

# Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



April 2011

Volume XII, Issue IV

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## Safety: Priority #1

BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



As most of our readers know, preceding our Annual Youth Advocacy Day, The Mockingbird Network has been working hard to gain support for two main priority bills to make foster care better for current youth, as well as youth aging/transitioning out of foster care. Due to the budget crisis in Washington State, bills that have a fiscal note attached are almost immediately killed. Both of our bills have passed through the House and are currently in the Senate Rules Committee. We've made a great amount of progress in the legislature despite our current budget deficit and our bills are still alive.

allows the state to opt-in to the Federal Fostering Connections Act and extends foster care to youth who are trying to earn their high school diploma. We also are advocating for programs that support youth with safe housing when aging out of care including the state's Independent Youth Housing Program (IYHP) and Foster Care to 21. To youth aging out, these programs are crucial. Without the support of these programs, so many youth would be on the street and possibly unable to take care of themselves. Giving youth the opportunity to have a safe and stable place to stay helps keep youth off the street and reduces the chances of them engaging in criminal activities. At the time this article was written, HB 1128 had made it through the House and is now working its way through the Senate. On March 15th there was a legislative hearing where **Jim Theofelis, Executive Director**, as well as **Georgina Ramirez** and **Ian Grant** who are both former foster youth were all able to testify on behalf of the bill.



Mockingbird youth during Youth Advocacy Day

House Bill (HB) 1128 -- "provides support for eligible foster youth up to the age twenty-one." This mainly

There are tons of youth in this state that could testify as to why having safe housing is so important and life changing to them. One such individual is Josie, a network participant from our Region 1 chapter who was put out of her home while attending college, at the age of 18. "I did not become a statistic because of the IYHP program. I was given the chance for a new beginning and I ran with it. The program didn't just give me a place where I can sleep at; it blessed me with a stable apartment that I can call my home. I was given a healthy living situation that I've never had that before in my life. I am almost ready to transfer to a University. I know how to pay my own bills. I'm not depending on anyone for anything anymore and I have the IYHP program to thank for that." Josie's story is just one example of how important and impactful safe housing programs can be. Many more youth in Washington share the experiences and have been able to overcome obstacles similar to Josie's.



Mockingbird youth march during Youth Advocacy Day

Our other main piece of legislation is HB 1697 -- "providing unannounced visits to homes with dependant children." This is an idea that came from one of our network chapters to make foster care safer for children and youth. If this bill gets passed into a law, ten percent of foster homes will be randomly chosen for an unannounced visit. This will help ensure that care givers don't have a chance to "put on a show" for social workers when they come for monthly visits. This bill has been passed through the House and also awaits Senate action.

Many youth feel strongly about this bill and think that it will make a huge difference in safety despite all of the controversy it has caused. "It will hold the foster parents and the state accountable," said

SAFETY, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## The Power of a Small Group of Concerned Citizens

BY DAVID BUCK



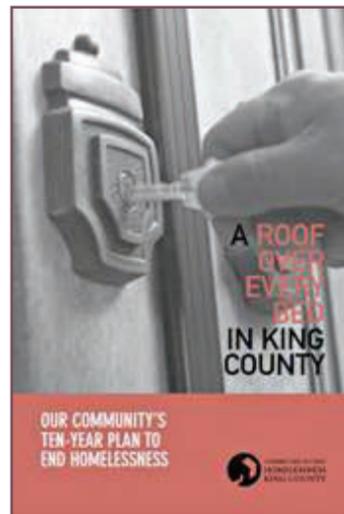
There are times in my life where I feel very proud of my community. I learned at a young age that if people come together for the common good then great things will come out of it. Sometimes all it takes is a small group of

concerned members of the community to come together at a church meeting to start a wave of change that will ultimately affect the lives of thousands of people for the better. This article is intended to share one of those amazing moments. According to local statistics between 2000 and 2001 homelessness in King County hit an all time high. Members of the community who were at a loss as to what to do began a community dialogue around the issue of homelessness and convened at St. Mark's Cathedral. These community dialogues lead into what would eventually become the Committee to End Homelessness in King County and the formation of the Ten-year plan to End Homelessness.

