself up for disappointment. I allowed this to go on during all of my pregnancy.

Overall, I had a healthy pregnancy. I thought that because of all the stress that my son's father was causing me, that my son would be a stress baby. I walked as much as I could, and ate healthy foods whenever possible. I read my pregnancy

book to learn as much as possible about becoming a parent.

The day I went into labor with my son, I was scared out of my mind. I was in labor for nine hours. The first time I looked at my son, I was filled with joy and amazement. I had just done of the most beautiful things a woman can do. For the next two weeks, I felt like I was floating on a cloud. I was so happy my son was here and healthy.

However, having Jayden was one of the biggest decisions I have ever made. I did not understand the benefits and responsibilities of having a child. Sometimes I had the "baby blues." I was happy and sad at the same time. I had this beautiful, healthy baby, but felt so depressed that I was doing this all by myself.

My son's father is not involved in Jayden's life, but appears when he wants to see him. He has not paid for anything since his son has been born. Not only do I have to get up in the middle of the night

with my child, but I also have to deal with all the emotions of this relationship. I try hard not to be angry, but life as a young mother has been one of the hardest things that has happened.

Now my son is almost a year old. I'm attending college at Cascadia Community College. I also work at my school. Raising my son has been challenging. I know that my son will benefit from the things that I have over come in my life and what I will accomplish in life. Being a mother is one of the hardest jobs you can have. Your full-time no matter how you try to play it, you always work over time, with no breaks. The thing that I'm proud of besides having my son, is the fact that I have let the anger go. I no longer blame his father for not being here. I thank him for it. If it were not for him I would not be as strong as I am.

## What You Need to Know About Date Rape

JAMICA HENDERSON



Teens and young adults, school is back in and there's going to be lots of parties. There's going to be smoking, drinking, dancing and music. Sounds fun! All your friends are going to be there, but the question we all must ask ourselves before deciding to go is: Is this a safe place for me to be? When we hear that there's going to be a party, we focus on how fun it's going to be, what to wear, how we will get there and home, how much it cost, who is going and more. Never do we think about date or acquaintance rape.

Before we get into the statistics, do you know the difference between date rape and acquaintance rape? "Date rape" is the combination of two words put together. Date: "To go on a date or dates with" (1). Rape: "is a crime wherein the victim is forced into sexual activity against his or her will" (2). In summary, "date rape" is when you go on a date with someone you know and are then forced to do things that you don't agree to.

Acquaintance rape: "Rape perpetrated by someone known to the victim" (3). Date rape and acquaintance rape are pretty similar. Acquaintance rape is somebody that you knew previously and not necessarily "dated" or were intimate with. It could be a person who you have had a relationship with, a friend of a friend, a classmate, etc. If one of you says "NO" to sex and you're forced anyway that's when it becomes a rape "acquaintance rape." "One of the most common types of acquaintance rape is date rape. If you are a female between the ages of 16-24, you run the greatest risk of being raped by a date. The use of alcohol or drugs also increases your risk. In one study, 74% of the men and 55% of the women had been drinking or using drugs prior to the sexual assault" (4).

How do you know when this is going to happen? You don't, but there are steps you can take to stay safe for all involved.

### For Potential Victims

- Say no as if you mean no; if you don't mean no then don't say it.
- Be clear, honest and consistent in your verbal communications about sexual desires.
- Trust your instincts. If you have any

hesitations about a man, think carefully about dating him. Pay attention to situations that make you uncomfortable and think of ways to decrease potential problems.

- Be aware that nonverbal behaviors or actions may be interpreted differently than you intended. That DOES NOT mean it is your fault if you are assaulted.
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol and/or other drugs (4)

### For Potential Aggressors

- Understand that forced sex is NEVER acceptable; it is against the law.
- Accept "no" as "no." Don't read other meanings into that word.
- Know the difference between desire and action. Being sexually aroused does not give you permission to force sex on another.
- Be responsible for your own sexual limits and actions; they are your responsibility.
- Realize that dating for a long time, spending money or previous sexual intercourse does not obligate a woman to have sex.
- Avoid excessive use of alcohol and/or other drugs.
- Don't make assumptions. Just because

your date welcomes some sexual contact doesn't mean she wants other types of sexual contact. (4)

Remember that rape occurs in ALL relationships, regardless of gender makeup. Rape and sexual assault occur just as frequently and should be taken just as seriously in Lesbian, Gay and other "queer" relationships. The following are a few resources if you or somebody you know become a victim of this crime:

Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA) - 801 23rd Ave S, Suite G-1, Seattle, WA 98144 (206) 322-4856

Harborview Center for Sexual Assault-1401 E Jefferson St, 4th Floor, Seattle, WA 98122 (206) 521-1800

King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (888) 998-6423 (confidential address)

