

Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION

August 2009

Volume X, Issue VIII

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Mockingbird Celebrates Eight Years BY CHRISTINA KOSHNEY



When I was asked to write The Mockingbird Society's (MBS) anniversary article, I was very proud. Each and every staff member here is vital to the organization and brings an amazing bag of skills, personality, and heart. There is an impressive sense of pride that each staff member exhibits not only in themselves but in the organization. The only way this fabulous staff could exist is if this was an amazing place to be, and it is! One person, **Jim Theofelis**, came forth with an idea because he noticed a hole in the system and that youth were the ones losing the most. Jim made it a mission to change this and build a "world class foster care system." This idea began with an initial staff of two in 2001. Currently the staff numbers over 20 and is still growing. A single idea has been expanded from one person's heart to a nationwide mission to implement powerful and effective change in the child welfare system.

The mission of The MBS is a selfless one that strives for the betterment of the children and youth that must be part of this system. The MBS helps youth in a way that will lead to real and permanent change, not simply a comforter for the night. Each of us here at The MBS has committed ourselves to fighting for change in the legislature, so our state laws can reflect the ideals we carry.

This past legislative session was one for the records in a variety of ways. As a nation and as a state we are facing some of the greatest financial deficits we have ever experienced and. We were told several important things at the beginning of Youth Advocacy Day, two of which come to mind. The first was from a

representative of the governor's office, who graciously took the time to share some words with all the youth in attendance. She said there were going to be a lot of budget cuts and that not all of The MBS's legislative agenda was on the governor's agenda. As a state, we were in a struggle to get back to the basics and what is most important.

The second was from a representative who told us that this would be a fight and that, as youth, we would need to come in strong and put our best foot forward. I believe we did. In this time of great financial strain,



The Mockingbird Society Executive Director **Jim Theofelis** poses with The Mockingbird Network youth from regions two (left), five (below left), and six (below right).

where teachers are getting laid off and schools are closing, we all have a reason to be proud as we were able to get almost all of our bills passed, including Fostering Connections (formerly Foster Care to 21), Independent Youth Housing Program, Consideration of Post Adoption Sibling Visits, and Notification of Rights for Youth in Foster Care.

These passed bills were the cherry on top of the hard work that is done every single day here at The Mockingbird Society. As we could become easily lost in political agendas, I thought it would be nice to take a moment to highlight some senior staff members. **Lauren Frederick** and **Leona Bill** are two amazing

women who I have the pleasure of working with. Lauren Frederick is a five year veteran and the Executive Assistant at The MBS who "feels lucky" to be a part of the growth that The MBS has accomplished. Listening to Lauren reminisce about her time here provided me with a more personal history of The MBS beyond the numbers and bills. Lauren has seen not only the growth of an organization but of youth as well. Hearing the passion and commitment that she has for our organization and the youth it supports allows me to breathe easy because I know we are all in good hands; we have a world class staff to match our goal of having a world class foster care system. As Lauren said, "it feels right."

Leona Bill, another veteran staffer since 2002, started as a writer and is currently a Senior Network Representative. Leona has seen this program grow from a small office to a statewide network where we have Resource Specialists and participating foster youth and alumni in all six regions of the state. When asked what she enjoys most about working here at The MBS, Leona says that working with the youth and being able to see change that she has personally advocated for through such activities as testifying in Olympia actually happen. She is reminded of the difference she has made as people who she does not personally know thank her for writing her articles, shining light on issues that Native American youth in care experience. Leona humbly said, "I honestly didn't think I would be that much help." Leona Bill is truly a world class member of our society who has graced The

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Children's Administration Bound for Major Transformation BY IAN GRANT



On March 11th, the **Washington State Legislature** passed a landmark bill requiring that the **Children's Administration** (CA) provide care for all of the youth and families on its caseload through performance-based contracts. This means that in the future, a child's social worker will (usually) not be an employee of the state but rather of a private agency and that CA will no longer be providing direct services to foster youth and parents. These roles will be taken on by private agencies which will be contractually obligated to meet certain measurements regarding the outcomes for the foster youth in their charge.

