

Mockingbird Times



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



JANUARY 2004

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak out Across the Nation

VOLUME IV, ISSUE 1

VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.MOCKINGBIRDSOCIETY.ORG

Dirty Dental Deeds

COURTNEY KONIETZKO

IT'S BEEN A LONG ROAD, paved with healthcare mistakes, that I've traveled since I decided to take care of my teeth. I am banned from the dental clinic where I get my medical care for something that happened years ago, when I was an angry adolescent and responded to stress by threatening people. People change. So do dentists. And mistakes follow people, sometimes for a long time.

An earlier article I wrote focused on the budget cuts affecting people on Medicaid ("Budget Cuts Teeth," October 2003). I am one of these people and am angry because I don't have decent dental care. Just because I am poor does not mean that I should receive inadequate work or a rough bedside manner. Yeah, I know that dentists who serve low-income people are often swamped with so many patients that they can't cater to my every whim, but you shouldn't be in healthcare if you have a nasty demeanor under stress. I want a dentist who is competent, whom I can trust, and who treats me with respect.

I have been to four dental providers since I decided to take care of my teeth. I am still searching for another one. The first dentist filled my cavity with a substance that resembled science experiment putty. The filling fell out and I ended up losing the tooth. I didn't go back. The next dentist was horrifying — straight out of *Little Shop of Horrors*. I should have listened to the bells of alarm going off in my head when the patient before

me came out of the dentist office clutching the side of her face mumbling, "she's mean." She was a "drill and bill" — extremely high strung with absolutely no sense of empathy for patients with dental fear. She was running around working on other patients and doing paperwork in between, responding "you be a big girl" when I expressed my dental fear and asked her to move slower around me. I don't need to be patronized. I need a dentist who's sensitive to my needs and is capable of listening. This dental session ended in tears and me

accidentally spitting blood on the floor.

At this point I called a clinic that specialized in treating patients with dental fear and was promptly turned down

How is somebody living below the poverty line supposed to get good dental work and still afford living expenses?

DENTAL CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Alumni Corner



I AM 18 YEARS OLD and have been in and out of foster care and group homes since I was 13 years old.

I had an alcoholic father and mother. My dad used to neglect me when I was very young, because of his girlfriend. He spent most his time at work and with his girlfriend, and when he was at home he was abusive to us kids.

I ran away when I was 13 when my dad broke my ribs because I broke a window in his house. My sister was already on probation, so her probation officer found out about me through the Montana State Department of Housing and Family Services.

I was put through counseling first. I told my counselor about my dad and the night that I was put in a shelter. I was there for more than the expected amount of time (30 days) — I was there

ALUMNI CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Where Are the Youth?

DARIUS REYNOLDS



I FIRST BECAME HOMELESS when I was 17 years old. There were a lot of youth under 18 living on University Ave in Seattle using the shelters. The youth over 18 who were using the shelters had to lie about their age to get in, and the shelters were full almost every night.

Now I hear that all the University District Shelter has changed its age range to 18 to 25 years olds (from 13-20), because hardly any minors were coming. A letter to the community from the University Youth Shelter (now the University Young Adult Shelter) Board of Director's states that only 12 percent of the youth using shelter were 16 to 17 years old and 2 percent were 13 to 15.

Are the youth finding other places to live like "squats" — usually an abandoned building homeless people move into — or are they all going back home? I personally

think it is because of the Becca Bill, a law that states that anyone sheltering youth under 18 must notify the police within 8 hours. A lot of youth leave home because they are being abused and they don't want to go to shelters because they are scared the staff will call the police and report them. So they are forced to find other places to sleep that can be dangerous for them.

A local Seattle study done by Street Children and Teens states that 44 percent of youth leave home for the first time at ages 12 thru 14, and 53 percent leave because of too much conflict and fighting at home. Twenty one percent leave home because of physical abuse., Five percent of the youth who live on the streets get beaten up on a daily basis, and 5 percent get raped monthly or weekly.

So if the youth are not going to shelter, then where are they going? Are they sleeping out in the cold or selling themselves for a place to stay? Unfortunately, I was unable to find a youth

willing to let me interview them, but in next month's issue I hope to have an interview with a youth and a shelter coordinator, so some of the questions I've asked will be answered. Until then, thank you for reading, and if you have some info on the shelters' age change, email me at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org.

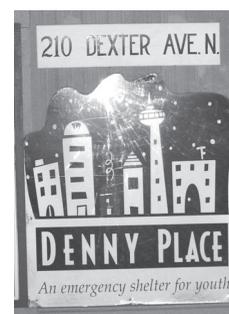


Photo by Darius Reynolds.