The Ten-year plan to End Homelessness in King County is designed not only to deal with the symptoms of homelessness; but also to cure the cause of homelessness itself. This includes a wide variety of outreach and prevention initiatives. Since 2005, when the plan first came into effect, 9,500 units of housing have been secured and a 98% reduction in the number of homelessness has been reported ac-

ording to the One Night Count. The plan is currently in the mid-plan review.

On March 1st I was given the opportunity to attend one of the three community meetings involving members of the Committee to End Homelessness in King County, organizations affected by the plan, and more importantly, homeless people whose lives are ultimately at stake with the outcomes of the Ten-Year plan to End Homelessness. The community meetings are key to the overall effort. It is a time when the committee and members of the community take a look back in the last five years



Ten-year plan to End Homelessness

and see what went well, what went wrong, and what to do now.

From April 25th to the 29th, 2011 the mid-plan review will conduct what is called a 'charette' - essentially a collaborative effort to design solutions addressing the problem of homelessness. The charette is organized to get the maximum amount of participation from the people involved. Select issues will be the center of the charettes and those issues will have panels that participate. The panels will consist of service providers, members of the committee, community members, and others. At the end of the charette a draft set of recommendations will be presented to the steering committee that will then make final recommendations.

This whole process, and the Ten-year Plan itself, all started with a group of concerned individuals who really cared about their community. It is important to note the positive effects a group of people caring for their community can cause. At the end of the mid-plan review, we will hope to see a guide that will take the Ten-year plan through its next stages that will ultimately end homelessness in King County; thus fulfilling a long goal that those caring individuals has hope to see occur.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cehkc.org/plan10/plan.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://humaninterests.seattle.gov/2011/02/15/help-guide-ten-year-plan-to-end-homelessness/>

## Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



Happy Spring! The season reminds me to “keep hope alive” and that the reason we get up every day is to improve the lives of children, youth and alumni of foster care and homeless youth. These amazing young people deserve a huge “shout out” for their work in communities and their efforts to gain support for increased safety in care and for youth transitioning out of care. This year we have focused on improving safety in care by seeking support for HB 1697 – Unannounced Visits and HB 1128 -- Extending Foster Care for youth working to achieve their diplomas or GEDs. We also are working hard to preserve funding in the state budget for Independent Youth Housing and Foster Care to 21 programs.

The Mockingbird Society and its Network youth have been privileged with the opportunity to testify before the House and Senate on the power of these great programs. In fact, this month we were asked to provide a summary of the research data demonstrating the benefits of safe housing to the Senate Committee members. Recent studies, including those from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy and the Chapin Hall Mid-West Study show that homelessness; early parenting and criminal behavior is significantly reduced by providing safe

housing to youth aging-out. We now have the evidence to confirm what Grandma has known all along: young people who receive safe housing and support are more likely to enter college, secure gainful employment, delay early parenting and rely less on public assistance.

The Legislature is in the final stage of this year's session which is scheduled to conclude on April 24th. They are now focusing on their main piece of work: the 2011-2013 state budget. I urge you to contact your legislators and encourage them to support HB 1697 and HB 1128, and retain the most funding possible in the Children's Administration budget to protect vulnerable children, youth and families. If you need assistance to find your legislator, visit [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov) or call 1-800-562-6000.

Thank you for all that you do. And, for helping all of us at The Mockingbird Society to change the system for that five year old child that doesn't yet know she will be in foster care.

Jim Theofelis  
[jim@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:jim@mockingbirdsociety.org)

### Save the Date: June 27th-29th Foster Youth & Leadership Summit

The Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit is an event that brings together youth in foster care from across the State, ages 14-24, for three days of: Leadership development, positive peer relationship building and support, and formation of recommendations for The Commission for Children in Foster Care. Applications are due April 13th, 2011! Mail applications to: Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit, Attention: Milissa Morgan, 2100 24th Avenue S. Suite 240, Seattle, WA 98144

Questions? Email Milissa Morgan: [milissa@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:milissa@mockingbirdsociety.org) or call 206-323-5437

Space is limited.

