

Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



June 2011

Volume XII, Issue VI

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Thanks for your support!

My name is Donnie Sellers. I am 22 years old and I first entered the foster care system when I was 11 years old. I was moved to thirty-eight different foster homes while I was in the state's care because of my medical disability -- known as Cerebral Palsy. I was moved to so many different foster homes because the group homes were unable to provide for my physical safety. For example, I was unable to get my wheelchair and other medical devices in and out of the homes. Many of the foster parents did not know or understand how to help me with my disability, especially when I had to have several operations on my legs. My disability made it difficult for me because I often felt like I was a burden to my foster parents. This led me to believe that I was unwanted. It was extremely hard for me to get the help and support I needed at this critical time in my life. It also was hard for my foster parents to care for me while I was in the foster care system because they did not have the medical training necessary to provide me care.

It was not easy for me to go through everyday life as a child and as a teen in the system with a disability. The operations, coupled with the constant moving, made graduating from high school seem impossible. Especially when it was a constant struggle to feel like I had a safe place to live. I thought I was just going to struggle with my disability all my life and that I would never be able to accomplish or achieve anything.

In summer before my 8th grade year, when I was 15, I moved once again to another foster home in Ariel, Washington. However, this placement was different than all of my other placements. It was a medical

Unstoppable Me

BY DONNIE SELLERS

foster home. My new foster parents knew that I needed a place to live that could handle my medical needs. They brought me into their home with open arms. For the first time I felt like I finally had a stable home. I ended up living with my medical foster family for more than five years. During that time, I was able to get the support and assistance I needed to graduate high school with a 3.5 GPA. My foster parents helped me with my Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and academic action plans to make my goal of completing high school a reality.



Donnie Sellers and Jim Theofelis, Executive Director

My medical foster parents also helped me get into the Springdale Job Corps Center in Troutdale, OR. They helped with transportation, as well as getting my state ID, medical information and other proper documentation that I would need once I transitioned out of care. They also were kind enough to let me stay under their roof when I aged out of the system until my Job Corps placement began in October of 2008. It is my belief that I would have ended up homeless and on the streets if it had not been for my medical foster parents.

I attended the Springdale Job Corps Center, and graduated on September 27, 2010. While at Springdale I was recognized for my attitude and my ability to persevere and not give up when I was faced with challenges regarding my disability. I was asked to come back this year as a student speaker during their graduation in April. This was a huge honor because I really tried to make a difference for people with disabilities while I was at Springdale. I also recently started a new job with a local nonprofit in Vancouver called **Innovative Services NW**. I am a Youth Assistant/Resource specialist for their Transitions program, which helps foster youth. I am really excited to work there as it has always been a passion of mine to help youth who have struggled through the foster care system, much like I did. I know I will learn a lot and I am always up for a challenge.

Although our past is challenging, the one thing I have learned so far, is to never give up. I have stuck to this lesson, and I will continue to be a fighter, because after all, I am Donnie -- on the loose; wild, unthinkable, unstoppable me.

Megan Johnson, National Jefferson Award Nominee

BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



Recently I had the pleasure of interviewing Megan Johnson who is Washington State's 2011 **Jefferson Award** winner chosen to represent our state nationally for her outstanding public service.

Almost ten years ago, at the age of 10, Megan started a small organization called **Megan's Mission**. She started out standing outside selling cider to raise money, so that she could buy supplies to make blankets, scarves and buy socks and gloves for homeless people in need. Part of her mission is to personally hand these items out to people that are out on the streets of Seattle. Since she started Megan's Mission she has raised on average over \$10,000 per year and helped four families regain stability.

Megan was in foster care in Korea until she was seven months old. Then she was adopted and brought to the U.S. Her adoptive parents also were foster parents, so she had foster siblings while growing up. Although she doesn't remember her direct experience while being in care, she lived in close corridors with youth that experienced foster care.

Megan got the inspiration to start her mission when she was just ten. "When I was young, in grade school my church had vacation bible school every year during the summer. I remember seeing a five minute video about the



Megan Johnson

homeless population living in San Francisco. They were living in cardboard boxes, under bridges. Basically they had nothing at all; they just looked extremely sad and lonely. They were shunned from everybody," said Megan. "That really impacted me. I knew that I really wanted to help the homeless somehow because even though I had never been homeless before, I know what it's like to be considered different from people. I know what it's like to be treated like dirt."

