

Mockingbird Times,



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

July 2006

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation

Volume VI, Issue 7

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

In This Issue

Letter from the Editor

Jim Theofelis
Page 2

My Graduation

Summer Kidd
Page 2

Meet the Staff:

Renita Baskin
Renita Baskin
Page 3

Meet the Staff:

Samuel Martin
Samuel Martin
Page 3

Meet the Staff:

Jessica Garcia
Jessica Garcia
Page 3

Meet the Staff:

Zeb Willis
Zeb Willis
Page 3

Returning to School

Surri Evans
Page 3

It's Not Always Happily

Ever After

Jamica Henderson
Page 4

Creative Corner:

Death

Kelly Lovelace
Page 4

Creative Corner:

There is a Plan for Me

Starcia Ague
Page 4

My WASL Experience

Sam Martin
Page 4

The Becca Bill

MISTY
Lou Cook



Becca Hedman was a Tacoma-based runaway murdered in Seattle in 1993, at the tender age of 13, by a man who had given her money to have sex with him (1).

"The 1995 Becca Bill, named after Hedman ... requires schools to take repeated truants to court and allows authorities to lock up runaways." (2) A truant is defined as "One who is absent without permission, especially from school." (3). The cause of Rebecca Hedman's death was attributed to her being a runaway, and legislation (state law) was created to try and prevent such a horrible tragedy from ever happening again. The 1995 Becca Bill is the legislative bill that Washington State law created in response to Becca's premature death, a little over 10 years ago. Although the Becca Bill was initially created in the hopes of protecting WA State's most vulnerable youth, specifically, runaway and homeless youth, it is highly controversial because this bill gives the youth's power and voice to government institutions and potentially abusive parents/

guardians. Juvenile court systems and parents, through the Becca Bill, have the ability to jail a young person who misses too many days of school, and, once identified as a "youth at risk" (through a disturbingly easy process), the young person could be jailed for the slightest offense. According to the Seattle Bar Association, "In one case, the commissioner ordered a child to be in his room and in bed by 9 p.m. or risk incarceration." (4) Are we giving too much power to state institutions and the parents that some of these runaway youth are trying to desperately escape, by any means necessary?? What other sensible legislation can be created?? These are the central questions I will try my best to answer, in hopes of protecting this Nation's at-risk youth.

One of my main problems with the Becca Bill is that it inadequately and ineffectively addresses the needs of children who really need comprehensive services. According to the King County website, 50 percent of the homeless youth and runaways in Seattle are between the ages of 12 and 15 years old (5). If we really care about these young people, if we really want to keep them from self-destructing and becoming another painful statistic, then we need to address the real issues and find the roots of a societal problem. What are the roots of this problem and what are the solutions to the

heart-breaking problems of youth homelessness, suicide and drug abuse??? We need to keep digging deeper, even when it hurts, and find some sort of legislation that will protect our youth and disadvantaged young people. The Becca Bill doesn't take into account family conflict, sociology, geographies, demographics and how class, race and gender play into this struggle to keep our youth protected and safe. The Becca Bill makes it mandatory for King County's runaway and homeless youth drop-in centers and shelters to report any young runaways to the police or to the parents that they are running away from. How is this protecting our youth? Issues such as child prostitution, youth homelessness and the health, safety and well-being of youth runaways are incredibly difficult and important topics. We cannot be afraid to look into the deepest, darkest, coldest corners of our society, because only then can we bring truth to light and let the vulnerable youth know that there is hope in life.

In my utopian (ideal) world, there wouldn't be global homelessness, hunger, runaways, tough streets or any of these horrible wars, in and out of this Nation. However, I live in reality, and these things exist,

BECCA CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Self Mutilation

RAQUEL
GRANATH



Her tears seeped through the corners of her eyelids as she looked down to the slices protruding from her wrists. She exhaled deeply at the relief of the sight of her own blood flowing to her fingertips. She didn't understand why no one loved her. She was hurt that her boyfriend was cheating and disappointed in herself for putting up with it. She was angry at her teachers and peers; she could never seem to get good grades. She was frustrated with her mother who allowed herself to be governed by her step-father. All the stresses of life rushed at her and made her dizzy. The only way she has to cope is a ritual known to most as self-mutilation.

