

Mockingbird Times

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



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IN THIS ISSUE

"I'm Playing Basketball": Innovative New Program for Homeless Youth
Darius Reynolds
Page 3

Movie Review: The Boogeyman is NOT Going to Get You
Courtney Konietzko
Page 3

Goodbye Joshua
Mockingbird Staff, Shay Denev, Bridgett Siroshon
Page 3

Clarity Achieved in Providing Medical Care to Minors
Darius Reynolds
Page 4

Creative Corner: Remember This
Sharina
Page 4

Creative Corner: One More Chance
Sharina
Page 4

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Racial Disproportionality Addressed in WA State's Child Welfare System

ECHO SPEED



THE NATION'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM has for some time been experiencing problems with racial disproportionality. According to the Child Welfare League of America, "recent research indicates that overrepresentation of children of color in the foster care system is a widespread concern." The Child Welfare System is overwhelmed with racial disproportionality. To begin with, African American and Native American children are vastly over-represented in our country's foster care population. This means that while these groups make up only a comparatively small percentage of youth across all of America, they make up a considerably larger percentage of youth in the foster care system.

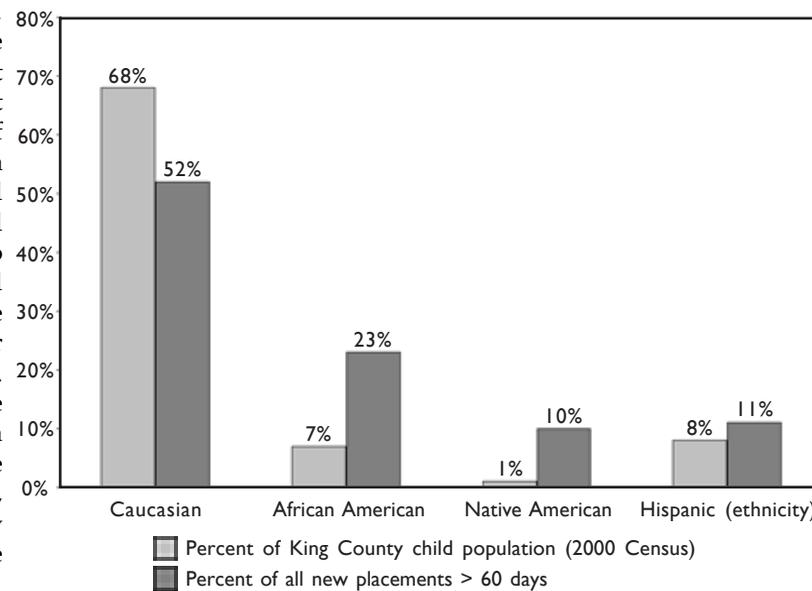
The King County Racial Disproportionality Coalition is working to address this issue and has been holding regular meetings since 2002. A research subcommittee supports and tracks the progress of the research team in analyzing baseline data, implementing decision point focus groups, and designing the evaluation. A subcommittee will begin designing the implementation of cross-system intervention strategies, including program supports and enhancements, and an

overall communication plan. Findings from the research team conclude that many factors contribute to racial disproportionality in the Child Welfare System, including factors the coalition cannot directly address. The report from this team states that, "societal factors outside the reach of the child welfare system [affect disproportionality in the child welfare system]...such as poverty, housing, community safety, racism expressed in the larger community

and media, and the differential history of discrimination experienced by people of color in this country." The report concludes, however, that the coalition can influence "factors associated with policy, funding, practice and contracting...factors associated with individual attitudes, values, stereotypes and racial biases of people involved in the ...system."

The Honorable Judge Patricia Clark of the King County Superior Court and Co-Chair of King County's Racial Disproportionality Coalition, is confident that with everyone working together positive results will soon start to show. "Our work is not only being followed by the rest of the state," says Judge

Clark, "but by the rest of the nation." With the help of Regina Jones, Executive Director, of the Commission on African American Affairs and active member of King County's Racial Disproportionality Coalition, there's a chance that enough information about this serious problem will convince Governor Gregoire to take an active role in participating in some solutions.