### Thank You!

Alpenland Delicatessen, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Matching Gifts Program, Patricia Bodzioch, Capitol Hill Windermere Real Estate, Cellar 46, City of Seattle Combined Charities, DP Peyton Contractors, Linda Foley, Deanna Grace, Aaron and Makeeba Greene, Justgive.org, King County Employee Giving Program, Lyman Legters, Carol Lucas, Mercer Island Printing Plus, Mercer Island Martial Arts Center, Mo's Pizza & Wine Dive, Target, Tatters, Samuel and Barbara Throm, Anne Tuttle, United Way of King County Employee Giving Program, and Windermere Foundation. Representative Andy Billig and Representative Timm Ormsby. Catholic Family and Child Services. The Y. Treehouse for Kids. Fostering Together Support Group. Pierce County Alliance and Greater Tacoma Community Foundation. Alex Tarasar, RYANNE SIMONSON, Thurston County Juvenile Diversion Unit, What to Wear.

### Submitting Letters

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

### The Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, The Mockingbird Society. Atticus, the widowed father of Jem and Scout, joins Miss Maudie in teaching his kids that it's a sin to kill a mockingbird because "... Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us."

What if we created an organization, a community, indeed a world, in which our most vulnerable children and youth were protected and valued with the same commitment that Atticus had for mockingbirds?

Join The Mockingbird Society today and help us give young people a safe place to nest and sing.

## The Truth About the Benefits BY DEONATE CRUZ



Many people are unaware of the different struggles that youth go through. A lot of people don't realize that different youth go through different things depending on their situation. One of the many dividing lines between youth that people may not understand is that some youth are in the foster care system and some have intact families. This can make a huge difference on the resources available to the youth, and ultimately the outcome of that youth's life. In this article I will share the stories of two youth who have never been in foster care and show how different their experiences are compared to what youth in care go through. My hope is that this sheds some light and knowledge about the different struggles that each individual may face.

While writing this article, I had the chance to interview two youth who have never been in care about the resources they are using to support their post-secondary education and housing. Both youth shared that they are currently receiving financial aid in the form of grants and loans to pay for their education. When I asked them to rank the resources they receive for housing on a scale of 0-100, both youth answered above 95, and stated that being homeless wasn't an issue for them.

According to a national survey done on foster youth we know that 25% of foster youth end up homeless within 2.5 to 4 years after leaving foster care. These statistics show how youth exiting foster care do not have the same opportunities to continue their education as youth who come from intact homes. Despite there being approximately 50 scholarships available for qualified foster youth in Washington State, it is rare for foster youth to receive all of them due to the barriers they face when exiting care.

With a safe and stable place to live high on their priority list, education takes a back seat, if it is even considered in the first place. If a youth doesn't have the skills to live independently or the resources for independent living, then the idea of college is replaced with the thoughts of survival instead.

In December of 2007, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies issued a report labeled *Aging Out of the Foster Care System to Adulthood: Findings, Challenges, and Recommendations*. The report covers the process of aging out of foster care and the key details revolving around youth who age out of the foster care system. Some of the key findings that came out of this report are as follows:

- In comparison to other youth in the United States, youth who age out of the foster care system are less prepared to function independently.
- 47 percent of surveyed social workers surveyed throughout the US rated the resources in their foster care system as fair or poor with only 11 percent rating them as excellent.
- Many youth in foster care have stated that they feel that they lack an adult advocate to guide them through life in preparation for the future.



Deonate Cruz at his High School Graduation

When the question of how good the resources are to encourage foster youth to go to college compared to youth who come from intact families arises, I encourage you to consider the following statistic: According to Children's Administration, less than 3% of youth who aged out of foster care actually earned their college degree by the time they were 25. According to the National Foster Care Coalition about 20,000 youth age out of foster care each year. However, it is not logical to say that the government can pay for 20,000 youth to go to any college of their choosing (especially with the budget conditions that the United States is facing right now).

