



NOVEMBER 2024

THE MOCKINGBIRD TIMES



Koncrete Rose, a young advocate, performing original music at our Fall Fundraiser: Block Party Edition on Oct. 10, 2024.

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ABOUT THE MOCKINGBIRD TIMES

The Mockingbird Times is a publication aiming to: amplify the voices of youth and young adults with lived experience in foster care and/or homelessness; change and expand the public perception of young people and the challenges they face; and educate communities about foster care, youth homelessness, and advocacy work.

The Mockingbird Times was the first project launched after The Mockingbird Society was founded in 2000 and has since played a key role in our Youth Programs. Not only does the publication provide an opportunity to elevate the voices of our young advocates and the issues they're facing, it also provides a picture of young leaders balancing their roles as powerful, positive change agents in our community with all the joys, challenges, and questions experienced by youth and young adults.

The Times has historically been distributed across the state and nation and has been included as an insert in Real Change, a Seattle-based community newspaper. All young reporters and contributors (ages 13-26) from across Washington state are compensated for their submissions to The Mockingbird Times.

As we have relaunched The Mockingbird Times over the past year or so, we have taken the opportunity to collaborate with young people and reimagine the publication, from its format and distribution to its content and vision.

The innovating and revamping process will take time and will center young people's perspectives on operations, content, and publishing as this program continues to be rebuilt. We believe it is important to create space for young people to share about all their passions—including, but not limited to, their advocacy work—to honor and provide a fuller glimpse of the whole human beings contributing their compelling voices and talents.

With that, we hope you enjoy the November 2024 Issue of The Mockingbird Times!



A LETTER FROM MOCKINGBIRD'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Mockingbird Times Readers,

My heart overflows with gratitude for the young artists, poets, and activists whose contributions fill this issue of the Mockingbird Times. I am humbled by the truths they have shared—truths rooted in lived experiences and the painful contradictions of striving to serve others while navigating systems that perpetuate scarcity and exclusion. These testimonies are a powerful challenge to dismantle cycles of inequity and reimagine a future where survival and service are no longer at odds.



The frustration expressed by advocates about nonprofit performativity and hollow gestures underscores an urgent need for transformation—a shift toward work grounded in authentic relationships, shared power, and deep accountability to the communities being served.

Transformative change begins with small, intentional acts. The courage and voices of those with lived experience are among the most potent forces for progress, yet systems of oppression often isolate and exhaust those who resist them. The struggles shared in these narratives—between survival and service, between opportunity and scarcity—are symptoms of systems in desperate need of dismantling and re-envisioning, guided by the wisdom of those directly impacted.

These stories compel us to confront uncomfortable truths: that the nonprofit sector, like so many systems, often mirrors the inequities it claims to address. At Mockingbird, we take these critiques to heart. We recognize that we have much to learn and unlearn as we work to create spaces of genuine safety, belonging, and equity for young advocates with lived experience.

To all the advocates who courageously shared their stories: your words are a call to action. They remind us of the interconnected nature of our liberation and the imperative to build systems that honor your vision, foster your growth, and elevate your leadership.

In Community,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Natalie Lente', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

NATALIE LENTE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



POEM AND ART BY AN ANONYMOUS LIVED EXPERIENCE EXPERT

In a world where voices are overlooked,
A journey began to seek the souls mistook.
In the embrace of the Mockingbird Society,
Allying with their cause, forming a unity.

BIPOC voices, vibrant and strong,
Their stories, the threads that weave along.
LGBTQIA+ voices, courageous and bright,
Shining colors in a world that's not always right.

We stand together, fostering change and care,
Lifting each other with love to share.
For we are the alumni of foster care and homelessness,
A community strong, resilient through every test.

In the chorus of unity, we find our song,
Amplifying voices, righting what's wrong.
Together, we create a world anew,
Where all voices are heard and embraced, through and through.



A MESSAGE FROM ENDER, A KING COUNTY CHAPTER MEMBER

TRANSCRIBED FROM WHAT ENDER ORIGINALLY SHARED AT OUR FALL FUNDRAISER: BLOCK PARTY EDITION ON OCTOBER 10, 2024 (PICTURED ABOVE)

Hey everyone, its super nice to be here! I'd like to start off by saying I've had a truly amazing time working with The Mockingbird Society (TMS). A big passion of mine is advocacy- it brings me a sense of purpose, and TMS has been more than gracious about my disabilities, which have affected my ability to do advocacy in the past. They've been able to give me a safe place to do my advocacy and help me to find that sense of purpose again.

