

Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



June 2010

Volume XI, Issue VI

In This Issue

Letter From the Editor

Jim Theofelis
Page 2

A Change for the Greatergood, No Matter How Small

David Buck
Page 2

Teen Pregnancy Rates in the US

Diamonique Walker
Page 3

The House on the Corner

Ian Grant
Page 3

Creative Corner: I'm Almost There

Jasmin Esters
Page 4

The Rose

Randy
Page 4

Calendar of Events

Page 4

News From The Mockingbird Network

Page 4

Youth Leader to Spend the Day with DSHS Chief BY IAN GRANT



This year, **The Mockingbird Society** is partnering with the Department of Social and Health Services Secretary **Susan Dreyfus** to offer a very special opportunity to partici-

pants in the **2010 Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit**. Youth from across the state were invited to submit essays about leadership to a panel of community leaders and child welfare experts. The author of the winning essay will spend the day with Secretary Dreyfus.

It is important to realize that this is absolutely *unprecedented*. Never before has the person in charge of Washington's *entire child welfare system* invited a youth in care or an alumni of care to spend a day with her. This lucky youth will be able to see firsthand how big a job it is to oversee policies for children and families in need in our state. The Mockingbird Society applauds Secretary Dreyfus' commitment to making sure that the people most affected by the child welfare system have a voice in how policies are made and people are served.



DSHS Secretary Susan Dreyfus



Members of The Mockingbird Society and DSHS Secretary Susan Dreyfus

Of course, the challenge of picking a winner from over 90 amazing applicants was not an easy one, and the Selection Committee had their hands full determining who would receive the prize. Youth were asked to write an essay on leadership and specifically they were asked: *What would you tell a state policymaker about the child welfare system?* Each region choose the top ten essays, and then a

committee of luminaries from across the child welfare spectrum, including **Elbridge Stuart** from The Stuart Foundation, **Ron Murphy** from Casey Family Programs, retired Supreme Court Justice **Bobbe Bridge**, as well as Mockingbird's own **Jim Theofelis** and others scored them based on the total composition.

A winner has been selected, and we are looking forward to announcing who will spend the day with the Secretary at the Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit on June 26th. In the meantime, we'd like to thank all of you who applied for your interest, and we look forward to seeing you at the Summit!

Run Away Teens Need Stability BY AMANDA BEVINGTON



Every year more adolescent teens run away from home. According to the **National Conference of State Legislatures** (*nsl.org*) statistics estimate between 1.3 and 2.5 million runaway and homeless youth are living on the streets. Five thousand homeless youth die each year from assault, illness, and suicide. And, more than one-third of these young people have been in foster care, with nearly half of those leaving foster care becoming homeless within one year. One in 5 youth in the US, runaway before age 18. The question is what is underneath these statistics?

Being a runaway means you are under the age 18 and are away from home (or other residence) at least one night or more without parent permission. Being homeless or a runaway means that you are at a higher risk for physical abuse, illness, and sexual abuse.

I was adopted out of care at a young age, and most people think when you are adopted all of your problems are resolved. That was not the case for me. When I lived with my adopted family I struggled a lot due to communications issues. I felt I was missing something in my life, because I didn't have any connection

with my birth family. At the time, I felt the only solution to my problems was to run away. But, being on the streets did not make life any better for me. I dropped out of school, I was unemployed, and I was getting arrested repeatedly, in part, for being a runaway.

"One in 5 youth in the US, runaway before age 18. The question is what is underneath these statistics?"

I thought if I ran, and then returned home that people would start giving me attention and affection. I wanted them to say how much I meant to them and I wanted to hear that they "didn't want to lose me." But, by running away, I found myself alone. The only thing I had were my survival skills. I needed to provide for myself by getting clothing, food, money, and shelter, and when you are a runaway you do not have many options for to do so.

Some common reasons why youth runaway are because of family problems, trouble at school, neglect, abuse, transition from foster care or other public systems, and economic

Transitional Living Program

BY JERRY BOBO



Transitioning to adulthood is tough for everyone, but it can be especially hard for youth who were touched by the child welfare system. One program that helps on that path to adulthood: transitional living programs.

