

Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



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JIM THEOFELIS: A MAN ON A MISSION BY DAVID BUCK



Looking back at the Mockingbird Society's first ten years, I see an idea coming to fruition. And while The Mockingbird Society today doesn't quite look like it did when it first started, the idea has stayed the same.

We don't just speak for youth affected by the foster care system and homelessness; we are those who have been affected. This idea came about by one man who, through his experiences working with marginalized youth populations, found himself wanting to create a place where youth can make their voice heard in hopes of creating real change. In this article we thank Jim Theofelis, Executive Director and founder of The Mockingbird Society, for all that he has done.

Jim was raised in Seattle and as a teenager ran on the same streets that he would later serve as an outreach worker. He was the first male member of his family to earn a high school diploma and went on to serve our country in the U.S. Navy. Upon his honorable discharge he attended Seattle Central Community College and began his outreach work in the community.

He spent twenty years of his career working on what he called, "the front lines in the war to save children and teenagers." As a counselor he worked on the streets and in group homes and would later work as the Director of the mental health clinic at King County Juvenile Detention. He also worked closely with the University District Youth Center (UDYC), a drop-in center for homeless youth that would later become a case management resource for me.



Jim Theofelis, Executive Director

Jim's experiences working as a counselor and an outreach worker showed him that youth experiencing homelessness and foster care are too often misunderstood. Youth are not the cause of what has happened and instead probably have a few things to say in regards to changing the system to secure a place at the table for youth who need help the most. He knew that to end homelessness and create healthy

outcomes for youth in care that you need to take action and be proactive. It was at this time that Jim launched a legislative advocacy initiative that would become the HOPE Act, which provides resources like emergency beds for youth in crisis. With the HOPE Act's success Jim developed the idea that would become The Mockingbird Society, which was formed with an anonymous donation of \$50,000 and three homeless youth.

In the ten years since the founding of The Mockingbird Society many things have changed. We have created a network of youth taking the initiative to drive the engine of change for the foster care system. The system improves with every legislative victory the Mockingbird Youth Network and The Mockingbird Society as a whole, fight for. And, with every step of the way is a man who has dedicated his life to creating change and works harder than any other person I know. We cannot thank him enough for all that he's done for our community.

Mockingbird is a place where I feel I really do make a change.

DEMAREA KIRK- REGION 3
NORTH (TACOMA)

Staff Spotlight: Lauren Frederick BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



As most know, this year The Mockingbird Society (MBS) celebrates its 10th anniversary as one of the most impactful youth advocacy organizations in Washington State. Since day one, Mockingbird has worked

hard at "building a world class foster care system." Our staff comes from all different kinds of backgrounds and system experiences, but we all share a common vision of creating improvements for families impacted by it, and for the children that don't know that they will be a part of the system one day.

In light of MBS' 10th Anniversary I interviewed Lauren Frederick, The Mockingbird Society's Executive Assistant, who has been a part of MBS for seven years now. Lauren is always cheery with a smile on her face at work and is someone that staff consider a "veteran" of the organization. "I came to MBS after working in mental health case management for a time. After working in a large bureaucratic system, I was attracted to the MBS' unique vision. I don't think there is another organization out there that is changing the child welfare system in a very real way by partnering with the children, youth, and families who are most affected by it," said Lauren.

Through all of the years Lauren has been a part of this organization, she has seen and experienced much of the change and growth that Mockingbird has undergone over the years. "When I started we had two-and-a-half



Lauren Frederick

[two full time, one part time] employees and now we have more than 20 employees. The Mockingbird Youth Network is now statewide and the Mockingbird Family Model has grown from one to 17 Constellations," she said.

Being a part of Mockingbird, there are opportunities to be a part of the legislative process. "As far as memorable moments, I was thrilled to attend the bill signing for HB 2002 [extending

voluntary foster care placement] in 2006. The media was there and my mom saw me on TV and was so proud."

Not only has Lauren seen many of the changes that MBS has went through in the last seven years, but she has also seen and been able to celebrate some of the accomplishments the organization has made over the years. "When I look back over my time here and all of MBS' accomplishments, I am so proud and blessed to have been a part of the MBS team. And every Advocacy Day, I am proud of the youth for speaking out because no matter what they have been through and even if they are homeless, they show up and they speak up for their rights," said Lauren.