Northwest Network of LGBT survivors of abuse- PO Box 20398 Seattle, WA 98102 (206) 568-7777

1. <http://www.answers.com/date>
2. [http://encyclopedia.laborlawtalk.com/date\\_rape](http://encyclopedia.laborlawtalk.com/date_rape)
3. <http://education.yahoo.com>
4. <http://www.wcstx.com/friendrp.htm>

## “We Are Dad”: Movie Review

MISTY LOU COOK



I recently enjoyed the opportunity of watching a documentary entitled “We Are Dad” at the (10<sup>th</sup> Annual) Seattle Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. The film, documented by a close family friend, was about the lives and struggles of two gay foster parents who had adopted 5 HIV Positive Children and Children with AIDS. The couple, named Steve Lofton and Roger Croteau, met during nursing school. They met, fell in love, and were together for 13 years before adopting their first child. Both Steve and Roger worked in the Pediatric AIDS Dept and were AIDS Specialists at the Jackson Memorial Hospital in Florida during the beginning of the AIDS epidemic.

“Steve and Roger ... don’t refer to themselves as ‘taking in’ kids, and they never say the kids ‘joined the family.’ They talk warmly about when each of the kids ‘came home.’” (1) Frank was the first of their kids to “come home.” He was a baby whose mother had died in the AIDS ward in Miami shortly after giving birth to Frank. As his mother was dying, she “asked them to take her baby boy after she was gone”(2). Although Gay Adoption in Florida was illegal, and still is to this day, “social workers had asked Steve and Roger if they would think about being foster parents to children with HIV who were impossible to place because of stigma and fear of AIDS at that point in the epidemic.”(3) Steve and Roger welcomed their first baby with open arms as he “came home.”

A few weeks later, their second child, Tracy, “came home” to them on her 1<sup>st</sup> birthday on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1988. Tracy was born severely drug-addicted and HIV Positive and welcomed with loving arms. From 1988 until the late 1990’s, Steve Lofton and Roger Croteau welcomed four more babies into their humble family, all of them HIV Positive or suffering from AIDS, most of them born drug-addicted, some with fetal alcohol syndrome on top of everything else. All of them “came home” to a house and family full of love, where they were loved and cherished for their individuality. One of Steve and Roger’s children, Ginger, passed away after graduating from pre-school in 1994 at age six. Despite the special needs of their children, Steve and Roger “treated the medical needs like just another fact of life and devoted themselves to raising the kids like any other family, filling their lives with love, fun, and learning.”(4)

Raising Frank, Tracy, Ginger and Bert in the State of Florida, in the 80’s and

early 90’s, wasn’t easy. Steve and Roger encountered abundant homophobia and racism, because Frankie, Tracy, Ginger and Bert were black children and Steve and Roger were gay, white parents. On top of the homophobia and racism, there was the knowledge that most AIDS babies weren’t expected to live beyond the age of two. Later on, after the family moved to Oregon in the late 1990’s, the children’s pediatrician “quickly noticed Steve and Roger’s parenting skills and the kids’ development. He asked if they would consider taking in two brothers with AIDS whom the state couldn’t place with anyone else.”(5) So, the Lofton-Croteau family grew by two, and Frankie, Tracy and Bert grew to love their rambunctious and inquisitive little brothers, who were white. In the face of all of the family’s obstacles, the quality of care, love and patience that Steve and Roger showed their children gave the family hope.

When the documentary about this family was finished in 2000, “Frank, the baby boy who was placed with them in 1988, is 14. Tracy, the baby girl who came weeks later, is also 14. Bert is 10, and the two Oregon boys, Wayne and Ernie, are 8 and 5. The five of them are a family by any definition...” (6). A decade later, “the Children’s Home Society, one of the leading kids’ social service agencies in Miami (and the group that placed foster kids with Steve and Roger), created an award for outstanding foster parent of the year. They didn’t just give the first award to Steve and Roger – they named it the ‘Lofton-Croteau Award.’” (7)

Despite the overwhelming evidence that gay people can raise healthy, loving and happy families, there are many states that have specific bans AGAINST Gay Adoption. Despite the fact that there are thousands of gay couples who would LOVE to adopt some of the thousands of children stuck in the foster care system, without homes or families, gay people aren’t legally allowed to adopt. The ACLU put together a website for Steve and Roger’s fight for justice, equality, and the right to keep their children. The website tells the Lofton-Croteau story, the kid’s stories, their legal battles to keep their children and legalize gay adoption, how to take action and help legalize gay adoption and has some really cute pictures of the Lofton-Croteau family. You can check out the site at: [www.lethimstay.com](http://www.lethimstay.com). This site is produced by the ACLU Lesbian & Gay Rights Project.

“We Are Dad” was a heart-warming, wonderful and very educational movie.

