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Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION

January 2010

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HAPPY
NEW YEAR!

In This Issue

Letter From the Editor
Jim Theofelis
Page 2

Beds of Hope
Ian Grant
Page 2

Cartoon: Advocating
for Yourself
Ashlie Lanier
Page 2

Eight Hour Notification
David Buck
Page 3

Domestic Violence
Amanda Bevington
Page 3

Every Child Deserves
a Family Act
David Buck
Page 3

Creative Corner:
Her Joy
Rashunda Johnson
Page 4

Creative Corner:
Love
Anna Gonzalez
Page 4

Calendar of Events
Page 4

News From The
Mockingbird Network
Page 4

The Mockingbird Society's Youth Advocacy Day BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



Each year, the Mockingbird Network coordinates two big events. One is the Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit which gives youth the chance to come up with law and/or policy changes that they think would improve the foster care system and present their ideas to a panel of policy makers, judges, attorneys and legislators. The other event is Youth Advocacy Day which gives youth the opportunity to go to the Washington State Capitol and put a face on the issues that we are fighting for. A lot of the issues that we work on come directly from the Leadership Summit in June. On Advocacy Day, we march through the capitol chanting, making sure our voices are heard. Both of these events gather youth from all over the State of Washington to put their voices together to make change.

Last year, The Mockingbird Society's own Network Representative Jerry Bobo along with Yolanda Kilgore, a Mockingbird Network Region 4 for Change chapter member led the march around the capitol. "Advocacy Day was an experience that taught me leadership skills and compassion and it made me feel a sense of empowerment. Being in the presence of legislators and people who could make a change was powerful. And marching through the capitol making sure we could be heard is one thing I will never forget," says Jerry.

February 8th, the Mockingbird Network in Seattle will be putting on a training to educate youth on how speak to legislators, how bills turn into laws, and to show youth how they can participate in the democratic process. We will also be making posters that we will carry as we march around

the capitol demanding our rights. There will also be trainings that will be hosted across the state. To find out when trainings are going on in your area, contact The Mockingbird Society.



Foster children and supporters march on the state capital advocating for their rights.

Youth Advocacy Day is coming on Friday, February 19th, 2010. Save the date. The items that The Mockingbird Society and ASK-Y (Advocates for System Kids and Youth) will be advocating for in Olympia for the 2010 legislative session are: mandatory surprise health and safety visits so that social workers will stop by homes unannounced to check on youth preventing caregivers from putting on a show, adequate legal representation, and

youth being informed of the right to request a lawyer. We are also defending several programs from cuts in the 2010 state budget including street youth outreach services, HOPE Center beds, and educational advocates. We also hope to extend the mandatory reporting law for runaway youth from eight hours to 72 hours, which will hopefully prevent youth from ending up on the street.

Some of those invited this year are youth and staff from the YMCA, YouthCare, YouthNet, Community Youth Services, YWCA, Volunteers of America, Pierce County Alliance, and many more. There will also be case managers, social workers, foster parents, and many supporters. There will be several different speakers such as a representative from the governor's office, legislators, and senators.

Last year, since our state-wide Mockingbird Network became fully realized, we had the highest turn out of all Youth Advocacy Days thus far. Over 200 hundred youth, alumni, service providers and community supporters from all over the state came to support the bills we were trying to get passed. The event attracted a lot of media coverage and our voices were heard when four out of our five bills were passed.

This year, since the Mockingbird Network is very active and is still growing, we are planning to have an even bigger turn out than last year. However, your support is still very important to us and we'd like to invite you to come join us as we march through the capitol and take a stand for those things in which we believe. If you do plan on attending, please email Kara Sanders at kara@mockingbirdsociety.org so she can make sure to have enough food for you and your group. We look forward to seeing you there.

The 2010 Budget Cuts Making a Drastic Change BY JERRY BOBO



Recently it was announced that certain programs that help youth in foster care may be cut to even out the Washington State 2010 budget. There are three programs in particular that are in serious danger; HOPE Center beds, Street Youth (Outreach) Services, and Educational Advocacy Coordinators. Youth without family support depend heavily on these programs. All three have been serving the State of Washington for at least ten years. In response, Jim Theofelis, Executive Director of The Mockingbird Society, wrote a letter to Governor Christine Gregoire expressing how important it is to save these programs from the 2010 budget cut. Shelter is just as important to homeless youth as it is to youth that are in intact homes.