What Is Self-Mutilation?

Self Mutilation is the act of attempting to alter a mood state by inflicting physical harm serious enough to cause tissue damage to one's body.¹ Although it is not commonly used, approximately 1% of Americans utilize it, it is a serious psychological deficiency. Most limit self-injurious behavior to cutting. It can also include burning, head-bashing, pulling skin or hair, as well as carving and branding. It does not qualify as self mutilation if the primary purpose is to induce sexual gratification or spiritual enlightenment.

But Why?

Studies have shown that people who self harm are brought back to reason immediately. I speak from experience when I back

up this theory. When the emotions are so overwhelming that you literally want to scream until your mind levels out, simply to feel the sting of a blade against the skin, or see the blood coming down is like instant gratification. I'm not condoning self inflicted abuse, but on the other hand, when you're depressed it's a better than going all the way with suicide. Most people are disgusted with this ritual, but for the "cutter" it is such a relief.

Another reason why people harm themselves is because they don't have any other means to cope. Perhaps as a child they were punished for expressing their feelings of sadness and anger. Over time as these feelings build without any release, they may develop unhealthy amounts of stress that cannot be dealt with rationally.

The last and most probable reason is an imbalance of serotonin in the brain. The same chemical that causes depression may predispose some people to abusive behaviors by making them more impulsive than an average person. This tendency combined with guilt, anger, and sadness pushes them over the edge. Once this happens they discover the temporary relief of their distress and the cycle begins.

What Kind Of People Are That Crazy?

Those who inflict violence on themselves come from all different walks of life. Various ages and professions, from 11 year olds to senior citizens; from professionals to teenagers. Self-injury is almost as common as eating disorders, but since it is so highly stigmatized, most people keep their scars to themselves and are prepared with excuses when others ask.

Another thing, people who cut or burn themselves aren't any more psychotic than people who smoke or drown in a bottle to calm

their nerves. It's simply an unconventional coping method used to avoid the direct issue.

What Else Can One Do That's Not Self-Destructive?

Alternatives to cutting behavior are abundant. Instead of burning, try using ice cubes to numb the area. Instead of cutting, wear a rubber band around your wrist and snap it a few times to mimic the sensation. Instead of head banging, one could rub their temples and speak softly to themselves. Other activities include writing or even talking to the mirror about the situation. Think rationally and reason with yourself. If you practice consoling and calming down on your own, pretty soon it will get easier and easier to stay level headed and cope with your dilemmas.

I Still Need Help

If you're still looking for resources for you or someone you know that practices self-mutilation try these links and phone numbers.

Self-Injury Hotline

Toll-free: 1-800-DONT-CUT

American Self-Harm Information

Clearinghouse

<http://selfinjury.org>

Self Injury And Related Issues

www.siari.co.uk

Mental Health Resource Center

Toll-free: 1-800-969-NMHA

¹ <http://www.focusas.com/SelfInjury.html>

Letter from the Editor

**JIM
THEOFELIS**



In this issue of the *Mockingbird Times* you are introduced to some amazing young people—some of whom you have met through previous issues but a number are new to our program. I'm certainly not objective but I must say this is one of our most compelling issues. There is nothing like the insight and honesty of young people to change darkness into light, despair into hope and struggle into achievement. As you read their articles you will undoubtedly be touched by their stories and all that they have endured and survived. I hope you are also see how much passion and compassion these young people have toward their own personal growth as well as their commitment to improving and honoring the lives of other young people. They are young leaders who understand the difference between surviving and thriving—for themselves and their community.