In closing, I asked Lauren about what she would like to see Mockingbird accomplish in the future and she replied, "I would like to see MBS stick to our mission with all the passion and determination we've showed in the past 10 years. I hope MBS always listens to the children, youth, and families who are in the system and that we always push to improve the system for and with them. I truly believe that one of the most important tasks before us is to build a world class foster care system."

A DECADE OF ADVOCACY || 10 || A LIFETIME OF CHANGE



Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



Dear Friends,

August 2011 marks the 10th Anniversary of The Mockingbird Society. Wow! This is truly an incredible journey.

In 2001, after more than 20 years of serving homeless youth including those from foster care, and watching the system fail them, I decided to go "upstream" to change things, and I'm so blessed that I chose this path.

I started with an essential belief that we could create change, and yes, "build a world-class foster care system." The Mockingbird Society was originally started out of my private practice office, and together with three street-dependent youth, we set out to change minds. We began by producing *The Mockingbird Times* and today, I'm proud to say, the voices of youth in care and homeless youth have been heard without interruption for a decade. Our paper now is distributed to thousands of readers nationwide and the work of producing this paper is improving outcomes and changing lives.

We have put forth an innovative idea to restructure foster care known as The Mockingbird Family Model. It has been replicated by private and public agencies because it works to improve safety, stability and well-being, and surpasses state and federal safety standards. Children in the model have been 100% safe from abuse and neglect. Thanks must go to U.S. Senator Patty Murray for her advocacy in securing resources to pilot the initial "Hub Home" to extend assistance and peer support to foster and kinship families, foster to adopt and birth parents.

The Mockingbird Youth Network is now operating statewide and hundreds of youth strong. We believe it could be a model for other states to ensure that the experiences of youth are reflected in the policy and practice. We employ, engage and empower youth. You'll read in this issue the highlights of our work to increase safety in care, safe housing for youth aging out, health-care to 21, and stronger sibling connections. Thanks to Congressman Jim McDermott for his leadership on behalf of children, youth and families to enact the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act. This year our state opted-in to this program with passage of HB 1128 which allows youth to remain in care to age 21 if they are working on their high school diploma or GED.

I am deeply grateful to community leaders, Legislators, advocates and service providers for their commitment to achieving the mission. The best measure of our success is the impact on the youth themselves. At any given point in time, there are more than 10,000 children and youth in the system. Historically, they were largely unseen. Not any longer.

We are stronger together. We have a seat at the table. And, with your continued partnership we will ensure that children, youth and families have what they need, not only to survive, but to thrive.

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org



Register online for our 10th Anniversary Luncheon
www.mockingbirdsociety.org

MEET OUR STAFF

Executive Director: Jim Theofelis; **Deputy Director:** Ros Ghan; **Youth Programs Director:** Tiffany Washington; **Public Policy & Communications 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:** Fredrick Kingston; **Administrative Coordinator:** Aine Cowan-Kuist; **Evaluations and Database Coordinator:** David Forte; **HR/Operations Manager:** Diana Clark; **Mockingbird Network Program Assistant:** Milissa Morgan; **Resource Specialists:** Jerry Bobo, Sarah Mahaffy, Graham Parrington, Georgina Ramirez, Tammy Soderberg, Samantha Valle; **Senior Network Representatives:** David Buck; Diamonique Walker; **Network Representatives:** Amanda Bevington, Asha Boucraée; Brenda Ortega, 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

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.

A Decade of Advocacy BY BRENDA CHÈRIE ORTEGA



Legislative accomplishments are not only a great triumph for **The Mockingbird Society**, but for youth and alumni of care all over Washington State. Out of almost 20 Mockingbird priority bills that

have passed in the last 10 years, eight are based on ideas that originated within the **Mockingbird Youth Network (MYN)**. The foundation of these bills focus on the topics of: safe housing, safety in care, health & well-being, and youth empowerment.

Mockingbird's efforts to improve safe housing for youth in care have resulted in more options and opportunities for youth transitioning out of the system. Extended Foster Care is a bill that passed the legislature this year. This bill allows foster youth that would age out the chance to stay in state care until they obtain their high school diploma / GED or turn 21. The 2006 Foster Youth Achievement Act allows up to 50

youth pursuing higher education to remain in foster care to age 21 as well as receive health care while in college. The **Independent Youth Housing Program (IYHP)**, established in 2007, allows youth exiting care the opportunity to receive housing vouchers to assist with housing

needs. The fourth bill is Fostering Connections. This bill allows 50 foster youth per year the ability to stay in their foster home after they turn 18 if they are enrolled in higher education. These are major accomplishments because we all need a sense of

security and stability while reaching educational milestones without the added stress of living situations.

