

Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



January 2011

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In This Issue

Letter From the Editor

Jim Theofelis
Page 2

Tips for Success in College

Ian Grant, Olympia Bureau
Page 2

Thanks to Our Sponsors

Page 2

Key to Employment

Terrell Rosetti
Page 3

U- District Allied Street Kids Against Negligent Keepers or "UDASKANK"

David Buck
Page 3

My Days in the Foster Care System

Max Ream
Page 3

Kawabe Memorial Center Visit

Diamonique Walker
Page 3

Creative Corner: Two Journeys For One Mind

Nickole Crites
Page 4

I Am Walking

Jasmin Esters
Page 4

Calendar of Events

Page 4

News From The Mockingbird Network

Page 4

Making the Connection BY DEONATE CRUZ



The US Administration for Children and Families reports a substantial proportion of the approximately 70 percent of children in foster care, who have siblings in care, are not placed together. It also is true that the connections between these siblings are not maintained. While many people shrug it off and think of the problem as irrelevant to the youth's care or placement, the fact of the matter is separating siblings is a big problem. Let me explain:

There are two main forms of sibling relationships; the first is a biological sibling relationship, which is a relationship between two siblings that are blood related. The second is dubbed a "fictive kin" relationship. This is a relationship between two siblings that do not share any blood relation. The reason for this distinction is because children are less formal about their view on who their siblings are, in comparison to adults. In general, this openness leads children to foster many more connections than adults. There are many things that influence the quality of a sibling relationship; some are: gender, age spacing, and order of birth. Ultimately the nature and importance of relationships vary with each individual.

One of the reasons that it is so important to maintain biological sibling relationships is because they are very powerful and critically important in the mental and emotional development of children. Siblings are a child's primary peer group, and through interactions with siblings a child learns social skills, particularly in conflict management, by negotiating with siblings. Siblings also are a constant base for support for one another. A 1996 study done by **Marjut Kosonen** showed: children who had a problem to solve would first seek out their mother, and then

they would turn to an older sibling before going to their father. This is a powerful fact that demonstrates the importance of sibling connections. Sibling connections also lower the chance of a child becoming an "at risk" youth. Often, children who are labeled as, "at risk youth," have behavior outbursts that are linked to trauma from their past. A 1994 study reports that warmth in sibling relationships is associated with less loneliness, fewer behavior problems, and higher self-worth. It also is true that siblings offer crucial support for isolated children, and isolation is



photo from www.oxleylearning.org

something many children placed in foster care feel. When looking at this problem, you really have to consider the flipside of not placing siblings together. Nothing positive can come from a lack of sibling connections. Again, many children who are in foster care without a sibling connection feel isolated and

neglected. This usually leads to the child having a higher risk for a number of negative outcomes, including placement disruption, running away, and failure to exit the system to reunification, adoption, or guardianship. It is the duty of the state foster care system to find a stable and long-term placement for any child in foster care and provide them with support and beneficial resources. But, the question still remains: Why are there still so many siblings under the state's guardianship who are not being placed together when it would be very beneficial to these children?

The research I conducted pointed to two things: 1) many foster parents who care for a child, who has a sibling in care, feel that they cannot "handle" any more children than they already have 2) it costs the state more money and is more work in the short run, to find a home that is willing to care for siblings. Now, it may be tougher than ever to do the right thing in the first place given the looming state budget cuts.

I hope as we work to balance the budget we also remember to keep in mind the lives of children and young people that are affected, and that maintaining sibling connections is a positive

and healthy choice that is beneficial to the children involved in the long run, and if we invest in them, it will be beneficial to the whole community.

¹ <http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/siblingsissues/>

Education is So Important BY AMANDA BEVINGTON



Most youth do not understand how important education really is to their future. Most youth feel that there is no point going to high school because the skills they teach feel pointless. A lot of youth feel that there are more

serious problems that they need to fix before going to school. It is important to understanding that if you do not graduate from high school it makes it extremely hard to fulfill your future and long term goals.

I am speaking to the many youth that are failing in school because I care and something needs to change. The children are the future, so without good education what will happen to us?