Shelter is necessary for everyone. Youth on the streets need shelter to stay warm and prevent exposure. A HOPE Center is a temporary residential facility where youth can stay for up to 30 days while being evaluated for possible placement, education, and treatment services, including family reconciliation if appropriate. This is a part of the HOPE Act passed in 1999. In Jim's letter to the Governor, he states how important this program is. "This program provides emergency housing to adolescents who are legal dependents of Washington State as well as young people who are from families experiencing 'family in conflict' issues. The HOPE Center beds are the only beds that young people can 'self-refer' to and they have been instrumental in giving young people a viable way to exit the streets and return to the foster care

system, their families, and communities. Without the HOPE beds, programs across the state will be decreasing and even eliminating their availability to respond to our most vulnerable adolescents who want to return to services and family." If given 30 days, youth have time to receive the help they need. The HOPE beds can connect youth too many different resources.

The Street Youth Outreach Program promotes efforts by its grantees around the state to build relationships between street outreach workers and runaway, homeless, and street youth. This is another program that Jim wants to save from the 2010 budget cut, saying, "The Street Youth Outreach program allows organizations across the state to 'be on the front lines' of the battle to save young lives from the predators that prey upon our most vulnerable teenagers. As you know, the media is full of recent stories of the growth of sexual exploitation of our most vulnerable teenagers. The predators who exploit our youth are organized and strategic about how and where they begin the grooming process for these youth. Eliminating the Street Youth Outreach will be good news to the predators who are the only ones who will benefit from elimination of this program." This is the reality that

homeless youth face every day. It is a struggle to stay out of the way of dangers; those struggles will increase with Street Outreach Programs being eliminated.

Concentrating on school work when you're in the foster care system can be a hard task. Dealing with other problems that come with being in care takes your mind off school, making it hard to focus. In addition, many foster youth do not have caregivers who know how to access the services the youth needs to succeed. The Education Advocacy Program is there to help youth with those problems. For cases requiring intensive advocacy, coordinators will directly intervene to resolve the situation. Examples include: school enrollment or placement crisis, school discipline issues, and accessing services such as Special Education. Jim Feels strongly about this as well. "As we all know,

BUDGET, CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Conserving Resources and Honoring Your Preferences

In an effort to increase awareness of The Mockingbird Times, and the voice of its contributing writers — youth and alumni of care, we plan to begin to publish a more robust online edition in early 2010. This also will allow us to conserve resources and reduce costs. So, watch for regular updates on our progress. We hope to be "live" in the spring. We'll be checking in with you, our loyal readers, in the near future to learn more about your preferences.

Thank you for your support.

Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



Happy 2010! On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors at The Mockingbird Society, I want to wish each of you a very Happy New Year. Of course, the big news for those of us in Washington State is the beginning of the 2010 legislative session which begins January 11th. The session promises to be full of intensity, stress, and opportunity as the governor and legislature will grapple with a 2.6 billion dollar deficit in the state budget. As you may recall, last year's legislature faced a nearly 9 billion dollar deficit so while 2.6 is much smaller than last year's deficit, it is still staggering. During this time more than ever, advocates for the children, youth and families in the child welfare system are needed.

The Mockingbird Society will continue to have a strong presence in Olympia ensuring the voice and needs of children, youth and families are being heard. Given the current economic climate, our main agenda item will be to retain the quality

