

Mockingbird Times



Recipient of 2005 Congressional Angels in Adoption Award
Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth.

January 2008

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation

Volume IX, Issue 1

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-KIDS (5437)

In This Issue

Letter from the Editor

Jim Theofelis
Page 2

Drowning

Anonymous
Page 2

Southern Strategy

Samuel Martin
Page 2

My Senior Year, Pt. 4

Samuel Martin
Page 3

When Leaving is All You Know

Anonymous
Page 3

Photo Gallery:

Holiday Parties
Page 3

Creative Corner:

Untitled

Whitney Allen
Page 4

Creative Corner:

Thawed

Vanessa Hutt
Page 4

Creative Corner: What Happens Now

Emma Cummings
Page 4

Creative Corner: Fruit of Temptation

Emma Cummings
Page 4

Back To Reality

Vanessa Hutt
Page 4



Staying on Top of New Years Resolutions

BY ANDREA ROLDAN

At the beginning of the year, we reflect on the past year and create New Year's Resolutions. The transition from one year to the next is a good time to reflect in general and especially when creating our resolutions. The New-Year attitude flourishes. What's the New Year attitude? Think: new, better, now. Naturally, we analyze; our good and bad habits, interpersonal experiences with friends, family and lovers, our achievements, our goals and the growth we want to see in ourselves in different arenas of life. After watching the "Best and Worst of 2007" on E[®], VH1[®], or whatever your favorite media channel is, it's time to figure out what your resolutions are for 2008.

There are many purposes of a New Year's resolution: to improve our existing habits, create new habits, and ultimately practice becoming the person that we want to see ourselves be. Some of the most common resolutions are centered on our health and physical appearance. Dieting or improving eating habits is popular, as are exercise and quitting smoking. Time management and prioritizing is also common such as getting to sleep at an earlier hour, getting to work on time, cutting back on video games or the Internet or spending more time doing an activity such as reading. There is no limit on our choice of resolutions which are essentially goals that we choose for ourselves to improve our lives. The challenge is keeping the New Year attitude all year and following through.

Sometimes we fall into the resolution mistakes that lead to failing in achieving our goals. One mistake I like to call "friendly failure" is pursuing the same resolution with a friend. We know that beating a habit and creating a new one takes motivation and determination. So we think that battling the habit with a friend will get us farther than by our-

selves because it can be more fun with someone and they can motivate you. This happens often with exercise: if you're someone who isn't particularly enthused about starting your workout plan, you find a friend who feels the same way and you both decide that you will do it together by motivating each other. It can be a good thing but also can be detrimental to your goal. Fun can often times turn into too much fun and become a distraction. If you lose motivation and your friend has also, you may discontinue pursuing the goal because the motivation you counted on is gone. Also, you and your friend may not necessarily have the same physical fitness goals. Friends and resolutions can become a mistake. Also, not considering resolution solutions before you begin and during your pursuit of accomplishing your goal can be a mistake.

When thinking about what your resolutions should be, think about it like you would a goal because that's what resolutions are – personal goals of self achievement. The basics are to be realistic and specific. A goal should not be too broad because then the outcome is harder to determine. Be independent with your resolution. This is your resolution, your pursuit of growth; don't depend on others to keep you focused on your goal. Correct yourself when you don't stick to your plan because that isn't someone else's responsibility. Personalize your goals: If time management is your goal, what activity do you need to cut back on? Which activities do you need to put more time into? What are your new priorities and how important is each to you? Don't compare your resolutions to those of other people. Analyze your adjustments: If you find yourself saying "I've worked out all week, I can take a few days off and then

I'll start again," ask yourself, will you really get back to it or are you letting yourself bow out? Do not be afraid to discipline yourself. You will achieve more by correcting yourself rather than by letting yourself fall out of the habit. After you fall out of the habit, it's hard to get back into it; you don't want to have to have the same resolution next year. Growth progression should be year after year.