FOSTER YOUTH ACHIEVEMENT ACT (HB 2002): As many of you know the 2006 Washington legislature passed HB 2002 which allows for 50 youth a year for three years (total 150) to voluntarily

remain in foster care if they enroll in college or a vocational-technical program. A workgroup has been meeting to develop the program including selection criteria, intake process and other tasks. It looks like the first 50 youth will not be able to begin until January 2007. However, in an act of good faith Children's Administration has agreed to allow youth to remain in foster care until the details of the program can be worked out. My understanding is that youth interested in remaining in foster care and participating in the HB 2002 program need to contact their state social worker to get their foster care extended. **If you have any further questions please contact Rick Butt (Washington State Independent Living Program Manager) at 206-923-4891.** Finally, I want to express my appreciation to **Dietra Clayton** who has served at Mockingbird Society for the past year as an **Ameri-Corp Volunteer**. Dietra has brought great energy and passion to the Youth LEAD program and the overall mission of the Mockingbird Society. Her time at Mockingbird Society concludes at the end of July but we're hoping she continues to visit. **On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff and youth at Mockingbird Society we wish Dietra and Astrid (her adorable 18 month old son) the very best.**

 Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, 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.

My Graduation

SUMMER KIDD



Summer Kidd (center) with her social worker, Selia Koenig and supervisor Brandon Dutton.

On Monday June 12th DSHS social workers from Everett, Smokey Point, Monroe, and Bellingham gathered at **Lombardi's Restaurant** to honor the class of 2006 foster children who had graduated from High School or completed their GED. I was one of the graduates.

Social Workers from Everett work all year raising funds for this event in addition to recruiting sponsors. They put a lot of pressure on us to earn the right to attend.

Eighteen graduates were honored at the event and there were three who were unable to attend but will receive everything we did. Over half of the graduates have enrolled in college or tech school. Three have received the **Governor's Scholarships**.

The restaurant was closed to the public and decorated beautifully. When we entered there was live music playing. **Beth** and **Aaron** donated their time to entertain us. On each table was a gift bag full of store gift cards, prepaid phone cards,

certificates for hair cuts at **Everett Beauty and Barber College**, and **Starbucks** gift cards. CWS supervisor **Brandon Dutton** was the master of ceremonies and he told us lots of people are survivors, but we are total survivors.

The guest speaker was **Adam Cornell**, the Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for Snohomish County and outspoken advocate for foster children. He gave an inspiring presentation about his experience in foster care and how he overcame adversity, completed college and became a successful attorney. He told a wonderful story about his foster mother, who did so much to shape his life. He also told us the best thing we could do for ourselves is to read more.

Each social worker presented their graduates and told about our accomplishments. It was amazing how many people had received scholarships and accomplished so much while in foster care.

Then the really good stuff came out. **KidsDream** of Snohomish County provided us each with a huge basket of household items, such as dishes, flatware, pots and pans, coffee maker, bedding, bath sets, and glassware. Sponsors of the event were CWS workers, **Lombardi's Restaurant**, **KidsDream**, **Starbucks**, **Everett Beauty and Barber College**, **Snohomish Java Inn**, **First Presbyterian Church** in Everett and **New Life Center** in Everett.

It was a great way to end my high school career as I begin my new journey in life. I have been accepted at **Everett Community College** and have scholarships to complete my first year.

Get Published — Get Paid!

We are looking for articles, poetry, artwork and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or homelessness. If you want to be published in the Times, contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org. For more info and to check us out, go to www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

HB 2002 Reminder

New legislation allows youth to remain in care and receive their medical benefits while pursuing higher education. Talk to your caseworker for details about taking advantage of this legislation or contact Rick Butt at (206) 923-4891 for more information.