Part II of Military Draft Series: Expert Opinions on Possibility of 2005 Draft



MISTY LOU COOK

FOR PART II OF THIS SERIES, I asked a variety of individuals and experts for their opinions about the impact they believe a Draft will have on the youth of this nation and the people of the world. The National Priorities Project has a website that lists the cost of the Iraq War updated to the exact second. As of March 1st, 2005, at 5:25PM, the U.S had already spent a grand total of \$156,714,643,298 for weapons, war and the invasion in Iraq. The truth is, our resources are being stretched so thin in Iraq that the possibility of a Draft in 2005 is becoming more of a reality than ever before. What could this mean for you? What could this mean for your friends and the rest of the youth in this nation and the youth in Iraq?

Aimara Lin started the Bay Area Chapter of Not In Our Name in March of 2002. Not In Our Name is a national project composed of a "network of individuals and organizations committed to standing with the people of the world." The Not in Our Name Pledge of Resistance states, "We believe that as people living in the United States it is our responsibility to resist the injustices done by our government, in our names." After Lin started the Bay Area Chapter, folks have been attending the weekly Wednesday meetings, getting educated and becoming involved in the

Bay Area ever since.

I asked Lin for her thoughts and feelings about the Draft and the War in Iraq, and Lin replied that, "No matter how much money the government offers, their lives are worth more to themselves and their families than [anything] this government could send these youth out to do." About the possibility of a 2005 draft, Lin said, "If a Draft does happen, it's going to be a direct result of the unpopularity of this war." For more information about Not In Our Name, visit www.notinourname.net/index.html.

Nancy Lessin founded the organization Military Families Speak Out in November of 2002. Lessin is the mother of a stepson who is currently in Iraq. Lessin started this program with a friend who was the father of a soldier about to be deployed. Military Families Speak Out was started in Boston, Massachusetts and is internet-based. Lessin informed me that they now have "well over 2,000 military families across the United States speaking out against this war."

Lessin emphasized that, "the reality is, the draft is already here in certain forms." Lessin described three different ways that the draft is here. The first she called the "poverty draft", which essentially targets the young, poor youth of this nation. Lessin said that when young, poverty-stricken people are looking for "security, real living-wage jobs, health insurance and money for college", they often turn to the military because it seems to be their only viable option. Lessin went on to say that it seems that the U.S Government is taking advantage of young people's hardships

DRAFT CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Letter from the Editor

JIM THEOFELIS



APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE AND PREVENTION MONTH. This is an important opportunity to renew public attention and action on the horrors of child abuse as well as the role each of us can serve in it's prevention. Typically, when most folks think about child abuse their thoughts turn directly to young children. This is understandable given the natural inclination for most of us to protect babies and young children. I believe it is important to also remember that abuse and neglect have a devastating impact on adolescents as well.

There is no question that the idea of an infant or toddler experiencing physical, sexual or psychological abuse is repugnant and overwhelming to the senses. It is equally repugnant to imagine a thirteen year old youngster being sexually abused or a fifteen-year-old receiving daily humiliation and physical abuse. It is critical that we commit to protecting all kids from this type of treatment, independent of age. I encourage each of you to find a way to participate in the community effort of protecting kids of all ages from the bruises, scars and life long wounds that characterize abuse and neglect.

You may recall in Harper Lee's classic, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, when the father is teaching his son how to shoot and handle a rifle for the first time. The father tells his son that whatever you do do not shoot the Mockingbirds because "...Mockingbird's 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." When choosing a name for our organization, this quote continually came to mind. What if we as a community valued our most marginalized children and teenagers in the same way that this dad valued Mockingbirds? The Mockingbird Society and you need to work together to build a world class foster/kinship care system while serving our neighborhood kids.

Jim Theofelis

jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Mark your Calendars...May is National Foster Care Awareness Month!

