

# Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



December 2010

Volume XI, Issue XII

## In This Issue

### Letter From the Editor

Jim Theofelis  
Page 2

### Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Amanda Bevington  
Page 2

### Thanks to Our Sponsors

Page 2

### Education Versus Raised Taxes

David Buck  
Page 3

### Inside Scoop with Representative Mary Helen Roberts

Monique Howard (Reporting from Everett, Region 3)  
Page 3

### New Kid on the Block

Deonate Cruz  
Page 3

### Creative Corner: Forbidden Love

Abigail Antoinette Brunner  
Page 4

### It Pours Down

Deamon  
Page 4

### Calendar of Events

Page 4

### News From The Mockingbird Network

Page 4



### The Importance of Respite Care

BY GIOVANNI ENGLISH

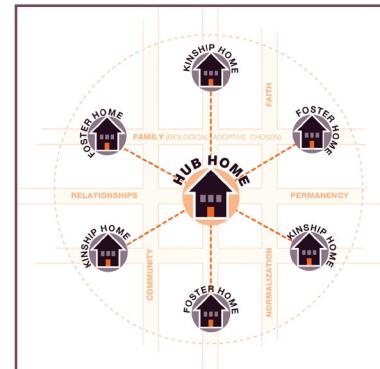
What is respite care and why is it important? Respite care is care provided by a state licensed provider. It is provided to foster parents when they go out of town or need a break from their foster youth. When thinking of respite care, think of it as dropping your kids off at grandma and grandpa's house for the weekend or for a week. It is not that a parent is getting tired of a kid, it is just that a parent is in need of some alone time or maybe need a vacation.

Respite care is often compared to being a babysitter or staying with your grandparents. In most families a babysitter is called and can generally help out for a day or an evening. But, for foster parents it is not that easy. They must call on a licensed state respite provider, and it is likely the respite care provider is not related to you or your child.

The reason this has become a concern is that all parents, even a foster parent, needs a break and they can't legally take one with normal supports, they have to use a licensed respite care provider. And, those folks are few and far between.

A lot of people getting ready to have foster kids go into it thinking that they can turn to their own extended family for support, saying to themselves, "Well, my parents will be there to help me take care of these kids and that they will have proper placement." The thing is – unless they are licensed too they can't provide a break – relief – support – or respite.

Respite care can be as long as two weeks and as short as three hours. It can be used for a long term vacation or for an event for short events such as attending a wedding. No matter what the reason is, it should be available foster families, just as it is for families that are not part of the system. Lately there has been a shortage of respite care providers, making it harder for families to go on vacation or get time taken off. This is one area that MBS strives to provide extra support through our Mockingbird



The Mockingbird Family Model

Family Model (MFM). The hub home provides "relationship-based planned and crisis respite care that prevents placements disruptions, provides a safe space for relationship pacing, and reduces caregiver burnout."

RESPIRE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



### Web of Violence

BY TERRELL ROSETTI

He's caught in the web of violence, going in and out of jail. Instead of going home at night he's living in a shelter or staying at a friend's house. Instead of playing after school activities, he's playing with the wrong crowd of people, and the activities he's getting into aren't helping him lead to the right path of success, only negative outcomes that lead to dead ends. He's infected with a disease known as violence. He's a product of his environment. He suffers the "love" of someone that cares about him, whether it's a mother, father, brother or sister. Now he's living in struggle, can't get a job because his record is holding him back, he's bouncing from community resource to community resource – if he's lucky.

The question is: can he wiggle his way out this web before the spider wraps him and paralyzes his abilities to thrive in society and eventually get eaten in the one and only life he has? The answer is, "YES!" with enough ambition and resources he will thrive.

I previously attended a summit on November 8th and 9th. The summit included many people from the community dedicated to ending youth violence in the communities. It was empowering to hear about a 31 year old man who was a retired gang member. He was incarcerated for nearly 11 years before becoming actively involved in saving young people from the pitfalls of the street life. It was discouraging to hear the reasons why youth end up in the web of violence. As Dr.

Joseph Marshall would say, they are not being "Alive and Free." Dr. Joseph Marshall was in attendance at the conference. He is a community activist and founder of the "Alive & Free" Movement, and founder and president of the Street Soldiers National Consortium, an organization dedicated to fighting violence nationwide.