Thank You's

Medina Foundation; Northwest Children's Fund; Bruce Cross & Perkins Coie; Brian Cooper; Robert Whitsitt; Donna Mathus; Elizabeth Barr; Trudy Sundberg

MEET OUR STAFF

Executive Director
Jim Theofelis

Youth LEAD Coordinator
Najja Morris

Operations Manager
Ros Ghan

Public Relations
Darcie Gray

Executive Assistant
Lauren Frederick

Americorps Member
Dietra Clayton

Senior Youth Representatives
Misty Lou Cook, Dennis Fisher, Jamica Henderson

Youth Representatives
Larishica Asher, Terasa Asher, Cassandra Davis, Surri Evans, Jessica Garcia, Raquel Granath, Renita Baskin, Samuel Martin, Zeb Willis

Contributing Writers
Summer Kidd, Kelly Lovelace, Starcia Ague

Volunteers
Patricia Gray

ABOUT US: The Mockingbird Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to building a world class foster care system and improving the other systems that serve children and adolescents involved in homelessness and foster care. 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 Mockingbird Society are paid between \$7.63 and \$8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, 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 U.S.A, 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 2006 The Mockingbird Society.

A Mockingbird Inside Your Mailbox

Make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable youth and support the Mockingbird Society!

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

Suggested Donations:

\$ 1,000+..... Protector \$500-999..... Caretaker \$250-500..... Organizations \$50+..... Supporter \$25..... Foster Parent

NAME _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to: The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South Suite 240, Seattle WA 98144, or donate online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

Please bill me for the amount indicated.

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.

Meet the Staff

**RENITA
BASKIN**



Hello my name is Renita-Reene Baskin, I am 14 years old. I've been through things not even a prison inmate should be put through; but hey, this is life and things like that happen daily especially to the young. I know you are wondering why you should care what my name is and what I've been through. So let me let me stop and tell you a little about myself then you'll get the moral of my story.

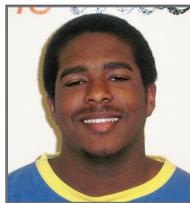
I was born at General Hospital in Riverside California. I spent my childhood years moving from Victorville Ca. to Los Angeles Ca. mainly because those are the places my family lived. Both places that my mother moved us to were bad environments to raise children. Victorville is a more complex environment versus L.A. which is a more urban type. So of course these kind of small towns that are placed right in the middle of the desert have a nice family friendly neighborhood. Sadly all it took was a little negative energy to corrupt to whole town. As for L.A., everybody already knows that east L.A. is very gang related and dangerous.

Right after my 11th birthday, I got hit by a car and had to have surgery in my knee. That's when I finally got to know my real father. I couldn't walk on my feet so I needed constant care and I couldn't get that from my mother since at the time she had 8 other kids to care for. That arrangement worked out just fine until I learned how to maneuver around on my own. That's when he sent me to my grandmother and the next the step was C.P.S., right along with my other siblings.

Since then, I have been taken into custody twice. Mainly because of the unorganized Child Protective System. On top of that, I was recently living in one of the Seattle group homes where I received very little help. Due to the very limited amount of space, once my time was up I had no choice but to leave.

So, this brings us to the present. I've always had my own opinions on things and ways to help struggling teens, young adults and also pregnant teens. I want them to be more encouraged to receive help as often as needed so they become more self-reliant. Once I saw what the Mockingbird Society was about and how they work toward paving a straight path for young adults to walk in, I had to be apart of their society.

**SAMUEL
MARTIN**



My Name is Samuel Martin and I am 15 years old. I was born and raised in Seattle, Washington. I attend Rainier Beach High School. I enjoy playing football, participating in my community when I have any free time. I am a student speaker, and I tutor elementary students. I am very enthusiastic and trust-worthy.

My experiences in kinship care have been very difficult, I have dealt with people I have never met in my life. I began living with a family member who was an alcoholic and abusive. After that I moved in with another relative who was very neglectful and I was brought in on top of her other 5 kids. Now I currently stay with an aunt and although there are difficulties, we are working things out.

There are a few issues that are really important in today's society. I think it is the foster-care system and African American community. I think that people tend to overlook people in both groups. Both of these cases involve increased education. I feel that people need to put a lot more focus into working on helping kids get into school instead of letting them stand on Henderson St.. I honestly think that a group of people can't do anything for themselves unless they assume responsibility. I also think that if that group has no support that it is twice as hard to make a step forward.

If I could change one thing about the foster-care system, I would change the pay. I think that if some foster care providers didn't get paid as much, they wouldn't be in this trade just for the money. The amount of pay can really weed out the good providers from the bad ones.