When we progress in our goals, it is mandatory to treat ourselves; this keeps our momentum up and working toward the incentive. Your reward should not reverse your progress, though. If you're dieting and exercising, a reward shouldn't be cake. A reward should be balanced and unconnected to your you used to do. It can be related to your achievement, though. Try a new pair of pants that fit your new shape. Go out to the movie theatre for the full experience instead of renting and watching a movie at home. Create a balance in your rewards: an incentive is a treat and it continues to motivate you but it shouldn't be detrimental to your success.

When we progress in our goals, it is mandatory to treat ourselves.

Lastly, keep in mind that the point of your New Year's resolution is to improve your life and yourself. Don't choose a goal you're not fond of just because others think you should. If you and your doctor think you're a healthy weight for your body, don't go on a diet just because magazines are full of stick-thin celebrities and your Aunt Agatha called you "plump." You will only make yourself miserable. Use the New Year as an opportunity for growth and positive change. Make it a truly happy one by being yourself and focusing on the positive. The only one who can control you is you. Use that to be the best you can be.



Using Your Resources

by Leona Bill

When I turned eighteen, I aged out of foster care. One of the only reasons that I actually survived out here on these streets is because of the resources that are available to me, like **Youth Care**. Youth Care has a number of programs, most of which were very helpful to me. Any resource that is a part of Youth Care is a non-profit organization such as **Orion Center**, which is a drop-in center for homeless youth. They supply needs like clothing, food, bus tickets, and case management. They also allow youth to access their mail at the drop in address. They have an interagency school and a job training program which is called "The Tile Project." Both of these are in the same building as the Orion Center.

Orion Center also has what they call an outreach team that goes out to the streets three nights a week handing out basic needs like socks, gloves, blankets, food, hygiene products, dog food, etc. But, when the van goes out, they have to limit what they hand out because they are a non-profit and they can only provide what has been donated to them. The donations are a big help, especially when the youth or even adults on the street need food such as a nice hot cup of soup or some hot cocoa.

Youth Care also has independent living homes for youth ages eighteen to twenty-two. I have aged out of these programs but I won't age out of the Orion Center completely until my next birthday. For now, I'm allowed there for case management, clothing and hygiene. I'm only allowed to get dinner there once a week.

A few other major non-profit organizations that have helped me are **University Presbyterian Church**, located about a block away from the University of Washington; **New Horizons Ministries**, another nonprofit located in downtown Seattle; and **Seattle Youth Ministries (SYM)** also located in the University District. SYM also offers stuff like case management, socks, sweaters, bus tickets, etc. I'm also thankful for **University District Youth Center (UDYC)**, another drop-in center which is not part of Youth Care. This is another place that has helped me out both while I was in foster care and after I aged out. I was attending the school there for a little bit but then I allowed myself to be distracted by the street life and just ended up quitting school altogether.

Even though I knew of these resources, I didn't use them as much as I could. When I did use the resources available to me it helped out a lot. Now that I'm twenty-two going on

twenty-three, which is the age limit for most of the drop-in centers, I realize that I haven't used these resources to my advantage, like, for example, finishing high school. There are many times where I look back and wished that I had not fooled around as much as I did so that I could have used my resources while they were available. This would have made things a bit easier for me and might have kept me out of trouble.

In other words, I'm ashamed because I allowed myself to get side tracked and ignored the important things I should have paid attention to. I am also a little on the down side because if I had not allowed myself to get side tracked I could be further along on the goals and dreams that I have set for myself. I also wouldn't have gone to jail and would still have a clean record. But even though I'm still a little behind, I still take pride in the things I've completed and the experiences that I have had.

So, as long as I can, I will use the resources that are available to me. I'm thankful that I have not fully aged out of some of the programs because they still are of help to me today. When I was younger, I didn't want to accept help. I wish I would have accepted it because it would have made things a lot easier for me today.



Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS

Happy 2008! I often remind the youth and staff at The Mockingbird Society that we are a mission-driven organization determined to build a world class foster care system for our most vulnerable children, youth and families through collaboration, innovation and advocacy. We do this not only for those children "in the system" today but also for that five-year-old child that doesn't yet know she will be in foster care. The Mockingbird Society is positioned and ready to take great strides in 2008 as both of our programs are set for major statewide expansion.

The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) continues to earn regional and national focus with multiple jurisdictions and organizations set for replication in 2008. We have continually received positive evaluations as well as very positive feedback from the foster parents, biological parents and kids themselves regarding the efficacy of the MFM. Perhaps most exciting about the MFM are the opportunities to test pilot it with biological families as well as unlicensed kinship care. We are committed to building a world class system for those kids and families in "the system" and we are committed to creating effective models

that keep families together and reduce the number of kids who enter foster care.

The Mockingbird Society is also very excited about expanding our **Youth LEAD (Leadership, Education/Employment and Advocacy Development)** program. We have received a major grant to develop a statewide coordinated network of foster youth who will receive training, support, and technical assistance in order to build their local Chapter. Each local Chapter (we anticipate between 9 and 15 across Washington) will have representation on the State Advisory Council that will determine the state agenda. The local Chapters and the State Advisory Council will be "youth driven." We are naming this program **The Mockingbird Network** and we will be releasing more information soon about this remarkable opportunity for youth in foster care. We welcome 2008 and look forward to the progress we can make together on behalf of the kids and families we serve. I want to wish each of you the hope and blessings that come with a new start and a New Year! Let's go to work!

 Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

DROWNING BY ANONYMOUS

I lost myself to a drug when I was nineteen. I began using every day, only occasionally spending a day or two clean. I intended, every time I stopped, to quit using altogether. But, I would find myself making excuses for why 'this time' would not turn out like 'last time' or how I would only do it once more. Eventually, everything I needed to do in life, from getting a job to eating, became something that only mattered to me deep, deep down below the surface; below my 'priorities' of which there really was only one: the drug. I was a very unhappy person but I could not even cry because I was so empty. I avoided my friends and could not express anything to my fiancé but my desire for more of the substance. I could not feel. I was a vague impression of who I used to be.

One night, after we ran out of the drug, I broke down. Something in me finally seriously spoke for the first time in a year. I looked at my fiancé and told him I missed him. I began to cry. I told him I needed to see him and hear him talk about all of the

incredible mind-opening, soul-moving things he used to talk about. He started to cry and told me how much he missed me and needed my love again.

We were done. We messed up a couple of times a long while after that decisive moment, but we are done. We've healed and fallen back in love. We've learned how it feels to be happy again and finally started eating right.

I think of that time now and realize how close I was to wasting away physically and emotionally and to losing him completely, how close I was to drowning.

Submitting Letters

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



Southern Strategy BY SAMUEL MARTIN

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

This quote is from our Declaration of Independence, what our forefathers fought so hard for. In 1776, the United States of America established itself as a nation. We fought a war for our independence and we set up a federal government. Everything was great for this young country known as the land of the free. But slavery and racism ran deep through our land. After 100 years of slavery, we African Americans finally got our independence in what is known as the Emancipation Proclamation. The world became a completely different place. African Americans began to vote, run for office, and live as free people.

This all ended in the Compromise of 1877 which removed troops from southern states, and left blacks all alone to defend themselves.¹ During this time, politics were quite different. It was the Republican Party that ended slavery and actually gave African Americans rights and equality. The Democratic Party at that time was focused on issues affecting whites, not social justice issues.² Sometime in the 1930's, during the Great Depression, this changed. Republican candidates became substantially more conservative than before in order to get more southern votes which are very important in elections. In turn, the Democratic Party, which already had southern states, began to care more about equal rights.³

Shortly after the first signs of this switch, a Democrat by the name of Strom Thurmond split away from his party because of an anti-segregation speech. He created his own party called the States Right Democrat or the Dixiecrat Party. Soon after that party proved to be unsuccessful, he switched to the Republican Party.⁴