According to www.all4ed.org each year, approximately 1.2 million students fail to graduate from high school, more than half of whom are from minority groups. Over the course of his or her lifetime, a high school dropout earns, on average, about \$260,000 less than a high school graduate. The dropout problem is likely to increase substantially through 2020 unless significant improvements are made. Many people do not know that most dropouts start failing in middle school. Many youth that are in middle school are not ready for the transition to high school. There are many reasons why a youth might drop out of school - it could be anything from poor at-

tendance, failing grades, a learning disability to lack of encouragement, family problems inside and outside of home, and much more. Most youth need encouragement from teachers and their parents not to give up on their dreams and hopes. Some youth do not have family members to support their education and push them in the right direction, but there are people that are more than willing to help. It's always good to have a mentor that you trust or a guidance counselor that you can look up to.



photo from www.globalpost.com

I am fortunate to say that I have successfully graduated from high school, but it wasn't easy. I had many challenges that I had to overcome. I dropped out of school after my freshman year for a year and a half because I felt that school wasn't important for me. I engaged in many negative activities that led me to drop out of school. I thought I could get my GED and get

a job and support myself from there. I tried to take my GED, but found it a lot harder than actually staying in school. I decided in the middle of my junior year that I needed to do something with my life. I had dreams and goals to become successful and have a career. I knew I could overcome my fears and just needed to push my self a little harder.

According to www.right-mind.us.com provides some really interesting facts on high school drop outs.

- Dropouts are more likely than high school graduates to be unemployed, in poor health, living in poverty, on public assistance, and single parents with children who drop out of high school.
- Dropouts earn \$9,200 less per year than high school graduates and more than \$1 million less over a lifetime than college graduates.
- In 2004, dropouts were more than twice as likely as high school graduates to slip into poverty in a single year and three times more likely than college graduates to be unemployed.
- Dropouts are more than eight times as likely to be in jail or prison as high school graduates).

So before you start walking out on your education, remember what matters to you the most. And believe in yourself that you can make a change. Believe me without education it is extremely hard to achieve your goals.

Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



Dear Friends,

Happy 2011! 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 2011 Legislative Session which begins January 10th. The session will hold great challenge and opportunity to mobilize support for children, youth and families impacted by the system, as Governor Gregoire and the legislature grapple with a \$5.7 billion deficit for the 2011-2013 biennium. This is an unprecedented economic crisis and The Mockingbird Society will be laser-focused on safe housing for youth both under and over 18 years of age.

The Mockingbird Society will lead advocacy on behalf of youth and alumni of care in Olympia. We must not turn back the clock on the progress we have made to ensure safe housing for these young people. This year, we can retain Washington leadership by passing safe housing to ensure youth transition safely to adulthood. These programs

have a HUGE benefit to the young people who realize \$5.16 dollars for every dollar we invest in increased earnings; and taxpayers realize \$1.35 for every dollar invested. In addition to better outcomes communities become safer and there is less pressure on our cities and counties.

I invite each of you to SAVE THE DATE of February 18th for our annual Youth Advocacy Day! Join more than 200 youth and alumni of care as they advocate for themselves, their communities, and safe housing for that young person who doesn't yet know they will be in the foster care system.

Together we can make sure children in foster care receive the same opportunities, care and support as children from intact families.

Let's make it a year to remember!

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org



Please Join!

**The Mockingbird Society & the ASK-Y Community Coalition,
youth and alumni of foster care, homeless youth,
elected officials and community members
from across Washington state for:**

Youth Advocacy Day

Friday, February 18th, 2011
9:30 am – 3:00 pm

Tivoli Fountain – North Lawn
Olympia, WA

For directions and parking information:
www.ga.wa.gov/visitor/direction.htm

For more information and to RSVP, contact

Kara Sanders, (206) 407-2134
or Kara@mockingbirdsociety.org

The Mockingbird Network

To find a Mockingbird Network Chapter in your region, visit our website:
<http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org>

We Welcome Your Work!

We welcome submissions of articles, poetry, artwork, and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or with homelessness. If you want to be published in the *Mockingbird Times*, visit mockingbirdsociety.org and select *Mockingbird Times* under *The Mockingbird Network* or contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at kara@mockingbirdsociety.org. Note: If you have submitted something before that hasn't been published, we need your submission agreement in order to print it. Please submit again via the web location listed above. Because of space constraints, shorter poems have a higher chance of being published.

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.