In performance-based contracting, you pay for what you get. The payment for child welfare services (CWS) is directly tied to measurable outcomes, like high school graduation or placement permanency. If the program doesn't achieve these goals, the organization gets paid less or loses its contract entirely. This is meant to ensure that agencies make positive outcomes for children in foster care their highest priority.

I attended the inaugural meeting of the **Child Welfare Transformation Committee**, the group created by the bill to plan the transi-

tion to performance-based contracting. People on this committee include foster parents, CA, Native American tribes, the Attorney General, the Children's Ombudsman, and the courts, among others. Every group of stakeholders seemed to be represented except one: youth and alumni of care. This is an oversight that I hope will be addressed soon. Unfortunately, because the makeup of the committee is defined by the legislature, it is unlikely that any changes will be made before the next legislative session.

The transition process will take five years. CA must begin converting its current contracts to performance-based contracts starting on December 1st, 2010 with total conversion to be completed by July 1st, 2014. This is understandable; CA is a big organization with a lot of inertia, and this drastic restructuring of what it does is going to take some time. The committee will meet once a quarter from now until July 2013.

The biggest change for foster youth is going to be that their social worker will no longer be a state employee. Social workers will be employees of agencies that have contracted with the state to provide case management. It remains to be seen what the effect will be upon the relationship between individual

foster youth and their caseworkers but it is hoped that the switch to performance-based contracting will lower caseloads and allow caseworkers to be more involved and more impactful in the lives of the youth in their charge.

Overall, I think that this is a change we can be excited about. One of the major problems with child welfare services being provided by state agencies is that there is very little that can be done to hold these agencies accountable. Government being as large and ponderous as it is, it really isn't possible to hold CA to the high standard that the people of Washington State need to have for the care and well-being of their foster children. When funding is directly tied to measurable outcomes for foster youth, I predict that agencies will get a lot better at providing the support that foster youth need simply because they must in order to survive.

I will be covering this issue as it develops, and I look forward to updating you in September. In the meantime, keep your head up. Change is slow but it is happening, in large part thanks to the readers of this newspaper and the work they have done to make the system better for foster youth. We are on the way to creating a world-class foster care system.

Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



It's hard to believe that August 2009 marks the 8th Anniversary of The Mockingbird Society. As a point of irony and reflection, I recently came across some of my earliest notes and worksheets when I first began "visioning" the agency that would become The Mockingbird Society. I was pleased to read in my notes the importance of an organization that advocated for major change and accepted the responsibility of creating solutions to accompany our advocacy.

My notes reflected that I wanted an organization that provided youth and alumni from foster and kinship care a vehicle to carry their voice and wisdom forward, and to ensure that this new organization would offer youth and alumni a fresh opportunity to be more than a treatment plan for others to diagnose and "fix." At this new organization I envisioned youth and alumni as employees, Board members, and indeed leaders within the organization, within their community, and certainly leaders in the social justice movement to build a world-class foster care system.

We have worked hard the past eight years and I am proud that so much of that initial vision is alive and active today. The Mockingbird Network coordinates and organizes youth across the state to be leaders in the creation of positive public policy and

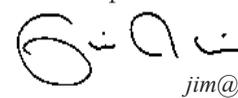
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MBS with her knowledge and negative experiences in care and has turned them into building blocks for the future.

Thank you to The MBS and everyone who has been involved with us for being committed to such an important cause. We are lucky to have an organization that equally reflects our values and mission.

legislation. The Mockingbird Family Model continues to demonstrate its efficacy as a service delivery model that is replicable, cost-effective, and, most importantly, outcome-based. The Mockingbird Family Model produces the critical outcomes of safety and stabilization while in care, allowing siblings and family members to remain in contact, providing relationship-based respite care, and retaining our most qualified and committed foster parents.