These programs gain referrals through case managers and some are an extension of the **Youth Care Housing Program**. The time period and rules for transitional housing vary. I looked at several and they range from offering six months of stable housing for homeless youth to up to two years. Programs that offer more time, allow youth to stabilize and get ready for true independence. The transitional living programs have less structure and are more like the real world, but they give you the self confidence to ultimately survive on your own. These programs do not discriminate on the basis of race, gender or sexual orientation.

I live in transitional housing and know firsthand what a difference the program has made in my life. I talked to a few other youth that live in transitional housing to get the inside scoop, and another point of view. I also talked to the program manager of **Youth Care's Isis House**. Isis House and **Home of Hope (HOH)** are both featured here and have a strong partnership.

Shortly after I started working at The Mockingbird Society, I found out about transitional housing. I was looking for stable living circumstances and my supervisor told me about Home of Hope (H.O.H) Apartments. To qualify to live there, I was treated in the same way I would have been if I were moving into a private apartment. I was treated like an adult and that is what I really like about the transitional housing program. Everything that a person has to do while living on their own, is what I have done and do. It is preparing me for life after care. I have been living at Home of Hope for over a year now. Having my own apartment is a dream come true, all boundaries are set by me, for what makes me comfortable, and that is apart of independent living.

The **Independent Youth Housing Program** (IYHP) is another great program. IYHP provides rental assistance and case management to eligible youth aging out of the state foster care system.¹ I had the opportunity to speak with **Josephine Davis** who has been living in this program for five months. She said, "I love living in the program. It has changed my life because it took me out of being homeless and now I am stable. My foster parents had kicked me out. If I follow the rules and pay my bills then I won't get kicked out of IYHP. I am now in charge of my life, and take care of my self."

I feel the same way about H.O.H. It is just like following rules at someone else's house, the only difference is that it's my house and I have to pay bills in order to keep a roof over my head. I asked Josephine, what is the easiest part of living in the program, and what would you tell a new comer entering the program?

"The easiest part of living in IYHP is the financial help, and I would tell a new comer to pay their rent and not to screw up a wonderful opportunity of a

RUN AWAY TEENS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

TRANSITIONAL LIVING, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



Dear Friends,
June 2010 marks our 5th Annual Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit.

Youth and alumni of care come together from every corner of Washington State to give voice to a population of youth legally and morally dependent on the state as "parent."

At the Summit, youth and alumni of care are given a platform and opportunity to stand up for themselves and those that follow them to make constructive change. Without advocacy, their life challenges can seem too complex and insurmountable. These young people are full of potential of and promise searching for genuine opportunity. They are in the system through no fault of their own, and without forums such as the Summit they, along with their wisdom and insight, too often go unseen and unheard.

Their issues are featured monthly in The

Mockingbird Times and touch on everything from transitional living skills to teen parenting -- from inspirational civil rights leaders to how to improve group homes. I'm struck in every article by the ability of youth to reflect on their own experience, and moreover, to learn and lead.

I invite you to read and reflect along with us. Contained in their stories is an essential truth: systems don't change lives, families and relationships do. And, in the case of these children, who have been taken from their parents into state care, we are the state --- you and I.

Please join me in supporting them as they emerge from the Summit. The Network Youth will be ready with their 2011 legislative agenda to seek reforms from increasing safe housing to safer family environments. They will be filled with the hope that their work will make it better for those children who through no fault of their own will end up in foster care.

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

A Change for the Greatergood, No Matter How

Small BY DAVID BUCK



On Thursday April 29th, flags were lowered to half-staff across our nation to honor the life a woman whose actions will benefit many future generations. She was a foster care caseworker for the state of New York, an educator, and a lifetime advocate for civil rights. Her name was **Dorothy Height**, and she has been called the "Godmother of the Civil Rights movement."

She began her career as a case worker with the **New York City Welfare Department**. Her work focused on youth and the case-loads were heavy. At the same time she worked as a teacher at the **Brownsville Community Center in Brooklyn**. In 1938, **First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt** and Ms. Height joined forces to plan a world youth summit designed to bring young people from many nations together to advocate for peace and understanding. This would spark a lasting relationship between the two women.