Safety in care is a very important because everyone deserves to be in a safe and loving environment. This year the MYN priority HB 1697 - Unannounced Visits passed. This new law is important because now 10 percent of all youth



Governor Gregoire signs HB 1128

DECADE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

The Past's Light Makes the Future Bright

BY DEONATE CRUZ



As many of you may know, August is **Mockingbird's** 10th anniversary. We are very excited about all we have achieved, but let me say on behalf of Mockingbird as

great amount of consideration in terms of Mockingbird's course of action. When asked, "What do you think the most important goal for MBS is within the next ten years?" Rose responded, "We need to ensure that youth voice and their opinion is always

a whole, that we could not have done it without your support. But we aren't finished yet, so understand me when I say, we at Mockingbird always strive to reach bigger and better results for the youth and everyone affiliated with the child welfare system.

This article will help shed light on what we as an organization hope to achieve in the future. Since we are at our ten year mark, we thought it might be cool to look into what we thought would be important key factors within the next ten years, and what would be our most challenging barrier(s) to overcome these factors.

I had the opportunity to meet with one of Mockingbird's great assets about this topic, our very own **Public Policy and Communications Director, Rose Berg**. Rose shines in policy development and public relations. Rose's opinion is given a

"The Mockingbird Society is dedicated to building a world-class foster care system. In the future, I hope we can continue to support every child's right to a safe home and a bright future by fully funding Foster Care to 21 without exception, and incorporating youth voice in the policy and decision-making processes."

- Jim Theofelis

included within the decision-making process done on behalf of youth within the child welfare system. The Mockingbird's statewide speaker program is a great start, but it can and will be even stronger. When Legislators and others are making a decision about a youth, we want them to include the youth." As a youth alumni of the child welfare system, I really could not agree more, and can honestly say that anyone who would have been there listening would be swayed, even if it was only by hearing the raw passion in her voice.

While hearing Rose's idea about MBS's future, it is important to think about, "what are the strengths that MBS has already that can be used towards this goal, and what do you think will be our biggest challenge into making this happen?" Rose responded with, "As for our biggest challenge, in my

FUTURE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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**.

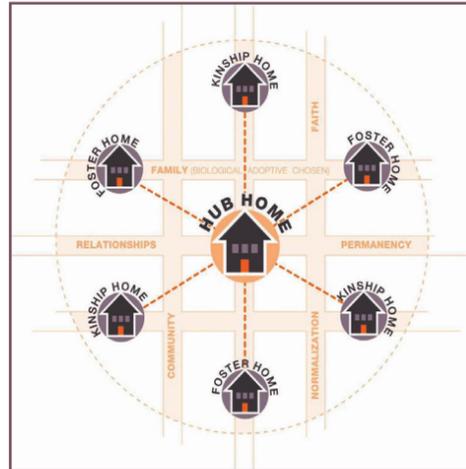
The Mockingbird Family Model BY ASHA BOUCRÈE



This month's edition of our newspaper is a special one. August is our 10th year anniversary here at Mockingbird. There are many areas in which Mockingbird has grown, The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) is one of them. Looking back on the past, from when the MFM started, it truly goes to show that it takes a community of genuinely concerned and determined people to build a successful model. From what I know about the Mockingbird Family Model's approach and main goals, a few of the main priorities are to ensure safety, permanency, support, cultural identity, and sibling connection. Child welfare system change is another goal, and, personally, I feel that MFM is the perfect example of how the system should work today. It would result in the same safe, successful communities that The Mockingbird Society is working toward.

additional future funding, we hope they would adopt it widely.

Another success worth celebrating, with much love and thanks to the Blackfeet Indian Tribe in Montana, is having the tribe decide that they would be the funders and support system for organizing a constella-



tion for Native American families in care. This process is currently being constructed and MFM and The Blackfeet Indian tribe are working together to ensure an even more powerful cultural support.

We here in the network, have been supporting MFM as best as possible. With majority of the Youth Reporters being youth whom

either have known people in care or have experienced it, the most we can do is provide testimonials throughout this journey when needed. When I was in my last foster home, I attended some Hub Home meetings. The first time I went, I met a wonderful group of people who all had so much in common. Degale Cooper, one of the Hub Home foster parents, has been involved with MFM for quite some time. I was lucky enough to get to speak briefly with her and learn her thoughts on the Mockingbird Family Model as a whole. Degale says, "It is a wonderful experience for first time foster parents with support from a group of skilled foster parents. We come together to provide additional support for the kids and their families as well. By doing this hopefully we can reform the system and have it work as fluently as the MFM. With the support from your constellation, you are guaranteed support from not only the social worker, but the Hub Homes as well."