Tips for Success in College BY IAN GRANT, OLYMPIA BUREAU



The publication of this month's *Mockingbird Times* comes at the beginning of the winter quarter at my new alma mater, The Evergreen State College. I thought that I would take the opportunity to acquaint you all with a few things that I know now that I wish I had known when I started here. While this is far from a comprehensive guide, I hope that these three tips will make your higher education experience a little smoother.

Tip #1: Avoid getting sucked in and establish a routine.

College was probably the most complete and sudden lifestyle change I made since I entered care. Most of my old routines, my old habits, simply didn't work in the new environment. If you're like me, you'll need to figure out how to restructure your life in a way that works for you. This is a potential source of lots of chaos and confusion; if you're living in campus housing, for example, you're going to be among a whole bunch of other students that are all doing their own thing - which may or may not mesh very well with what you want to do. It's very easy to simply go with the flow, and you can end up halfway through the quarter before you know it. Take the time to think about how to structure your life to accomplish your goal; if you don't establish a routine and stick to it, you're going to be at a serious disadvantage in the classroom.

Tip #2: Keep in touch.

Unless you're going to a local school, you've probably become somewhat separated from your old support network. It is vital to keep in touch; part of what motivates you and keeps you sane in the college environment is contact with the people that we care about, and it's very easy to lose track of that in the sound and fury of the typical college experience. The people that cared about you be-

fore you left still do; even if you haven't had the most successful of quarters, give them a call anyway. It might be just what you need to get back on the horse, or to stay on it.

Tip #3: Earn it on the page.

No matter where you're going to school, your professors are going to be pretty aloof compared to what you may have experienced in high school or other places. Unfortunately, it's the nature of the beast - you are one of many hundreds of students that your typical professor has to deal with on a day-to-day basis, in addition to their other activities (like research, writing books and articles, and speaking). A good relationship with your professor requires two things: taking the initiative and doing good work. You almost always have to be the one to initiate contact with your professor if you need something. That's what they're there for; shoot them an email if you need help, or even if you don't. Keeping that line of communication open will come in handy throughout your relationship with that professor. The other thing you have to do is make sure that you're turning in good written work. The only thing that your professor has to remember you by is the written work you hand to him or her; if you turn in forgettable work, they'll, well, forget about you. If you impress them on the page, they'll remember you off of the page.

If you're like me, you're already thinking about next quarter and how you can make it a good one; I hope this helps. Anybody coming out of care has already done more difficult things than any college can hope to throw in your way; remember that "You can do this!". Hold your head up, have a plan, stay in touch (both with your professors and with your support squad at home), and be persistent, and you'll win through. Good luck next term.

Thank You!

Joyce Anderson, Nina Berenfield, Rhonda Berry, Bill Block and Sue Leavitt, Mike Bobis, Baby & Co. Stephanie Brosio, Scott and Cindy Buchanan, Gerry Burnett, Representative Reuven Carlyle, Casey Family Programs, Lynne and David Chelimer, Karen Cowgill, Diane Coyne, Benjamin Danielson, Jennifer Dovey, Linda Foley, Stephanie Garlich and Jeff Reid, Shirlee Garrett, Alden Garrett, Ann Giesel and Malcolm Jollie, Constance Gold, Kim and Nancy Goldov, Barry Goren, Deanna Grace, Gretchen Grady, Makeba Greene, Jillian Gross, Jerrilyn Hamley, Lura Harrison, Jo Ann Herbert, Douglass Jackson, The Kawabe Center, Olive Larsen, Lyman Legters III, Carol Lucas, MAC, Suzann Marquess, Mark and Cheryl Marshall, Donna Mathus, Louise McIlraith, Linda McClamrock, PCA, Rose Quinby, Lance and Cindy Richmond, Eric Sano, Suzanne Shawger, Erin Shea McCann, The Alfred and Tillie Shemanski Trust, Ryanne Simonson, Lisa Smith-Putnam, Patricia Spence, Stuart Foundation, George and Beverly Theofelis, Anne Travis-Barker, Treehouse, Kevin Washington, Erin and Mike Welch, WDWillis Wealth Management, Gail Winberg, Mark Wittow and Gail Gatton, Susan Weiss, The YMCA, and YouthNet IL Staff.

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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**.