They have given me a lot of oppotunities to not only do something bigger outside of myself, but also helped me to get and keep my life on track, to take care of my health, and return a sense of pride to my life. I can't thank them enough for all that they've done to help me.

Through TMS, I have met a lot of truly amazing people- people I likely would not have met any other way. It's honestly incredibly comforting to have a sense of community when I don't really get to have that outside of TMS. It's been a truly fulfilling experience for me.

The first event I ever went to was the Youth Leadership Summit, and I have never met more dedicated and truly just amazing people. The kindness that I was met with - even with being a newcomer- was outstanding. And TMS managed to get so many things done, and I got to contribute. I got to be a part of it, and the amount of joy it brought me to be able to bring in some truly good change into our community was astounding.

There is a lot of work that still needs to be done, and personally I can't really think of a better place for me to be to do my advocacy. There are so many pieces of advocacy that I can throw myself into and work on through The Mockingbird Society. We do so much good- so, so much. It's honestly breathtaking to me, despite all the work that there needs to be done in the world to truly make a place for the people who need it.

Everyone I've met here is so dedicated to pushing forward progress, and doing what needs to be done, and taking care of its people to truly make sure that the people around us have the best lives they can despite the circumstances we're all surrounded by.

Just being with TMS, not only am I able to better take care of myself and my cat, but I am able to fulfill a dream that I had when I was pretty young: I wanted to make a change in the world so profound that it would end up in the history books one day. And I truly believe that The Mockingbird Society will end up in the history books some day. The amount of change we are talking about will impact people- likely forever.

We are taking the states, at the very least our state, into a much better place through the advocacy that we are doing and the policy changes that we are trying to put in place. I have no doubt in my mind that The Mockingbird Society will keep fighting long after I leave, and long after the group after me. It's comforting. It's comforting to me that there are people out there that truly do care about bringing about meaningful change.

We are setting a precedent. If we can do this much good here, I have no doubt in my mind that it will inspire many organizations across the states to do what we are doing - to make as much change as possible. We need to keep doing what we are doing, and I can't wait to be here to lend a hand.

Thank you to everyone who came here, and the people helping to keep The Mockingbird Society fighting. I hope to see you all again at some point.

OTHER REFLECTIONS FROM OUR FALL FUNDRAISER

“THE MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY HAS TAUGHT ME VITAL SKILLS IN LEADERSHIP, TEAMWORK, AND ADVOCACY... THIS IS AN ORGANIZATION THAT HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH ADVOCACY, ALL WHILE HOLDING SPACE FOR THOSE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE TO COME TOGETHER.”

-AMAIYA, MOCKINGBIRD ADVOCATE



“BEING A PART OF THIS ORGANIZATION, I’VE LEARNED HOW TO BE TRANSPARENT AND VULNERABLE WITHOUT ANY FEAR OF JUDGEMENT AND TELL MY STORY FROM A MORE POWERFUL PERSPECTIVE.”

-KONCRETE ROSE, MOCKINGBIRD ADVOCATE



THE FOSTER CARE TO HOMELESSNESS PIPELINE: MY EXPERIENCE

BY WEISS, A KING COUNTY CHAPTER MEMBER

PLEASE NOTE: THIS PIECE CONTAINS EXPLICIT LANGUAGE, DESCRIPTIONS OF EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, AND DETAILS THAT COULD BE TRIGGERING FOR FOLKS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE. READER DISCRETION IS ADVISED.

When I was 19, I was faced with a decision that would change my life permanently. In the height of the Covid-19 Pandemic, I was a foster youth in the state of Missouri. It was Spring 2021, the economy got hit hard, jobs were hard to find or maintain, the housing crisis was escalating and I had just graduated high school a year later to... this. Inspiring! In the midst of this crisis, the independent living program I was a part of had a policy of no one other than your assigned roommate was to live with you, though as foster youth, we didn't really care about that when our friends are going through it too- especially in the context of the times and the traumas we'd just endured to get there. It was that or they live on the streets, right? Well, I had done this with a friend of my own, however, this time my roommates didn't really like this person, and resorted to the power of snitching to address it. Long story short, they succeeded in making my friend homeless by having the organization force me to put them in that predicament. This led to a fallout that led to my own personal experience with homelessness, as the tensions between me and my roommate, as well as me and the foster system as a whole, came to a head. I was faced with the decision to either endure a massive setback and be forced into placements that wouldn't want an old bastard like me (in foster terms anyway), nor would any foster parents want me. Why would I willingly submit myself to the same trauma they'd forced on me at 16? So of course, I ran for the streets. Thus began my homelessness. With \$500 to my name, I fled the hellscape that is Missouri for greener pastures, Washington.