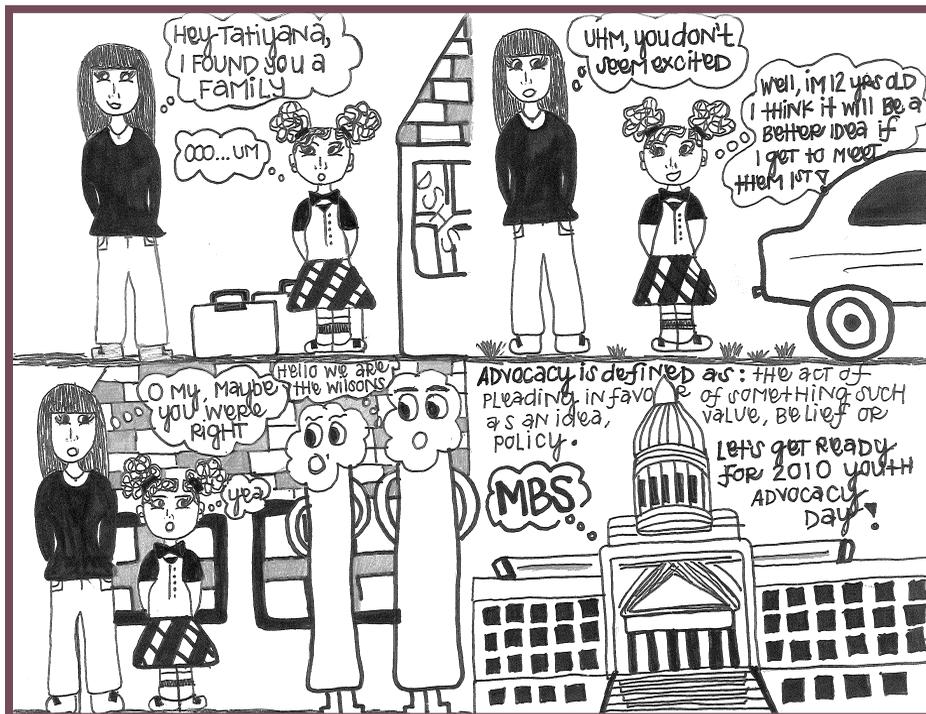
programs and policies that have been adopted and proven effective. For example, we have made incredible progress over the past several years in providing safe housing for older adolescents in the foster care system, including those who have turned eighteen. I'm confident none of us want to balance the budget by returning to a practice of discharging 18 year-olds from the foster care system directly to the streets or homelessness. As a result of bipartisan support for kids in foster care, we as a state have made tremendous progress in this area and The Mockingbird Society is committed to retaining this progress.

I invite each of you to **SAVE THE DATE of February 19th for our annual Youth Advocacy Day in Olympia. It is a remarkable day to participate in the democratic process, cheer and advocate for the youth who participate, and to observe the work of The Mockingbird Society. Again, Happy New Year and let's make it a great year!**

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org



Advocating For Yourself BY ASHLIE LANIER



Beds of Hope BY IAN GRANT



Times are hard. And nowhere are they harder than at Children's Administration (CA), which has proposed, among others, cutting foster prevention programs, health care, secure crisis residential centers, and other invaluable resources for the most vulnerable of our children.

One of the cuts that appear in Governor Christine Gregoire's recommended supplemental 2010 budget is the elimination of state funding for HOPE beds.¹ HOPE beds were established by the 1999 Homeless Youth Prevention/Protection and Education (HOPE) Act, which created two programs: HOPE Centers and Responsible Living Skills Programs (RSLPs). Hope Centers are places where youth can stay for up to thirty days while the Center connects them with placement, education, and treatment resources, and tries to reestablish contact with the youth's parents. Responsible Living Skills Programs are longer-term placements where youth can get the help they need to do well in school, find employment, and try to reopen lines of communication with their parents.²

An interesting fact about the HOPE Centers is that the majority (over 60%) of the youth that are admitted to them don't have any recent history of homelessness.³ HOPE Centers are a significant part of the front line in the battle against youth homelessness; they are the only program to which youth can self-refer (apply for admission without the help of a social worker), and the services they provide prevent

youth from falling further into homelessness. RSLPs, on the other hand, are there to help youth rebuild a life often already severely damaged by abuse and poverty. And they work; youth placed in an RSLP are more likely to be employed, more likely to pursue postsecondary education, and more likely to reestablish contact with their families.⁴

75% of homeless youth are victims of physical or sexual abuse.⁵ Most youth leave home for a reason; a good enough reason that they are willing to abandon their homes and families and live on the streets, in the cold, constantly harassed, and constantly in danger. We have a duty to these youth—the vast majority of which are on the streets through no fault of their own—to protect them, to not allow them to fall into poverty, crime, or drugs, and to rescue them when they do.