Key to Employment BY TERRELL ROSETTI



Employment is the key to financial stability, building a support network, positive self-esteem, and developing goals for the future. Jobs provide youth valuable work experience, help youth build references, learn money management skills and provide educational focus, but many foster youth are discouraged from working or they are not given the support they need to access employment opportunities and to develop skills.

I decided to write about this because I noticed that a lot of youth who are either in foster care or have aged out - and even those that are homeless - do not have jobs. There are reasons why I believe youth lack employment. The first reason is because youth don't want to settle for a minimum wage job. I talked to **Aaron Fox** at The YMCA Center for Young Adults, where resources are provided to foster youth and those that are experiencing homelessness. A key resource is employment assistance, whether it's helping with job readiness skills or providing a weekly list of job opportunities. He told me that "youth are discouraged from applying or even seeking a minimum wage paying job such as a



photo from www.ubalt.edu

fast food place or a retail job in the mall." Aaron also said, "This is not good, because as a youth, you have to take advantage of what you can get, and build experience and skills, so that you can move up in employment opportunities."

I know from experience that this is true. In the summer of 2009 I was having a hard time finding employment because it was a time when the economy was suffering. I ended getting into

My Days in the Foster Care System BY MAX REAM



My life in foster care began when I was five years old. Some of it is hard to remember because I was so young; I had different "fathers" in my life and was moved a lot. The other thing that made it hard was the custody battle between my mother and grandma. It went on for months and months. I ended up living at my grandma's house, along with my sister and brother, until they turned 26 and 19 and both moved and started doing their own stuff. During that time, I had a good social worker, **Jordan Kirk**. She listened and did her job well. It was hard to see my life put into such detailed paper work, but she did a good job.

At the age of about 15, I received help in a big way from the YMCA. I was a shy person, but they helped me do my resume. I also did the W.A.G.E.S. Program for about one year and received help with housing. All of these programs helped me to engage with other youth and build good networking skills. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) helped me access social security income which I needed because my disability made it impossible for me to work. The food stamp card was also important because I needed food. So, I went to the Belltown office and got the help I needed.

the YMCA WAGES program that provided me with an internship. I knew that they were going to only be paying me minimum wage for only twenty hours a week. I was discouraged because of the pay, but at the same time I was thankful and saw it as a chance to make some money. By going through this summer internship I fell in a groove of building good job habits and skills. I found it easier to find employment after this. I ended up gaining an internship at The Y because of this "groove" that I developed. I see the first step is to just swallow your pride and take whatever you can get to begin. And then you have the foundation, and all you can do is build from there and keep picking up tools along the way.

"Networking is important because according to statistics 80-percent of all jobs are never advertised. Which means networking and asking around is the key to opening the door to employment opportunities."

When youth are able to find a support system, they almost always succeed. It doesn't have to be a parent or family member; it can be someone out in the community. By having this support system or network you have someone to bounce ideas off of and you can look to them for opportunities. Networking is important because according to statistics 80-percent of all jobs are never advertised. Which means networking and asking around is the key to opening the door to employment opportunities.

Youth in foster care, as well as those that are experiencing homelessness, need to seek resources, and build a community network of people that will help them succeed. There is a song that I like by Too Short, and in one of the verses he says: "Get it while the gettin' is good." What this means to me is that you do what you have to do to be successful.

The way that I can give back is to help out with the Seattle King County Coalition for Homelessness. I'd like to help the organization teach youth how to advocate for themselves and also teach them about how government programs and resources work. I have been a mentor and peer leader for the past two years. It all started about a year ago, and by participating I was able to see how the advocacy ends up making new laws and support in the end. I have been with The Mockingbird Network for two years now. I am excited to be part of the Region 4 Chapter for Change. The annual events are an excellent thing to be a part of. I have taken part in the Foster Youth and Leadership Summit and also take part in Youth Advocacy Day, where all six chapters from across the state go to Olympia to talk to the legislators.

Finally, being a part of the Region 4 Chapter is an honor and I'm proud of myself for doing these things for the community and the organization. I have learned to teach other young people to advocate for themselves and to stand up for what they believe in. I also listen a lot to the stories or the questions they ask me. Helping to encourage them on what they do in life is an amazing experience, and I'm always pointing to the goal. I have had great success helping them. And, they help me feel stronger in my own life.