There are several reasons why youth get caught in the web. Some people are born into it or exposed to it. One of the root causes of getting caught up in violence is lack of activities and programs that provide alternatives for youth. People often lack the experience and guidance to see a future, or possible success, or even a role as a professional. A lot of this has to do with the state -- which really means the overall community -- not providing enough funding for people in poverty to access programs that will improve their chances. Instead, these programs are being cut from budgets. Programs that provide resources to those that have already suffered and gone through this web are also losing funding. In the end, there should be no reason for a youth not make it in anywhere in the world.

I will leave off on a poem that I like by Tupac Shakur, "Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete? Proving nature's law is wrong it learned to walk without having feet. Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air. Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else cared."

### Safety in Foster Care

BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



Most people would agree that if a child or youth was taken out of their home because of abuse, neglect, or just an unsafe environment, they shouldn't get placed back into a similar situation. But, sometimes it happens. According to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF)\*, statistics show that less than one percent of youth in care indicated maltreatment. It may not seem like a lot, but in reality, it shouldn't be happening at all. In the foster care system there will be some of those families that are "as seen on TV," as well as families that love and care about the youth that come into their home.

Surely the child welfare system isn't a perfect one, but it's not completely bad either. From the way the media and news portray the system, it could change the perspective of people who are truly naïve to it. All of the negativity and violence are exploited, but the media very seldom shows the bright side of foster care. Some youth are happy to have been in care because they were actually placed into better, loving homes or maybe even adopted. I think that people hear "foster care" and immediately think of stereotypes associated with media exploitation such as aggressive, violent, and just all around troubled youth. Despite the many stereotypes youth of the system face, as well as the hardships and tragedies, many youth are still compelled to use their voice to make change, and stand up for the rights and well-being of all youth in care.

"Despite the many stereotypes youth of the system face, as well as the hardships and tragedies, many youth are still compelled to use their voice to make change, and stand up for the rights and well-being of all youth in care."

The final report-out of this year's Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit raised questions about whether some youth are safe in care. Two of the six topics presented were in regards to safety. One proposal was to require mental health evaluations for foster parents, so that mentally unstable foster parents can get the support that they need to be caregivers, or be exempt from foster parenting altogether. The other safety issue proposed by youth was random drug testing for foster parents, because drugs were possibly used in the presence of a foster youth. Some youth were removed from environments similar to this, so again it makes no sense to put a youth in the same situation again. Also, in the previous year, surprise visits to foster homes was brought up, so that foster parents don't have time to prepare or "put on a show" when they know that social workers are coming for a home visit.

Since the youth feel so strongly about pushing these policies around safety, the conclusion that the system is not nearly as safe as it needs to becomes clearer. Unannounced vis-

SAFETY, CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



Happy Holidays to each of you! The social challenges of our day are top of mind for all of us, but it is in these times we often come together as a community and rise to the occasion. That is what we do every day at The Mockingbird Society through our dedicated staff, volunteers, Board of Directors and the children, youth and families.

The Mockingbird Society accomplished much this year. We completed our 3-year strategic plan, funded with a grant from the **Washington Women's Foundation**. This was an innovative process that included business and community leaders, child welfare leadership and youth and alumni of care. The plan direction was clear - now, more than ever, system reform and advocacy for change is critical to ensuring that all children get the love, care, support and resources needed to thrive.

The Mockingbird Network has scaled-up and continues to build leadership and employment readiness skills for youth in care and homeless youth across our state. This year, Mockingbird built on its legislative

successes by formalizing a Public Policy & Communications Department to increase our capacity to advocate and ensure that youth voice is included at the decision-making tables. The Mockingbird Family Model has demonstrated improved outcomes in permanency, safety and well-being. We will continue to advocate for restructuring the way we delivery foster care.

Given the current economic climate, our advocacy work is critical for vulnerable children, youth and families. This season, as you consider your gifts to community organizations please remember vulnerable families -- our work at Mockingbird on their behalf -- and make a donation to build a world-class foster care system.

May the season bring peace and joy to you and all those you love. Thank you from all of us at The Mockingbird Society.