I asked Megan what impact she feels like she's making on the homeless community and she modestly replied, "Just by seeing the results. Putting a smile on homeless people's faces

and letting them know they're not forgotten. There's someone that truly cares about them, whether it's giving them a blanket, a pair of socks, or just a hug or a prayer." Megan is doing something that no one else is doing out of the kindness of her heart. When it comes to inspiration she said, "I look up to God, for all he's done for me, I couldn't have done it without him. My family and friends of course, especially my mom -- who is like my 'manager'. Also, I am thankful for my co-manager from Baltimore, Maryland, who is about my age, I have a Megan's Mission branch in the east coast."

With **The Mockingbird Society**, youth are encouraged to participate in community service activities to change the face of foster youth in our communities. Megan has been doing exceptional community service for years now and has shared with me some ways to get involved. "You're never too young or too old to volunteer. Anyone can volunteer and make a difference." Youth that have a talent or passion for something can use it to volunteer and help out in their community. For example, she said if your passion is art, you could volunteer at a hospital and teach art classes to children that are sick.

MEGAN, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



After what has been a difficult, extended legislative session for many, I am happy to report we have made strong progress toward our goal of building a world-class foster care system. We began the 2011 Legislative session with the goals of increasing safety in foster care and providing safe housing for youth transitioning out of the system. In addition, street youth programs also topped our agenda because these programs provide a safety net and stability for youth who are street involved – many who run from their placement in foster care. Our entire Advocacy Agenda had budget implications, but we moved forward, firm in the knowledge that these policies are right for community, individuals, and ensure effective use of state resources. I am proud to report our top priority bills have been signed into law by Governor Gregoire and the final budget maintains the most funding possible for critical youth services including Street Youth Programs and Independent Youth Housing Program.

HB 1697 – Unannounced Visits

This new law requires that 10% of all children/youth will be chosen randomly to experience unannounced visit per year to help ensure that foster children and youth are provided the highest quality of care. Unannounced visits are a system best practice adopted by many states across the country. By

implementing this practice we are increasing safety in care.

HB 1128 -- Extended Foster Care

This new law will allow foster youth working to achieve their high school diploma or GED to remain in care until age 21. Equally important, Washington State will now “opt-in” to the Federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act and receive matching funds to ensure safe transitions for youth aging-out.

I want to take a moment to once again congratulate Megan Johnson, who we were fortunate enough to feature in this issue, for being selected as Washington State’s nominee for the National Jefferson Awards. I wish her luck at the National Awards and urge all of our readers to do the same.

In this, our 10th Anniversary of The Mockingbird Society, I am deeply grateful for your strength and commitment towards building a world-class foster care system.

Thank you for all that you do. And, for helping all of us at **The Mockingbird Society** to change the system for that five year old child that doesn’t yet know she will be in foster care.

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Save the Date: June 27th-29th Foster Youth & Leadership Summit

The Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit is an event that brings together youth in foster care from across the State, ages 14-24, for three days of: Leadership development, positive peer relationship building and support, and formation of recommendations for The Commission for Children in Foster Care. Questions? Email Milissa Morgan: milissa@mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-5437

Space is limited.

Thank You!

Karen Cowgill, Linda Foley, Henry and Jennifer Gordon, Deanna Grace, The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation, Jillian Gross, Lura Harrison, Daniel Henscheid, Jo Ann Herbert, Vonna Johnson, Lyman Legters III, Carol Lucas, Melanie Lyons, Peter Morrison, Judy Pigott, Anne St. Germain, Peter Fewing Soccer Camp LLC, Elena and Crystal Region 1 Spokane, Nina Berenfeld, Jana McKinley, Community Youth Services, Kat Cooley, Lagoberto Heathscott, Nina Berenfeld, Jana McKinley, Community Youth Services, Kat Cooley, Lagoberto Heathscott, Catholic Families and Child Services, Casey Family Programs.

A special thank you to our men and women in uniform.

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.

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.