Submitting Letters

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

U-DISTRICT ALLIED STREET KIDS AGAINST NEGLIGENT KEEPERS OR "UDASKANK" BY DAVID BUCK



"Just like a Phoenix, we were born out of our ashes." These words were said by a man who I have known since my first days out on the streets homeless. Xavier is affectionately known as "the professor." He too was homeless at one time and is well known for his intelligence and kind manner. Three years have come and gone since I first met Xavier and his words ring true to me, as we both find ourselves in positions where we are striving to do what is right. I am working through The Mockingbird Society dedicated to building a world-class foster care system. Xavier, now on the Board of directors for **ROOTS homeless shelter**, (we both have accessed this shelter before), is working through the **U-District Allied Street Kids Against Negligent Keepers (UDASKANK)**, a collaboration of homeless youth dedicated to being a voice for the homeless youth community.

UDASKANK represents an ideal that service providers have a responsibility to the homeless youth community, one that most of us are unwilling to take on, but a responsibility nonetheless. The lives of homeless youth often are in their hands. It's a tough responsibility, and only the strong hearted can truly do such valiant work. But when service providers overstep boundaries and hurt youth, whether intentionally or not, who holds them accountable?

UDASKANK was started when one of its core members was involved in an insubordination issue involving an employee at an organization that supports homeless youth. The youth went through the proper channels to have something done about this. And, many throughout the organization noticed that this youth's request was not being recognized. That is when UDASKANK (formerly known as the Street Youth Council) was formed. At the time the Youth Council was

led by **Mike Champagne**. Xavier took the reins after he left. Homeless youth in the area, advisors, and service providers who backed up the mission of UDASKANK got involved and brought to light the awareness of some of the injustices in the local homeless youth community.

The goal is not just to hold service providers accountable from the homeless youth perspective. UDASKANK is dedicated to being the voice for the homeless youth perspective in general. I had the privilege of going to one of the meetings and found something that made me glow on the inside. I saw homeless youth, many who I know from my time on the streets, involved in a process where homeless youth became directly involved in a practical study. **Professor Peter House** from the University of Washington is seeking information from street youth so they can actively work to improve our community, both on a short and long term basis. This is why UDASKANK is unique and important. UDASKANK isn't waiting for others to solve problems. This new organization is striving to improve the community now, and its members are working on creating a locker/storage program for youth who are on the streets.

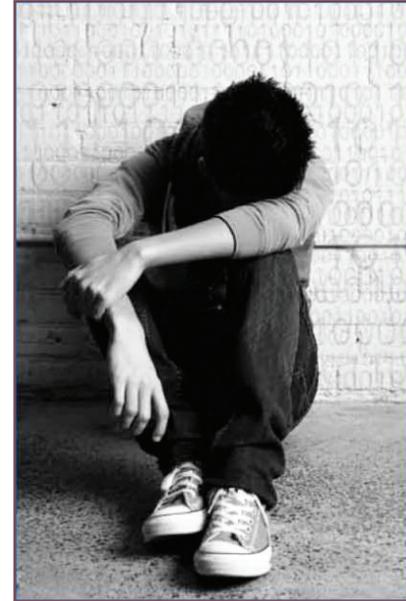


photo from www2.ncfy.com

UDASKANK follows a principle that appears similar to The Mockingbird Society's guiding truth, if a youth is going to be affected by a decision, then they should be heard and part of the decision-making process. The power of youth has been seen within The Mockingbird Society and Xavier seems to be aware of this power. UDASKANK is still a small collaboration that was formed no more than 6 months ago, but already we can see a collaboration that is dedicated to holding service providers accountable, helping service providers as a consulting group, and providing a voice for homeless youth by homeless youth. UDASKANK welcomes any and all supporters who share similar beliefs and ideals, if interested in observing a meeting please contact **Xavier Gary** at 1-619-760-3431.

Kawabe Memorial Center Visit BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER

Each holiday season, for the past 3 years, Mockingbird Network Representatives and Region 4 for Change chapter members have visited the Kawabe Memorial Home to spread holiday cheer to our neighbors and friends. Kawabe Memorial Center is a retirement home located just east of the International District, in what is commonly referred to as the Central District. The City of Seattle states that forty percent of the residents at Kawabe do not speak English; 86 percent are of Asian descent and 75 percent are Japanese or Korean. The other 14 percent of the residents represent many other ethnic backgrounds.