BENEFITS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

### MEET OUR STAFF

**Executive Director** Jim Theofelis; **Deputy Director** Ros Ghan; **Youth Programs Director** Tiffany Washington; **Public Policy Director** Rose Berg; **Public Policy & Communications Coordinator** Jon Brumbach; **Development Coordinator** Kylie Palzer; **Development Director** Brian Lawrence; **Finance Director** Beth Vance; **Executive Assistant** Lauren Frederick; **Mockingbird Network Coordinator** Kara Sanders; **Administrative Coordinator** Aine Cowan-Kuist; **Evaluations and Database Coordinator** David Forte; **Administrative Assistant (AA)** Liliana Davies; **Mockingbird Network Program Assistant** Milissa Morgan; **Resource Specialists** Jerry Bobo, Sarah Mahaffy, Graham Parrington, Georgina Ramirez, Tammy Soderberg, Samantha Valle; **Senior Network Representatives** Ian Grant, Terrell Rosetti, Diamonique Walker; **Network Representatives** Amanda Bevington, David Buck, Deonate Cruz; **Contributing Writers & Artists** Chris Bauer, Brandy Baxley, Rebecca Sara Bersek, Nickole Criteser, Sam Martin, Garrett Nadeau, Crystal Stacey, Janessa Thomas, Kristina Thomason; **Design & Layout** Highdive.com

**ABOUT US:** *The Mockingbird Society* is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation developing innovative models for improving the outcomes of foster care, while advocating with decision makers for system reform. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please consult your tax advisor regarding your specific tax situation. *The Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of *The Mockingbird Society* are paid between \$9.50 and \$12 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, and poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. *The Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of over 25,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the USA, through a private distribution list and as an insert in *Real Change*, a Seattle-based community newspaper. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of *The Mockingbird Society* and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. Donations to *The Mockingbird Society* may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of *The Mockingbird Society*. All contents copyright ©2009, *The Mockingbird Society*.

## Region I Article: If You Can Get Through This, You Can Get Through Anything!

BY CRYSTAL STACEY

I had the honor of interviewing **Darriell Beaumonte** and learning about his accomplishments of overcoming the statistics against foster youth. He is now a running back for the Championship Eastern Washington University; this is his story.

At 10 months old, Darriell Beaumonte remembers being taken from his biological mother. Although he was not with his mother the relationship never died. Every month, Darriell still looks forward to the one day a month that his mom sends him a card in the mail with a simple message of her love and a few dollars.

When Beaumonte was first taken away from his mother, he went to live with his grandparents. Beaumonte was the youngest of seven, so he had the opportunity to learn coping skills and numerous techniques on how to survive the foster care system by learning how to make the best of every situation. Darriell always had to deal with many people from different backgrounds coming and going out of the home for many years, so he learned how to "stand on his own two feet."

One morning Darriell was taken away from his grandparents. For years after, Darriell and his brothers were bounced from foster home to foster home. Darriell's first foster home almost felt like "a prison". He remembers night after night coming home from school being told "to fend for himself" when it came to dinner. There was no food, so he was forced to steal from the nearest grocery store.

When Darriell was in high school, he found a family that made him feel at home and accepted. Zena Sturgis seemed to be the perfect support system for Darriell especially during his last two years of high school. Zena gave Darriell only one option for his future; it was college. This became the start of "Team Beaumonte." Darriell was declined



Crystal Stacey and Darriell Beaumonte, Eastern Washington University football player

from colleges all over, which forced Team Beaumonte back to the drawing board. After many efforts and much time Darriell finally received a letter of acceptance from Eastern Washington University. Darriell was given only one quarter, one chance to get anywhere. If he failed even one class, he

was out of school. Darriell said he took the easiest classes, so he could continue going to school.

Darriell was so excited to finally be in college and felt very accomplished, but in order to have the full college experience he still had one more obstacle: football. When Darriell knew he was going to Eastern, he called the coaches and sent in his films, the only thing on Darriell's mind was getting recruited. After not hearing anything for months, Darriell almost gave up hope the summer before moving to Cheney. Finally two days before summer football training, Darriell's phone rang. The voice on the other line said, he was in. When Darriell arrived he wasn't allowed to workout with the team because he wasn't in shape. Darriell spent numerous hours watching the team, and doing those same workouts on his own. Next fall, Darriell was recruited on the team and received a full ride scholarship to Eastern Washington University.

Darriell had to overcome so much in his life. Children and adolescents in foster care do the same. Darriell's finished the interview by saying, "To all the foster youth still in the system, don't be ashamed to be a foster youth because this is forming you for the person you will one day become. You cannot give up, there is so much more out there. And to all foster youth that have exited care keep going hard, keep going, you overcame the adversity that giants once overcame, so why give up now when there is so much more out there."