I joined Mockingbird Society because this will give me the opportunity to express myself through writing and my opinions about the world today. I really want people to hear my voice. I also would like to meet people and establish a bit of a support system here at Mockingbird.

All incoming Letters to the Editor should be addressed to Mockingbird 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 Editorial Staff.

**JESSICA
GARCIA**



My name is Jessica. I recently started working with *Mockingbird Times*. I'm in a positive frame of mind with *Mockingbird Times*, because I'm learning a lot and changing things around in my life. I've been in the system for almost 12 years and I've had my share of ups and downs, but have had to manage what's thrown at me at given moment is what life offers me. I know look at it this way "God wouldn't put me through anything that I couldn't handle."

What I've experienced while being in the system, is not a whole help. Being dependent, moving from place to place, Learning ways to survive being obedient. I had to grow up quick and what mean by quick I had to take care of my two little brothers and look out for my brothers and myself. When I was split up from my brothers I was so used to worrying about them that I started to worry about the other kids that I was placed with.

There are some positive's that I've done for myself while being in the system is I got into barista training BTEP, going to school to receive my High School Diploma. I also have been clean and sober; I also participate in the ILP program through the YMCA. I plan on attending college to become a cosmetologist. I have high goals for myself, that doesn't mean that I can't reach my goals.

I'm always asked by people who am I. Most the time I don't know the answer to the question, but I do have a lot of determination in what I would like to do with my life.

ZEB WILLIS

My name is Zeb Willis I am 17 years old I love to cook and read and I also love to play basketball. Other than that, I pretty much a laid back person. There is another part to my story; like being in foster-care. Although I really don't want to get in to the details, I have had bad experiences with foster and group homes but that's not stopping from me from doing my thing. Right now I live in a group home in Auburn. It's ok for a start, but there's no place like home.

Right now my focus is to be a good person and stay out of trouble. That means keeping a job and staying in school. Recently, I was put in Crisis Residential Clinic (CRC) (which is a place for runaways) which is where I met Dietra who came there to talk about jobs and help us with writing and stuff. Then I had ask her to tell me more about Mockingbird Society; she had told me a lot about this place and she gave me her number.

As soon as I got out of CRC, I called and she told me to come in and give it a try. Everything worked out fine so I began working and now I'm on payroll. I'm set I guess. You can say my life has changed a lot, because now I'm working and on the right track.

Summer Is Here

Please remember:

- Keep hydrated;
- Keep the sunscreen on;
- Wear a lifejacket;
- Have fun!

Returning to School

**SURRI
EVANS**



I dropped out of school at the age of 16 and was in foster care at the time. Now, I'm 18 with a ten-month-old daughter (Sa'maiah) and am having a hard time making the decision on whether or not to return to school. For some of us, it's a hard decision to make because we have either aged out of the system, having a rough time in our lives right now, or both. As a young adult, it is especially hard with no family support. As of right now, I just completed the Barista Training through **Youthcare**, and I have quite a busy schedule here at Mockingbird Society.

The decision to go back to school is the number one thing on my mind, but being the only provider for my family it's hard, so I came up with a plan for myself. Since I only have one test to pass for my GED, I decided to look into tutoring through **Treehouse** so that I can get help on the subject needed for me to accomplish my goal. I figure since I'm always here in the 2100 building it

shouldn't be hard for me to do. There is also good motivation for me being with the **YMCA Independent Living Program**. There is a grant called an ETV (education training voucher) which entitles you to up to five thousand a year for education and living expenses, when you complete a GED or high school diploma and hold one class at a community college. With that said, things should go a little easier for me from this point on.

The two things that scare me about my decision is that, 1) My whole schedule will change. Instead of me working full time to support my daughter, I will have to split my focus and adjust to not only working but learning as well. 2) Will I still make enough money to cover my bills and survive? Once again, I've thought about the issue, and I know that if I put my mind to it, along with the right support I am capable of reaching my goals.