Each November, in preparation for our visit we make several pies to share with the residents at Kawabe. In exchange for our treats, they teach us to make some simple origami shapes like cranes, pianos, and of course samurai hats. It's always fun for us to visit them during the holidays and they definitely seem to love our time together. Getting out of the office is nice for us. And, inspiring Kawabe residents to do something different from their daily routine makes it even more rewarding.

Just last week, as well as the past few Decembers, the Network "Reps" picked out their favorite Christmas carols to sing to our friends at Kawabe. We sang "Silent Night" especially for them. They all love to sing that song. As a special treat, they sang a Japanese children's song to us. And the remaining time was spent eating sushi, which they had prepared and socializing with them. They always tell us how much fun they've had, as well as how thankful they are that we came.



Diamonique and Terrell with a resident of Kawabe Memorial Center

The more we go there, the more of an impact I feel like we have on them. It gives them something to look forward to and to be excited about each holiday season. They don't get a lot of visitors, so it's a really special and exciting time for them and for us. Not only are we doing our part to give back to the community, but we're also building a long lasting community relationship which is a big part of why The Mockingbird Society and The Mockingbird Network is so important as well.

<http://www.seattle.gov/tech/reports/TMF-report-final.pdf>

Creative Corner

Two Journeys For One Mind By Nickole Crites

Home to Home
around the world
nobody seems to care.

Many places
one child
two children.

Opening door...
shuts in your face.

On the road,
we have no place.

Angry minds flutter about.

One decision,
they give no doubt.

We are the kids
smart and bright.

all we need
is one chance

This is life.

I Am Walking By Jasmin Esters

I want to be something in the future and want it
to work

I am not a low life girl
I've been surviving this world
I've been through bad times and nothing about
the good times

I've been pushed to many different towns
To where I want it to stop now
So I'm taking my first step and I'm not going
back

Because I want to change
I got my pride and I'm on my way to success
So listen up I'm walkin on the path I got my
pride

And I'm not looking back
Because now I am walking on the path to success

Community Events

Region 1 (Spokane)

January 1st-19th: Exhibition: Collections and Cultural Fusions Event - 10-6pm
NW Museum of Arts and Culture

January 29th: NW Museum of Arts and Culture - Displays and learning on historic
material about Children of different Tribes

Region 2 (Yakima)

January 15th-16th: 21st Annual ASA Snowball Softball Tournament - Yakima
Parks and Rec.

January 15th-17th: 20th Annual MLK Basketball Tournament

Region 3 (Everett)

Every Friday Night: Open Mic - 7:30 pm Tim Noah Thumbnail Theater
Musicians, comedians, poets, artists. Family friendly venue.

January 8th: - 12-3pm. Bellingham International Maritime Museum
Cost: admission by donation.

Region 4 (Seattle)

Every week Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday through January 23rd:
Teatro ZinZanni - 6:30pm

Region 5 (Tacoma)

January 12th: Chapter Meeting - 3:30-5pm. PCA. Free Food.

Region 6 (Olympia)

1st and 3rd Saturdays: Youth 'N Action - 1-3pm. 618 7th Ave SW, Olympia WA 98512
www.youthnaction.org

Every Monday: Movie Night - 9pm. Le Veyuer Café: 404 East 4th Ave: Olympia WA
98501. Info: (360)943-5710, www.levoyeur.net/firms.com/.

February 18th: Youth Advocacy Day - 9:30am to 3pm.
Washington State Capitol Campus.

"Do all you can, with what you have, in the time that you have, in the place that you are."

~Nkosi Johnson, 1988-2001

Region 1 (Spokane) UNITE! (Understanding Needs and Implementing Transformations for Everyone) by Kristina Thomason

Hello, I'm the new Chapter leader for Region One and so far I absolutely love it and I am really enjoying meeting new people! Region One has been pretty busy. On November 17th we had a chapter meeting where we went over plans for the rest of the year and began to talk about Advocacy day. We are all very excited. We have a lot of new members and a lot of people who want to get involved! We just did a holiday kickoff with Crosswalk where kids from Crosswalk and Mockingbird went down to the Spokane plaza and we made and served meals to the homeless. It was a great success, and the kids of Mockingbird got to know each other better and bond which is always great to see. For our December chapter meeting we will be having a more laid back get together where we get to go ice skating! I am very stoked, and I know other kids are too. I can't wait for the New Year and what it has in store, not only for Region One, but for me as the new Chapter Leader! Have a great Christmas and rest of the year!