Letters to the Editor

Dear Rico,
[In response to your article "Making Your Path" in the March 2005 issue of the *Mockingbird Times*], I am so glad to hear you taking responsibility and not blaming the "system." I receive the *Mockingbird Times* every month and initially thought the concept was great. Unfortunately all the whining and blaming of the "system" put me off and it usually went in the trash pretty fast. Your article caught my eye.

I agree you should not have to worry about housing. Nor should you have to worry about college. There are plenty of programs to help you. Contact the YMCA in Seattle about their Independent Living Program. Contact Treehouse for tuition assistance. Apply now for the Governor's Scholarship. A girl on my caseload got \$5000.00 for college and her grades were not great. It is an underused resource. Friends of Youth, (425)869-6490 has several transitional living programs. There is a wealth of resources for people transitioning out of foster care in Region 4, especially when they have your attitude and insight.

I want to wish you good luck and a successful future.

DSHS Social Worker III

Mockingbird Response:

Thank you for taking the time to send Rico a message of goodwill. Receiving feedback regarding their articles has a very positive impact on youth so again I thank you. I am appreciative of your honest feedback re: the perception that *Mockingbird Times* spends too much time/focus on "blaming" the system. As you might guess, we get that feedback particularly from folks from DCFs, although not as much lately. I would like to point out that we work hard to ensure that there is a balance in the paper between allowing youth to give voice to their experiences in the system while ensuring that we also discuss solutions and personal responsibility. Often, youth need a bit of time before they can get beyond being locked into their experience as victims and survivors, and move towards seeing themselves as having some authority and choice over their lives. At the same time, most of their issues are real and legitimate, particularly for the older adolescent (we've just had two youth who lost their foster home at age 18, becoming homeless six months before their High School graduation). I just want you to know that we do strive to find a balance. Again, thanks for taking the time to send a message to Rico.

Best Regards,
Jim Theofelis

My name is Johnny Ohta. I am a Chemical Dependency Counselor and work with homeless youth at The Orion Center and The University District Youth Center [in Seattle]. I am writing this letter in response to the article in the February 2005 issue of *Mockingbird Times*, "The Dirt on Heroin Abuse," by Shay Deney. I think it is an excellent article, very informative and well written. However, I am extremely distraught about a few aspects of this article. First of all, the "Make a rule about money" point. Shay suggests that sometimes you give a heroin addict money because you may be keeping them out of trouble. In my experience, it's very difficult to figure out when it's the right time to give a heroin addict money to keep them out of trouble. The only time that you should give a heroin addict money is when you have decided that you are willing to buy heroin for them. Enabling addicts to continue to use and provide them with "soft landings" prolongs the active addiction. In working with addicts, be they loved ones, family members or clients, it is important to show compassion and support in the direction of overcoming their addiction. The truth about enabling is that it's really difficult to say no to drug addicts. Often one needs to get support in being clear about what you can and can't do for the addict. The other issue is the "Lapse Relapse" point. Whether it's a lapse or relapse, the issue is still what happens when you use. Addiction is in it's very nature not something you can rationalize. The addict's brain sends one message over and over— "Just one more time." When an addict uses again after being clean for a period of time, it triggers a craving and whole set of physical and psychological responses which sets up the active addiction pattern once again. The significance of using again after being clean for a period of time should not be minimized.

I greatly enjoy the *Mockingbird Times* and the issues the talented young writers bring forth.
Thank you.
Sincerely,
Johnny Ohta

THANK YOU'S...

Michael Oliver & Janet Osborne, Anne Redman, Anne McBride, Ernest & Ruth Watts, Valerie Ramisch, Elizabeth Little, Washington Mutual Matching Gifts, Stella L. Pitts & Associates, PLLC, Ron & Lauren Maier, Honorable Judge Patricia Clark, Sherri Bloomer, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Bridgett Siroshon, Shay Deney, Johnny Ohta, Lucy Lawless.

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.

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 60,000 copies being distributed across Washington and the U.S.A, as inserts in Real Change, Seattle Sun and Seattle Star newspapers and our own distribution list. 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 2004 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

- 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.