Once I reached Seattle, I was admittedly bewildered. I had fallen asleep on the Greyhound bus and had to be woken up to get off, which gave me this eerie feeling of stepping out into this vast concrete landscape, all alone. At 12am or so, I had just stepped into The Chinatown-International District for the first time, and immediately wanted to explore. I did so for a while, but realized Seattle was kinda huge and decided to go find somewhere to sleep/rest until morning. I found a bus stop nobody was at in a neighborhood I stumbled into and spent the rest of my first night here right there all balled up for warmth. Then I awoke to the cold, cold, so cruelly cold early mornings out here and began my exploration of the city, its resources, and its people. I met a lady with her son playing at a park early in the morning. I felt reluctant to approach so randomly but decided she could help. When I asked if she could point me to the

nearest resources for homelessness, she happily did so. You Seattleites are nice, you know that? That's my first impression of people out here. I traveled around U-District to find these fabled tiny houses I heard about from that helpful mother. Once I did, I was redirected to downtown due to their limited space, but this time I finally got bus tickets that introduced me to another great thing out here: public transit. In doing so, I found the resources I needed to go to in order to succeed in getting out of homelessness. And so I traveled to the east side cities to spend the remainder of my time gathering all I needed and pursuing what I needed, and eventually did succeed 11 months later. I made good friends, learned more about myself and the world, and felt confident in my chances of success with the variety of skills my supports gave me.

This is just one of the many ways that my peers enter homelessness from state custody. Much of it has to do with traumatized youth not getting the full support and resources they need to accomplish their personal goals as well as whichever program they had to go through to do so. In my time on the streets, I met many other youths like me. About a third of them were former foster youth still in the midst of their traumas and with the hope to escape them. I had managed to survive homelessness for those 11 months until I finally got the resources for housing, but I was luckier than most in that the pandemic was still raging and housing vouchers were easier to come by than typically possible.

“THIS IS JUST ONE OF THE MANY WAYS THAT MY PEERS ENTER HOMELESSNESS FROM STATE CUSTODY. MUCH OF IT HAS TO DO WITH TRAUMATIZED YOUTH NOT GETTING THE FULL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES THEY NEED TO ACCOMPLISH THEIR PERSONAL GOALS AS WELL AS WHICHEVER PROGRAM THEY HAD TO GO THROUGH TO DO SO.”

I hope that in some way my story and my success in gaining housing can be used to further help and make the case for more assistance for other unhoused youth and young adults. More vouchers to house more youth, more supportive people to help guide us through these difficult situations and our eventual recovery, and like I have mentioned in the *Mockingbird Times* before, less authoritarian systemic displacement and treatment of our foster youth. I want to see that be a reality as soon as possible. And be nice like those who helped guide me through the journey, small or significant.

HOW SHELTERS REALLY ARE

BY SAHARA AND JOSH, CENTRAL CHAPTER MEMBERS



PLEASE NOTE: THIS PIECE CONTAINS DESCRIPTIONS OF EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, SHELTERS, AND OTHER CHALLENGES THAT COULD BE TRIGGERING FOR FOLKS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE. READER DISCRETION IS ADVISED.

It may seem good on the outside, but what is going on on the inside is a different story. Shelters, in our experience, have not been nice and need to be better. Some shelters would be all up in your business, and most don't have privacy. Most shelters would not care about your well-being. Most shelters would listen to people who have been there a lot longer than you, and then move you when they see issues. They won't work things out, they make the one who has been there the longest feel safe, but they will pretty much say, 'who cares'. That, to us, is messed up. The conditions of the shelters are not as good as the public thinks they are.

Josh and I (Sahara) had a challenging experience staying at a shelter during a difficult time when we had lost some people close to us. Initially, the staff were kind, but their behavior soon changed, becoming unreasonably mean. They accused us of gossiping whenever we talked about the people we missed, which left us feeling hurt and isolated. I often found myself crying alone in bed.

The shelter also had significant issues with accessibility and basic needs. They lacked a wheelchair for those unable to walk, forcing residents to help with mobility, which was uncomfortable for everyone involved. Meals were inconsistent, often relying on donated food and sometimes only provided once a day. The sleeping arrangements were poor, with old jail beds that were difficult to sleep on, exacerbating my health issues. Despite my requests for a better mattress due to my health, I was told it was reserved for others who "needed it more."