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

Happy Holidays from ACT FIRST! We are looking forward to the New Year and to what will happen in our Chapter and in the Network this coming year. This month Brenda and I will be co-facilitating the "Your Rights, Your Life" Training. This will be our last training of the year. We also are super excited because Casey Family Programs will be donating our Winter Festival Dinner! This will help us to be able to host a Gingerbread-making booth, a holiday inspired card making booth, and a fabulous gift booth. Stay tuned to the next issue to find out all about our awesome holiday festival!

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

This time of year can be good and bad for some. I remember growing up and the holiday celebrations were especially disappointing. For foster youth, this time can be a very discouraging because some of us are not always in connection with family. But the Mockingbird Region 4 for Change recognizes that and we do our best to create a family dynamic. This month we will be doing "White Dove" which is a gift exchanging game and everybody has to bring in something created or made from home. We also will be building Gingerbread houses and reflecting on the past year we spent together. Being around people that care about you can be all the difference in making someone's holiday season special.

Region 6 (Olympia) T.A.F.F.Y. (Truth and Action For Foster Youth) by Chris Bauer

I became a Chapter Leader to help advocate for the underprivileged and those in need. Having been homeless in the past, I find it heartbreaking that the best resource homeless youth can harness in Lewis County is the U.S. Post Office. Recently, I had a conversation with a 17 year old youth at the Amtrak Station. He told me that he sleeps in the atrium of Centralia's Post Office, a small but dry anteroom with heat and some privacy. Why: "There just isn't anything around here to help with my situation; I'm only 17, I can't find work and none of the shelters will admit me." If today's youth are the future of this country than why aren't we arming them with the skills and resources they need to support themselves? I believe we have the responsibility to give everyone a chance at success, regardless of background and status. With today's problems we need strong trusses to support the bridge of social evolution. That's why we're doing trainings for the youth at Haven House, serving meals for the homeless at Camp Quixote (TBA) and starting work on a local resource guide for low/no income people.



Region 3 (Everett) H.E.Y.M.A.C. (Hearing Every Youth Make a Change) by Garrett Nadeau

Representative Mike Sells joined us for our November chapter meeting. We took the opportunity to talk to him about safe housing for foster youth and why we think it should be retained. Joyce and Garrett facilitated a Mockingbird presentation for Representative Sells and new chapter members. Since it was our November meeting, our theme was Thanksgiving. We had lots of food including Pumpkin Pie! Overall it was a good meeting that gave us a great opportunity to represent Mockingbird and HEYMAC. Next month is our Christmas theme with Gingerbread houses to build and a good conversation with our legislative guests! We also will be conducting a "Know your Rights" training and Life Advocacy 101 Training for other youth in care.

News From

The Mockingbird Network

Your Needs, Your Voice



Region 5 (Tacoma) Cour'ige (Changing Our Unique Responsibilities Individualities Gaining Empowerment) by Janessa Thomas

When I first heard about the Mockingbird Society, I was a little flustered and didn't how the program could help provide the type of essential skill improvement training that I was seeking. I was looking for new ways to apply my skills and help better the foster care system. I already had hands-on training with community service by volunteering at the Boys and Girls Club, Safe Streets, and The Junior Reserved Officer Training Corps. I knew one important thing: I wanted to continue giving back to others by working to improve the foster care system. The vision I foresaw was: to be a voice, some way or somehow for the little children who couldn't voice their concerns. I wanted to help youth realize they are important too. And, with The Mockingbird Society, I found a passionate group of advocates who shared my vision.

In 2010, our chapter accomplished a lot. We have held chapter meetings and trainings and hosted a barbeque. It was a blast. In 2011 we are planning to spread COUR'IGE around the Tacoma area. We are preparing to march in Olympia, so we can advocate for youth in foster care and help change laws. We are most definitely trying to put The Mockingbird Society out into the world more. By spreading our wings, and flying, we can do it together! This is the start toward a great new year.