The southern strategy means essentially playing toward the south. For example, Ronald Reagan said that he would give the states more power to run their own affairs. A lot of southern states still feel like the national government has too much power. Something that was very shocking to me was in the 2004 run for the nomination for the Republican Party, George Bush claimed that his opponent, John McCain, fathered

"an illegitimate black child."⁵ This was all to get more votes in the South. This shows that there is still an extraordinary amount of racism in those who are supposed to be leaders of our country. Using someone's child as a reason for not voting for them, regardless of their stance on real issues in the world, is immature. It tells me that people still live in the past. You cannot lead a racially diverse nation when you complain about the ethnicity of another man's child. If you can't accept that, than you, more than likely, can't accept this nation as it is with its great diversity.

When I found out about this, it opened my eyes to another level of racism. In the movie "The Pursuit of Happiness," Will Smith asked how Thomas Jefferson knew that happiness would be a pursuit, that it would not be guaranteed. People have to work for what they want, but what if the people who are trying to get what they want are oppressed? I am not only talking about Blacks, I am talking about all people of color. We are always discriminated against. How do you succeed in a society that constantly looks at you as someone who is prone to failure and is naturally going to be a problem?

I think that the world should think a little bit more about why they choose a leader of this nation. Is it truly because they are great or is it these little subliminal signs that nobody really notices? I strongly urge people to understand and get involved in the world around them because it will affect you, your children, and your grandchildren. You deserve better, but you will only get what you give.

¹ www.u-s-history.com/pages/h396.html

² en.wikipedia.org

⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_strategy

⁵ www.salon.com/politics/war_room/2004/07/06/mccain/

MEET OUR STAFF

Executive Director

Jim Theofelis

Operations Manager

Ros Ghan

Public Relations/Fund Development

Darcie Gray

Executive Assistant

Lauren Frederick

Programs Manager

Dr. Wanda Hackett

Youth LEAD Coordinator

Najja Morris

Mockingbird Family Model Coordinator

Marie Goines

Administrative Assistant

Juan Ramirez

Senior Youth Representative

Samuel Martin,

Andrea Roldan

Youth Representatives

Leona Bill,

Jessica Garcia,

Vanessa Hutt,

Kenneth Larson-Rettinger,

Melissa Stringer

Contributing Writers

Whitney Allen, Anonymous,

Emma Cummings

Volunteers

Chrissie Jackson

Layout

Kelly Hawkins

Become a Member of The Mockingbird Society

We welcome you to join us in making a difference in the lives of our nation's most vulnerable children, youth, and families. As a supporter, you'll receive a monthly edition of the *Mockingbird Times*. Thank you for your contribution.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITYSTATEZIP _____

PHONEE-MAIL _____

Enclosed, please find my check made payable to **The Mockingbird Society** in the amount of (please note amount on appropriate line):

\$1,000 +	Protector	\$
\$500 - \$900	Champion	\$
\$250 - \$500	Advocate	\$
\$50 - \$250	Supporter	\$
\$25	Contributor	\$

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

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

Please do not include my name on published donor lists.

Please mail this completed form and your check to: The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South, Suite 240, Seattle, WA 98144. For questions or more information, call (206) 323-KIDS (5437) or visit www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

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 50,000 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 ©2008, *The Mockingbird Society*.



My Senior Year, Pt. 4 BY SAMUEL MARTIN

I would just like to, once again, wish you a Happy New Year. A new year is a time for new beginnings. That is my favorite thing about it. There is a chance to make goals and try to accomplish them. The sad part about it is this new motivation found across the country only lasts for a short time. My hope is to try to stay motivated throughout the entire year.

This year is especially important for me because some big things are going to be happening this year for me. I have my first prom, which is one of the sentimental things I want to hold on to forever. I also have my high-school graduation, which is already exciting me because I can see 12 years of work coming in clear. Also, I am looking forward to the opportunity to play college football and to college life in general, not to mention adulthood. This is the beginning of the rest of my life, and, quite frankly, it's scary. At the same time, I feel like I'm ready. This past month has been different. It started out pretty roughly but it has really gotten better since. The fire that I continue to reference hasn't gone out. Someone once gave me the metaphor that I should keep throwing a log in the fire every once in a while in order to keep the fire going.