Times are tough everywhere. But we cannot allow the most vulnerable members of our society—abused and neglected children—to bear the burden of the fiscal decisions that adults made without consulting them. Is there nothing that we could do without rather than allow youth to fall out onto the streets without intervention?

I hope not. We have a duty to these youth and to ourselves to do the right thing. We should not, and cannot, send abused children into homelessness to balance a budget.

¹ ofm.wa.gov/budget10/recsum/300010.pdf
^{2,3,4} www.scribd.com/doc/11201997/Evaluation-of-the-HOPE-Act-Services-for-Street-Youth
⁵ seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/opinion/2010320412_guest23giovento.html?pmid=op_ed

Thank You!

Hazelruth Adams; Anonymous (5); Linda and Thomas Baker; Garvey Schubert Barer, On Behalf of Jim Kibble; Black Family 1994 Charitable Trust; Gerry Burnett; Belinda Butler-Bell and Sam Bell; Paula Butzi; Casey Family Programs; Daniel Cequitella, Tacoma Bates Academy; Ricardo Chavez; Stephen and Arlene Cohen; Perkins Coie; Congregation Beth Shalom, Social Action Committee; Karen Cowgill; Trudy Davies; Frances Demarco; John and Jennifer Dovey; Eastside Community Members - Starbucks Toy Drive; Employees of General Dynamics; Petter and Patty Fewing; Vi Franz and Friends; Robert O. Geballa; General Dynamics OTS; Mr. and Mrs. Germani; Ann Giesel and Malcom Jollie; Makeba Greene; Jillian Gross; Dr. Wanda Hackett; JoAnn Herbert, in memory of June Herbert; John Holt and Susan Trainor Holt; Ann Marie Jostol; Ron Kaplan; Biji Keigley; Alice Kuder; Elena Lamont; Wendy Lane; Laura Levings; Eric Liu; Diane Lobb; Shannon Loveland and Robert Artega; Yaffa Maritz; Mark and Cheryl Marshall; Sean Mears; Sofie and Alan Muller; Miles Otoupal, in honor of Daniel Joseph Buck; PCA and Tacoma Bates Academy; Noah and Sarah Poutre; Vanitha Raman; Lance and Cindy Richmond; Jeff Ried and Stephanie Garlich; Heather Riley; Juana Royster; Mark and Lisa Schneider; Mary Schroeder; Ellen Shaman; Sparrow Properties; P. Spence; The Stuart Foundation; Lucy Sullivan; Tamarack House & Service Alternatives - Phoenix House; John and Sharon Theofelis; Sam and Barbara Throm; Meryl Thulean; Alicia Tonasket; U Village Tree of Winter Wishes participants; Vancouver ILS staff; Erin and Mike Welch; Gail Winberg; Mark Wittow

Support The Mockingbird Society!

We invite you to join us in building a world-class foster care system. In gratitude for your support, we would like to send you a monthly e-version of the *Mockingbird Times*.

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

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- Please charge my credit card: One time Monthly Quarterly
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Please mail this completed form and your check to The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Avenue S, Suite 240, Seattle, WA 98144. For more information, call (206) 323-KIDS (5437) or visit www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

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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*.

Eight Hour Notification BY DAVID BUCK



The **National Runaway Switchboard** states that each year for the last ten years 1.6 to 2.8 million youth have run away from home. Most of these youth make their way back home in a very short time. But many of them have more reasons to run, such as abuse in the family, so they try to stay away. These youth have very little help on the street and most of these youth are afraid to seek what help is available due to the eight hour notification law. This requires youth shelters and drop-in centers to notify the police, parents/guardians, or DSHS within eight hours of the youth appearing. This requirement doesn't distinguish between case workers, social workers, and non-professionals. But advocacy and legislative workers are currently trying to expand the eight hours to a 72 hour notification which is in line with federal guidelines for notification.

Case workers and social workers have said since Washington took up the eight hour notification law they have noticed more and more youth not seeking resources and just accepting a life on the streets with no help. As someone who has been homeless for a long time, I can say that I have seen this to be true, too. More than half of the homeless youth in Seattle are runaways that do not seek youth services because of this scenario.