That same year Dorothy Height was hired by the YWCA. She spent the next several years working to end segregation within the YWCA and inspiring unity within the neighboring communities. In 1957, Height was named president of the National Council of Negro Women, a position she held until 1997. During the height of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Height organized "Wednesdays at Mississippi," which brought together black and white women from the North and South to create a dialogue of understanding. She also marched with **Dr. Martin Luther King** through the deep South and can be seen in historical footage, in the 1963 March on Washington. And, later in life she worked to improve some of the negative portrayals of black family life by launching the Black Family Reunion Program which continues to this day.

According to Height, "Without community service, we would not have a strong quality of life. It's important to the person who serves as

well as the recipient. It's the way in which we ourselves grow and develop."

Dorothy Height started out as a case manager, and became civil rights icon. To the end of her life she didn't distinguish between the two roles. To her she felt like all work done for the greater-good, no matter how small, is of equal value, and as important as any that should be remembered throughout history.



Dorothy Height
www.phillisremastered.wordpress.com

Dorothy Height is famous for her work ending segregation within the YWCA and getting them involved in the civil rights movement. No one can question the impact she has made for future generations in the United States of America. When she said that she did not distinguish between her work as a case manager, and her work as a civil rights activist, those words inspired me. I feel the same way. I am particularly proud of my work here at The Mockingbird Society, no matter how small.

We at the Mockingbird Society are working towards the greater good. And we have succeeded on many fronts, but it's a long road and the words of Dorothy Height ring true for me, and hopefully will inspire others.

Dorothy Height was a model for humankind as it should be. She dedicated her life to striving for social change and justice, from a case worker for foster youth to marching with Dr. Martin Luther King; she always strove towards an ideal making the world a better place. People like Dorothy Height drive me in my ideal that I might be able to achieve some good as well. To me it doesn't matter how small of a change, or how big of a change we make, as long as we make the world a better place for future generations, Whether a case worker trying your best to give foster youth a chance, to being a spokesperson for the civil rights movement, we have all done our duty.

<http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local-beat/Civil-Rights-Icon-Dorothy-Height-Dies-at-98-91581204.html>
<http://www.ncnw.org/about/height.htm>
<http://www.cnn.com/2010/US/04/20/obit.height/index.html>

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 publishing a more robust online edition in 2010. This also will allow us to conserve resources and reduce costs. So, watch for regular updates on our progress. 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.

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.

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.

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 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**.

Teen Pregnancy Rates in the US BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



Every year around 750,000 teenaged girls will get pregnant in the United States. That means more than one-third of girls get pregnant before the age of 20. The United States has the highest teen pregnancy rate in the industrialized world.

Sadly, in some situations teenage girls get pregnant and get kicked out of their living arrangement. Being a teen mother myself, I'm thankful that I have accepting parents that they have supported

my decisions. But not everyone is so fortunate. I recently talked to someone who just encountered this situation. She got kicked out of her home (with her parents) because she refused to have an abortion. So, where does a pregnant teenager go?

In Seattle, there are resources available to young mothers. First time mothers can take parenting classes or join support groups. There also are group homes that are designed for teen mothers and even independent living programs for this specific population. These places can give teen mothers the support they need to become great and successful mothers, and young women, while guiding them on the transitional path to adulthood.

At **Aridell Mitchell Home**, they accept young mothers between the ages of 15-17 and can house up to 6 families at a time in individual apartments. This program requires young women to stay in school, get work training and experience, and provides youth with the skills to live independently. They also offer case management and help the young people to transition

and find a new home upon turning 18.

Teen Parent Home of Seattle is a group-home style with the same concepts as the Aridell Mitchell Home. But instead of apartments, young mothers/parents live in a single house together with their own rooms (with their children) and take responsibility for doing their share of chores around the house.



Young mothers have many resources available to them in the Seattle area

A young lady who had a positive experience at the Teen Parent Home wrote an online review. "I lived in this teen mother home with my young son. They helped us with everything we needed, food,

housing, bathing. They refer you to places to get free clothes, and parenting classes - transportation provided. They even give you bus fare to get to and from where you need to go. Curfew is 9:30 p.m., which is more than fair. It's a great place to help you get on your feet if you can simply follow their rules."