NAME _____ PHONE _____
ADDRESS _____ EMAIL _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please do not include my name on published donor lists.

Please fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to: The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South Suite 350, Seattle WA 98144

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I'm Playing Basketball: Innovative New Program for Homeless Youth

DARIUS REYNOLDS



ON MARCH 1, 2005, SEATTLE'S UNIVERSITY DISTRICT OPENED "I'm Playing Basketball," a gym for homeless youth opened up for the first time. About ten people showed up to play full court basketball. Zach Messner, a homeless youth, has been working with Rick Eberhardt and the University District Youth Advisory Board for the past few months to make a safe place for homeless youth to come once a week to have some fun and get some exercise and above all get away from the streets for a couple hours. Thanks to the University Presbyterian Church, there is now a space to do it.

The open gym is a very positive thing for the youth in the University District because it encourages the youth to do something healthy; instead of sitting in a drop in

center for three hours doing nothing. Jay-"Son" Foreman, a homeless youth, thinks the gym will last a while because a lot of youth on the "Ave" love to play basketball. Forman states that, "The gym provides me with something to do so I'm not on the streets looking suspect to the police."

Johnny Ohta, Substance Abuse Counselor in the University District, who plays basketball with the youth, says that having an open gym is an excellent opportunity for youth to get off the streets and do something fun. Ohta states that the gym offers them a time to forget about the negative things happening in their life. Ohta goes on to say that any activity youth participate in that gets them off the streets is a step towards addressing other issues in their life.

I have attended the open gym every week since it's been open and I would like to thank Zach and Rick for designing the program, the University Presbyterian Church for providing the space and Tyler Bauer and Johnny Ohta for taking the time to come and play basketball with all of us youth. The gym is located at 4540 15th Ave. NE and is open from 12:30-2:30 every Tuesday.

Goodbye Joshua



"Hi Shannon this is Joshua. How are you? I'm back in town now, and working hard on looking for a job now that I'm 7 months sober.. A job is very important.. I was wondering if Mockingbird is looking for more staff.. I'm really interested in working back with Mockingbird, I have a lot of stories in my head..."

On February, 2005, Joshua Passmore, a talented young writer on the waiting list for employment at Mockingbird Times, died at the age of 21. Joshua was a young person with many gifts, whose sweet nature made it easy to know and love him. Joshua was also a young person struggling with mental health issues and a debilitating addiction to heroin, in addition to not having a place to call home. Unfortunately, addiction, mental illness and youth homelessness often go hand-in-hand, and the barriers presented are often too debilitating for a young person to overcome on their own. Joshua will be missed by many, and his untimely death should be a reminder to all of us that the cost of youth homelessness includes life and death consequences. Our hearts and prayers go out to all those struggling to find a path off of the streets. Don't give up, find a way and don't let your addiction keep you from achieving your dreams.

-Mockingbird Staff

On February 12, 2005, my life changed forever. My best friend, my soul mate, my everything, Joshua Passmore, died. Joshua was very special to me. He understood me like no one else was able to. Joshua meant more to me than anyone could ever know. No one really understood our relationship but us, but that was ok because that was how we liked it. When Joshua and I were together it was like time stopped just for him and I and it was like nothing or no one else existed. We learned over time that we could take away each other's pain. Life had been very hard on both of us and in each other we found safety, comfort, and most importantly, happiness. I feel very lucky to have gotten to know Joshua the way that I did. He had a very hard time letting people close to him and he had told me many times that he loved how close we were and how special I really was to him. I have no doubt in my mind that he is here with me even now as I write this. I feel him smiling down on me just like he did when he was here by my side, the way it should be. I know that I will never have a relationship with anyone else like I had with him, but at least I was able to experience something as powerful as what we had together. I wouldn't ever have had it any other way. Until we meet again, I love you and R.I.P. my rock star.