A Bridge Linking Separated Siblings BY DEONATE CRUZ



Hello wonderful readers once again. As you all may know, I am a big supporter of sibling connections. With that being said, I had the great opportunity to conduct an interview with Mrs. Karyn

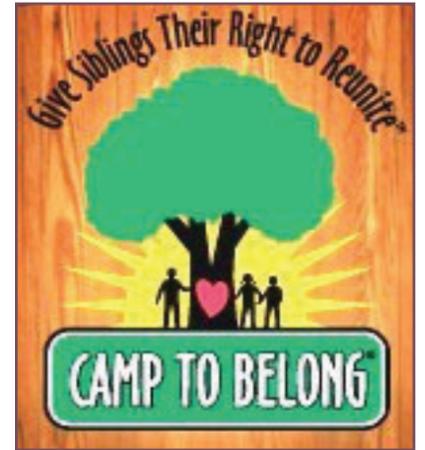
Schimmels, the Director of the Northwest branch of “Camp to Belong” which is located in Salem, Oregon. Camp to Belong is a nonprofit camp founded in Las Vegas in the summer of 1995 by Lynn Price and was the first of its kind; focusing on providing foster youth and their families with the wonderful opportunity to pursue sibling connections for those families who have been separated by the child welfare system. Camp to Belong Northwest (CBNW) is proudly sponsored by **The Oregon Foster Parent Association**, and they have served over 500 youth in the Pacific Northwest as a Member Camp of the International Camp to Belong organization since 2001.*



Siblings unite at Camp to Belong

During my interview with Mrs. Schimmels, I was provided with some amazing personal insight into this camp and how it runs and functions. Because this camp is a nonprofit, it is run solely by volunteers; and because these individuals are volunteers they do it out of pure passion for these children and their families. With that being said, when Mrs. Schimmels is considering volunteer applications she personally values and considers applications from former foster youth who have moved on into adulthood.

This camp at first glance seems like a paradise; a Disneyland of sorts. There is swimming, tubing, canoeing, kayaking, arts and crafts, challenge courses, hiking, etc. There is more to it than just play. There are many skill and relationship building exercises throughout the day. After all, the point of this camp is to bring together siblings separated by foster care and nurture and foster a healthy relationship between them. That is the true meaning behind this camp. Although it has all the elements of a regular camp there is



indeed a purpose behind the week participants spend there. Many of the youth leave with a better connection than they had before they started; but it’s not just the youth who benefit, the camp counselors and staff also develop lasting relationships with them too. Aside from the counselors leaving feeling a little exhausted, they also leave with a more powerful feeling; the feeling within their heart knowing that they made a difference and selflessly helped someone else for a greater purpose. What can be more rewarding? After all, an individual volunteers at this camp to help further its purpose, which is: to help the participants nurture and foster their relationship between their separated siblings. When you not only accomplish this, but make an impact on the youth as well, then what can be more rewarding mentally and physically than that? This camp strengthens bonds and strengthens people.

Camp to Belong Northwest isn’t the only branch though. For those of you who are interested in this camp, there are several branches across the US. They are located in Georgia, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Nevada, Orange County and here in Washington State too. If you are interested in taking part in this Camp as a volunteer or a having a youth participate you should check out the website at <http://camptobelong.org/> or mail them at P. O. Box 1146, Marana, AZ 85653. Keep in mind though that this camp is for foster youth who have been separated from their siblings. I hope that you, the readers, will look into this camp and see it for the great opportunity it presents.