These programs are very critical because of the still substantial number of teenage mothers. There aren't enough resources for all of them, but the ones that receive assistance get the boost they need to get on track, and safe housing is the key to safety and stability. Supporting the programs for this vulnerable population of youth, as well as creating new programs to help, is essential. Without these programs teenage mothers and their children will face poverty and homelessness. With them, they get a fair and healthy start.

<http://seattle.citysearch.com/review/10790528?reviewId=46136711>
<http://www.pregnantteenhelp.org/articles1.html>

TRANSITIONAL LIVING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

nice home because you won't get a chance like this again."

I agree with Josephine, because these programs are once in a lifetime chance to prepare for life alone.

Program managers and staff of these programs are there to help push the youth further into adulthood; to help increase the peace with in the facilities, inform about resources available, and the basic independent living skills one will need to survive.

"These programs are once in a lifetime chance to prepare for life alone."

Kate Culpeper, Isis House gave me insight from staff point of view. I asked her how long a youth can stay at Isis house and this was her response: "A youth can stay up to two years if that's what they need to become stable. And, we always try to have a place for youth to go. We are Phase 1 transitional housing." Isis house is an extension of Youth Care Programs

and from Phase 1 youth can go to Phase 2 housing.

Further, I asked, If the program is designed to prepare youth for adulthood, why are there so many rules? "Sometimes youth that come and live with us, haven't had to live by rules and establish that discipline in their own life, so coming into a structured program with common sense rules...is one way of learning to be an adult by taking on those type of responsibilities, and they are there to prepare youth to be independent." The rules are not to punish, but to help youth recognize their responsibilities and make their own rules around their household.

Transitional housing is more than just a program for youth from care. It not only teaches youth the way of life, but that being an adult is more than just paying bills. There are more things that come with being an adult. Transitional housing is one way for youth to know that you can get help from organizations to help stabilize a home.

¹ <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/site/1051/default.aspx>

The House on the Corner BY IAN GRANT



For a long time, group homes have been an oft-forgotten cul de sac of the child welfare system; the place where kids that are too old, or too problematic, or too hard to find places for end up. They run the gamut from somewhat relaxed programs designed to teach independent living skills or to serve specific populations to correctional facilities and psychiatric institutions. They are often vilified as little better than holding facilities where the system sticks inconvenient kids until they age out and the State no longer has to worry about them. They are often praised as necessary facilities which prevent troubled youth from slipping through the cracks entirely.

They are, in a word, complicated. To shine a better light on this somewhat misunderstood aspect of foster care, I spoke to a gentleman who manages several group homes for a private agency. The gentleman in question was previously the manager of a single group home. He spoke on condition of anonymity, and I will refer to him as Mr. Doe.

Mr. Doe is concerned about the state's recent "...emphasis on moving kids who are in [group] care into relative placements or [with] responsible adult guardians." Essentially, what this means is that youth who would normally go into intensive group care or behavioral rehabilitation are now being released into the community. In and of itself, Mr. Doe acknowledges that this is a good thing insofar as it meets a particular youth's needs. But he worries about "an influx of need at the state level for placements that would house kids in the 10-18 range that [need] intensive supervision services." The way things are going now, it is entirely possible that the programs currently serving those youth will "no longer be serving that population."

One of the biggest issues with running a group facility, according to Mr. Doe, is finding and retaining qualified staff. Group care facilities are often run on shoestring budgets, and wages are often very low. This has the dual effect of making it harder to find qualified people, and creating a revolving door scenario where people who are qualified leave for more lucrative employment at a staggering rate. Mr. Doe believes that the best tool that agency administrators have in the war against burnout and ineffective staff is strong support, effective training, and a team attitude. Like any other

workplace, staff do a lot better when they feel that their contributions are recognized and that they can rely on their colleagues.

One interesting role that Mr. Doe's programs have taken on is that of evaluating newcomers to the system. Most of his programs serve youth who are going through thirty-day residential evaluations before a more permanent placement. This is in fairly stark contrast to former practice in Washington, where youth were kept in so-called interim care for long periods of time. Mr. Doe believes that "there's an acknowledgement at the state level that we've kept kids floating around this interim care system that don't belong there." Indeed, "interim care" no longer exists as a state program. Many youth go out to the community after being evaluated at Mr. Doe's programs.