## May is National Foster Care Month!

Each May, we celebrate the kind-hearted people who make a difference in the lives of foster youth by serving as foster parents, relative caregivers, mentors, advocates, social workers, and volunteers.



Currently, 426,000 children in the United States are in foster care because their own families are in crisis and unable to provide for their essential well-being. Many children in care are unable to return home safely because their parents lack access to services that could help strengthen families.

Now is the time to get involved! No matter how much time you have to give, you have the power to do something positive that could impact the of a young person in foster care.

To find out how to volunteer with The Mockingbird Society, call (206) 323-KIDS.

To learn more about National Foster Care Month go to [www.fostercaremonth.org](http://www.fostercaremonth.org) or call (888) 799-KIDS.

<sup>1</sup> [www.fostercaremonth.org](http://www.fostercaremonth.org)

## Meet the Staff BY AMANDA BEVINGTON



We have such a great team at The Mockingbird Society. We always are growing from each other, as well as learning new ideas and skills from one another. A couple of months ago, The Mockingbird Society added a new employee.

After interviewing him, I feel we are "blessed" to have another awesome leader. He brings so much to our organization. He always comes to work with a smile on his face, never a frown. He always has a great attitude and is willing to help others as best as he can. He brings such a good aspect to the team. He is a team player, who is very devoted to the work he does at The Mockingbird Society. He is hard-working, very determined, and action driven.



David Forte, Evaluation Coordinator

So I bet everyone who is reading this article is wondering who I am describing. His name is **David Forte** and his title here at The Mockingbird Society is Evaluation Coordinator. The Evaluation Coordinator helps to tell the story about the organization and demonstrate the impact of The Mockingbird Society. He works with youth, the community, funders, and is always looking at areas for improvement.

David Forte was born on July 25 which makes him a Leo. According to my understanding of astrology, the Leo individual is ambitious, con-

fidant, independent, and loyal. I believe David brings all those traits to The Mockingbird Society. David is an only child. He went to college in Texas, but is currently at the University of Washington and is studying public administration. He will graduate with his masters' degree in June 2011. His hobbies are bike riding, hanging out with his dog Lance, and he loves being outdoors. David is really passionate about the work he does at The Mockingbird Society and is mission-focused. He believes that our mission -- to create a world-class foster care system -- is really important and explains that The Mockingbird Society plays an important role to help youth advocate for themselves, as well as influencing youth to help inform legislative policies and focus on issues in the child welfare system. David is really impressed with all the hard work that is

put into The Mockingbird Society and said that, "Hopefully we will continue to succeed, as we move forward."

I hope that everyone will have a chance to meet such an awesome man, and is able to welcome David to the team. Remember David is trustworthy, takes initiative, positive role model, and always has a great attitude. So if you have a second come stop by and say hello to our new employee David Forte here at The Mockingbird Society.

## Farewell BY TERRELL ROSETTI



I am writing to inform you all of an exciting opportunity that I have been offered and accepted. I have been offered a position with the YMCA Alive & Free Program. Alive & Free is the name of the violence prevention prescription of the Omega Boys Club/Street soldiers-a nationally recognized youth development and violence prevention organization headquartered in San Francisco, CA. Co-founded in 1987 by **Dr. Joseph E. Marshall Jr.**, Omega's mission is to keep young people alive (unharmful by violence) and free (from incarceration). I would like to thank all of The Mockingbird Society for all that they have done for me during my time

here. I have gained more leadership skills and learned a lot about the importance of advocacy that I can use in my career. In my time here, I was able to speak to legislators, give trainings to service providers, and learned a lot about the legislative process, all experiences that helped me to give back to the foster care system. I take my hat off to Jim Theofelis and all the staff here at MBS and hope that they continue to build a world-class foster care system. As for me, I will continue to



Mockingbird Representative Terrell Rosetti

grow and not be a stereotype of a foster kid.

## SAFETY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Kristina, network participant. "The foster parents would be doing what they need to be doing all the time and be cautious of what they do." Youth all over this state feel that having "unannounced visits" will make a difference in safety for the lives of children and youth everywhere. If children are taken out of homes for being abused or neglected, they shouldn't be placed into a similar environment again. I hope that with passage of this bill, social workers can make sure youth are in safe place without foster parents "putting on an act."