Jim Theofelis  
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

## RESPITE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The loss of a sufficient number of respite care providers likely will result in the loss of foster parents. And, it will most definitely result in a loss of foster parent time off, which is neither fair to the parent or the child of the parent. Sometimes a good placement can be made better by taking some time off. A lot of people need space and normal breaks like this help develop deeper and stronger relationships.

Respite care is not put in place to say that a foster parent is rejecting a kid, or that they don't like their foster youth. It's supposed to be there for support for everyone involved. Foster parent Eric Kliskey said, "Respite care is a God send!" His wife went on to say, "Sometimes it feels

like the respite care is the make or break for us. It's something that offers us a full night's sleep if we are feeling like we're at the end of our rope." Comments like these help you to understand why respite care is so important in foster care and how much it really means to the parents. For some it is the deciding factor into whether or not they can become foster parents. Right now that deciding factor is limited, and as we know, supply and demand is what controls the market. This is one demand that we need to continue supplying foster parents so their needs can continue to be met and they will be stronger for their foster children and youth.

## Post Traumatic Stress Disorder BY AMANDA BEVINGTON



Post Traumatic Stress disorder not only affects soldiers and victims from war, but it affects families and many young adults that have witnessed or been a victim of abuse. According to the online medical dictionary *medterms.com*, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has common symptoms we can all spot. PTSD develops after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. Family members of victims also can develop the disorder. PTSD can occur in people of any age, including children and adolescents. Medterms said that more than twice as many women as men experience PTSD following exposure to trauma. Depression, alcohol or other substance abuse, or other anxiety disorders frequently co-occur with PTSD. Some of the common symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder include having nightmares or flashbacks, or having quick mental and physical reaction if something reminds the person of the event, avoiding activities, thoughts, feelings or conversations that remind the person of the event, feeling that one can never relax and must be on guard all the time to protect oneself, trouble sleeping, angry outbursts or trouble concentrating, and many more. PTSD can happen at any age. Most symptoms usually begin with in the first three months after the trauma.

**"PTSD can occur in people of any age, including children and adolescents."**

Having PTSD is a real illness and it affects not only the individual, but others that are in your life. Many people have experienced PTSD since they were young. Being exposed to trauma at a young age can make life complicated. Everyday people with PTSD may wonder whether they are safe and often feel like someone is out to get them. One person told me that: "Sometimes, it's hard to do daily activities because I am living with painful guilt. I am often scared to speak what I feel in my heart because of past experiences." There are many questions that come up

for people with PTSD such as: How can I make things okay? How do I teach myself that the trauma was in the past and I am blessed to see another day? Why can't I just let go? I understand to let go of pain you have to forgive yourself first, but how do you forgive yourself if you never seen the joy life brings?

People often say they worry that others will think they are crazy for taking medication or talking with a therapist for PTSD, so they may avoid seeking proper treatment. From my perspective, this is no way to live your life. I don't want to allow those who hurt me to continue to negatively impact the rest of my life. I shouldn't have to be afraid or avoid

certain people, places, and things just because I am reliving frightening experiences. Many people say getting treatment for PTSD is really helpful. It can be a way to gain control and gather up your thoughts and beliefs. Given the growing amount of knowledge and help for those experiencing PTSD, I really encourage people to think about working with a therapist, and, like any challenge, take life one day at a time. I believe life is too short to worry about tomorrow and what it will bring.

Some people try to escape PTSD or other mental health issues by abusing drugs or alcohol, so they can numb the pain. I have learned that doing that will never take the problem away, it often makes it worse. I saw many friends' abuse drugs and alcohol to avoid feelings, and now five years later, they are either locked up or on the streets because they didn't get the right resources for themselves. They never asked for help.

Mental Health disorders such as PTSD are serious, and it's something that does not go away over night, or without help. For more information on mental health or PTSD visit the National Institute of Mental Health Web site at [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov).