*<http://camptobelong.org/about/how-we-started/>

MEET OUR STAFF

Executive Director Jim Theofelis; **Deputy Director** Ros Ghan; **Youth Programs Director** Tiffany Washington; **Public Policy & Communications Director** Rose Berg; **Public Policy & Communications Coordinator** Jon Brumbach; **Development Coordinator** Kylie Palzer; **Development Director** Brian Lawrence; **Finance Director** Beth Vance; **Executive Assistant** Lauren Frederick; **Mockingbird Network Coordinator** Kara Sanders; **Administrative Coordinator** Aine Cowan-Kuist; **Evaluations and Database Coordinator** David Forte; **HR/Operations Manager** Diana Clark; **Administrative Assistant (AA)** Liliana Davies; **Mockingbird Network Program Assistant** Milissa Morgan; **Resource Specialists** Jerry Bobo, Sarah Mahaffy, Graham Parrington, Georgina Ramirez, Tammy Soderberg, Samantha Valle; **Senior Network Representatives** David Buck; **Diamonique Walker**; **Network Representatives** Amanda Bevington, Asha Boucree; Brenda Ortega, Deonate Cruz; **Contributing Writers & Artists** Chris Bauer, Brandy Baxley, Rebecca Sara Bersek, Nickole Critesser, Sam Martin, Garrett Nadeau, Crystal Stacey, Janessa Thomas, Kristina Thomason; **Design & Layout** Highdive.com

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**.

Peace for the Streets by Kids from the Streets

BY DAVID BUCK



For every marginalized group of people, advocates need to be there to speak up for them in the community. That is what makes **The Mockingbird Society** so important; we aren't just advocates for change, we get youth involved in the process because youth themselves are the best advocates for inspiring change in real life-outcomes. Recently, I have discovered an organization that implements a very similar form of advocacy for another marginalized group of people.



voice about things adults are doing?" The response: "No, no one is going to listen to a bunch of kids." A concert was held as a community engagement project which got enough attention through the radio and the community that would establish the foundation for PSKS.

Since 1995, **Peace for the Streets by Kids from the Streets (PSKS)** has been a voice for homeless youth in Seattle in a fashion where youth are the advocates and the fuel to the engine of PSKS. PSKS is driven in a similar manner to The Mockingbird Network where those who compose the core membership of youth vote and have a voice is what the organization does.

PSKS was founded after **Elaine Simons, Executive Director and Co-Founder** for PSKS, was working as a school teacher at The Orion Center for homeless youth and started a conversation about the Becca Bill, which established the time in which authorities and services are required to inform police that a runaway youth is present. Youth that participated in this conversation had a lot of frustrations about the Becca Bill and after Elaine asked a question to the youth "Have you guys ever had a place to have a

PSKS provides more than just case management and services for homeless youth. PSKS's programs are designed to promote self-advocacy in youth through their community activism and other programs such as Re-Inventing Steps to Knowledge (R.I.S.K.). Their education programs, internship programs, and peer driven support groups all incorporate this very important characteristic. PSKS has a wide variety of programs that are meant to not only teach youth the power of self-advocacy, but to actually be advocates and inspire change in the community. Through programs such as a Donut Dialogues, where youth are able to sit down with police officers in a peaceful forum meant to break down barriers between the homeless youth community and police officers, youth that participate with PSKS are able to achieve change on a community level.

PSKS is a wonderful organization that uses self-advocacy as its foundation for helping their participants. Self-advocacy is an underrated and sometimes overlooked quality that youth need to be successful in the long term. PSKS incorporates that into every aspect of their organization which leads youth in the long run to be more successful and capable adults and this in turn, helps the community at large through their works in the community. It's also important to note just how much the employees of PSKS care about what they do "we give second chances, we give fourteen chances," said **Jaclyn Mellon, Special Events and Fundraising Coordinator**.

¹<http://www.psk.org/>

²<http://dailyuw.com/2008/11/14/reaching-streets/>

MEGAN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Although Megan is like a super hero in her community, she's just a regular person in her free time. She enjoys traveling, which she does often on business. She also likes to build legos and draw to help relieve stress. Watching television is something she likes to do as well including shows like Spongebob, Naruto, and the Medical Channel.

Save the Date for the
Mockingbird Society's Annual Luncheon: October 20, 2011

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Thanks for your support!

Corrections

In Volume XII, Issue V- the article called: Cherokee Fraiser & Catholic Families & Child Services by Brandy Baxley, Region 2 should have read: Cherokee Fraiser & Casey Family Programs. We apologize for the confusion and thank both Ms. Fraiser and Casey Family Programs for their hard work!

We reported in our May issue that the Sharehouse kept 2,600 items from landfills a year, but it's actually 26,000!