The Mockingbird Society is a mission-driven organization dedicated to strengthening the current and future lives of the children and youth involved in foster and kinship care. So, as we celebrate our 8th Anniversary I want to thank each of you who have provided me and our staff with support, encouragement, funding, and friendship.

 Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Child Welfare Transformation Committee

It is my honor to be the foster parent on the Child Welfare Transformation Committee (see article pg. 1). I am seeking input from foster parents and youth across Washington State with regard to the transformation of the foster care system. If you are interested in the work of this committee, please feel to contact me at (206) 838-6635 or catherine@mockingbirdsociety.org.

Become a Mockingbird Network Representative

The Mockingbird Society is hiring! We are looking for youth between the ages of 15 and 24 who have experience in the foster or kinship care system. Duties include public speaking and advocacy, writing articles for the *Mockingbird Times*, and other organizational and leadership opportunities. Pay starts at \$9.50 per hour. For more information, contact Kara at kara@mockingbirdsociety.org or (206) 323-5437.

A Man For Change BY ASHLIE LANIER



Recently I had the opportunity to interview Eric Liu, the author of *Guiding Lights: How to Mentor and Find Life's Purpose*, the official book of National Mentoring Month. Eric has served as a speech writer for former President Bill Clinton, is on the Washington State Board of Education, teaches at the University of Washington's Evans School of Public Affairs, and hosts a television interview program called *Seattle Voices*. I was very anxious to meet with him.

"I first discovered Mockingbird through *Real Change*. Jim always stood out to me because of his commitment to change young lives," Eric said. "Mockingbird helps youth use their voice to their fullest potential. After seeing the changes being made and the growth made I want to be as involved as possible with the Mockingbird family." We are pleased that Eric Liu will be our guest speaker at The Mockingbird Society's Annual Luncheon in October.

Eric Liu's Web site *The True Patriot* (www.truepat.org) lists 10 principles of what it means to be patriotic. After reading these definitions, I could not help but wonder whether these could be valuable when advocating for change in the system. "We are not here to just help youth get through it, we are trying to equip youth with the skills needed as they move through the system to leave the system in better shape than youth found it in," says Eric. Speaking of stewardship he says, "To indulge in immediate gratification and exploitation is an insult to previous generations, who sacrificed for us, and thievery from the next generation, who depend on us for virtue. We must be good stewards. We are responsible for each other."

Eric wrote a self examination novel, *The Accidental Asian: Notes of a Native Speaker*, about an awkward race and ethnic identity issue he faced as a young man. Often youth in care have similar issues as they might be of a different ethnic background then their foster or adoptive parents. Once they age out and go through life experiences, some develop an identity crisis or even culture shock. I asked Eric what advice he would give a youth in care with these issues. "Figure out who you are and what you want to do, regardless of what society thinks or expects you to do. Do not be afraid of an identity crisis, there is always opportunity in them," Eric says. "When you are living to disprove a stereotype, you are just as much of a prisoner as you were in the beginning." There are always going to be stereotypes. So what? Do not let them define you.

Eric continued, "I have not experienced the system first hand; it's all about human story and human relationships. I think it's really important coming at this issue as a community connector to recognize that when you don't know, you don't know. We have to do deep listening and hear about these issues." In Eric's opinion, "Foster youth have more to teach than just about any other group. They have a nature of adapting and being resilient; they have to keep in touch with their inner core because everything around them is always revolving."

Eric Liu invites you to *Revive the HOPE*, a free event August 15th, 11 AM - 4 PM at the Seattle Center created by foster youth and alumni of care. There will be informative, interesting, and fun workshops about life skills; healthy choices; health, wealth, and happiness; financial aid, etc. Food will also be available.

Thank You!