It is clear to say that the Mockingbird Family Model has definitely been a success and it looks as if it is going to continue to progress and help the foster families in our community. Special thanks goes out to all our wonderful foster parents and Hub Home families as well as Dr. Wanda Hackett for her amazing work with the MFM. Can't wait to see where we are when the 20th anniversary rolls near!

DECADE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

in care will have an unannounced visit to make sure there is a high quality of living in every foster home. Many states have implemented this great practice within their foster care systems.

Along with safety in care is the health and well-being of those in care. The year 2007 was a poignant year because of HB 1201 - Healthcare to 21 passed. This law allows all youth exiting foster care, whether in housing with state or not, to receive health coverage.

Empowering youth is a responsibility for people regardless of their position in a child's life. In the foster care system, it has a slightly different connotation. In 2009 HB 5758 - Notification of Rights in Foster Care passed. This law requires youth to know and understand what rights they do have while in state care. Many foster youth and alumni of care did not know that they had any rights. Now they know and understand what that means for them and the state. Another bill that passed in 2007 is the "Identicard" for Foster Youth. Previously, it took an insurmountable amount of paperwork and social worker contact to get all the documents they need for an I.D Card. Now foster youth will be able to get a Washington "Identicard", enabling youth to have I.D and faster access to services.

System reform is one of the key components that drive the Mockingbird Youth Network as well as The Mockingbird Society as a whole. We have a passion and belief in this and it is great to see progress in this area. The past 10 years have had a multitude of highs and lows within the US; it is great to see the MYN flourish when most see the US as floundering.

Real Change and The Mockingbird Times BY AMANDA BEVINGTON



In this article, I will be talking about an outstanding organization called Real Change. Many people have probably heard about the non-profit organization that is improving the lives of the homeless and preventing future homelessness. Real Change articles focus on reducing poverty and addressing real life issues. According to their website (www.realchangenews.org), their mission is to provide opportunity and a voice for low-income and homeless people while taking action for economic justice.



Working at Real Change to get out an issue.

Members from the community write weekly articles about topics that they would like the audience to know more about for example stories about labor, public health, resources, education, employment, transportation, current events, and many more. Real Change newspapers are sold by members of Seattle's homeless population. The vendors have to buy the copies of the paper, but Real Change allows the vendors to keep any profit they made. I think that is a great opportunity for people that experience economic difficulties and/or homelessness. This is a way to help

homeless people get back on their feet. The papers sell for one dollar. While at the same time, you are helping someone out, which is a good feeling.

At The Mockingbird Society, we collaborate with Real Change to help distribute *The Mockingbird Times*. By inserting our paper in the Real Change newspaper, we are getting our message across to thousands of people. The Mockingbird Society's Network Representatives write monthly articles

that focus on the foster and child welfare system and issues related to homelessness. Our goal is to identify the problems and work on areas to improve the issue, much like Real Change's effort to address homelessness issues. We want our voice to matter; we want our voice to be heard. Real Change helps make that happen.

About a year and a half ago, an edition of *The Mockingbird Times* had a mistake in the layout. It was nothing that our great team could not fix, so the Network Representatives had to go the Real Change headquarters to fix the printouts. I remember walking into the room and everyone there was working hard and ready to help others. It made

me feel good to see people in our community helping others that are less fortunate. We all had a great time learning from each other as well as listening to stories from vendors who worked at Real Change. It is an incredible feeling to know that you are making a difference in someone's life.

¹<http://www.realchangenews.org>

Mockingbird is a organization designed to make foster care tolerable.

KAITLIN WILLIAMSON - REGION 3 NORTH (TACOMA)

FUTURE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

opinion, it is communication and getting the word out to everyone. Mockingbird already does a great job networking and getting info out, but we aim high. Everyone needs to understand the struggles the youth face, so we cannot stop until everyone has heard the message."

It is clear that thanks to our past successes and current strength, Mockingbird's future looks brighter than ever.

Mockingbird has impacted me in a lot of different ways; first the awareness of the foster care system. I know a lot more now than I did when I first entered the system which is beneficial and it's opened a lot of doors and opportunities for me to meet with legislators, representatives, and other foster youth in my region who have become my support group.