We Want to Hear from You!

Dear Readers,

Hi! My name's Courtney Konietzko. I'm the chick who's too shy to take off her sunglasses. I want to know who you guys are (the readers) and what issues are important to you. How old are you? Have you ever been in foster care? What do you want to read about? I want to know who reads *Mockingbird Times*: adults or



kids or both? I want kids to read our paper, especially kids involved in foster care or kids living on the streets. If you have some spare time, please e-mail me at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org or snail mail me at 2100 24th Ave. South, Suite 350 Seattle, WA 98144. I love snail mail!

SINCERELY, COURTNEY

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Founded in Seattle, Washington, 2001	

Letter from the Editor

ON BEHALF OF THE MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY staff and Board of Directors, I extend to each of you a very happy New Year. We at Mockingbird feel very fortunate to welcome the New Year with some amazing organizational developments. The *Mockingbird Times* continues to grow both in circulation and the number of young people interested in participating. Also, The Mockingbird Society begins the New Year in the new **Treehouse** building. We now enjoy twice as much office space in a state-of-the-art building with wonderful neighbors. Also, dare I say, for the first time since starting Mockingbird, I have an office and desk of my own! If you are in the Seattle area, please give us a call and drop by for a visit.

The Mockingbird Foster Family Constellation Project is in full swing and we are working hard with **One Church One Child/UJIMA, University of**



“Be generous! Give to those you love; give to those who love you; give to the fortunate; give to the unfortunate – yes, give especially to those you don’t want to give. You will receive abundance for your giving. The more you give, the more you will have!”

— *W. Clement Stone*

Meet Our Staff

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Washington/ Northwest Institute for Children and Families to make this happen. You may recall that The Mockingbird Society was awarded a federal grant to implement an innovative model that is designed to reduce multiple placements, allow siblings to be together, ensure cultural relevancy, and provide respite care to foster/kinship parents. We have identified some of the family participants and are moving out of the “start-up” phase and into implementation of the model. Lots of work for everyone with lots of promise for kids and families.

Finally, a heartfelt goodbye to one of Mockingbird’s original staff members: Molly Rhodes. Molly has been invaluable to me and the organization, particularly the *Mockingbird Times*. She has been with us from the very beginning, when we were meeting in the basement of another non-profit organization. She possesses too many skills and talents to list, but what sticks out is her expertise in layout and editing combined with her patience and commitment to the young people we serve. Molly has been a true gift to Mockingbird. We will miss Molly and wish her the very best in her new endeavors.

Jim Theofelis

jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Have a Heart for Kids Day

The Children’s Alliance’s annual Advocacy day at the State Capitol, will take place on Tuesday, February 10th in Olympia. Check out their website for more information at www.childrensalliance.org

ABOUT US:

The Mockingbird Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to building a world class foster care system and improving the other systems that serve children and adolescents in foster care. The *Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper that is written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of Mockingbird Society are paid between \$7.50 and \$8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, poetry and are compensated up to \$20 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 28,000 copies being distributed across Washington and the U.S.A. Youth involvement is 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. All 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 2003 The Mockingbird Society.

Letter to the Editor

Dear *Mockingbird Times*,

I read the *Mockingbird Times* insert in *Real Change* and am very impressed by your organization and the quality of the writing and production. You do great work. I recently volunteered to be a 4-H co-leader and my group is recruiting new members. I believe 4-H is a great organization for foster kids and I’d like to make sure everyone knows about it.

Most people think of 4-H as an agricultural organization for farm kids, but nowadays it is so much more. The emphasis is on learning by doing projects involving topics like environmental stewardship, expressive arts (such as drawing and painting), family living (fashion, sewing, and babysitter skills), and applied and mechanical sciences (aerospace and computers).

Social science projects might be especially valuable for foster kids and homeless kids. In the citizenship project you can learn how local, state, and federal governments work, so you can get more involved and make sure your representatives know about your needs. And you can learn how to participate in community organizations and activities. The teamwork project helps you learn to work in a group and the conflict resolution project helps you learn to respect different point of view. The health project includes stress management, dating and teen pregnancy, and health career opportunities.

The traditional animal and plant science projects are still part of 4-H, but now animal projects include dogs, cats, cavies (guinea pigs), and small animals. Plant science projects include container gardening and houseplants along with vegetable and ornamental gardening. There’s even a landscape management project where you can learn how to earn money with your landscaping skills. My club, Gatewood Explorers, meets in West Seattle. Our group currently has poultry, computer, and rocketry

LETTERS CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

A Mockingbird Inside Your Mailbox: Make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable youth.