Stephen Adkins; Virginia Anderson; Anonymous; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Karen Brandvick-Baker; Justice Bobbe Bridge (Ret.); Michael Campbell; David and Lynne Chelimer; College Success Foundation; Karen Cowgill; Devone; Kabren ducoing; Sandi Everlove; Kimberly Exe; Jillian Gross; Guests of Matt Tronsdal and Natasha Jankauskas' Wedding; Dr. Wanda Hackett; Raven Heavy Runner; JoAnn Herbert, in memory of June Herbert; Bob Hollowell; Carey & Lillevik, PLLC; Najja Morris; The Moyer Foundation; Sarah Rafton; Vanitha S. Raman; Mark Richards and WAFTS; Debra Ronnholm; Karisma Solis; Frank Squires; Patrick Tippy; Alicia Tonasket; Elizabeth Upton and Rayburn Lewis; Maurice Ward; Washington Women's Foundation; Calvin C. Watis; Erin and Mike Welch; Tim Williamson



Join The Mockingbird Society for our Third Annual Benefit Luncheon.



To be a table captain, reserve a seat or sponsor this event, please contact Alicia LeVezu, alicia@mockingbirdsociety.org or 206.323.KIDS (5437). There is no cost to attend. However, there will be an opportunity to donate. Suggested minimum donation is \$150.

We believe we can fly
2009 BENEFIT LUNCHEON | THE MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY

Support The Mockingbird Society!

We invite you to join us in making a significant difference in the lives of our most vulnerable children, youth and families. In gratitude of your support, we will send you a monthly issue of the *Mockingbird Times*. Please join us today!

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So that we may recognize you for your gift, please write how you would like to be listed:

- Please do not include my name on published donor lists (check box).
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Please mail this completed form and your check to The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Avenue S, Suite 240, Seattle, WA 98144. For more information, call (206) 323-KIDS (5437) or visit www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

MEET OUR STAFF

Executive Director Jim Theofelis; **Operations Director** Ros Ghan; **Mockingbird Family Programs Director** Dr. Wanda Hackett; **Youth Programs Director** Tiffany Washington; **Development Director** Madelaine Thompson; **Executive Assistant** Lauren Frederick; **Development/Communications** Darcie Gray; **Finance Manager** Catherine Lanham; **Mockingbird Network Coordinator**; Kara Sanders; **Mockingbird Family Model (The MFM) Coordinator** Amy Converse; **Administrative Coordinator** Diana Clark; **Administrative Assistant (AA)** Liliana Davies; **Mockingbird Network AA** Milissa Morgan; **The MFM AA** Stephanie (Stevie) Glaberson; **Development Assistant** Alicia LeVezu; **Resource Specialists** Eva Ervin, Heather Jones, Georgina Ramirez, Tammy Soderberg, Lauren Steed, Samantha Valle; **Senior Network Representatives** Leona Bill, Ashlie Lanier, Jerry Bobo; **Network Representatives**, Ian Grant, Christina Koshney, Diamonique Walker; **Contributing Writers & Artists** Holly Allen, DeMarea, Kevin Egan, Hunter Nelson, Crystal Sharp, Sir Donald L. Stallworth, Onalee Stewart, Nora Sutman, Rosie Valencia; **Volunteer** Chrissie Jackson; **Copy Editing and Layout** Kelly Hawkins

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*.

Homelessness and Foster Care BY YOLANDA KILGORE

Ten o'clock on the dot was the time I was given to be out of the house. I looked around the room at all my "Hefty bag suitcases" and then looked down at the small carry on duffel bag which was the only thing I had to fit my life into.

There's something to be said for those who can fall in and out of homelessness and not fall into the mentality of, "Oh well, I'm homeless and I have nothing to lose so it doesn't matter what I do." Sometimes it happens quickly, sometimes it's a repetitive pattern that you don't realize has become a habit until you are out on the streets. Regardless of how it happens, the bottom line is that it does happen and 19.8% of **Casey Family Programs** young adults alone have been homeless since leaving the foster care system.¹

In society today, we have the foster care system and we have the homeless system. What we don't seem to talk about that often is the overlap between foster care and homelessness. These two systems overlap in many ways such as the lack of housing and need for services as well as the negative stigma that is placed on both foster and homeless youth by society. It is this gray area that we seem to overlook and, by doing so, we allow youth to fall through the cracks. When that happens, you end up with two out of five young adults from care being on the streets for more than three months.²

I interviewed an alumni of foster care who has experienced homelessness and who is currently working two jobs assisting homeless and foster care youth find housing. We talked about both the foster care and homeless systems and how both should be able to find ways to help prevent youth from ending up living on the streets. The alumni felt that if social workers had listened better then she wouldn't have been forced to run away and thus wind up on the streets.