It's hard on the streets, The **Seattle Homeless Youth**

Project released statistics stating that 91.4% of the youth were physically assaulted and 30% of youth were sexually abused while on the streets. Another study says one third of female youth on the streets under the age of 14 have been raped. The same study says that in one three month period 25% of the youth who volunteered for the study reported being robbed, 37% reported being physically assaulted, and 31% reported spending time in the emergency room. While on the streets myself, I have witnessed this firsthand. Life is hard on the streets and the eight hour notification to me feels like all it is doing is taking runaway youth and making them a statistic.

But there might be a change in this rule; **Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson** is currently sponsoring a bill that would change the eight hour notification in line with the federal guidelines

which states a 72 hour notification. Past legislative sessions have witnessed bills similar to this one and have always had overwhelmingly strong support. The city of Seattle endorsed a ten year plan to end homelessness. It called for an extension in the reporting requirement to match that of the federal guideline of 72 hours. The ten year plan to end homelessness has been endorsed by 16 cities and organizations.

At the forefront in advocating for this extension is the **University of Washington Child and Youth Legislative Advocacy Clinic**, which consists of five students trained in legislative public policy advocacy. Founded in 2008, the clinic has successfully advocated for the passage of legislation relating to the sealing of juvenile records. This year, the clinic is representing the **Street Youth Legal Advocates of Washington (SYLAW)** and devoting all of its energy to the reporting requirement legislation.

The **Family and Youth Services Bureau** released statistics that show that youth who engage with social services have a much better success rate than youth who decide to stay on the street. The 72 hour notification would help get youth to engage with social services. Statistics show that 75% of youth who engage with

“...75% of youth who engage with social services return to the families while 15% to 20% go to alternative housing situations and only 5% return to the street...”

social services return to the families while 15% to 20% go to alternative housing situations and only 5% return to the street, a much better success rate than when youth have to turn to the

streets, which is what the eight hour notification is pretty much doing.

The bill will not prohibit professionals from reporting youth early; all the bill will do is give a grace period for social workers and professionals working with youth more time to find out about the specific situation with the youth so that they may better come to a conclusion about what should be done. There are reasons why youth run away from home and eight hours is not nearly enough time to find out why youth have run away and definitely not enough time to come to a conclusion about what services can do about the situation.

Resources: Private interview, www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/docs/rhy_report_to_congress_06_07.pdf, apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=13.32A.082, www.runawayteens.org/statistics.html

Every Child Deserves a Family Act BY DAVID BUCK



A bill was recently introduced to congress that may make it so more homes are available for youth in the foster care system. The bill is not only garnering a lot of attention from foster care advocates, but it is also receiving attention from GLBTQ rights organizations, as well as anti-gay organizations.

According to opencongress.org, on October 15th 2009 **Rep. Pete Stark** (D-CA), Chairman of the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, introduced H.R. 3827 - Every Child Deserves a Family act for the 111th United States Congress. The bill is designed to prohibit discrimination in adoption or foster care placements based on sexual orientation, gender identification, or marital status. The idea behind the bill, according to Stark, is to increase adoption for foster care youth, many of whom don't get adopted because there are foster care placement centers that are allowed to blacklist adoptive parents based on, among other things, sexual orientation. "We got 25,000 kids a year maturing out of the welfare system without permanent foster care or adoptive care, and the prospects of those children having a successful adult life are diminished greatly," Stark said. "These are kids who

end up in the criminal justice system, or end up homeless."

According to The Washington Blade, a highly acclaimed GLBT newspaper, if the bill should pass it would greatly affect states like Utah, Florida, Arkansas, Nebraska, and Mississippi, as well as several private adoption agencies. The bill has sparked anger on both sides of the party line as far as foster care advocates go. **Jeremy Jimenez**, an Idaho social worker, said "I feel that this is unfair to the children who have been raised [by] heterosexual couples to be put in a home where they will feel uneasy living at." The concern for many is that by allowing this bill to be passed, private agencies, many of which are Christian, will shut their doors completely making the available homes drop significantly. **Cate Culpepper**, social worker and program manager of a transitional living house, said: "I just think if there really are centers planning to shut their doors based on this bill, then that is just another example of institutional discrimination that in the end will only be counterproductive and unfair to the children."