## BENEFITS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

I think it's safe to say that the two youth who I interviewed can focus on higher education because they have a safe place to live, and although it may seem that youth in foster care have access to many benefits, the evidence in this article makes it clear that they lack the support and guidance from adults and mentors to even access them. So for those who think that being a foster kid is an all expenses paid ticket to a better future, I challenge you to consider the overwhelming odds we are against in our transition to adulthood.

## We Welcome Your Work!

We welcome submissions of articles, poetry, artwork, and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or with homelessness. If you want to be published in the *Mockingbird Times*, visit [mockingbirdsociety.org](http://mockingbirdsociety.org) and select *Mockingbird Times* under *The Mockingbird Network* or contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at [kara@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:kara@mockingbirdsociety.org). Note: If you have submitted something before that hasn't been published, we need your submission agreement in order to print it. Please submit again via the web location listed above. Because of space constraints, shorter poems have a higher chance of being published.

**Sky Blue Rose**

By Rebecca Sara Bersek

You sky blue rose, standing all alone  
 And all you want is to be known...  
 As something unique and quite wonderful too,  
 Just stand tall you beautiful young you...  
 You'll knock out their hearts as they see your lifeline,  
 What happens in your past will help you shine

**May These Words**

By Nickole Criteser

may these words  
 ever so often  
 echo in my head

bringing me closer  
 and intrude me  
 to want love for you

push me away and leave me in the rain  
 like drum beats to my cheeks...  
 these tears never end.

like forgotten hopes  
 if I didn't know any better  
 I would have believed you were dead

someone I never thought I could live without  
 but I have

two strong men  
 bury their heads before me

and ask what they have done

they've lost their mom  
 unsure if they even belong

every home  
 treated just a little bit worse

still waiting on hopes...  
 please don't

you have too many years before you hit 18

too many tears to tread  
 dragging your feet

like broken lead.

pick your head up little one  
 make this better

make life easier  
 you are strong

I know you can

**Community Events**

**Region 1 (Spokane)**

**March 7th-May 31st:** Free Life Coaching Session - weekly meetings to help accomplish goals!

**Region 2 (Yakima)**

**April 9th:** Life Advocacy Training - 2-4pm. Casey Family Programs.

**April 18th:** 100 Jobs for 100 Kids - 1-5pm. Southeast Community Center.

**Region 3 (Everett)**

**April 15th:** Friday Night Gaming for Teens - 7-9pm. Mill Creek Library. More info: (425) 337-4822.

**April 26th:** Teen Tuesday Matinee -3:30-5:30pm. Find us on Facebook and vote for which movie you'd like to watch! Only those who vote decide! One teen attendee will win a copy of the DVD we watch! More info: <http://www.facebook.com/LynnwoodLibrary>.

**Region 4 (Seattle)**

**April 8th-April 24th:** Seattle Center Productions - Whirligig!- Monday-Sunday, 11am - 6pm. Seattle Center.

**April 13th:** Raphael Saadiq performing at Showbox at the Market - 8:00pm. More info: [ticketmaster.com](http://ticketmaster.com).

**Region 5 (Tacoma)**

**April 13th:** Chapter Meeting - 3:30-5pm. PCA.

**Region 6 (Olympia)**

**April 21st:** Chapter Meeting - 4-6pm. Community Youth Services.

**May 3rd:** ILS Workshop - 5-7:30pm. Community Youth Services.

Mark your calendar: **June 27th-29th** Foster Youth and Leadership Summit, Seattle, WA.

*"Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind."*

*~Dr. Seuss*

**Region 1 (Spokane) UNITE! (Understanding Needs and Implementing Transformations for Everyone)** by Kristina Thomason

Hey Everyone! Region 1 is doing fantastic! We just had our March monthly Chapter meeting. We talked about what we did at Advocacy Day; prepared for the Summit by reviewing what we want to see change and handed out applications. We circulated signup sheets for community service events that we are participating in; for committees within our chapter, and for voting for Jim at [King5.com](http://King5.com)! We had more new faces than old faces, we then had some of our older chapter members stand up and explain what Mockingbird is and what we do. It turned into a great discussion! Sarah made us delicious Lasagna with garlic bread and salad as we celebrated St. Patty's Day! It was a great laid-back meeting!