This past month I have struggled with a lot of different things, as most of you know, primarily motivation. Luckily, I have found someone who can really coach me and help me deal with a lot of the issues I am going through. He is one of the

mentors from the mentoring program I am in called Community for Youth. His name is **Dan Pronovost**. I feel it is necessary to mention him because he has been helping me with college applications and life. It really means a lot to me because he has given me so many tips and pointers on how to deal with what I am going through. It is not often that you find people who understand you like that. I have other mentors who give that type of commitment in other specific areas but he is really what has gotten me through these past few months.

In the last talk we had, we came down to two conclusions: One is that I am dealing with some stuff from my past which is like a big puzzle and I don't have all the pieces to it. Once I have figured that out I will be able to deal with myself completely. The other thing is that I am inhibiting myself by fear. We compared it to being so afraid of drowning that I never go swimming. The problem is my fear of drowning is eventually going to cause me to drown anyway. So we came to the conclusion that I would start by just putting my feet in the water. I'm going to take it slow because I am not ready to just jump in the pool.

Along with my hardships have come positives. I have had several great things happen to me in the past month. I have had several offers to play college football, which is one of the greatest things that could happen! I really love that sport and the opportunity to play in college is an honor. It shows that there is potential in me. Still, at this point, I am so young that the sky is the limit for me.

When Leaving is All You Know BY ANONYMOUS

I remember the first time the urge to leave hit me. I stood staring at the gaping hole in the bathroom wall, left by my enraged uncle upon opening the door to find my mother on the edge of her third unsuccessful suicide attempt. I was paralyzed by the desire to be anywhere but there. I kicked the vomit stained, plaster dusted rug that masked the spot where my mom's near lifeless body had lain moments before and contemplated what a seven-year-old should take on a journey away from there. Decision made, I wrapped yogurt, apples and a can of soup in a bandana, attached it to a stick and ran as fast as I could into the woods behind our apartment.

I sat crying in the woods for what seemed like hours to my young mind, and waited. I sat wondering why my mom wanted to leave me and my brother. I wondered what I could do to make her want to stay. I imagined my family being a family whose home wasn't filled with violence, anger and hours spent on the porch waiting for the door to be unlocked when "mom felt better." I recalled the now-too-familiar blare of ambulance sirens approaching our house, the crowd of curious neighbors lining the street outside and the sour smell of lingering vomit. I imagined what it would be like to have another mother, one that wasn't "crazy."

I imagined not being afraid that my mom would die or "go to the nut-hut," the term my uncle now used to describe the place that my mom went when she tried to "leave," the euphemism that my family collectively used to describe my mom's repeated suicide attempts. I imagined being picked up by the same woman that took my baby sister away and shuttled off to the "better place" for a "better life" that my mom assured us she would have. I didn't realize it then, but the place I imagined was foster care and a child welfare system that would protect me while finding me a mom who would stay.

Eventually, my mom returned, begged me out of the woods and convinced me that she would never "leave" again. Although I couldn't understand wanting to die, I understood wanting to leave. I understood immediately that leaving meant getting away from my fears, unbearable challenges and rejection. I was running from the domestic violence in my home, my mom's frequent rages and the CPS workers that, as my mom reminded us daily, were waiting to collect us if we weren't good. I learned that living meant running inside my head and away from friends, family and supportive adults. I learned to run from the impending sexual, emotional and substance abuse that would characterize the remainder of my childhood.

**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.

JOIN THE MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY AND ASK-Y (ADVOCATES for SYSTEM KIDS and YOUTH) FOR HOMELESS/FOSTER YOUTH ADVOCACY TRAINING AND LEGISLATIVE DAY 2008

Training Day:

Wednesday, February 6th, 3-5:30 PM
2100 24th Ave South (Treehouse Building)

Homeless/Foster-Youth Legislative Day:

Friday, February 8th
Washington State Capitol Campus, Olympia WA

You may join us for one or both activities. You don't have to attend Training Day in order to attend Legislative Day.