Others are worried about the psychological effects such adoptions have on children. Many against the bill feel that youth adopted by homosexual and transgendered partners or



Domestic violence (DV) and emotional abuse are behaviors used by one person in a relationship to control the other. Partners may be married or not married; heterosexual, gay, or lesbian; living together, separated, or dating. Examples of abuse include name calling or put downs, keeping partners from contacting their families or friends, withholding money, stopping partner from getting or keeping a job, sexual assault, actual or threatening physical harm, stalking, and intimidation. Domestic violence is very serious and if you find yourself or someone you know that is in a domestic violence relationship please get help as soon as possible. Make sure you have a safety plan.¹

Domestic violence and abuse are used for one thing only and that's to make sure the abuser gains total control. Domestic violence can happen to anyone; just because you may not have been battered or bruised does not mean you are not being abused. Abuse can be physical, sexual, or mental. According to domesticviolence.org, 2.5 million females experience some form of violence each year. In the US, 2,000-4,000 women are murdered by abusive partners or ex-partners. 20-50% of the female population of the world will become the victims of domestic violence.²

Now I am going to tell you a personal story. This is really hard for me to share because honestly it's scary and a little embarrassing. As I share my story, all I ask is please don't judge me, and for those who are in my shoes and have experienced the same situation, you are not alone. I have been a victim of domestic violence and abuse my whole life. It started with my birth family and ended with my ex-boyfriend of two years. The beginning of the relationship with my ex-boyfriend was very typical; sweet talk, flowers, dinner, etc. That's how it always seems in the beginning of relationships.

After we had been dating for about 6 months, he started getting real possessive over me. He would call nonstop, telling me who and who not to be around, insulting and degrading me, and getting violent. To make a long story short, I ended up leaving him and moved in with my mom. He still called and wanted to see me and apologize for his mistakes, but in situations like this, you really need to just stay strong and leave. Abusers don't usually change and certainly not without intensive therapy and help. I really advise you to talk with a therapist. That's what helped me

get through this situation.

According to helpguide.org, abusers use a variety of tactics to manipulate you and increase their power. In a relationship, an abuser uses dominance, humiliation, isolation, threats, intimidation, denial and blame. Domestic abusers falls into a common pattern, or cycle of violence which starts with abuse, guilt, "normal" behavior (acting as if nothing happened), fantasy and planning, and setting up the victim.³

People who are being abused may:

- Feel afraid or be anxious to please partner
- Go along with everything partner says or does
- Check in often with partner
- Receive frequent harassing phone calls or text messages from partner
- Talk about partner's temper or jealousy
- Frequently miss work, school, or social occasions, without explanation.
- Have very low self-esteem, even if they used to be confident.
- Show major personality changes (e.g. an outgoing woman becomes withdrawn).
- Be depressed, anxious, or suicidal.
- Be restricted from seeing family and friends.
- Rarely go out in public without their partner.
- Have limited access to money, credit cards, or the car.³

Abusers are really sneaky people that make you believe that he won't do it again, he loves you, things will be different, and ending with "I'm sorry." Don't just let abusers manipulate your head; they do have a problem and it is very serious. This isn't something that gets fixed overnight. They need help and so do you. If you or someone you know is in an abusive relationship get help. Call 1-800-787-3224 or 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or visit

^{1,2} www.domesticviolence.org

^{3,4} helpguide.org/mental/domestic_violence_abuse_types_signs_causes_effects.htm

SAVE THE DATE!

Youth Advocacy Day is February 19th. Join other foster youth, alumni of foster care and supporters in our legislative action date. Visit mockingbirdsociety.org for more information.

you agree with the bill, that is exactly what it will do. Foster care organizations and equal rights organizations support the bill. Some fundamentalist Christian organizations have threatened to shut their doors if this bill is passed. We have a duty to the children to make the right decision here; I hope this article helps you decide.