(1,2,3,4,5) [http://www.lethimstay.com/loftons\\_kids.html](http://www.lethimstay.com/loftons_kids.html)

(6,7) [http://www.lethimstay.com/loftons\\_steveroger.html](http://www.lethimstay.com/loftons_steveroger.html)

saults were under investigation until I was 20 years old.

It all started at a Seattle Group Home. It was there that I was slammed against the wall and injured, and the facility decided not to report the incident to C.P.S. Instead, they continued “care” for another 2 years, in violation of the law that states that an agency must make Child Protective Services report if a child has been injured or a suspected injury has occurred. It was very scary at such a young age to be injured and not know what to do. It felt like nobody cared about me. I felt that I was all by myself, with no family and nobody to help me. I felt abandoned, hopeless and like my life was filled with nothingness.

The remaining 5 years in foster care

• a different kind of hero one I’d like to see a different kind of hero one I’d like to be different kind of hero someone who i trust a different kind of hero the one who watches me

mommy

• mommy,mommy my old mommy  
• mommy,mommy the mommy i shall love  
• mommy,mommy the mom right for me  
• mommy,mommy don’t take my mommy

Something i wont waste’

this is my day of opportunity and i will not waste it on a corner doing or selling drugs or in a club drinkin beer I’d rather spend my time getting a valuable education

## Calendar of Events

**November is National Adoption Month**  
Visit [www.nationaladoptionday.org](http://www.nationaladoptionday.org) for more local and national information.

**November 18-19**  
Seattle Adoption Day Activities

**December 1, 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.**  
The Washington Association of Family-based Treatment Services (WAFTS)  
Is offering a FREE TRAINING to foster parents and social workers  
1201 S. Proctor  
Tacoma, WA 98405

To register, call or Email:  
1-800-701-8711  
WAFTS55@hotmail.com

**February 2**  
Advocacy Day Training  
2100 Building

**February 3**  
Advocacy Day  
Olympia, WA

**March 30**  
Mockingbird Annual Fundraiser  
Location To Be Determined

## Stay in Touch With Community Voicemail

ANTHONY GUESS



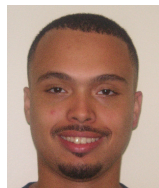
Womens Law Center), Najja Morris (Mockingbird Society), Shereese Phillips (Casey Family alumni) and Nate Caldwell who is a the Director of King County Community Corrections Division.

Community Voice Mail (CVM) is a voice mail system that was started in 1991, and its primary focus is to provide a free and adequate number where you can be reached at all times. Currently, there are only 37 sites in the United States. By the year 2008 CVM is expected to serve the biggest 50 cities and an estimated 65,000 people in the U.S. On October 7, 2005 Community Voice Mail had its annual conference, where people from around the country came to share what’s working and what’s not. During that conference, four people spoke about how CVM can help in different aspects; June Krumpotick (Northwest

Having CVM allows you to take control of your life. For example, while growing up in the “Foster Care System”, there are a lot of appointments and personal business being discussed. CVM is a way for your case worker to talk to you instead of having the messages relayed through other people. Or how about if you just aged out of the system and you are now homeless, lack a permanent residence and /or number and need to communicate to get stable. This is a wonderful resource for many! For more information or to receive a voicemail number you can contact Fremont Public Association- (206) 694-6771 if you live in Seattle, or visit [www.cvm.org](http://www.cvm.org) to contact them nationally.

## My Story

THOMAS HARRIS



My name is Thomas Harris and this is my story about how I survived one gun shot and two sexual assaults. I went into foster care when I was 11 years old. It seemed fun at first, but later became a nightmare that would not go away for nearly 10 years. The shooting case lasted until my 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday and the sexual as-

seemed to go by somewhat fast. However, those years in Foster Care were frightening and very emotionally, physically and mentally damaging. I was moved in with a gay foster parent that would later assault me and admit to the assault. The agency would later violate the C.P.S order, jeopardizing my life once again, as well as showing their willingness to break the Foster Care laws.

After all of this happened, it seemed to me like life was a tunnel of doom. I was sexually assaulted, then moved, then sexually assaulted again, then shot. It seemed that life was going to end for me. I was a child inside that never had a caring family. I struggled to get anything and not be abused. Prior to entering Foster Care, my bi-

ological parents had 22 C.P.S reports from a number of different public schools, private agencies and neighbors that would eventually lead to my removal from their home. I have had three surgeries on my mouth due to abuse.

I am now 20 years old and have dreams of becoming a City Council Member and changing laws to protect foster youth, especially orphaned and in-state care children. I am also working on my degree at S.C.C.C, with a major in Biology, and would one day like to become a surgeon.

I have a television show in the works on the public access channel and I have some art that I would like to put on display at the SAM Art Museum.