In closing, I'm still making up my mind but am getting closer to the decision to go back to school. I know that in the end I will have success and a better education for myself and for my child. And when she gets older, she can always look back and see that I made the decision to finish, and I did it not only for myself but for her.

Summer Arrives at Mockingbird Society!



Americorp member Dietra Clayton with the newest member of the Mockingbird Family, Cinnamon.



Youth Representatives Jamica and Renita enjoying post-deadline games in the sun.

BECCA CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

so all we can really do is unite and work toward common goals, founded on common ground. I recently discussed these global and local issues with **Valerie Douglas**, who just happened to be working as an outreach worker at a Seattle homeless youth drop-in center when the Becca Bill was first passed into law. Reflecting, she said, "There used to be an emergency shelter for youth ages 16 - 21 in the University District called **Roots** and we'd see a lot of young people accessing this shelter and these (social and human) services". "However," she said, "after the Becca Bill was passed, we didn't see that many young people utilizing (homeless youth) resources". Let me put it this way: if you were a typical runaway youth, between the ages of 12 and 15, and you were running away from a seriously abusive "home", would YOU go to a drop-in center that would report you for accessing basic services like shelter, food and clothing??? I have seen countless youth in Seattle experience serious conflict with needing to go to a drop-in center or shelter, but then ending up sleeping under a bridge or with a shady drug dealer because of the Becca Bill's mandatory reporting laws for shelters and drop-in centers. This bill is NOT helping Seattle's homeless youth, and in my personal opinion, it creates more problems and barriers for homeless youth and only makes the struggle for life free from suffering all the more difficult to achieve.

So then, what are we to do at this crossroads? We know that the Becca Bill is creating more problems for homeless youth than it is solving, but what are the next steps, the next laws, the next bold moves for us to make?? My dream is a COMPREHENSIVE Federal Law that protects our most vulnerable children, called something like, "**The Vulnerable Children Protection Act of 2007**". Valerie Douglas suggested optional supportive family reconciliation groups, extending the mandatory time period for reporting a youth (in regards to drop-in centers and runaway shelters) to at least 72 hours, a policy enforced by the majority of the Nation. In any case, we must ask ourselves, "What do we have to offer young people under the age of 18?". What alternatives are we going to create for them??

For more info about the Becca Bill go to <http://www.wsba.org/media/publications/barnews/archives/1999/apr-99-becca.htm>. If you know anyone creating a Federal Child Runaway Protection Act/Bill/Law, please have them contact me at: misty_lou_cook@yahoo.com

(1,2) http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/194800_becca12.html

(3) <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/truant>

(4) <http://www.wsba.org/media/publications/barnews/archives/1999/apr-99-becca.htm>

(5) <http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/humanservices/fys/HomelessYouth/HomelessYDemographicData.htm>

It's Not Always Happily Ever After



**JAMICA
HENDERSON**

I am currently reading **Its Not Always Happily Ever After**. This book was written by students at John Marshall and American Indian Heritage Schools. This book was put together with the help from this organization called 826 Seattle. In this book they all share stories of important events in their lives. Many of them spoke about pieces of childhood that they feel they missed out on. They also reflect about "heading down the wrong road" at a young age.

In "Devonté's Untold Story" he talks about his bad temper and activities he did while in middle school. I like how he shared that as he got older he knew that he needed to change his ways: this was what encouraged him to do so: "to this day when I have a slip-up I try to think of my grandparents and how they would feel about what I am doing".

What I like about this book is everyone has a different story about their life. I also like how they realized and admitted that what they were doing was wrong and would hurt them in the long run. I personally feel that this is a good skill to have. If you know what you are doing is wrong and keep on doing those things, than the only person who can stop you is you. Once they saw the damage that they were doing to themselves and others that love them, that's what made them stop and get it together. What I have also learned while reviewing this book is that most teenagers have a rebellious stage in their life. How can you stop that? You can't; it is apart of life, but what we can do is still believe in them and give them a chance. Once you give someone a chance to fall down and get back up, they have the opportunity to realize their own mistake and realize that they don't want to experience that again.