She also spoke about how there should be some type of after-hours line to report abuse from foster parents, because even though the caseworker clocks out at six

o'clock it doesn't mean that abuse stops as well. (The **Child Protective Services** line is available 24 hours a day and anyone can call it, but how useful is it if youth don't know about it?)

Being more prepared, having more life skills, and having a wraparound system that doesn't stop once you turn 18, are just a few of the things she listed when I asked her what could have helped her before she exited out of care. When asked if the foster care system has the power to prevent youth from ending up on the streets, she replied "Oh yes they do, they just don't utilize it." For example, where is the allocated money going for youth in care? There is obviously something wrong when a youth being mistreated in a home tries to contact a caseworker and half of them are burnt out and the other half are on vacation.

When I became homeless, I focussed on work instead of going to school because it was the one thing keeping me financially stable. I subconsciously put off things like school and later on working because I first felt that keeping a stable income was the way to survival. But when I ended up on the streets again due to lack of a job, I began to give up and felt like the need to stay constant was more important than the need to progress.

Fortunately, I was able to refocus my priorities and get an internship. I was able to break the cycle but there are youth out there who are still going round and round putting off things like work and school because the need to survive requires a certain type of freedom that going to work and school does not. Now for all the youth who are homeless or on the verge of being homeless just remember the words of **C. Jones**: "There is hope still out there. People still care, you just have to care about yourself first."

If you are looking for a way to help, just remember that there is always a youth out there with a story to tell, they just need someone to listen.

^{1,2} www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/pdf/CaseyYoungAdultSurveyThreeYears.pdf

Child Safety and The MFM BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



Child safety is very important in the child welfare system. Since a lot of these youth come from homes where they were abused and neglected, they come into care vulnerable and traumatized. It makes no sense for them to get placed in the system and then be abused and neglected again by caregivers. While this happens to less than one third of a percentage point (.32) of the children in care, it shouldn't happen at all.¹

Research has found that there are five prevention measures that deter caregivers (whether birth, kinship or foster) from abusing and neglecting youth:²

1. Successful preventive programs that are characterized by multiple types of support and frequent contacts;
2. Interventions such as counseling and skill training in combination;
3. Informal help such as support groups and community networks;
4. Rapid response and intensive support;
5. Effective programs that reduce barriers, both within the family and within the organization.

When I was in the system, I was cared for by my older sister who was only 17. She didn't have these supports and so caring for me was very stressful for her. While I wasn't abused or neglected, my sister, who is only two and a half years older than I, didn't always have the time and resources to take care of me.

The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) is an innovative foster, birth, and kinship caregiver service delivery model based on the extended family concept. It is designed to prevent child abuse and neglect in various ways. For one, in The MFM Constellations, there is always plenty of adult supervision. Youth feel safe and comfortable talking to adults in the Constellations about safety concerns. The MFM is community based, providing a community structure where there is support all around. There is planned and crisis respite, mentoring, trainings, monthly support meetings and system navigation, just to name some of the supports that The MFM provides. **Dr. Wanda Hackett**, Director of Family Programs at The Mockingbird Society describes The MFM as "a pro-active integrated system in which caregivers receive the support they need." Dr. Hackett indicated that since the beginning of The MFM (2004) there have been no founded Child Protective Services referrals for abuse and/or neglect within any of The MFM Constellations. This far exceeds the national standard reported above.

I wish that while I was in care my sister had these kinds of supports that would have made caring for me less stressful. To learn more about The MFM visit www.mockingbirdsociety.org/mfm.php.