Both events are free and open to all. Food will be provided.

Transportation to Olympia can be arranged ahead of time or at Training Day.

For more information, please contact Najja or Lauren at 206-323-5473.

THANK YOU!

KEITH AND KIMBERLEE ADAMS; THE ALFRED AND TILLIE SHEMANSKI TESTAMENTARY TRUST AND FOUNDATION; ANONYMOUS; LINDA AND STEVEN ARAI; BABY & CO.; TOM AND LINDA BAKER FOR INNERSOURCE CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUST; SAMUEL BELL AND BELINDA BUTLER-BELL; KERRI BRADFORD; JULIE BRAYBROOKS AND GREGORY SIMON; SUSAN CONNOLLY; KAREN COWGILL; DIANE COYNE FOR PICKET FENCE REAL ESTATE; BRUCE CROSS; BEVERLY CUEVAS AND TOM GILL; FRANCES DEMARCO; ANTHONY AND ANN DEROCO; ANNE FORTUN; APEX FOUNDATION; ANDREA FULLERTON AND CLARA GRAHAM; KRISTA GOODMAN; AUDREY HANSEN; JAMIE HILLS; HOLY NAMES SOCCER TEAM 2007; CHARLES HUFFINE, MD; WINKY HUSSEY; BIJI KEIGLEY; JOANNE KIPP ON BEHALF OF JOHN GRAHAM; SANDRA KRAUS; RON AND LAUREN MAIER; WENDY MARLOWE, PH.D.; MARK MARSHALL; HARVEY AND HISAKO NAKAYA; CHARLES NORDHOFF; MICHAEL OLIVER AND JANET OSBORN; PETER AND PATTY PECORA; PENGUIN WINDOWS; STELLA L. PITTS; LISA REVELLE; LANCE AND LUCINDA RICHMOND; SUZANNE SHAWGER IN MEMORY OF DOROTHY TAYLOR AND ON BEHALF OF RACHEL E. ROSE JULIE SHEFTS; WENDY, JEFF AND MARI SHIBUYA; SHIRLEY AND DAVID ALLEN FOUNDATION ON BEHALF OF LUCY SULLIVAN; CARMINE AND MARIA SMERALDO FOR IL TERRAZZO CARMINE; CHRISTINE STOLL AND ADAM JUNDT; JAMES AND ANN STREET; STEVEN STROH ON BEHALF OF DAVE STROH; THE STUART FOUNDATION; JOANNE SUGURA AND WILLIAM MASSEY; JOHN AND SHARON THEOFELIS; GEORGE AND BEVERLY THEOFELIS; JULIE THORNTON; SARAH HUFBAUER AND DAVID TRUE; ELIZABETH UPTON AND RAYBURN LEWIS; VENETIA VANGO; ERIN AND MIKE WELCH

Photo Gallery: Mockingbird Holiday Festivities



Youth Representative Jessica Martin and Executive Assistant Lauren Frederick hard at work on their gingerbread houses.



Mockingbird Family Model hub parents receive gifts for their Constellation families.



Senior Youth Representative Sam Martin shows off all his hard work.



Mockingbird Family Model partners share smiles and a holiday meal with The Mockingbird Society Executive Director Jim Theofelis.