## MEET OUR STAFF

**Executive Director** Jim Theofelis; **Deputy Director** Ros Ghan; **Mockingbird Family Programs Director** Dr. Wanda Hackett; **Youth Programs Director** Tiffany Washington; **Public Policy Director** Rose Berg; **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, Giovanni English, Monique Howard; **Contributing Writers & Artists** Abel Alaniz, Olivia Anderson, Brandy Baxley, Abigail Antoinette Brunner, Josey Davis, Deamon, DeMarea Kirk, Sam Martin; **Design & Layout** Highdive.com

## SAFETY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

its, random drug testing, and mental health evaluations for foster parents are items that came up at the 2010 Foster Youth and Leadership Summit. And these items will keep coming up until youth feel safe in care. The State Advisory Council decided to wrap those issues into its 2011 Advocacy Agenda and we will advocate for changes

that help youth feel safe in care, starting with unannounced visits. We will do so in our communities and at the upcoming Youth Advocacy Day in February in hopes of making the system even better than the year before.

<sup>1</sup> [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/data\\_indicators.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/data_indicators.htm)

### Thank You!

Steven Antonoff, Richard and BJ Arnold, Joslin Boroughs, Julio and Bridget Carranza, Foster Parents Association of Washington, The Glaser Foundation, Jillian Gross, Jo Ann Herbert, Sandra Lee, The Lucky Seven Foundation, The Medina Foundation, Cynthia Parsons, Pierce County Alliance, Mary Anne Thorbeck, The Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund, Bob and Jan Whitsitt, Yakima Catholic Families Services.

### 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.

**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.

## Education Versus Raised Taxes BY DAVID BUCK



The election is over and the results are in. Initiative 1098, an initiative that would have ultimately added about two billion dollars towards the education and health care for Washington State's children, lost in the general election with only 34.57 % voting "yes" on Tuesday night November 2nd, 2010.

Initiative 1098 was amongst the most highly debated initiatives on the ballot for the 2010 election for the state of Washington. The argument seems to have been centered on trying to determine whether our children's health and education is more important than our state's current economic status in a time of recession.

Washington State has the most regressive tax system in the nation. According to The Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy, the poorest 20 percent in Washington pay 17.3 percent of their income in state taxes, while the top 1 percent pays 2.9 percent. The state also holds some of the highest sales taxes in the nation. And, while it is widely believed that the State of Washington is required by law to balance its budget, the only legal parameter is that the Governor submits a balanced budget to the Legislature for consideration, so it is really a myth. But the state tries to hold to that benchmark each year, even in times of recession. Because of this the state does one of two things. It either cuts programs, such as cutting the budget for the Department of Education, and the Department of Transportation, or it must raise taxes to fit the bill.

Budgets for programs were cut all around this year in response to the recession and education was one of those programs affected facing more than \$1 billion dollars in cuts. If the initiative had passed not only would the initiative had covered that gap, but it would have added

**"Although the election is over, now I feel it is important to state that if you are to invest in the economy, what better way than to educate children?"**

more money towards education and health care by adding a 1% income tax on people who make \$200,000 or more a year.

The argument against Initiative 1098, according to the Web site [defeat1098.com](http://defeat1098.com), mistrust towards the state government, accusations that there are no limits to who, and how high, the tax can get, and said that the tax would hurt job creation. The argument was spearheaded by many wealthy venture capitalists including Matt McIlwain, partner with the Madrona Venture Group, who said he "was pleased a non-partisan defeat of 1098 prevailed." My response to this argument is that this is not enough to vote "no." Although the election is over, now I feel it is important to state that if you are to invest in the economy, what better way than to educate children?

The graduation rate for all students in Washington State has ranged between 70 and 75 percent. For students in foster care, graduation rates vary between 32 and 44 percent. Although a low number, graduation for foster care youth has increased in the last three years. Although now that is in jeopardy with budget cuts soon to be on the rise. The election is over and there is nothing that can be done as of now. I will end with my final thoughts: Education should be our number one priority as a country. Sooner or later those who we educate now will become the generation in power.