If you are interested on learning more about the book and the organization involved you can visit the website at www.826seattle.org.

My WASL Experience

SAM MARTIN

I am 15 years old and I recently took the WASL and I don't think this test should be hated as much as it is. Do I believe it should be a graduation requirement? No, but I do believe that it should have some significance and value. If you want to have an assessment with accurate scores, it has to put something on the line. This test is only hard for people who don't take it seriously. I don't think that it is impossible to pass. I was fortunate enough to pass all three parts and to have a teaching staff who worked a lot harder than what they had to.

My school was almost centered on the WASL for a large time. We even had an extra period added once a week. Even with all the studying, I don't think that there is ever really a way to prepare for a test like the WASL. You never really know when a student is ready until he or she takes the test. I even asked a few teachers in my school if they think that they could pass the WASL and most of them said yes, but they also said they wouldn't be able to do it without seeing what is on the test first.

A huge problem was the math which over 46 percent failed. It was suggested that all students should be in the same math class for that grade, which is Algebra 2. The biggest question is, are the scores improving? They are when you compare



Creative Corner

Death

KELLY LOVELACE

Your words hurt me
So do your fists
Your voice in my head
Makes me want to slit my wrists
You gave me the razor
And held out my arm
Your eyes glanced over
To see my blood so warm
I look up into your eyes
And I dint see a man
Why didn't I realize ?!
The devils holding my hand



There is a Plan for Me

STARCIA AGUE

- Sometimes I wonder why my parents had me when they were so young,
- And why couldn't they wait until they were older and mature before they had fun,
- How come when I was born they didn't do everything they could to love me
- If I was climbing a tree, they didn't care and went there to see,
- Why did you and dad fight so much? And then blame it all on me?
- That's probably had something to do with my insecurity,
- I wish I could remember more about when I was younger, besides sex, violence and drugs,
- All I ever wanted from my mom and dad was a hug.
- I grew up thinking my family was normal,
- That was up until I went to school and everyone around me was way formal,
- How come when I had lice all the times you didn't take care of it right?
- Instead you wanted to argue bicker and fight,
- I was the fat, ugly, red head growing up,
- Nobody even wanted to look at me or say "whats up?"
- You can only be rejected by so many people
- Before you start to treat everyone you met unequal
- My mom kicked me out when I was 11 and said I was a burden
- I didn't know where to go or what to do I was so uncertain
- I soon fell into the vicious cycle of sex violence and drugs
- It wasn't long after that I started kickin it with thugs
- I used to being a bully to cover up my emotions: fear, guilt and pain
- I literally didn't know what to do in my life anymore and thought I was going insane
- You can only follow that life style for so long
- Before you get booked like me and five and a half years of your life are gone
- Getting locked up was the best thing that ever happened to me
- Its taken me a long time to turn my life around tremendously
- And when I am finally free
- Ill tell everyone Jesus Christ is my savior, and he will forgive you for your sins just as my gracious father in my heaven has forgiven me

It's Seafair Time!

Don't forget, Seafair is here! For event details, visit www.seafair.com

them to the test taken in 7th grade but you can't compare them from year to year. A teacher referred to it as "comparing apples to oranges."

The states goal is that at least 70% of students pass. 83% passed the writing and 85% passed reading. This seems to be a significant increase, but it still seems like people look at it as "ok" to be unsuccessful at math when Algebra 2 is somewhat in society. It just doesn't really make sense that people frequently say "I can't do this, I haven't done math in years." Most people don't understand that math can be just as valuable as reading and writing. When you consider that some of their parents/guardians act like they don't care about

math, how do you think the student will have a positive attitude?

It honestly comes down to the fact of studying hard for this test. Unfortunately, the biggest conflict is that teachers also have to teach the regular curriculum that is required before the students graduate. I think that it is doable with practice, because when I took the test I really was afraid. The test is hard without a doubt. It isn't as hard as everyone makes it seem. I think over the course of time, the scores will be where the state would like them to be. This year was a trial and there is room for improvement which will happen eventually.