I have often spoken critically of group care. What I have not done is acknowledged that group care is probably one of the hardest, if not the hardest, aspect of foster care to get right. Group care, for all its faults, serves hundreds of youth who would otherwise be on the streets or in jail. Until we find a better solution, it is a necessary service for foster youth in crisis. The system is changing, as are the youth it serves, and we would do well to pay attention to this vulnerable population.

Thank You!

Adobe Systems Matching Gifts, AIG Matching Grants Program, American Baptist Women's Ministries Pacific Northwest, Chris Marsh Attorney, Miho Awazu, Jennifer Beers, Scott Armstrong at Brenthaven, Bruce Cross and Perkins Coie, LLP, George Gonzalez at Casey Family Programs, Karen Cowgill, Kikora Dorsey, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Matching Gifts Program, Gatewood Elementary, Henry and Jennifer Gordon, Lura Harrison, William Jarcho, Michael Jolson, Jennifer Marratt, Donna Mathus, David McKinlay Trust, Wendy Malloy at Pacific Science Center, Peter Fewing Soccer Camp, LLC, Janice Ritter, Solid Ground Washington, Reynelda Solitaire, Jean Sundborg, Diane Steen, Joan Stewart, George and Beverly Theofelis, Ruth Williams, Nina Zingale

RUN AWAY TEENS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

problems. Many teens that runaway from home do not have the proper support from their parents and/or guardians to help them transition into adulthood. Many teens need reassurance that they will be safe and secure no matter what -- whether they are living with their parents, foster or adoptive parents. Teens need structure and guidance in their life. We need parents that will not give up on us; that will push us to find our talents and reach for our hopes, and dreams.

Even though running away might feel like it's the best option, it's not. There are major consequences for being on the streets. There are greater risks of severe anxiety and depression, suicide, poor health, nutrition, and low self-esteem. Also attending school or trying to get back into school is very difficult. You need transportation to and from school, proof of residence and medical records.

Being a runaway is extremely hard for the youth, as well as the family. To prevent teens from running away the **Polly Klaas Foundation** recommends taking the fol-

lowing steps. First, provide emotional and physical safety; talk with your child openly and honestly; listen to your child's concerns; respect your child's responses; encourage your child to succeed and to work through their differences and struggles; support your child's needs; create opportunity for your child to learn; teach your child right from wrong; protect your child from feeling of loneliness and isolation; defend your child openly; and make your home a place to trust and support your child. Family counseling also will help provide your family with the support they need. And, for crisis support call: **1-800-THE-LOST**.

Update Your Subscription

If you have recently moved, need to change the number of issues you receive, or if the address we are mailing the *Mockingbird Times* to needs to be corrected, please complete and mail the subscription request form found on page 2 so we can update our records.

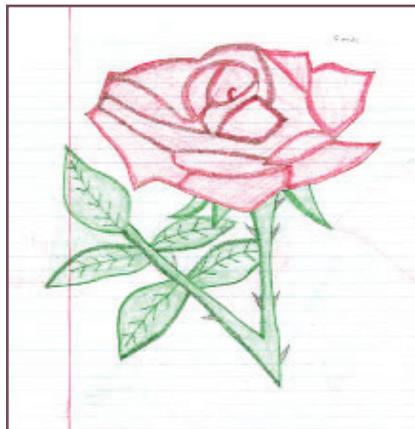
I'm Almost There

By Jasmin Esters

My heart sinks when you're gone.
 I'm alone in the darkness with no one to help me.
 I yell for help but nobody comes.
 The light never shows never in a million years
 because you're gone
 And you aren't here to protect me.
 Today I'm strong and I will not give up on you.
 I will put my faith in God and in myself.
 I'll never give up on myself
 I will work till the end
 God put me on this earth to succeed not to give
 up on my life.
 My life maybe going bad but God is in my life so
 it can't be hard
 Now I see the light that shines real bright like a
 smile on my face.
 Now I feel free that you're watching over me.

The Rose

By Randy

**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. 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.

Community Events**Region 1**

June 18th: Kids Concert - Riverfront park. Free music and entertainment.
June 26th-27th: Hoopfest- Downtown Spokane. 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament.