-Shay

One of my friends (and ex boyfriend) died recently and I just want everyone to know what kind of person he was. He was a caring individual, a loving person, someone who could show affection at all times, never a dull moment around him. He was one of a kind! I still don't understand why he was taken from all of us and me so soon, he had so much more living to do! But all I have to think is that he is watching over us in a great place; his good energy is everywhere. I didn't get to say goodbye to Joshua but I did write him a farewell letter at his memorial service, it was burned with all the letters from people who loved him, at his favorite place to hang out. So I know that it will go back into the universe from which he came, and maybe one day we will be reunited together in heaven. R.I.P. Joshua

-Love, Bridgett

*Email from Joshua about 5 months prior to his death.



by Echo Speed

Movie Review: The Boogeyman is NOT Going to Get You

COURTNEY KONIETZKO



BOOGEYMAN IS A BADLY PRODUCED HORROR FILM THAT RELIES completely on shock tactics to make the audience scared, which I guess is the thing that places it in the horror genre. Boogeyman is the story of a little kid who is afraid to go to sleep because whenever he turns out the lights the boogeyman comes into his bedroom. The little kid tries to tell his dad about his fear and his dad tells him everything is going to be alright. The dad proceeds to check under the bed and all the places a boogeyman could hide when—suddenly—something happens. This is the good part: the beginning; it teases and promises to deliver something, but it can't. Everything goes downhill from here. I was left at the end with a feeling I'd been cheated with cheap scares and questions left unanswered. There is one seriously creepy part involving lots of little kids. Lucy Lawless a.k.a. Xena Warrior Princess stars in Boogeyman, another plus (I always thought she was pretty)

The plot is this: the little kid grows up and seems to be living a normal life when things conspire to bring him back to the house where he grew up. He has to face the boogeyman and figure out whether it's real or in his head in order to get his life back.

Boogeyman made Friday the 13th look killer...and Freddie wasn't even that talented! He was certainly more entertaining though. Boogeyman is a typical horror movie

that relies completely on shock value effect to scare you. Scary no, headache yes, I came out of the theatre with a splitting headache from being so tense. Boogeyman makes you tense because you never know when the boogeyman is going to jump out of the closet along with lightning fast imagery and insanely loud sounds that make you jerk in your seat. It's similar to the sensation you get when a cat runs out in front of your car. A good horror movie is one that makes you leave your lights on after watching it; one that sends chills through you and makes you wonder about the possibility of it really happening. Needless to say none of that happened for me. I left the theatre relieved that I didn't pay to go see it. If you want to see a good horror movie go rent anything directed by Lucio Fulci, a man who really knows the horror genre, rated R and above.

Boogeyman had potential to be something, the original idea was good, make a movie out of something kids have feared for years but there are a lot of loose ends and gaps in the film that need to be filled before it can be considered good.

Boogeyman is directed by Steven Kay and is rated PG-13 which seems appropriate. There isn't any offensive language, lots of blood or graphic imagery, or any sex scenes. Small children might be scared because of the scenes when things seem to jump out of nowhere with loud sounds accompanying them. I jumped a few times and the person next to me sucked their thumb and sat wadded up into a little ball.

Rating Scale: One out of five birds, and the only reason it gets one bird is because there is one scary moment, the guy is cute and there's Xena--I love Xena.

Clarity Achieved in Providing Medical Care to Minors

DARIUS REYNOLDS

YOUTH AND DOCTORS FACE A SIMILAR PROBLEM IN WASHINGTON STATE; Doctors are sometimes not sure what kind of services they can give a youth without getting in trouble with the law and youth don't know what kind of health services they are eligible for. To fix this problem Columbia Legal Services, Seattle Public Health and UW Medicine came together to create a summary of health care services that can be offered to minors.

The summary explains what rights the youth have and whether or not the doctor has to have parental consent. It also says if the parent has to be notified or not. Below is an excerpt from this document, please go to www.washingtonlawhelp.org for the complete document and more information.

Quote of the Month

"Freedom is actually a bigger game than power. Power is about what you can control.

Freedom is about what you can unleash."