Additionally, the shelter's policies regarding personal belongings and curfews were problematic. I felt unsafe leaving my things at the shelter, leading me to carry them with me constantly, which was both difficult and embarrassing. The shelter's rigid curfews and harsh treatment if you didn't return on time, even when working, were frustrating.

The inconsistent treatment by staff was another major issue. Some staff were kind, but others were dismissive and unhelpful. For instance, when I needed a ride to a doctor's appointment, management told me they either couldn't or didn't care about my health. I was also unfairly treated when dealing with depression; despite having a doctor's note explaining my condition, I was told it didn't matter and had to leave.

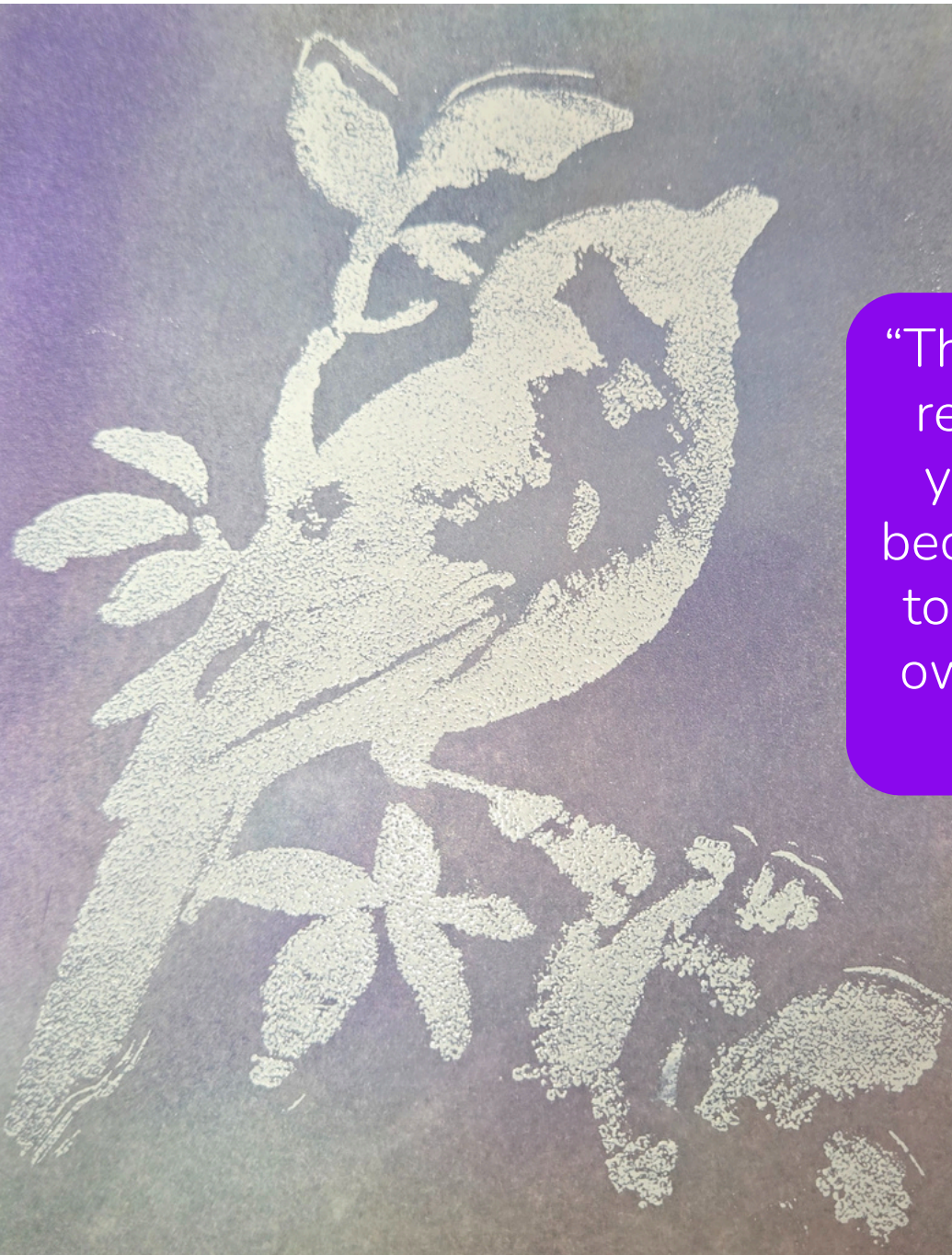
However, shelters often had biased and unfair policies, such as providing food preferentially to pregnant individuals while denying it to others, or not allowing basic necessities like tea with a doctor's note. I also faced discrimination when I sought shelter for me and my children but was denied because I didn't have full custody. This lack of empathy and support made us feel neglected and devalued.