Welcome Brenda Chèrie Ortega

BY ASHA BOUCRÈE



Brenda Chèrie Ortega is one of the new members of **The Mockingbird Society** as a Network Representative. I also was recently hired, making us the "newbies" of MBS. My first assignment was to conduct a one-on-one interview with my fellow Network Representative. Brenda is 23 years young and has an excellent head on her shoulders. She has an excellent outlook on life and always walks around with a smile. Brenda was born not only a twin, but also a leap year baby, essentially making her the youngest member of the **Mockingbird Society** (Technically, she has only had five birthdays). Brenda has a one-year-old daughter, Abrielle, who she loves and nurtures with all that she has to give. Ms. Ortega considers herself a Seattleite, even though she has lived predominantly in the rural towns of Castle Rock, Colorado and Maple Valley, Washington. "While residing in Castle rock, CO I went to Douglas County High School. The school was 98% white and 2% Mexican. African Americans were not even given a percentage of the demographics, because there were only eight of us. I graduated from Cleveland high school in Seattle where there is much more diversity."

After earning her high school diploma from Cleveland High School, Brenda was able to further her education by pursuing an Associate's Degree in English & Photo Journalism, as well as a BA in Entrepreneurial Business at Community College of Denver Online. Despite, caring for her daughter while working two jobs and going to school, Brenda still finds time to enjoy herself by swimming, spending time with friends and reading and writing literature. Brenda also enjoys spending time with her family, "My daughter is who I work hard for. I want to show her that you do not have to let your circumstanc-

es define who you are. I plan to succeed in this life, both career wise and family wise" Brenda's life in the foster care system is not something she lets prevent her from growing and effectively sharing her story with those who may not have enough knowledge about the trials and tribulations most foster youth experience. Before she started at The Mockingbird Society, Brenda was a regular member of the **Member Advisory Committee (M.A.C.)**, which is a small yet successful organization put together by members of the **YMCA Center for Young Adults**. In this committee, Brenda would help her community, and attend regular M.A.C. meetings.

Over time, Ms. Ortega developed an appetite for change. Her priorities for change include reforming the trainings DSHS Social Workers are required to do in order to be eligible to work with foster youth, and to have the foster care system legitimately protect the well-being and mental security of foster youth with only the utmost standards in care. "I was dumped into a foster home on my birthday and never saw my case worker again. I was never treated as family, not even as a houseguest. I was treated like that 'mean unwanted baby sitter' by the kids and as a maid by my foster mom. No youth regardless of whether they are in care or not, should have to deal with that on their conscience."

We are lucky to have such a passionate and knowledgeable advocate in Brenda and I know I speak for everyone at The Mockingbird Society when I say I look forward to continuing to work with her.



One of the newest members of the Mockingbird team is also the youngest. 17-year-old, multifaceted, Asha Boucrée is joining the ranks of a striking team. Miss Boucrée has accompanied the

Mockingbird Society on multiple projects that have helped her become "a positive person, who will have something great to talk about when I'm 50." As a "typical American who is from everywhere," she has proven that she is passionate about changing our society. When asked to describe major problems with not only the foster care culture, but also within society at-large, she responded, "Healthcare. They make funding an excuse when it's more than that." Asha's passion for knowledge, truth, and love are exemplified by her favorite pastimes. "I love to write poetry, words of wisdom, and research topics. Everything smaller than me, I have a passion for, like little innocents."

Her big heart and generous spirit did not come from such a loving upbringing, "I entered foster care as an infant. I had my first bought of homelessness when I was nine. I had an apartment where my dad left me. I was alone, scared, and didn't know



Asha Boucrée and Heather Riley from Casey Family Program

Welcome Asha Boucrée

BY BRENDA CHÈRIE ORTEGA

what to do on the streets of L.A." However, when you look at Miss Boucrée, you do not see the child who slept under a bridge during the horrid 2008 snowstorm, nor the GED she obtained at the stunning age of 16. What you do see is a passion blooming in her eyes as she relays what she would change within the world, "If I had magical powers, I would change the whole mentality and outlook of the homeless. I would show them that there is more positive-ness in their life and that they are worth more."

Doing more is what she is setting out to do with her life. Asha has decided to continue her education by attending Highline Community College in the fall. "I want to get my AA Transfer Degree in Business most likely, and then go to a technical school.