COURTNEY CANOVA - REGION 1 NORTH (SPOKANE)

Submitting Letters

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

Thank You!

Dae Shogren, Alex Tarasar, Lura Harrison, Yakima Union Gospel Mission, Casey Family Programs, Catholic Family and Child Services, Goldie and Patric Campbell, Alene Alexander, Dick and BJ Arnold, City of Seattle Combined Charities, Maurice Classen, Katherine Cooper, Karen Cowgill, Maureen & Matthew Marinkovich, Gary E. Milgard Family Foundation, Eric Trupin, Anne Tuttle, Bob & Peggy Wilkerson

Creative Corner

My Life

By Taylor Springs

I'm starting to care,
less and less.
Times I feel so low,
like I am possessed.
I say things,
that I don't mean.
It's like I'm living,
in a dream.
And I can't think,
no,
I can't speak.
Day after day,
it's always the same.
Questions unanswered,
unable to cry.
Don't wanna try,

not sure why.
Don't know where to go,
nowhere to turn.
Trying to be strong,
but I'm falling apart.
It's just so hard,
for me to believe,
that this is my life.
When it feels so fake.
A fantasy, a rumor, a
nightmare, a lie.
My fantasy.
My rumor.
My nightmare.
My lie.

Being in the Capital (city) it felt like since we were located there - why not be active and make a change? It was tough starting out, but when we found our rhythm everything fell into place.

SAM EVANS - REGION 3 SOUTH (OLYMPIA)

We're Just Getting Warmed Up by Sarah Mahaffy

Region 1 - North (Spokane)

Region 1 Spokane has been very busy and has grown quickly over the past few years. Just in the nine months since I began, we now have 15 to 25 youth attend each monthly meeting. It has been amazing to see the Chapter's work to serve the homeless, raise money for organizations such as SafetyNet and have some fun too!

We have a lot of youth who have really stepped up and become leaders within the chapter and are ready and willing to help out with anything needed. I feel that our chapter has a close bond and it is fun to see the friendships that have grown from Mockingbird. We always have a great time and learn a lot at the annual events including Youth Advocacy Day and the Summit. At Youth Advocacy Day the youth were able to meet our Legislators and we look forward to building that relationship at our legislator BBQ on August 10th.

It has been a great journey so far and I look forward to seeing where our chapter will go and how it will keep growing.

ACT FIRST Staying Active by Tammy Soderberg

Region 1 - South (Yakima)

Over the past few years, ACT FIRST has grown significantly in its passion and ability to advocate for creating "a world class foster care system." In December of 2008, Yakima had a kick-off party to celebrate and recruit for Region 1 South Chapter. That meeting was met with excitement at all of the possibilities and experiences that would come forth from being a part of the chapter. Some of the many experiences that ACT FIRST has had over the past few years include: participating in Advocacy day each year, being a part of Yakima's MLK march and the peace march, serving food at the Union Gospel Mission in Yakima, raising over \$3,000 for The Mockingbird Society, having an active seat at the State Leadership Council (SLC), communicating to our legislators, helping out at a nursing home, training youth and alumni of care on how to advocate for themselves and training them on their rights as foster youth, and many other activities that build relationships, employment skills, and support.

We look forward to continuing these efforts while finding new ways to help youth and serve our community!

HEYMAC: Growing and Changing Every Day by Georgina Ramirez

Region 2 - North (Everett)

H.E.Y.M.A.C. means "Hearing Every Youth Make A Change," and that is simply what we do. Over the past three years the chapter has been dedicated to putting the needs and voice of youth at the forefront of child welfare decisions, while helping youth blossom as leaders in their community.

Perseverance and dedication have been the driving force that has helped this chapter propose an idea that became a law, and now helps youth in foster care all over the state of Washington. HEYMAC was originally located in the Mt. Vernon Youthnet office, with Eva Ervin as their Resource Specialist. In 2009, its first year of work, they provided the innovative idea of notifying youth of their rights. This idea was drafted into legislation (HB 5758), with the help of the Mockingbird Society, legislative champions and community partners it is now a law that youth in care have to be notified of their rights while in care. The following year HEYMAC made a transition to a new Resource Specialist and a new location. I am more than proud of the HEYMAC Chapter, as membership grows, so does the leadership, achievements and community investment of our members.

Community Events

Region 1 - North (Spokane)

August 6th: Spokane Highland Games at the Spokane County Fair, 6-8pm.