¹ www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/data_indicators.htm

² www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/Child_Safety_Curricula_Staff.pdf

When Native Youth Transition Out BY LEONA BILL



Most Native American youth get placed in out of home care. Rarely do they get placed with family. Only twice out of the whole time that I was in care was I placed with family. I transitioned out of care before I even aged out, constantly on the run. Before I came of age, I had a hard time trying to keep in touch with my culture, one reason being that I was placed in a different county. Once that happened, I felt that basically I was forgotten.

Cultural identity remains a struggle for Native American youth in care as, for the most part, they are not in touch with their tribe. Some Native youth I met know where they come from but barely know anything about their people or their families.

It requires work to keep youth involved with cultural events. If the youth are with a non-Native American family, it is up to the foster parents to help the Native children to take part in their own culture. For most foster parents, the travel to cultural events is prohibitively far or expensive. Only a few Native American foster children are lucky enough to have foster parents that go out of their way or set aside time to take them to cultural events.

Some areas have small cultural get-togethers; it's just a matter of finding them. In Seattle, there are events with the **United Indians of All Tribes Foundation**. The **University of Washington** holds a powwow every year and some Native American youth try to encourage their schools and communities to hold events.

When it comes to Native American youth being in foster care, there is much stress. **Raven Heavy Runner** is a supervisor with the **State of Washington Service Office** in the Adolescents Unit. His co-workers approached him with concerns about the placements of the foster children on their caseloads, how short their stays were, and how movement disrupted their schooling, sensibility, and involvement in

programs.

In certain areas, there are resources that help Native Americans but in many cases, youth are afraid of using the services the state offers. Caseworkers fear that when Native American youth transition out of care they are not prepared to fully engage in the mainstream adult system. Youth won't know how to look or apply for housing, won't have an employment history or the education to transition out of care.

Native American youth have the same resources as other children in the system such as education benefits, Foster Care to College, Foster Care to 21, Education Training Voucher Program, Governor Scholarship, Passport to College, support programs, and Independent Living Programs. Native American youth who are connected with their tribe may have the opportunity to get health care through the tribe. Some tribes cover very little and some tribes cover more depending on the tribe and the same goes for resources. For more information visit www.independance.wa.gov.



Senator Joe McDermott from the 34th WA State legislative district, joined MBS youth and volunteers to help with the Mockingbird Times mailing day. Joe earned a Master of Public Administration from the UW's Evans School of Public Affairs and holds a BA in History and Political Science from Gonzaga. We were also joined by Calvin, 2008 Foster Parent of the Year. Thank you to both Joe and Calvin for their greatly-appreciated assistance!

I Will Never Give Up BY JERRY BOBO



I Will Never Give Up is the name of a book which is the true and inspiring life story of **Derek W. Clark**, a foster youth who found the light at the end of the tunnel.

At an early age on that journey, Derek had an inner voice that never stopped telling him to *never give up*. I had the pleasure of speaking with Derek to get the inside scoop on his life and the struggles that came with being a foster youth. "I am a former San Francisco Bay Area 'High Risk Foster Child.' [I was in care] from the age of 5 to age 18. My mother having given up on me, placed me in [the] county Social Services Foster Care System desperate to be rid of me, but keeping my younger brother, and older sister. That was the most inexplicable and saddest part ... knowing that I was deleted from my family. I was so scared and alone and these feelings persisted on through my teenage years," said Derek.

When I heard this, my heart sank. Being a sibling is hard enough, but to know that your parent wants to keep your siblings and not you is a hard pill to swallow for any child. It is a situation that takes a negative toll on the heart. "I struggled mentally and physically. There were traumatic experiences throughout my youth and I had to learn how to live with them. The negative energy was channeled into depression and [I was] heavyhearted. Ironically, I wasn't a weak depressed kid that got picked on; I went the opposite way and was filled with aggression and anger. I had problems trusting, loving, and accepting others.

Deep down I believed I was a happy kid with anger and mistrust [that] arose from miserable life experiences I had to endure at such a young age." Even though Derek had different situations in his life than I did growing up, the book speaks to me and is very inspiring on so many different levels. I asked Derek where the title of his book came from, and what inspired him to write it.