Much of the content of this article was garnered from the *Washington Blade*, www.washblade.com/thelatest/thelatest.cfm?blog_id=27707, which is now defunct and no longer available online. Other resources: www.halfwaytoconcord.com/rep-pete-stark-seeks-to-dismantle-adoption-in-u-s/, www.opencongress.org/bill/111-hi3827/show, california.realestaterama.com/2009/10/16/stark-introduces-bill-opening-more-homes-to-foster-children-ID0491.html, forms.house.gov/stark/webforms/contact.htm, slog.thestranger.com/slog/archives/2009/10/20/every-child-deserves-a-family.

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.

Her Joy

RASHUNDA JOHNSON

There is this girl who opens her heart to a noble man; what is it that she finds?: A book that tells his affections for her, the key to his heart and the relationship filled with rubies of love that conquers their pain: She has always endured unstable relationships in her past: So she thinks, out loud: WHY is he so special?: She leaves no hesitation because words are not always her best judgment: Instead, she uses her five senses to outwit vocabulary to make this set valuable, from how much her heart has broadcasted her love for him: Tears of joy is the center of compassion: The word that utmost defines herself as a woman of color: Friendship is their background: Touchy words are used as thoughts that strikes the deepest part of their emotions: A kiss holds the tale of love that erupts at every moment as it encounters body language: remembered settings of venues with excitement favor their memories to share: The warm touch of his hands strokes her face with every finger that sinks within: She holds his heart in her hands for everyone to see: they see that she is in LOVE: LOVE, the essence of joy that two compatible people share for one another who don't hold back emotions which occurs at every second, every hour, every day during their lives' change: DOUBT is never used of any form to corrupt their lovely bond, that represents them as one: Her Joy

Love

ANNA GONSALEZ

Love is pure.
Love is kind.
I wish my mom gave me that.
Love is to nourish someone.
Love comes from the heart.
Mom, why weren't you there?
Someday my mom will regret it.
Love is forever and you know it, Mom.
Mom, why did you throw me away like garbage?
Love, Love, Love that's all I wanted.
When the day comes, I will tell you how I felt
when you never told me you loved me.
I wish this wouldn't have happened if you made the wrong choice.
I "love" you mom and I don't think I can hold this grudge longer,
but I know you loved me
but you never showed it.
Love is eternal and forever.

We Need Your Work!

We are in **great need** 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 and select *Mockingbird Times* under The Mockingbird Network or contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at kara@mockingbirdsociety.org.

BUDGET, CONT. FROM PAGE 1

children and youth in foster care have dismal educational outcomes. The Educational Advocacy program provides critical support necessary to the children and adolescents in the foster care system, increasing their opportunities for educational success. This program has demonstrated solid benefits to the children and youth it serves as well as to the Children's Administration social workers who do not have the time, expertise, or capacity to provide this level of support." Education is a crucial part of a youth's future. It gives hope to a better life after care.

If the HOPE Center beds are gone, where will those youth go to sleep? If Street Outreach Programs are gone, where do youth go for resources? If the Education Advocacy Programs and coordinators are gone, where will youth go for educational help? These are three programs that youth in care desperately need. Cutting them will only put more hurt in the hearts of youth. If these are gone, what will be the alternatives? Will there be alternatives? If youth can't even count on the State of Washington, who can they count on?

Community Events

Region 1

Daily: **Ice Palace open**, hours vary, Riverfront Park; spokaneriverfrontpark.com.

Jan. 15-24: **Louff Carrousel open**, 11 AM - 5 PM, Riverfront Park; spokaneriverfrontpark.com.

Region 2

Jan. 18: **Martin Luther King March**, 10 AM - 12 PM, MLK Boulevard, FREE.

Region 3

Jan. 23: **Native Northwest Art Show and Sale**, 11 AM - 5 PM, Skagit County Historical Museum, \$4, \$3, families \$8.

Region 5

Jan. 21: **Your Rights Training** (for foster youth and alumni), FREE, Tacoma DSHS office, 4:30 PM.

Jan. 21: **Culture of Foster Care Training** (for those who have not been in the foster care system), 7 PM, Tacoma DSHS office, FREE.

Region 6

Jan. 13: **Mockingbird Network Chapter Meeting** (for foster youth and alumni), Pierce County Alliance, 4:30 PM, FREE.