Region 2

June 11th-13th: POWI-YA-LUX-SIMIT in White Swan
 For more info: (509) 865-3262.
June 19th: Singing Contest for youth. Ahtanum Youth Park.
 For more info: (509) 574-8031.

Region 3

June 16th: Teen Movie Matinee 23300-58th Avenue West, Mountlake Terrace
 This month's movie is "21." Enjoy a movie with friends. Free popcorn and soda!
 All teens get a chance to win the DVD!
 For more info contact Dawn: (425) 776-8722
June 17th-20th: 73rd Annual Berry Dairy Days
 For more info: lisa@burlington-chamber.com

Region 4

June 27th: Seattle Pride Festival. Seattle Center, Downtown Seattle
June 27th: Carnival of Live. 2100 24th Ave S, Seattle, WA 98144 9am-5pm.
 For more info contact Henry Jenkins: (206)0749-7581

Region 5

June 9th: End of the Year Party - PCA, 3:30pm
 Food/Drinks provided; Gifts will be available.

"Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other."

~Abraham Lincoln

Region 1 by Noah Stiles

On May 1st, we flew to Seattle for the Strategic Advisory Council (SAC) meeting. We presented our topics and received great feedback. Alya, Josey, Alene Alexander and I attended the 3rd annual educational conference which promotes secondary education and wrap around services. We spoke on how Independent Living Skills, Passport, and other educational assistance have helped us to succeed. Back at Volunteers of America, members of our chapter had an opportunity to share experiences in foster care and gave input on how the system needs to be changed as part of a federal assessment. Josey and I facilitated a Voice Development training with members of our chapter in preparation for the upcoming Leadership Summit. At our Chinese New Year-themed chapter meeting, we chose the final topic that we will present at the Summit.

Region 2 by Brenda Gonzalez

Brenda and Taylor represented Region 2 at the SAC meeting. We discussed what each region wanted to present to The Commission during the Leadership Summit. On May 15th ACT FIRST had a Voice Development Training for the participants that will be joining the Summit. Some of the youth learned how to say "no" if they were not comfortable with the questions. We ended the training with a discussion of rules for the Summit and agreed on the rules of conduct to ensure we show respect to all during the event.

Region 4 by Rashunda Johnson

This month's Region 4 chapter meeting focused on the future. Among the SAC updates, there was a discussion in our meeting about how different chapters are doing events distinctive to their regions for chapter leaders to focus on. In our meeting we came up with ideas that could help us improve both as individuals, and as a region for success. The ideas included: keeping lines of communication between chapter regions open, having certain roles for certain chapters, staying consistent and doing things outside of our chapter meetings. We touched on the Leadership Summit Committee topics for the conference. We chose the following six topics: Court Proceedings, Transitioning out, Leaving care, Healthcare, Safety and Well being, Education, and Placement and Vision.

Region 5 by Cameron Williams

Our chapter has been discussing some of the troubles that foster youth have had during the time they were in the system. For the Summit, we currently have come up with two ideas; the rights and laws of the foster youth. For the youth attending the Summit, we did a training session on how to use your voice and present your story properly. Next chapter meeting will be our End of the Year Party.

**Region 3 by Hunter Nelson**

This month we had a S.A.C. meeting where we discussed the future work of the Mockingbird Society. In our chapter, we decided to focus on the importance of court hearings as our topic to bring to the Leadership Summit. Next month we will have the honorable **Representative Mary Helen Roberts** (District 21) attend our chapter meeting. Region 3 is excited and looking forward to hosting Representative Roberts who is a huge advocate for children, youth and families, and supporter of the Mockingbird Society.

News From**The Mockingbird Network****Your Needs, Your Voice****Region 6 by Graham Parrington**

Region 6, T.A.F.F.Y. has been busy working on our Leadership Summit Topics, trying to find agreement, come up with rebuttals to potential counter-arguments, and identifying the true needs and desires behind the topics. We are in preliminary planning stages for conducting Culture of Foster Care training for the Foster Care team at CYF, and potentially one for Mason County foster parents. We nominated candidates to apply for rotating chapter leader, as Jessica LaChance will be gone all summer in Missouri. Those interested in becoming a chapter leader, getting involved in the chapter, or volunteering, should call me at 360-943-0780 x169, or email me at g.parrington@mockingbirdsociety.org.