"There is a four letter word that is woven into the fabric of my soul: *will*. I have always had the *will* to persevere, the *will* to believe in myself, the *will* to take action and the *will* to never give up. This word has given me the unyielding strength to conquer all negative situations that I've encountered. *will* has allowed me to make something positive out of my life. There is always a way! You can do whatever you want to, but you must first have the *will* to follow things all the way through to succeed. I am a fighter by nature and have always had the fire to prove to the world that I am somebody. Being given up on has given me the *WILL* to live and prove to the world that I could be somebody. I no longer have to prove that, but it did fuel the fire within me."

I respect Derek for sharing his story through all his *will*-power to overcome the struggles that life brought his way. His four letter word is giving me a better way of looking at the things that happened in my life and I want to thank Derek for that. Life throws you curve balls to see if you will be able to hit home runs. I, too, *will never give up!*

My Spirit

ROSIE VALENCIA

My spirit is like a smooth and soft feather flowing back and forth in the wind.

It likes to sing in the sky and makes everybody feel joyful.

My spirit is as blue as a sky and as big as a sun brightening up the day to make everybody feel better than they did before.

My spirit prays every night and day, asking God to help people who are sad and angry.

My spirit is like a river washing sadness and anger away, and helping others feel like a new person who can be more confident to make a better place for themselves.

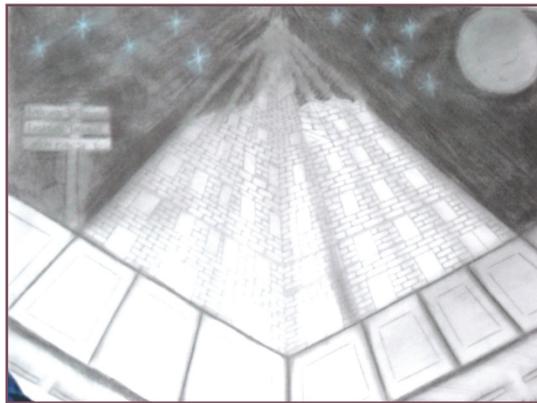
Hate Don't Mean a Thing

SIR DONALD L. STALLWORTH

You can't hate your family for too long cause it's wrong. You can't hate your family too long 'cause your love shouldn't be like jewelry or diamond rings. Your love shouldn't be like a glimmer or gleam. Your love should shine real bright. That's exactly what I mean. Some people take family for granted. I don't understand it. For the family around you is the only one you'll have; without them you'll only go downhill. But still sometimes they get annoying and make you mad. Sometimes they make you happy and glad. It is just the same. You love them so much you forget who to blame. Through the rainy days and the cloudy nights they'll be with you, by your side through the lowest and highest highs. All this because hate don't mean a thing.

Untitled

NORA SUTMAN

**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.

Community Events**Region 1**

August 8: Kids Day in the Park, 11 AM - 5 PM, Riverfront Park; (509) 242-2505.

August 15: Unity in the Community, 10 AM - 4 PM, Riverfront Park and various meadows.

Region 2

Fridays: Youth dance, 7 PM, Southeast Yakima Community Center; (509) 575-6114.

Sundays: Open Mic Night, 7 PM, North Town Coffeehouse.

Region 3

August 12: Parenting Tools That Work, 6 - 7:30 PM, Skagit Family Study Center; www.selftimeout.org.

August: Back-to-School Supplies Drive for Foster and At-Risk Youth; www.youthnetnw.net.

Region 4

August 14: The Inside Scoop, 2100 24th ave S; RSVP (206) 838-6646 or georgina@mockingbirdsociety.org.

August 15: Revive the Hope Within, 11 AM - 4:30 PM, Seattle Center; arowland@casey.org.

Region 5

August 13: Serving breakfast and lunch for the homeless, 9 AM - 12 PM, Catholic Community Services.

Region 6

August 13: Employment Barriers, 2 - 3 PM, Clark College; ckeane@clark.edu.