Overall, these experiences highlight the urgent need for shelters to hire more people, try to get more funds and ensure they meet the needs of all residents respectfully and politely.

Shelters are vital to those that do not have a home. They can provide more resources for jobs and more understanding of certain cases. However, we also know that they need help to ensure people that stay at a shelter are safe and protected and have opportunities to get back on their feet. By having better hiring practices, gaining support from other communities to provide resources such as food, beds, and transportation would be important for those that are in shelters. Although these needs are attached to needing more funds, these changes would help people gain stability in their life.

MOCKINGBIRD ART

BY AZZAROTH, A CENTRAL
CHAPTER MEMBER



“The freedom of the bird reminds me of finding your own path in life, becoming who you want to be, and making your own choices to achieve your goals.”

FROM SUMMIT TO SESSION

HOW ADVOCACY TOPICS ARE DEVELOPED

At Youth Leadership Summit in late July, Mockingbird Chapters shared their advocacy topic ideas for the 2025 Legislative Session with stakeholders from across the state. Since Summit, Chapters have collaborated with our Public Policy team, community partners, leaders and legislators to refine their ideas into policy proposals that now make up Mockingbird's 2025 Legislative and Administrative Agendas. Here's how each of the Chapters' work evolved between Summit and Session:

TOPIC: PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

FOCUS AT SUMMIT:

While permanent supportive housing (PSH) traditionally serves people with disabilities, expanding it to include different age categories, particularly young adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness, would reduce shelter reliance, lower involvement in illegal activities, and decrease preventable deaths due to unstable housing. This initiative supports all homeless youth and young adults, including those with disabilities, young parents, individuals in recovery, survivors of domestic violence, and emancipated minors. Investing in PSH not only improves young adults' well-being but also reduces state costs, as homelessness services are more expensive than providing permanent supportive housing.

LEAD AGENDA ITEM FOR LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

Mockingbird is advocating for the state to allocate \$250,000 to the Office of Homeless Youth to use for researching and developing recommendations to improve PSH access for young adults with developmental needs. This will involve funding, programming enhancements, and awareness campaigns.

YOUTH ADVOCATES ENDING HOMELESSNESS (YAEH) CHAPTER



TOPIC: PEER TO PEER PROGRAM

FOCUS AT SUMMIT:

The Peer 2 Peer Program, initiated by the King County Chapter, aims to provide job opportunities and support tailored to young individuals with lived foster care experience. Despite challenges such as funding and organizational support, the program has garnered positive feedback and is now being pursued legislatively after initial administrative attempts fell short. This program benefits current and former foster youth by fostering autonomy and community. Next steps involve conversations with the Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA) to develop a clear plan to implement this program within their office, and ensuring clear mental health resources for youth and mentors. The goal is to establish a comprehensive program that supports all foster youth, regardless of their case intensity.

AGENDA ITEM FOR LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

Mockingbird is advocating for the WA State Legislature to allocate \$250,000 to the Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA) to initiate a co-design process, collaborating with foster youth and community stakeholders to develop a peer mentorship program tailored to the unique needs of youth in foster care.

KING COUNTY CHAPTER



TOPIC: INCREASING ACCESS TO FOOD STAMPS/ EBT BENEFITS

FOCUS AT SUMMIT:

Many young adults and youth, particularly those in the foster care or homeless systems, face significant barriers to accessing Food Stamps/EBT/SNAP benefits. These obstacles include unclear and inconsistent eligibility requirements, definitions that do not align with their experiences, difficulties navigating the application process and gathering the necessary documents, and a lack of awareness about SNAP benefits and other available resources. To address these challenges, the Eastern Chapter proposed strategies to increase awareness of these resources, revise some of the definitions involved in accessing these resources, and enhancing promotion of these resources.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEM FOR LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

The objective of this administrative work is to address vague and misleading language on SNAP Benefit eligibility on Washington State application platforms by creating a step-by-step guide with simplified language on all eligibility requirements, state and federal. Currently, young people between the ages of 18 and 22 living with a guardian are unable to qualify for SNAP benefits if the guardian is already receiving benefits, clarified in the federal definition of a “household.” However, state application sites omit this definition and circumstance, leading to confusion during the application process. By creating a simplified guide for the state application portal, we can ensure that all eligibility criteria, state or federal, are visible and consistent with all regulations for this program in Washington State.