I want to support The Mockingbird Society

All donations are tax deductible and all donors receive the *Mockingbird Times*. Enclosed, please find my check made payable to Mockingbird Society in the amount of: \$ _____

Donor Information:

- # of copies per month: Annual Price:
- 50-120 **\$200**
- 15-45 **\$150**
- 5-10 **\$100**
- 1 **\$50**

Enclosed in my additional gift of \$ _____

Please bill me for the amount indicated above.

My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.

I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.

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Day Phone () _____ - _____ Evening Phone () _____ - _____

Email Address _____

Yes, you may use my name on published donor lists.

Please fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to:

The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave. South, Suite 350 Seattle, WA 98144

★ Positive Power: Going Back to School Again?

BRIDGETT SIROSHTON



WHEN PEOPLE LEAVE HIGH SCHOOL, there are two options. They either never want to go to school ever again, or they like school and want to go back to get a degree or just to learn more in general.

It's been four years since I was in school and I didn't really have the best experience. Kids are mean, and I guess I was just afraid of history repeating itself. I've been wondering for a long time if school is right for me. I recently decided I would try something like photography or beauty/hair school. I have always liked styling and coloring my own hair, or even doing someone else's hair coloring. But cosmetology school is a year-long commitment, and I think it is too soon for me to take that long of a program.



Graphic from Photo Illustration.

Part of me is very anxious and the other is exhilarated about going back to school. When people decide to go back they might have their parents' support, but for many of us we have to sign up for grants, scholarships, and even loans. I recently found out that financial aid does not cover your dreams if you're not taking credit classes.

However there are places and organizations that can help. In the Seattle area there is a non-profit organization called Seattle Education Access or S.E.A. for people aged 13-30. Their services are for people who don't get support from their families. If you feel you are ready for school, I suggest going to S.E.A. They help you find the right school. For more information contact Polly Trout at www.seattleeducationaccess.org or 206-683-5536. Or you can snail mail her at S.E.A., Polly Trout, 4740 B University Way N.E., Seattle, WA, 98105.

Anxiety is normal, especially if you think that history will repeat itself, or when you don't know what to expect from your own life. Just have faith and keep pushing on and do what your dreams tell you to do. 🐦

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

projects. I'm interested in family living, rabbits, gardening, leadership and citizenship, and environment. But I'm willing to help kids pursue their passions.

The group is all boys, 6-11, and I would love to recruit some girls. If you're interested, please contact me at 206-767-7334 or ormac@eskimo.com. If you don't live in West Seattle, there's sure to be a club in your area. In King County, you can contact Carey Roos at 206-205-3152 (tty 711) or Carey.Roos@metrokc.gov. You can find a listing of programs in other Washington state counties at <http://4h.wsu.edu/staffdir/agents.html>. You can find programs in the rest of the United States (including territories) at http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/4h_map.htm.

Kids ages 8-18 are eligible and some places have programs for kids as young as five. 4-H can give foster kids and homeless kids an instant network of kids and adults with common interests, lots of hands-on learning opportunities in just about any area a kid might be interested in, and a chance for lots of positive recognition for accomplishments. It's open to everyone without regard to race, religion, ethnic background, economic status, or disability. I hope your readers consider it.

YOURS TRULY,
MELINDA A. MCBRIDE

Dear Mockingbird,

Thank you for all that you do. Jim Theofelis is an inspiration as is the work of the Society. I am now working in New Jersey and have been made more and more aware of how important Mockingbird is due to light being shed on the New Jersey system.

THANK YOU!
KRISTA GOODMAN

ALUMNI CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

for about 6 months.

I was placed in a group home in Montana. I was there for more than a year. They treated me pretty well. But no matter how often the staff tried to contact my dad he [occasionally] came or just forgot. After my graduation (which they never told me about because they thought I might ruin it) I was put into foster care.

My first foster parents were very young and did not know how to raise a teenage girl with emotional problems. They tried really hard though. I had to leave because they had an "add-on" to the family, and [the mom] had to be put on maternity leave.

My second foster home (which was just respite) was with an old lady who did not really care that much for kids but just for the money. I was taken out of there because she bought me cigarettes.

My third foster home was a blast. The mom was very nice. The dad traveled for work so he was never there but she was cool and I came to love her as a parent. I was taken out of there because she moved to another city. My case worker really wanted me to go with her but my P.O. was a control freak and made me go to a different home. I cried for days.