<sup>1</sup> Wsipp study

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Washington\\_Income\\_Tax\\_Initiative\\_1098\\_\(2010\)](http://www.ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Washington_Income_Tax_Initiative_1098_(2010))

<sup>3</sup> [http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/truthneedle/2012944784\\_1098truthneedle20m.html](http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/truthneedle/2012944784_1098truthneedle20m.html)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.techflash.com/seattle/2010/11/income-tax-initiative-1098-goes-down.html>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.seattlepi.com/local/426758\\_fair16.html](http://www.seattlepi.com/local/426758_fair16.html)

<sup>6</sup> [http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/politics/200840910\\_budget08m.html](http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/politics/200840910_budget08m.html)

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.leg.wa.gov/Senate/Committees/VM/Documents/Publications/BudgetGuides/2010/CGTB2010Final\\_3.pdf](http://www.leg.wa.gov/Senate/Committees/VM/Documents/Publications/BudgetGuides/2010/CGTB2010Final_3.pdf)

## INSIDE SCOOP WITH REPRESENTATIVE MARY HELEN ROBERTS

BY MONIQUE HOWARD (REPORTING FROM EVERETT, REGION 3)

Representative Mary Helen Roberts (D-21st District) is a legislative champion for children and families, with a special focus on youth in foster care. Representative Roberts also is a strong woman who seemed clear on what she wants in life and who possesses a true passion for helping others. As a key member of the House Early Learning and Children's Services Committee, she is a champion for welfare reform, and by serving on that committee she has learned a lot about the struggle to be in that system. In her work as a legislator, Rep. Roberts also learned about youth transitioning out of foster care and the challenges they face. She said she was sadly surprised at how many youth become homeless as a result of being kicked out of their homes on their 18th birthday. She also said she felt they didn't get the opportunity to be taught what to do after their 18th birthday. She said, "Even after the age of 18 we all need someone to call for advice or ask a simple question about how to cook or make something."

What surprised me most about Rep. Roberts was how down to earth she is. She has a common sense approach to working with youth and families. When we discussed youth transitioning out of care she said, "It's like pushing someone out of the airplane and saying 'Oh I forgot the parachute.'" She also said the Legislature has started to pay more attention to what youth need to get successfully to adulthood and to create normative experiences.

Rep. Roberts is leading the effort to implement the Fostering Connections to Success Act which will allow youth to opt in to care when they age out. It also will help provide safe housing and transitional services. We talked about programs like Washington State's Foster care to 21 pilot, how other conversations with the states helped pave the way for **Congressman McDermott's** sponsorship of the Federal Fostering Connections Act.



Representative Mary Helen Roberts

Washington State has the opportunity to get federal money to support the foster care to 21 programs extended to more youth. Representative Roberts said, "We started down a path that we will no doubt continue more slowly because of money." There are a couple of things they are looking at in moving forward with Foster Care to 21. An example of this is the court involvement, who monitors youth 18 and over, if they are involved in a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA) which also is a big deal of potential court cost. They will now look at the whole age group of kids with special needs and how to cover them. She is working through all the possible solutions.

She is making sure she does her research as well. She will do college reviews to see what services different schools are offering to youth in care. "Some schools are offering different services for youth in care, such as Seattle University offers Fostering Scholars which offers many resources for transitioning youth."

Rep. Roberts also emphasized how important the work of the youth in The Mockingbird Society is to educating legislators. "If you tell your personal story then it helps legislators understand more. It brings more reality to the conversation." Representative Mary Helen Roberts also reminded me that potential Foster Care to 21 recipients have some leverage because we are voters. At 18 we can register to vote and advocate for what we need. She stressed how important it is to hear from youth.

I am so glad I got the opportunity to interview her. My favorite Representative Roberts' quote: "Information is powerful and the public needs more information."

So let's continue informing others about struggles or how our experience in foster care was, still is, or whatever your situation is, and how we can change it to make it better for future generations.

up for adoption, but separately. That is something that I would also like to change. Many people who run the foster care system don't understand what it's like to be separated from a sibling and not being able to see them for a long time. There is a very strong bond, and when you are forced to break that bond, then it hurts more that most people will ever know.

So now that you know a little more about me, I hope you will continue to support The Mockingbird Society by reading the *Mockingbird Times*, and I hope you will look out for my future articles. I will pour my heart into writing my articles and I hope that you enjoy them. Also, thank you to all of you who already support The Mockingbird Society, because individually we are strong, but together we can make a change. So let's make a change, and create a world class foster care system for all youth involved.