Jan. 18: **Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service**, begins at 8:30 AM, Capitol Rotunda, FREE; (360) 943-0780 ext. 159.

"The new year is in motion, lets not forget the past but embrace it, because memories will last."

~ Jerry Bobo

Region 1: UNITE! CHAPTER IN SPOKANE COUNTY BY ONALEE STEWART

UNITE will not have a chapter meeting in December, as our Resource Specialist is getting married this month! Congratulations **Lauren** and **Levi**! We had 16 people attend Thanksgiving dinner at **Clinkerdagers** in downtown Spokane. We ate a lovely turkey dinner and had plenty of pumpkin pie to celebrate the holiday. We will be having a New Year's Party Chapter Meeting on January 20th where we will celebrate January birthdays and prepare for Advocacy Day in Olympia. I will also be facilitating a Strategic Sharing workshop to help prepare for Advocacy Day.

Region 2: A.C.T.F.I.R.S.T. CHAPTER IN YAKIMA COUNTY BY FRANCESCA CANTU AND TAMMY SODERBURG

December has been a refreshing month for Region 2. December 6th we watched the lighted parade in downtown Yakima and went on a safari to a cool interactive Christmas house. There we got out of the car and walked around and played with some of the cool decorations. We would like to thank **Cherokee** for showing us this really cool house. Our next event was even cooler! It was a VERY fun day. A lot of the youth got together and made gingerbread houses and holiday cards and we ate awesome Mexican food. Everyone seemed happy and everyone walked away with a prize! **Cyndi** and **Isaiah** won the gift certificates. It was the last meeting of the year so everyone is excited for the plans in 2010!



Region 3: Hey Mac CHAPTER IN SKAGIT COUNTY BY JOSIE TOOHEY

This month we went caroling at **Mountain Glen Retirement Center** and saw many smiling faces as we traveled from room to room. We also finished three fleece blankets that we will be donating to children in need. Then we had a chapter meeting where we got to know **Georgina** who will be taking over as our new Resource Specialist. We will greatly miss **Eva** but we are looking forward to working with **Georgina**. It will be exciting to see how our chapter comes together once we start meeting in Everett where it will be easier for more people to join us. During our last meeting of the year, we had a gingerbread house-making party. It was very fun and festive.

News From

The Mockingbird Network

Your Needs, Your Voice

Region 4: For Change CHAPTER IN KING COUNTY BY GEORGINA RAMIREZ

Region 4 had a fantastic chapter meeting. Everyone enjoyed a wonderful dinner and had a blast celebrating our one year anniversary and the holiday season. We started the meeting with a fun game of *Would You Rather*, State Advisory Council updates, and the development of a Region 4 Training Team! **Casey Trupin** from **Columbia Legal Services** came in to talk about Adequate Legal Representation. Lastly, we ended our meeting with some seasonal fun! We made gingerbread houses and listened to some seasonal tunes. A great time was had by all. Come and check out the next chapter meeting January 11th, 2010 at 3 PM, at 2100 24th Ave in Seattle. We will talk about Youth Advocacy Day 2010!



Region 5: Cour'Ige CHAPTER IN PIERCE COUNTY BY DEMAREA KIRK

Last month we came up with a name for our chapter: **Cour'Ige** which stand for Changing Our Unique Responsibilities Individualities Gaining Empowerment. Also, our region had a Christmas party where youth got gifts. New people came to the group to become involved with the Mockingbird Network. At our last State Advisory Council meeting we discussed issues that should be brought to the upcoming leadership summit. So, at our chapter meeting I asked our youth "Is making a law going to change what the youth are going through?" and "What other issues can we change for our upcoming summit in 2010?" Everyone have a safe and happy new year.

Region 6: CHAPTER IN THURSTON COUNTY BY CRYSTAL SHARP

On December 8th, **Graham** and I facilitated a Voice Development training with the Vancouver chapter. I felt everyone left with a better knowledge of how to share their stories in a manner that gets the point across effectively. Knowing how to share your story effectively also can help you advocate at the upcoming Advocacy Day on February 19th for surprise health and safety visits and adequate legal representation! If anyone in Region 6 would like to participate and speak at Advocacy Day, get a hold of **Graham Parrington!**