**Region 2 (Yakima) A.C.T.F.I.R.S.T. (Around Community Two Fostering Individual Rights Safely Together)** by Brandy Baxley

Hello Mockingbird Society! We hope that every region is doing great! On March 12th our region went to the local Union Gospel Mission. We served food, washed tables and also cleaned the windows. The meal there was a great homemade Mexican lunch. On March 26th we are going to have a chapter meeting where we will fill out and go over the Summit Applications. For next month we will prepare to do a Life Advocacy Training and the 100 Jobs, 100 Kids event.



**News From**

**The Mockingbird Network**

**Your Needs, Your Voice**

**Region 3 (Everett) H.E.Y.M.A.C. (Hearing Every Youth Make a Change)** by Garrett Nadeau

For HEYMAC'S March meeting we had a lot of NEW people show up AGAIN! We went over the Leadership Summit and showed a video of the summit, so people know what to expect. We talked about why HEYMAC is important and how they can make a difference. Two AWSOME chapter members Maria and Marta brought enchiladas for the group. We had new members sign chapter member applications and we got four people interested in being new chapter leaders. It was a very productive meeting with lots of goals for the future! GO REGION 3!!!!!!!



**Region 4 (Seattle) Region 4 for Change** by Sam Martin

Region 4 for Change is coming off of a very exciting March meeting. This month we have begun to extend opportunities for chapter member involvement in a more tangible, immediate way. We are right now attempting to transition in new leadership for the chapter. In order to do that we need to make sure that young people are able to handle the responsibilities of becoming chapter leaders. We have also begun to focus heavily on collaboration with several different entities within the community. We realize that it is impossible to thrive and survive without the support of the community. Also our attention has turned to the Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit 2011. This is a place where young people are allowed to present real and tangible problems to decision makers and work on solutions. Region 4 has been at the forefront of presenting topics that will result in actual change and progress. Region 4 is really attempting to make sure that we are a face in the greater King County area.



**Region 5 (Tacoma) Cour'ige (Changing Our Unique Responsibilities Individualities Gaining Empowerment)** by Janessa Thomas

In the month of March, COURIGE (Changing Our Unique Responsibilities' Individually Gaining Empowerment) has been showing what COURIGE really means - inspirationally speaking. On March 9th Region 5 hosted a training called The Culture of Foster Care for Kitsap County. Tianna, Shalisa, and I talked about what living in the foster care system truly looks like. There were a total of 19 CASA's that showed up. This training specialized in revealing the "behind the scenes" on foster care, and how it impacts us. This month we are working hard and progressing each time. On March 16, 2011 we met with The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation. The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation is a trusted partner with the Pierce County community, "fostering generosity by connecting people who care with causes that matter." A few members of the MBS staff and I met with Amanda Moore, a program associate, and Jennifer Nino, an EVP & CFO for Commencement Bank and a GTCF Volunteer. We discussed the mission of the Mockingbird Network by showing how we make a difference in the lives of Pierce County youth. I even spoke about how my experiences as a Chapter Leader have positioned me for a successful future. The

GTCF was thrilled to hear I received a Governor's Scholarship. Currently, we are preparing for another training called Life Advocacy 101. This training is going to take place at Pierce County Alliance at our Chapter meeting this Wednesday from 3:45 to 5pm. In April, we will be getting ready to take applications for our annual Leadership Summit and select the youth who will be attending.

**Region 6 (Olympia) T.A.F.F.Y. (Truth and Action For Foster Youth)** by Chris Bauer

Region 6 has been quite busy over the past month. What with Youth Advocacy Day, which was phenomenal, in bringing our message to those who can help morph the foster care system into the family it should be as well as HB 1697 chugging towards completion. We've had several youth give their personal stories in front of legislative committees in an effort to prove the practicality and need for unannounced visits for foster homes. Yes, you can hold your breath. The bill looks to be doing well. Recently we have also facilitated a Culture of Foster Care Training for Thurston County Juvenile Diversion volunteers. Currently, T.A.F.F.Y is debating on which topic to bring up at this year's Foster Youth & Alumni Summit. There are many great ideas being passed around the table and Region 6 is looking forward to making those ideas a reality.