[When I was 18] I moved in with my mom. She really cleaned up her act and is a really good mom to all us kids.

I have learned from my past and I am now getting my G.E.D. By next fall I will be going to college. Thanks for listening to my life story.

SINCERELY BRIANNA LUCAS

How to Turn Drab Eyes into Fab Eyes

BRIDGETT SIROSHTON

WHETHER YOU'RE A PLAIN JANE or a dramatic Donatella Versace eye catcher, every girl needs help with their eye make-up. I am here to help you to not look like you applied your make-up in the car or had a tragic event with your eyeliner on the bus.



Today we are going to start a lesson on applying stick eyeliner. For those special occasions or everyday wear, stick eyeliner is good because you don't need to get it perfect. You can just brush it off with a cotton swab and a dab of lotion. For thick and thin, 'til eyeliner do us part (whether you like thick or thin lines), I'll show you the basics. You can use the information to help

better your eyelids.

Step 1: Pull eyelid horizontal and use eye pencil, (I recommend Almay pencils or Revlon click-on's).

Step 2: Apply thin or thick line starting from outer top eyelid to inner like a straight line. You can also put eye-liner on the bottom lid.



Step 2



Step 1

Step 3: In case you got way too much on and need to fix it, get a cotton swab, put a dot of lotion on it and take the excess off. 🐦

DENTAL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

because of lack of "normal" insurance, too many people on the waiting list, and I think because of what happened years ago at the first dental clinic I went to. I was getting pretty exasperated at this point and picked up a phone book and started randomly dialing numbers until I found somebody who accepted Medicaid. It's amazing how many dentists do not accept Medicaid, and it's incredible how expensive dental work is!



Don't let your teeth end up looking like this!

bedside manner and even made jokes. Little did I know I would wind up crying not laughing. He cut me with the drill twice and his fillings have noticeable lines where the composite material meets the tooth. He told me this was some type of "dental leak" that was easily fixed, though he denied working on the tooth he filled when I asked him about the lines. He offered to fix the line so I let him.

I thought everything was peachy until I came home and looked in the mirror. That !!*##! I screamed. I never should have

This third dental provider seemed nice. He had a good **DENTAL CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

Read more stories from foster care alumni online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

Eye-Popping City

COURTNEY KONIETZKO

THIS MOVIE IS ONE OF THE MORE BIZARRE films I've seen. I came upon it at the age of 20 after complaining to a room full of people, "I want to watch a film that will make me cry." *The City of Lost Children* didn't make me cry but it did make me clench the hand of the person next to me when I watched it for the first time. *City* is a fairy tale full of wonder and awe. The landscape the film is set in is a strange metal structure (I think it's some sort of giant boat) in the middle of the ocean. It's a big structure, big enough to be a city and close enough to reality to make you think it's really somewhere in the world.

City is a French film directed by Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre Jeunet. It is the story of a dysfunctional family created by a mad inventor. The family consists of Krank, a "man" who cannot dream or feel pleasure so he kidnaps children to steal their dreams, a brain that lives in a glass tank that is sort of a philosopher and gets migraines, Krank's four brothers who look exactly alike and are all trying to figure out which one of them is the original, and a midget mother. The other main characters are One, the circus strong man, who goes on a quest with one of the stolen children Miet, to get his brother back from Krank; the creepy Siamese sisters who "teach" the children and sell the children; the mad inventor who has forgotten everything and lives in a humble abode under the sea that resembles an antique store; many stolen children; and a flea that makes people he injects violent.



There's even a couple of (insane) Christmas scenes which make this movie a suitable holiday pick for this time of year.

I would definitely classify *City* as an art film. One that doesn't leave you bitter like David Lynch can. Don't get me wrong. I adore David Lynch films. You might enjoy *City* if you have a taste for Lynch, darkness, surreal art, science fiction, creepy holiday movies (think Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas*), or fantasy. According to *reel.com*, *City* has been classified as action, cult, drama, and sci-fi/fantasy. I guess it is all those things rolled into one. What more could you ask for? It is rated R because of some violence and creepiness, but I think it's safe for ages 12 and over.

City has amazing visuals. You may not understand it fully the first time. I didn't, but it's worth watching more than once because of the interesting special effects and beauty of the film. There are some pretty cool shots of a full moon over the city, a mysterious nuclear green smoke of dreams, and the view of the city through the mechanical eye, a device worn by "privileged" ones who can "see." It is a story of sadness, friendship, and power, with madness ever present in some form or another. Parts of it will make you laugh. I don't think it will make you cry. *City* uses more special effects than any other French film in history.