EASTERN CHAPTER



TOPIC: FINANCIAL CAPABILITIES

FOCUS AT SUMMIT

Youth in foster care face significant financial challenges when transitioning out of the system. Washington state must provide comprehensive support to ensure these young individuals achieve stable independence. Without adequate resources, they risk falling into a cycle of poverty. The Tacoma Chapter presented the following next steps: establishing a Financial Capabilities program for all eligible youth, assisting with opening bank accounts for these young people, making regular deposits in these bank accounts, and creating an online platform for young people to access and monitor their accounts.

LEAD AGENDA ITEM FOR LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

Financial Capabilities has evolved into a Lead Agenda Item that will focus on all of the steps that the Tacoma Chapter outlined at Summit. The key objectives of this proposal are: establishing a Financial Capabilities Program for all eligible young people age 14 and up through The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF); providing caseworker support to these young people to ensure their bank accounts are opened; ensuring the state makes monthly deposits of at least \$25 dollars are made into eligible youth accounts; and creating an online platform for young people to access and monitor their accounts.

TACOMA CHAPTER



TOPIC: TRANSPORTATION SUPPORT

FOCUS AT SUMMIT:

Despite the presence of resources for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness, accessing services remains challenging due to limited transportation options. Public transportation often fails to adequately meet their needs, proving time-consuming and expensive, particularly in rural and inter-town settings. Consequently, young people experiencing housing instability struggle to access vital services. Our objective is to enhance service accessibility for homeless youth and young adults through two proposed solutions. First, we advocate for the implementation of a Third-Party Transportation Service dedicated to facilitating travel to city and county-wide resources. Second, we seek additional funding to enable specific organizations to establish their own transportation services or mobile care units, enabling staff to reach young people in need.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEM FOR LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

The Mockingbird Society Northern Chapter will collaborate with local government agencies, transit authorities, and private organizations to identify and implement innovative transportation solutions. This may include rideshare partnerships, community shuttle services, and subsidized transit passes.

NORTHERN CHAPTER



TOPIC: ABUSE PREVENTION LEARNING STANDARD

FOCUS AT SUMMIT

Abuse is alarmingly prevalent within the foster care system, both before and during youth placement. It is crucial that foster youth are educated about the various forms of abuse to prevent normalization and empower them to seek help when needed. This awareness is particularly critical for disproportionately affected groups such as homeless youth, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, Neurodivergent individuals, and others with disabilities. This year, our collaboration with OCLA has enabled progress on the Know Your Rights Pamphlet, enhancing foster youth's understanding of their rights and access to legal support. While we have maintained a consistent workgroup, last year posed challenges in garnering adequate support and attention for this critical issue. Moving forward, our focus must prioritize inclusivity through trauma-informed care and address language and cultural barriers. To maximize effectiveness, we aim to extend this education to youth in and out of foster care, and enhance training for foster caregivers, including within BRS trainings.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEM FOR LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

The Mockingbird Society is working closely with OSPI to propose revisions to the existing health education learning standards. The updated standards would be focused on: Physical Abuse, Psychological/Mental Abuse, and Financial Abuse

CENTRAL CHAPTER



It's powerful to see the way that all of these topics have progressed this year, and we know that this will lead to meaningful change and community collaboration in the 2025 Legislative Session and into the future. Make sure to stay tuned throughout Legislative Session for ways that you can advocate and show your support for these young people's proposals!



SURVIVING AIN'T LIVING

BY AN ANONYMOUS LIVED EXPERIENCE EXPERT



PLEASE NOTE: THIS PIECE CONTAINS EXPLICIT LANGUAGE, DETAILS ABOUT EXPERIENCING POVERTY, AND OTHER CHALLENGES THAT COULD BE TRIGGERING FOR FOLKS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE. READER DISCRETION IS ADVISED.

Being a lived expert (i.e. someone with lived experience honed into expertise on the subject of their experience) and trying to do good work for people who suffered like me is a real trial in patience, poverty, and loss. You must be patient for good opportunities, not just to help people, but to get by. And you must be patient with how you approach these various communities of people trying to help. In my poverty I've found that patience is a real bitch. You don't have enough money to handle everything you need to, so you must choose what matters at that moment more, such as a phone bill or your rent for example. You stand to lose something either way as you don't make enough to cover all your needs. The loss of an opportunity could lead to the loss of being able to afford what might enable you to even accomplish other opportunities. Thus, a cycle of poverty, lackluster opportunities, and mental distress is created.