I want to have a broad range of skills and educational degrees and certificates." Asha Boucrée is an exemplary role model for children and young adults alike. She proves every day that a person can be better than their current circumstances, turn a pessimistic situation into an optimistic idea, and always be there when you need a smiling face. Congratulations and Welcome to the Mockingbird Society, and may your time with us be fruitful Miss Boucrée!

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.

Reflection

By Brenda Chèrie Ortega

If you could sit back and listen what would your heart tell you?
Would it whisper sweet nothings of yesterday?
Or would it scream about today?
Would it sing a sweet melody of the things to come?
Or would it simply hum?
My life has been a turmoil of ups and downs.
My ups were like I was upside down so really it was all the same.
Then I reached the point where I couldn't find home.
So I let it go.
I could review the past, and forget the present and wait on the future
But there is too much neglect, sorrow, and anger; the dangerous three.
I want to reflect the beauty that others see of me,
Then I could possibly be truly extraordinary

Telepathy

By Mykal Alonzo

We know too much to go back,
Aware and alert,
We watch,
As instinct tells those lost...
"Run faster"
In their minds the misguided think...
"Liberty"
My words...
Deflected...
They stop at a great distance...
And say...
"Speak that I may see thee!"
I blink slowly...
Look to my company of equals,
We give our hearts to know wisdom,
And our own words...
Our words...
Do not even tingle the ears of the deaf,
As if,
The truth was written
On water.

Community Events

Region 1 - North (Spokane)

June 4th: Spokane Valley Community Parking Lot Event - 9-3pm. Eastpoint parking lot! Kids carnival, fire truck, yard sale, vendors. Free!

June 3rd-June 5th: ArtFest - Coeur'd Alene Park in Spokane. Free!

Region 1 - South (Yakima)

June 13th: Free Nature Day - All day. Yakima Arboretum

Region 2 - North (Everett)

June 17th-June 19th: Edmonds Arts Festival - Fri 11-8pm; Sat 10-8pm; Sun 10-6pm. Frances Anderson Center, Edmonds. Free! More info: (206) 285-2455 or <http://www.edmondsartfestival.com>.

June 18th: Flying Heritage Collection Fly Day - 12pm. Paine Field, Everett. More info: (877) FHC-3404 or <http://www.flyingheritage.com>.

Region 2 - South (Seattle)

June 4th-August 31st: Zoo Tunes Outdoor Concerts - Woodland Park Zoo.

June 1st-September 3rd: Avatar: The Exhibition - Experience Music Project/Science Fiction Museum. More info: <http://www.seattle-fun.com/seattle-events-calendar-june-2011.html>.

Region 3 - North (Tacoma)

June 8th: Chapter Meeting - 3:30-5pm. PCA.

June 15th: End of the Year Party - 3:30pm. PCA

Region 3 - South (Olympia)

June 16th: Chapter Meeting - 4-6pm. Community Youth Services in the Cal Sheldon room 2nd floor. More info: (360) 943-0780 x169

Mark your calendar: **June 27th-29th** Foster Youth and Leadership Summit, Seattle, WA.

There's only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving and that's your own self.

~Aldus Huxley

Region 1 - North (Spokane) Understanding Needs and Implementing Transformations by Everyone by Kristina Thomason

Region 1 North has been incredibly busy planning for our chapter meetings, the 2011 Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit and lots more. We are transitioning Noah out as a chapter leader. It's been tough because he has been a great leader and advocate for The Mockingbird Network. But now it's time to let someone else from our chapter shine! We have picked James Mason. He is very involved in our chapter and is always willing to lend a hand. We feel he will represent Region 1 North amazingly. James and I attended the Statewide Leadership Council meeting on May 7th, in Seattle, where we introduced him as our new chapter leader. He fit in right away! We are stoked for our next chapter meeting, it will be so fun and I can't wait to share it with you all!! We are designing our shirts for the Leadership Summit and they will blow you all away!