- Harriet Rubin

Service needed	Minor Consent Sufficient for Confidential Care	Parent/Guardian Consent Required	Parent/Guardian Notification Required	Source and Notes
Emergency medical services:	Yes	No	No	If the parent's consent is not readily available, the consent requirement is satisfied and the minor can receive medical services. RCW 7.70.050(4).
Sexually transmitted disease testing/treatment (including HIV):	Yes, if 14 or over	No	No	Minors may obtain tests and/or treatment for sexually transmitted diseases if they are 14 years of age or older without the consent of a parent or guardian. RCW 70.24.110 Public Health – Seattle & King County will test and treat individuals regardless of age due to its mandate to prevent and control the spread of communicable disease
Abortion services:	Yes	No	No	Minors may receive an abortion and abortion related services at any age without the consent of a parent, guardian or the father of the child. RCW 9.02.100(1); State v. Koome, 84 Wn.2d 901 (1975)

CREATIVE CORNER

SHARINA



Remember This

A sad and twisted thought came upon my mind
 Something so sadistic that should be left behind
 I thought about those who have died so soon
 And what I was doing when they met their doom
 And I thought about myself, about my blood and my tears
 Living with nothing but pain and my tormented fears
 And I noticed something that just didn't seem right
 Something to make you cry and shiver in the night
 Every time you smile, another child cries
 Every time you're happy another person dies
 When everything's going right and it's the best day of your life
 Someone out there has had enough and is picking up that knife
 Every time you have someone another person is alone
 Every time you feel loved another child is on their own
 When your parents are hugging you and showering you with kisses
 Some child out there is being beaten by parents who are making death wishes
 Every time you see the light another child only sees the dark
 Every time you're healthy another person is cutting a fresh mark
 So remember this next time you're having a good day
 Another someone out there is dying in some way.

One More Chance

One more chance to be free
 One more chance so my family can look beyond all the hatred
 and what I should be
 One more chance to love
 One more chance to be hugged
 One more chance to show I could do right
 One more chance to kick it all night
 One more chance to get my life on track
 One more chance to sit back
 One more chance is all I need

DRAFT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

in finding living-wage jobs, affordable housing and access to financial aid for college. According to The American Friends Service Community, "Overall, the Pentagon spends over \$2.5 billion a year targeting high-achieving low-income youth with commercials, video games, personal visits and slick brochures."

Lessin also described two other ways that the draft is already here. You can find out more about the U.S Military's use of "Stop-Loss" (extending Military Duties in Iraq against an individual's will) and the National Guards being sent over to fight in Iraq (when they signed up to stay at home) in an article written by Tim Dickinson. Dickinson's article, "The Return of the Draft," is an excellent account of what is going on with the Draft, Stop-Loss and the National Guards and can be read at www.RollingStone.com.

****We are interested in hearing from you about your perspective on the war in Iraq and the possibility of a draft. Please send us your thoughts at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org.****

Cool Opportunity: Make It Happen, The College Experience!

The Washington Education Foundation (WEF) is pleased to announce that applications are now available for our statewide summer program, *Make it Happen, the College Experience!* This brand new program will be held **July 19-22, 2005 at the University of Puget Sound**, to help foster youth prepare and plan for their post-secondary education.

All *Make it Happen* applicants must be in Washington State, tribal or federally recognized out-of-home care; interested in higher educational opportunities; and be either a junior in high school or eighteen or younger and enrolled in or graduated from a GED program.

Make it Happen participants will:

- Experience life on a college campus by staying in the residence halls at UPS for 4 days and 3 nights.
- Meet other amazing students from foster care who are in college now or who plan to go to college.
- Learn about the college admissions process.
- Learn how to apply for financial aid and other scholarships.
- Hear from the captivating speaker, author, and former foster youth, Regina Louise (visit her website to learn more about Regina: <http://www.reginalouise.com>).
- Participate in fun recreational and entertainment activities.
- **Receive a \$50 stipend if they complete the program.**

The application (postmark) deadline is April 4, 2005. For more information, please visit our website at www.waedfoundation.org or contact Mareesha at mbackman@waedfoundation.org or 1-877-655-4097.