For someone like me, this is pretty terrible. It makes you think that helping people, especially people you can relate to and want to be there for, is incompatible with reality. Or at the very least "your" reality. The needs I have can't always be met. My growth, not just financially, but also as an individual is stunted by the inability to move past a cycle of growing payments and unfortunate gaps in chances to do good work for my community. The anxieties I feel as I interview for more opportunities/contracts get in the way of performing well in them, and my distrust of the nonprofit world based on "image" and "public perception" leaves me disillusioned and spiteful. How many times must I watch my friends in this community suffer? How much of this suffering could be avoided if I could do good work more efficiently or more consistently? Or would my work only enable more suffering? As a lived expert, I speak to you that I don't know. And from where I stand, my community does not know either.



Sometimes this doubt leaves me unable to act on chances that could improve my situation, or help people like I really would like to. It feels crippling, to be honest. I felt that way for the big Fall event Mockingbird was hosting, despite my invitation to be there, in my community. After all, why would I want to show myself as the struggling, sustenance deprived, and traumatized young adult that I am in an environment meant to produce hope? I feel very counterintuitive to that hope, as someone who doesn't have much hope from the things I've seen, and lived, and have to have on replay as a condition and as my means of making an income.

You see people who share your experiences and wonder, how are we going to fix this? You build a group, a council, a community, a goal to strive for but then get shut down by those who've never experienced a thing of what they claim to address in their organization as they fire those who sympathized with you enough to speak out about it. And even within this paragraph I am not allowed to call out those who have done this very thing. So again, you wonder how we can even fathom fixing this?

I'm surviving, but definitely not thriving, and surviving ain't living. I'm not the only one either, I know it because I live it. And if I live it, then it's the lived experience that changes you. If this is just a continuation of my traumatic experiences for the sake of "helping", then I don't know if I'll survive long enough to thrive, or show anyone that it's worth doing anyway.

The purpose of this piece isn't meant to fill you with dread, but I do hope it gives you, the reader, some insight into what it's like to be a lived expert in this line of work. If you don't like it, good. You weren't meant to. So, how will you address us?

“THE PURPOSE OF THIS PIECE ISN'T MEANT TO FILL YOU WITH DREAD, BUT I DO HOPE IT GIVES YOU, THE READER, SOME INSIGHT INTO WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A LIVED EXPERT IN THIS LINE OF WORK. IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, GOOD. YOU WEREN'T MEANT TO. SO, HOW WILL YOU ADDRESS US?”



JUXTAPOSITION

By Rain, a lived experience expert

I fell so hard for you it was,
Colossal.

Yet, I'm shaking in this bed like an unforgiven apostle.
I'd love to wash you clean, but it seems that I'm corrosive.
An architect, I build, only to find that I'm explosive.

Synonymous with pleasure, yet pain you'll never show.
Diamonds form under pressure, like children caught in
undertow.

Now I've become the monster, like the person I used to know.
These cycles move like seasons, and you've been dragged below.

Littered with bruises, this hurt I don't deserve.
Finding pleasure in inflicting another, the same master I've
came to serve.

Yet I cannot hurt another, a perturbing
coinheritance.

Your influence is so meritless.

"This is about addiction, familial influence and factors such as the cycle of an addiction... as the word juxtaposition suggests, "the fact of two things being seen or placed close together with contrasting effect." A person who suffered a great deal and viewed as a victim, following the cycle, goes on to be hated and viewed in the same light as the person who did it to them or another. It's all about choices and the cycle of abuse."

CELESTIAL NECROPOLIS

By Rain, a lived experience expert

Never ending and infinitely spinning,
These thoughts of mine with no beginning.
Above the grave an ashen moon glistening,
No hopeful gleam, nor ears listening.

I can't get enough sleep, and I don't wanna wake up.
Tempted to tumble over and drown within my cup.
No damsel am I, defeated, potential always wasted.
Nor can I sail away, my ship has become dismantled.

Simple solutions breed violent depression.
Left to rot away, no aid at your discretion.
My chains rusted away to leave me prisoner again.
The sword she used was sharp, but I keel over from a pen.