Untitled

WHITNEY ALLEN

No more excuses... No more I'm sorry it's just... No more you just don't get it... The truth of the matter is I just don't get it myself- I wish I did but I don't... I don't know why I am so messed up.... I don't know why I have to be so mean... I can't explain the reason or even know if there is a real reason for my attitude... I'm not sure if there is something really wrong with me or if I was just brainwashed into believing there is something wrong with me when they took me from my mom. When I cry and someone else asks me what's wrong, a majority of the time I just make something up because I really don't have a clue to why I am crying or where the tears came from in the first place. I don't know why I have never been okay in my whole life not even once... I don't get how I know I need to talk and sometimes I want to talk but never know what about or how to even start. I don't understand how it always feels like something's missing... I can't understand how everyone is fine or finds a way to be okay- except me. I don't know how I just somehow fell apart. I don't know how to make something of myself. Sometimes when I hear myself talk I hear myself saying a lot of good things but the reality is all I've amounted to is just one big mess. I'm not even sure I know why I hurt and why I was even mad in the first place... Thought and played with death but just didn't have the heart. What if heaven and hell are indeed real... I can't live and go through hell and then die and go to hell... Sometimes I am sure but the rest of time I am clueless and lost.... I smoke weed day in and day out blunt after blunt just so I won't cry... My whole life from the age I can remember until yesterday plays in my mental theater and there's no bathroom breaks... I always feel scared inside and sometimes I try to trick myself into believing I don't care but I really do. I don't get how I always without fail manage to mess everything up... You know with people you never can be sure so I can never figure out when to trust and not lie. I can't recall ever feeling apart or as if I belong... When I was a little kid it was just as bad as now- always feeling aware and feeling like I got to do something and always in the end just making a big mess of things. Closed out of the world and people.... I don't think I ever actually felt loved without any threat about it not even with my family... I'm not sure if the only reason I close myself in is that all my life I was closed out of it... I am just so scared and that's the way I prefer to be.... Everything is a mess and I can't fix it.

Thawed

VANESSA HUTT

Icicles growing
Where love should be
Heart encased in ice
Bittersweet feelings that don't go away
When will the ice thaw?
When will the good feelings come back?
Love is a feeling I don't have
Passions of life are ingrained in me
Life soars out of me
It's starting to get warmer
Dripping and Dripping, the icicles leave slowly
Sweet feelings are coming back
Smiles come back
Life soars back into me
Finally.

What Happens Now

EMMA CUMMINGS

What happens now
Only time shall tell
Yet I do not believe
Our love will fail
I will continue
To stay upon this path
For no other man is worth
What I want to last
No matter how long
I have to wait
I will always remember
That this was fate.

The Fruit of Temptation

EMMA CUMMINGS

The fruit of temptation
Is never so sweet
Laced with arsenic
It is only deceit
A beautiful illusion
Is what it is...
And yet
How can it be so bad?
If it's only one kiss?
A kiss of destruction
A kiss of death
A kiss to steal
The last of one's breath
Temptation is an evil creature
That lurks behind closed doors
When your belief becomes so low
Remember what's in store
It will play any trick to win
And yet if your love is truly strong
It will never be let in.

EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS

A special thank you to those who made generous holiday donations to the children and youth in the Mockingbird Family Model and our Youth LEAD program: Dean Laue, Liz Lasater and Red Arrow Supply Chain Solutions, Jerry and Colleen Sellers, University Village. Many thanks to our friends and supporters at Windmere Real Estate/East, Inc., Bellevue office, especially Rick Franz and Belinda Henderson for the coordination of the gift giving program.

It isn't what you have in your pocket that makes you thankful, but what you have in your heart.

~ Author Unknown



Back to Reality BY VANESSA HUTT

It's pretty amazing that I am still alive coming into the year 2008. I have gone through so much in the year 2007 it's, honestly, completely unreal. I have had to deal with deaths in my family and the death of friends as well. Due to their life choices, their lives were lost. It's tragic, but it is life. Sometimes, people's lives are not meant to last that long. It's a hard fact for me to fully comprehend and understand. But it gets easier.

I have lost housing twice this year due to my choices and impulsive way of life. I have gone through the acceleration of my addictions and results of my drug use on my body and mind.

I have gone through detox once and gone to jail to take care of warrants to better my life and clear my record of warrants. I went through one treatment center and

left due to a difference of beliefs about my rights as a woman. I have been in fights with friends and family and lost friends due to my addiction. Thankfully, I have not lost my family due to my choices. They chose to stay with me, even with my choices, even though they don't fully agree with my not taking responsibility for my life. I didn't really act like a twenty-one-year-old woman. I acted like an out of control teen that could do whatever I wanted without thinking through my actions or the repercussions I would have if I chose to do something erratic.