I thoroughly enjoyed getting to see this movie in the theatre because I was able to understand the plot a lot better. I recommend *City* for those looking for something different.... This film is dreamlike... and not for the weak of heart.

P.S. Bjork's *Dancer In The Dark* did make me cry... twice. 🐦

DENTAL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

let him touch my teeth. He had drilled on the wrong tooth, chipping away at my enamel, creating a noticeable discolored appearance when he never should have touched it. He also "fixed" the right tooth that had the line but the fake tooth material somehow wound up bonded in the wrong place — to my gums. I will never go back there again. I think he should have told me he drilled the wrong tooth and did what he could to make it better rather than hoping I wouldn't notice. I should have gone with my gut instinct, which screamed uneasiness around this dentist, despite his "nice" bedside manner.

The fourth dental provider was a good dentist. I felt really safe and confident in his ability to do a good job, but I couldn't afford his prices. He did some pro bono work for me but it was limited to looking at the health of my gums. If I wanted any fillings done I would have to come up with the money. It's true money does buy you better things. My significant other had three teeth pulled by this dentist and didn't feel any pain at all, but it also cost him a pretty penny — \$1,000. Ouch! How is somebody living below the poverty line supposed to be able to come up with large amounts of money for good dental work and still afford living expenses? Beats me.

I really wish healthcare was equally accessible for everybody because everybody deserves to have a sound mind, body, and soul, regardless of money. It makes me sick how expensive it is for things people need like prescription medications, dental care, medical care, mental health counseling, drug and alcohol counseling, and healthy food. If you have money, you're probably going to have a better quality of life — that's just the way it is. But meanwhile there should be some good people out there working in the healthcare industry who treat people equally regardless of income.

It's hard to remain optimistic in the face of so many inadequate dental providers. My fear has doubled. I never used to wonder about the quality of filling materials until I lost one of my permanent teeth. I never used to be scared of the drill until I was cut and now I'm afraid of dentists who cut corners to save money and dentists who don't tell me the truth.

My New Year's Resolution? To take care of my health — physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I hope by New Year's I have found a good dentist! 🐦

Mockingbird Bids Goodbye to One of Its Own

"Goodbyes are forever. 'See you later's' are not. Never say goodbye to somebody unless they're dead because the body is gone forever. Molly on the journey to personal fulfillment physically leaves us, but she will live on in e-mail, her monthly subscription to Mockingbird Times, letters, and telepathy. I wish her happiness, serenity, and the 'good' silly things in life."

— COURTNEY KONIETZKO

DENNIS FISHER



WHEN YOU SHOW UP TO WORK and see Molly sitting by the door, you know you'll be facing the Evil Red Pen. Molly is Mockingbird's Technical Advisor; she does the layout of the paper, and provides proofreading and general editing assistance to us reporters. Unfortunately for us, this will be the last issue of the paper where we have Molly's contribution to the paper. Molly has been with Mockingbird since the first issue of the *Times*. She's always done the layout for the paper, and was also a Staff Advisor at the beginning, where she could be more stealthy with the red pen and mark

things up gradually as they were written. Now, she only comes in a few times a month and goes crazy with the red pen, marking things up all in one sitting. While that could be overwhelming to have everything marked up all at once, it's never like that with Molly. She's always calm and gentle explaining the chaotic sea of red that she'd turned your paper into, never making the errors seem like they were all because you didn't know how to write well enough. In fact, it feels like just the opposite—it feels like she's always saying things like "this is really great, but if you rearrange it like this,

Goodbye Molly hopes to see you again.
Goodbye Molly I will miss your red pen.
Goodbye Molly I wish you all the luck in the world.
Goodbye Molly I hope I didn't misspell any words.
Goodbye Molly, oh man I think I'm gonna cry, so
goodbye Molly
Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye.
— DARIUS REYNOLDS

it would be even better." Wherever Molly goes, and whatever she does, Mockingbird wishes Molly the best of success. 🐦

Poetry Corner

Life is insane twisted and flipping it's like a holocaust in my brain. The pain from defeat knocking me off my feet sending me to my knees crawling and beggin please lord give me some direction send me a blessing cus right now I'm living in agony the feelings I feel can't be explained they're sending me to an early grave. This life is a play and I'm just a puppet on a string being thrown into everything but I got to keep my head up and do what I got to do wake up every morning and see that the sky is blue, the sun is shining and be thankful that I have another day to fight through.

THE LYRICAL POET