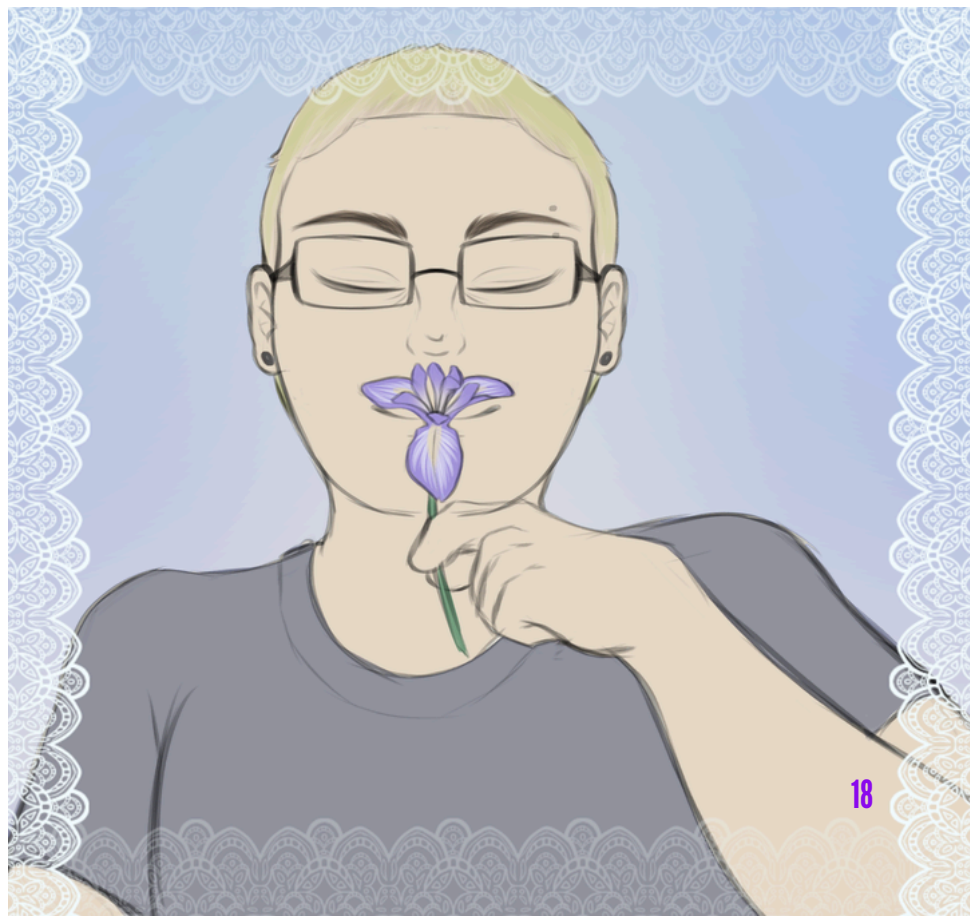
Dreams have become my translucent nightmares, vehemently haunting me.
These words a magnum opus, these eyes my planted tree.
Memory eventually fades, bystanders creating distance.
She died a couple times, her shadow lost all subsistence.

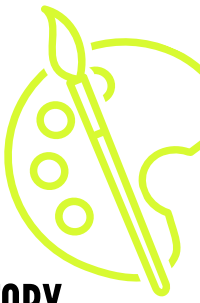
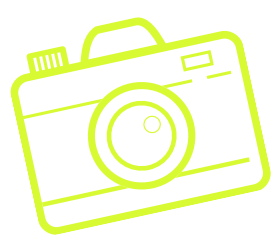
ART BY ENDER, A KING COUNTY CHAPTER MEMBER



“I created a drawing of two mockingbirds while inside of The Mockingbird Society's office. It's meant to be a more realistic, but still a clearly drawn depiction of the two mockingbirds in the logo of The Mockingbird Society. It's honestly a symbol of what Mockingbird has been for me: an inspiration, a hope, a home, and a community for me. I want other people to see it through the lens that I do of a clear picture of support and care.”

“I drew this artwork as a symbol of my hope that things will get better after everything that I've been through. The orchid is meant to symbolize hope, and obviously myself as myself. I drew it while having a particularly difficult morning and it made me feel a lot more hopeful and happy. Homelessness put a dark stain on my life and I wanted to show the light that can come out of it and the hope that I hold that things will continue to get better for me.”

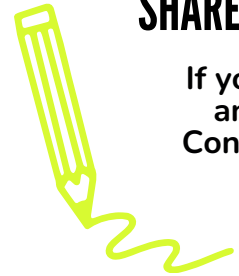




THE MOCKINGBIRD TIMES

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If you're a lived experience expert and you paint, take photos, sketch, write, or create any other type of art, send in your work to be featured in The Mockingbird Times! Contact your Regional Engagement Coordinator or use the QR code on the back page to contact us/submit your work.



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