I let my addiction take over 2007. I was in control for a little while and I was clean and sober but I was overtaken by stress and urges and monumental triggers that I

couldn't resist for long. I let hustling take over my life as well. Being a drug dealer in Seattle is not fun and didn't help me achieve anything I wanted. I lost jobs due to my drug use. I lost opportunities for housing, school, and new jobs. I lost trust with people who were trying to help me better myself for the sake of my life in the future.

Eventually, I started to shut out everyone who wanted to help me be a better person. I let my friends and family down over and over with lies of doing well even though I felt like I was dying inside. I felt as if I was never going to dig myself out of the hole of drug dealing and using. I

wanted to be legit but knew I had to ask for help from my counselor. He took me to detox and from there I went to a rehabilitation center for almost two months before I left and went into another center for recovery. It's a

struggle every day for me. I have to literally take it one day at a time like they say to.

I hope that 2008 brings me joy, success, and a better life. I want to make people proud to know me and be around me. Mostly, I want to be proud of myself. I want to be phenomenal in every aspect of my life. I don't want to hurt anymore. I don't want to self-sabotage. I am intelligent and need to start living a life like that. I am sick and tired of my life being horrid all the time. It's time to change for the better. I improve my life every day that I do something productive. I have a chance to start something amazing in my life. I mean, hey, it's only the 4th of January right? I have 361 days to do something right.

"And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years."

~Abraham Lincoln

Foster Care to 21 Program

House Bill 2002 creates a pilot program that allows 50 youth each year to remain in foster care after they turn 18 while they pursue a college or vocational program.

What are the goals of the Foster Care to 21 Program?

- To ensure that foster youth and tribal youth in out of home care who are age 18 or older and have completed high school or a GED program can remain in foster care while they pursue a college or vocational program
- Provide foster youth and tribal youth in out of home care with the necessary supports so that they can be successful while attending a college or vocational program

Who is eligible?

Youth must meet the following criteria to be eligible to apply for the Foster Care to 21 program:

- A dependent in the custody and care of Washington State or tribal out of home placement
- Age 18 or older and will be graduating or have graduated from high school or a GED program during the calendar year in which they are applying for the program
- Applied to or been accepted into a college or a vocational program
- Will be attending a college or vocational program within Washington State

Not all youth who apply will be accepted into the program because it is limited to 50 youth per year for the entire state.



What services will eligible foster youth receive?

Foster Youth will continue to receive:

- foster care placement
- medical and dental coverage
- other agreed upon support services while they go to a college or a vocational program up to the age of 21

Social worker can help youth explore ways to pay for the college or vocational program.

How do youth apply for the Foster Care to 21 program?

Youth should talk to their DSHS Children's Administration social worker who will help them verify their eligibility, and provide them with a "Foster Care to 21" application. Youth should send their completed application and release of information to:

Foster Care to 21 Program Manager
Children's Administration
PO Box 45710
1115 Washington St. SE
Olympia, WA 98504-5710

Once a youth applies – what are the next steps?

Once Children's Administration receives the application, the youth and his/her social worker will be contacted by mail letting them know if the youth has been accepted into the program. This should happen before the youth has graduated from high school or GED and has begun their college or vocational program.

What is necessary to enroll in this program?

Once accepted into the program the youth will have to complete a voluntary service agreement with their social worker and maintain eligibility requirements as set forth in the agreement.

As a social worker how can I help youth access this program?

- Share program information with youth/caregivers
- Incorporate this resource into the multi-disciplinary staffings for youth exiting care
- Refer youth to this program when they are preparing to graduate from high school or GED program

Questions about the program?

Contact:
Foster Care to 21 Program Manager at
360-902-8487
Email: PRJ1300@dshs.wa.gov
or visit:
www.independence.wa.gov