I'm the newest addition to The Mockingbird Network staff. Being the newest recruit, there are many things that people want to know about me, so they can further get to know me as a person. So, in this article, I am going to attempt to answer as many questions, as efficiently as possible, to give you (the public), a better picture of what kind of guy that I am, where I come from, and what I stand for...

So, to begin with, I was thinking I would talk a little bit about where I came from. My full name is Deonate Osha Cruz. I am 18 years young, and I have been in foster care for all of those 18 years. My nationality is a mix of African American, Mexican, and Apache Native. Growing up in the foster care system has been a little rough to say the least. Because my parent's parental rights were terminated at birth, I didn't really have much of a parental figure

in my life. I have been relocated a minimum of at least 30 times, so that being said, I didn't have much room to get attached to anyone or have a parental figure in my life. Don't get me wrong, I have seen blessings in my life, but I have also seen my fair share of hardships as well. I've seen a lot of physical, verbal, and mental abuse. Not until recently, about 4 years ago, did I enter a stable placement that really helped me get a hold on my life.

Family is a very important base of support. If there is one thing I have learned growing up, it's that family is not defined by blood, but by the bonds that tie us together. People at work have been asking a lot, how much family do I have? If I want to go by my earlier statement, then it would take time to explain the amount of family that I have acquired over the years. That being said, I'm only going to keep it to immediate blood relatives. I have four sisters; Tiara Atkins, Quinita Townsand, Veronica

Smith, and Natasha Hull. We have all been in foster care, or kinship care. I also have brother; his name is Tremaine. I am sorry to say that I don't know his last name because I haven't met him personally yet, but he is still in my thoughts.

Another big question that I have been asked a lot is, "What do you want to see changed in your time as a Mockingbird staff"? Well let me say first off, I plan to stay for awhile, so I have plenty of time to make change, but I want to change the fact that a lot of siblings get split up during their time in foster care. One of the hardest things to do is to go through foster care all alone; especially if you know you have siblings that are also in foster care. I know this for a fact, because I was one of those children who were separated from a sibling very early on in my life. It was a very hard thing to deal with. Also when foster youth go up for adoption, many of them have siblings that also go

## Support Youth and Alumni of Foster Care this Holiday Season!



**The Mockingbird Times** is distributed free of charge to people with a passion for improving the lives of children, youth and families. Please consider supporting our youth reporters by including The Mockingbird Society in your giving plans this holiday season!

Donate online:  
[mockingbirdsociety.org](http://mockingbirdsociety.org)  
 By phone: 206.323.5437 (KIDS)  
 By mail: The Mockingbird Society  
 2100 24th Ave S., Suite 240  
 Seattle, WA 98144



**Forbidden Love**

By Abigail Antoinette Brunner

I stare into my bathroom mirror, watching as my eyes shed tears, crying silently so you won't hear. Wondering about the stranger in the mirror. Swollen face, bloody nose, busted lip, knowing that sitting on the couch is who caused all of it.

I stand gazing dizzily in the mirror, wondering why I'm still here. I take blows to the face, hits to the head, wondering why I'm still not dead. Wishing this pain would go away, but until then I pray for another day.

Finally my day came, my most prized day, no more bruises, and no more blood. No more of your forbidden love. Now I stare into my bathroom mirror, a new beginning, a new year. No bruises, no cuts, no busted lips and blood. Because I am no longer addicted to your forbidden love.

**It Pours Down**

By Deamon

It pours down  
I always feel it  
But cannot hear it  
I try to explain it  
But no solving it

Like grace from God.  
But in my life there is no God.

I try to explain it  
Grace like rain  
Pours down on me.

Hallelujah

**Community Events****Region 1 (Spokane)**

**November 26th - January 1st:** Campbell's House Christmas Open House - Museum of Arts and Culture. Enjoy Decorations, cooking classes, live music and activities.

**December 31st:** First Night Spokane - 7pm-12am. Riverfront Park. Bring in the new year with the community!

**Region 2 (Yakima)**

**December 11th:** Santa Trolley - 11am-2pm. Free.

[www.yakimavalleytrolleys.org](http://www.yakimavalleytrolleys.org)

**December 11th-16th:** The Art of Giving - Drop-in holiday art classes (509) 966-0930

**Region 3 (Everett)**

**December 22nd:** An old-time village festival of goodwill and celebration - EPAC, 2710 Wetmore Ave.

Info: <http://www.enjoyEverett.org> or (425) 257-7101.