August 1st - September 6th: Ponderosa Outdoor Market, 3-7pm at The Trellis Marketplace.

Region 1 - South (Yakima)

August 7th, 12th, & 14th: Free Family Nights, Movies at the Park starts at 8:30pm. 8/7 - The Last Song: Gilbert Park, 4820 Avalanche Ave; 8/12 - Secretariat: Randall Park, 1399 S. 48th Ave; 8/14 - Toy Story 3: Gilbert Park, 4820 Avalanche Ave.

Region 2 - South (Seattle)

June 4th-August 31st: Zoo Tunes Outdoor Concerts - Woodland Park Zoo.

June 1st-September 3rd: Avatar: The Exhibition - Experience Music Project/Science Fiction Museum. More info: <http://www.seattle-fun.com/seattle-events-calendar-june-2011.html>.

Region 3 - North (Tacoma)

August 6th: Free Summer Community Festival: Best Of The Northwest, 10-4pm. Celebrate summer in the Northwest and all that it has to offer. Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma WA

August 6th: In the Spirit NW Native Art Market and Festival, 10-7pm. Washington State History Museum, Tacoma WA

Region 3 - South (Olympia)

August 18th: Chapter Meeting, 4-6pm at the Community Youth Services (CYS) in Olympia. For more information, call 360-943-0780 x169

September 1st: Independent Living Services (ILS) Workshop, 5-7:30pm CYS in Olympia. For more information, call 360-943-0780

Staying True by Jerry Bobo

Region 2 - South (Seattle)

I remember the first time I really felt a part of the King County region (Previously known as Region 4 for Change). I really felt a part of things when the chapter members elected me to be one of the regional chapter leaders. In my eyes I went from being viewed as an employee for the region, to being viewed as a member that can help take the chapter to the next level. This chapter would not be the same chapter if it didn't have an outstanding Resource Specialist, Georgina Ramirez.

Over the past few years the chapter has grown not just in numbers, but also in its impact on King County communities and its relationships with those within them. Even though we have fun in our community, we have never forgotten the purpose behind our work.

Over the past few years I have seen the Region 2 Stay True (South) chapter grow dramatically. The youth are more engaged in the community, better understand the policy process, and they know how their story and advocacy work will help all of those in care, and those that will be entering care in the future. As a former member of the chapter and now its Resource Specialist, I have seen Mockingbird achieve its goals and I will continue to help them set new goals to be met by the ever-growing chapter. Happy 10 year Anniversary MBS!

How Far has Our Region Come? by Samantha Valle

Region 3 - North (Tacoma)

When I first started as the Resource Specialist in Tacoma, the chapter and youth were in transition. The youth were all new to the chapter; fortunately, I had a young lady, Kiarra Brown, who was eager to move the chapter in the right direction. Shortly after, more youth followed in her footsteps.

The youth in Tacoma were community driven. They not only wanted to improve the foster care system, but they also wanted to improve their community. The

Tacoma chapter has since then worked in community to clean up gang graffiti and prepare food and serve the homeless. I notice the great change in the youth from this chapter. They have grown as leaders and as individuals. They have articulated remarkable issues which foster youth face every day to their peers, their community and government officials alike. They have all faced many barriers, yet these youth don't let anyone stop them from moving forward.

The Olympia Chapter: From Newest Chapter to Engine for Change by Graham Parrington

Region 3 - South (Olympia)

In the fall of 2009 in Olympia there was host agency staff ready to support the new chapter, a Resource Specialist in over his head, and youth who were ready to lead. Youth like Sam Evans, who described the time as, "new and exciting." The legislative session, Youth Advocacy Day, and the Leadership Summit in 2010 helped things fall into place. Sam Evans won the 2010 Summit essay contest and spent the day with Secretary Dreyfus; Melody Esteves was a moving speaker at the 2010 Benefit Luncheon; Chris Bauer became the "go-to" speaker for Unannounced Visits (HB 1697); Ryan Cummings joined the Commission and took 2nd place in the 2011 Summit essay contest; and Amanda Urwiler's personal story became the core of a powerful presentation at the 2011 Leadership Summit.

Now the Olympia Chapter has assumed its role in the Capital as a "go-to" source for youth testimony at legislative committee hearings, and I look forward to watching the Chapter continue to grow as an engine for developing speakers, leaders, ideas, and change in the child welfare system.

News From

The Mockingbird Network

Your Needs, Your Voice