Region 1 - South (Yakima) A.C.T.F.I.R.S.T. (Around Community Two Fostering Individuals Rights Safely) by Brandy Baxley

For the month of May, our region conducted the Life Advocacy Training at Casey Family Programs where we had about seven chapter youth and alumni participate. Also, Brenda and I attended the Statewide Leadership Council (S.L.C.) which was very successful. Coming up our chapter is having a Voice Development Training for those who are attending the Summit May 21st at Casey Family Programs. I have also been on the team building committee for the Leadership Summit and we are making very big plans! Region 1 South is excited and getting ready for the Leadership Summit next month and cannot wait to meet everyone there!

Region 2 - North (Everett) H.E.Y.M.A.C. (Hearing Every Youth Make a Change) by Janell Braxton

At our chapter meeting we expressed our ideas for changes we as youth impacted by foster care want to see in the system. The categories of concern related to education for high school and college, grouping siblings together into the same foster home, driver's license and improving the relationship between foster kids and their social workers. Youth spoke passionately from their personal experiences, providing perspective for our ideas. We all agreed upon our ideas which made for a successful meeting!

Region 2 - South (Seattle) Stay True by Christina Koshney

Hello All! For starters, Region 4 for Change is now called Region 2 Stay True, due to the new DSHS regions merging the previous six regions down to three regions. We are also going through leadership changes in our chapter with the opening for two new chapter leaders! This means that two awesome new leaders will get the opportunity to job shadow our current chapter leaders to make this a smooth transition. I have loved the opportunity to grow as a leader and to help guide my peers through the advocacy process I am super excited for new passions and voices to lead Region 2 Stay True into the future. Part of the reform that Region 2 has decided to pursue is to change the mental health care system to better protects kids from mental abuse and equate it to physical abuse. Also to improve services that provide counseling at a pace that works with the youth, and is decided by the youth so they can really work through problems to get to healing instead of being pushed into it or being forced pills and diagnoses without dealing with the life issues they face. This issue was presented to the State Leadership Council and they thought it a worthy cause to research more and push for. On a more fun note, the Leadership Summit is coming up in June and the members of Region 2, including myself, are looking forward to a fun and productive weekend trip where we get to share our ideas and activate change. Go Region 2 Stay True!!!



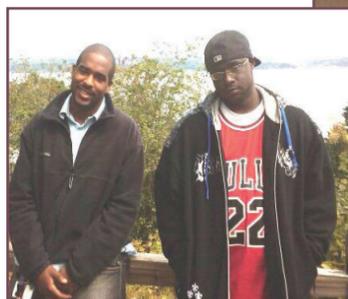
Region 3 - North (Tacoma) COURIGE: Changing Our Unique Responsibilities Individually Gaining Empowerment by Janessa Thomas

Our chapter, partnered with Region 3 South in Olympia to present the Culture of Foster Care Training in Centralia for the Passport to College Conference. There were a total of 26 adults who participated in the training. The participants were touched emotionally because actual foster youth were doing the training themselves and it was based off of their experience in care. We also just recently completed our community service on May 11. The youth made some sack lunches for homeless adults around our host agency. They were troopers and passed out the lunches in the rain. Lastly, we're planning on preparing the youth who will be coming to the Leadership Summit this summer. Dates and times of these trainings will be emailed to the youth who are participating.

Region 3 - South (Olympia) Truth and Action for Foster Youth by Rosalee Warren

We recently facilitated a Culture of Foster Care training for Thurston County Juvenile Diversion Volunteers, and one for the Region 3 (formerly regions 5 & 6) Passport to College Summit in Centralia with the Tacoma

Chapter. It was awesome hearing social workers and foster parents come together on the deeper problems facing the foster care system. Speaking at the capitol to legislative committees seems to be doing some good because HB 1128 (Extended Foster Care) was signed by the Governor! I recently spoke to the House Ways & Means Committee in favor of HB 2048 which would raise more money for the Independent Youth Housing Program (IYHP), and other important programs. Hopefully that bill will pass too! Chapter members and I enjoyed ourselves at the Be the Spark event at the Tacoma Dome, where we heard Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu speak. I really, thoroughly, enjoyed it! My favorite part was when Desmond Tutu was imitating characters out of the bible. He showed that doing something risky like using religion to make a point about creating peace and positive change can work even when speaking to a diverse audience, because he was just being himself, even under the spotlight.



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