**Region 4 (Seattle)**

**November 26th-January 2nd:** Zoolights - Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium

**November 26th-December 27th:** Pacific Northwest Ballet's Nutcracker

**Region 5 (Tacoma)**

**December 15th:** Chapter Meeting (Christmas Party) - 3:30-5pm.

**Region 6 (Olympia)**

**Every Wednesday:** Free Youth Medical Clinic - 1-5pm. 2nd Floor of CYS

**December 16th:** Thurston/Mason/Lewis Mockingbird/ILS Holiday Party - 3:30-5:30pm. Rosies Place, 2nd Floor of CYS in Olympia.

**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.

*"Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get."*

~Dale Carnegie

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

This month, Region 1 members, kicked off our chapter meeting with a Mexican fiesta/Halloween party. A lot of new faces showed up, so during our fiesta we spent some time getting to know each other and then we played an icebreaker. There were a grand total of 21 people at the chapter meeting and 12 of them were new, so Sarah introduced Mockingbird to many new faces. She also discussed upcoming events. Serving the homeless (Thanksgiving Kickoff), ice skating, and playing games with the elderly are penned into Regions 1 calendar. Noah and I also spoke at the chapter meeting about the expectations and responsibilities necessary to be a chapter leader because I have decided to step down from the position. We interviewed several youth for the chapter leader position, and Noah and I decided **Kristina Thomason** will represent Region 1 in a wonderful and enthusiastic way.

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

This Month ACT FIRST had an awesome Harvest Party at the Corn Maze in Yakima. It was a lot of fun, we roasted marshmallows and hotdogs. Then some of us went on the hay ride and went through the maze. On November 2nd Brenda and I facilitated the Life Advocacy 101 Training at the Yakima ILS Group. It was successful as we added more people to our group. At our next Chapter meeting we are going to discuss our Advocacy Day agenda. We also will be reviewing what was presented at the S.A.C.

**News From****The Mockingbird Network**

Your Needs, Your Voice

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

This month in Region 4 for Change we have begun to move in a wonderful new direction. This was our second month that we met in our newly established chapter committees. We have begun to divide up responsibilities in the chapter to allow members a greater opportunity to get involved and do something they are passionate and skillful in. This past month we also gave a Culture of Foster Care training at the West Seattle Office of Indian Child Welfare, for 20 MSW Students working in Public Child Welfare services (DCFS). It was delivered by our very own **Christina Koshney, Leon Lewis, and Nicolas Holcombe**. Shout out to them for doing a great job! Also the Resource Specialist **Jerry Bobo** and I delivered a network presentation to the **Foster Parent Association of Washington State (FPAWS)**. Thank you to them for taking the time to listen. Keep on the lookout for fun new activities from a rejuvenated Region 4 for Change.

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

Members of Region 6 are excited to begin a few upcoming community service projects. First we plan on serving meals this holiday season for the homeless of Thurston County. The time and place have yet to be announced. Future projects to be announced. We also have a couple trainings scheduled: "Your Rights, Your Life" & "Life Advocacy" 101 to take place at Haven House on November 16th and December 21st. We also have Mockingbird/ILS winter party taking place on Dec 16th on the 2nd floor of the "CYS" building @ Rosie's Place from 3:30-5:30pm.

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

This month in Region 5, our chapter voted on a new chapter leader, **Janessa Thomas**. Janessa has been active member of our chapter and conducted many training workshops for youth. She is truly a great inspiration and a real leader. Welcome Janessa!

Our November meeting consisted of discussing myths and facts about youth in care. We talked about going against the stereotype and not becoming a part of the negative statistics. We talked about changing the facts and percentages of foster youth. We want to be the change, not the stereotype. In late November, we will have hosted two trainings, Life advocacy and Know Your Rights. We hope to encourage many youth to attend. On November 17th our chapter will have hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for the youth in collaboration with Pierce County Alliance. We will be doing the same thing in December for Christmas. On November 13th all regions will have met in Seattle for our Statewide Advisory Council (SAC) meeting to discuss the legislative agenda and the future of our system.