August 29: Clark College Open House, 10 AM - 2 PM, Columbia Tech Center; ckeane@clark.edu.

A sense of humor is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done.

~ Dwight D. Eisenhower

Region 1: CHAPTER IN SPOKANE COUNTY BY ONALEE STEWART

Region 1 had two really exciting events this month. First, we had an Advocacy 101 training with **Kara Sanders** from The MBS. We had 10 youth and alumni attend and we learned about key skills such as communication, planning, and using our voice to advocate for ourselves in more positive and productive ways. Our second event was a chapter BBQ with **Rep. Kevin Parker** from the 6th district, and **Shannon Waechter**, Legislative Assistant to **Timm Ormsby**. We talked about The MBS, the Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit, the bills The MBS has gotten passed, and our chapter. They let us know what it's like to be a legislator and the best way to have youth approach them in Olympia. We want to thank them as well as the **Eastern Washington Women's Networking group** (for donating the food for our BBQ) and all the youth and alumni for coming and sharing in our desire to make change for the better!

Region 3: Hey Mac CHAPTER IN SKAGIT COUNTY BY HUNTER NELSON

For the month of July we took things slowly, but that's okay because next month we will be very busy. We will be talking with **Senator Dale Brandland** from the 42nd District in Bellingham about The Mockingbird Network and also learning about him. He's been a strong supporter of foster youth. There will also be a couple of awesome trainings in August. The first one will be on our rights as foster youth, which is crucial. The other training will be a legal workshop with The MBS in Seattle. The Region 3 chapter is definitely pumped for the coming month!

**Region 2: A.C.T. F.I.R.S.T. CHAPTER IN YAKIMA COUNTY BY HOLLY ALLEN**

This month we met and discussed what events will be happening in the future. For our community project, our group decided we will serve lunch at the **Union Gospel Mission** again. We are going to try to have **Mayor Dave Edler** come to one of our chapter meetings to discuss with him what it is like being the Mayor of Yakima and we would also like to add some fun competitive games. We also plan on having a day where we experience hands on budgeting. This chapter meeting was a BLAST!

**News From****The Mockingbird Network****Your Needs, Your Voice****Region 4: For Change CHAPTER IN KING COUNTY BY KEVIN EGAN**

This month we came up with a mission statement: Using our voice to empower, enrich, and improve the lives of foster youth through advocacy, education, and community involvement. **Yolanda** filled everyone in on what happened at the Leadership Summit. On August 14th we are having an event called The Inside Scoop where we will discuss advocacy for mental health and financial issues for youth. There will be ice cream as well. The event will be at the 2100 Building, 10 AM - 2 PM. We hope to see you all there. Please also join us for our monthly chapter meetings which are scheduled for the second Monday of each month.

**Region 5: CHAPTER IN PIERCE COUNTY BY DEMAREA**

We are currently working with a group of youth to put on **Culture of Foster Care** training. This training is for social workers and foster parents to help them perform their jobs better by helping youth open up more and by advocating effectively for them. In August, we are going to participate with **Catholic Community Services** to feed the homeless. Giving back to people in need is a great thing you can do in life for people that do not have as much.

Region 6: SPEAK UP! CHAPTER IN CLARK COUNTY BY CRYSTAL SHARP

This month we had a special guest, **WA State Representative Jim Jacks** from the 49th district who came and talked with us. We explained what The MBS is and what we do within the Network. It was very nice that he recognized **Amanda**, one of the SPEAK UP! leaders, from town hall meetings and **Charletina** from Youth Advocacy Day. He was very interested in what our goals are and asked many questions wanting to learn as much as he can from us. He is a very nice guy and is working hard to represent what we want. He believes as we do that with enough effort and persistence anything can happen. We really appreciated the time we had with him and hope to see him again at Advocacy Day next year. SPEAK UP! will now be meeting the first Tuesday of every month with the Independent Living Skills program. Regular meetings are still the second Monday of every month. Hope to see you there!

