

Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



March 2011

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Best Youth Advocacy Day Yet

BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



February 18th marked The Mockingbird Society's 2011 Youth Advocacy Day (YAD). In my opinion, it was the best to date. Close to 250 participants including foster and kinship youth and alumni; homeless youth, service providers, foster parents, and concerned community members showed up in large numbers. I had the honor of co emceeing with Mockingbird's Executive Director, Jim Theofelis and Terrell Rosetti, my fellow Senior Network Representative.

on the position at DSHS in October of 2009. Representative Mary Helen Roberts who has been a primary sponsor for the Network's safe housing bills also came to speak in support of making a change in the foster care system. We also hosted Representative Reuven Carlyle, an extraordinarily uplifting speaker that has a passion for youth and children in the foster care system. Other speakers included Representative Eric Pettigrew, Senator Adam Kline, Representative Roger Goodman, Representative Jamie Pederson, and Mary Meinig, Director, Office of Family and Children's Ombudsman, all of whom have been supportive of making a positive change in the foster care system, are passionate for the youth, and believe in the power of youth voice.

This was the part of the day that I had been most excited for in preparation for the event. I couldn't wait to lead the march with Terrell and scream into the megaphone until I was hoarse. A youth participant



Mockingbird Youth rally at Youth Advocacy Day

Throughout the day we had several guest speakers who were passionate and supportive in making a change for youth of the foster care system. Some of the speakers included Denise Revels-Robinson, Assistant Secretary, Children's Administration. Ms. Revels-Robinson always has listened and continuously supported our advocacy efforts since she took

Andi Smith, a representative from the Governor's office came to speak to us just before the march. She presented a proclamation that proclaimed "February 18, 2011 as Youth Advocacy Day, in Washington state, in recognition of youth and alumni of foster care, homeless youth, and caring adults who support them," signed by Governor Gregoire. This incredible special honor shows that our advocacy efforts have made a difference and that through The Mockingbird Society and The Mockingbird Network, foster youth and alumni of care are getting the recognition that we deserve.

One thing that stands out the most to me is the march that we do through the capitol. It's the youth's chance to really be heard and really make an impact.



David Buck, CA Assist. Sec. Denise Revels-Robinson, Deonate Cruz

said they liked the march because "It was like telling the world I care." and another youth said, "I got to scream my advocacy thoughts!" We yelled out, "Make it count, show up unannounced!" "A safe place to sleep, to keep me off the streets!" and "To reach our full potential, keep us residential!" I think the march really made the day. It gave everyone an opportunity to feel like they made a difference whether it was by holding a sign or screaming out the chants or a combination of the two.

The day was a success. "This is the second time I've come to YAD and it keeps getting better and better. I feel more and more a part of a community than I

BEST YAD, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Speaking up for What You Believe In

BY TERRELL ROSETTI



According to www.dictionary.com the definition of advocacy is "the action of advocating, pleading for, or supporting a cause or proposal." Before attending this year's Advocacy Day I knew very little about what it truly means to advocate. After this day I was able to see it and feel it first-hand. Youth Advocacy Day was simply and powerfully, people like me standing up for their rights, like the people did during the civil rights movement. The youth that have been in foster care, or who are actually going through the struggles of being a foster kid, as well as a person who experienced homelessness, had a chance to put a voice and face to the issues that either affect them directly or other youth in care.

sent the bold colors of The Mockingbird Society and speak with one voice for youth and alumni of foster care about the issues of a broken system.

People were given a chance to speak out on their experiences. They spoke out about why we need to retain safe housing, implement unannounced visits, and keep the street youth programs. It was inspiring to see all the people that came up to the microphone speak straight from their heart. One young woman said, "Without the street youth programs I wouldn't have been able to find employment or care for my daughter." Another person said without the safe housing programs, he wouldn't have had the opportunity to obtain his GED or have a roof over his head while he continued to achieve his higher education at a community college. It definitely was motivating to see people speak up and share their concerns; I know it takes a lot of courage for some people to do that.



David Buck at the Youth Advocacy Day march

sleep, to keep me off the streets". These chants were yelled, at the top of our lungs, all as one, through megaphones and our voices rang out.

Afterwards we all got to refuel with sandwiches, chips and juice. We all were gathered in the tent to listen to some more of guest speakers which included legislators that supported the bills we were pushing to get passed. The day soon came to an end with a drawing for prizes. But, between the crowds numbering more than 250, the individual stories, the protest and the fun, what I will take with me forever is that we were one in spirit on this Youth Advocacy Day, and maybe the next time a legislator thinks of what it means to be a foster youth their impression will be one of strong, young people with potential.

SPEAKING UP, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Mockingbird Youth marching at Youth Advocacy Day

Although the day was cold that still didn't stop people from coming. The tent was filled with youth from different regions of Washington. There also were many supporters from street youth programs and places like The YMCA. People gathered with the orange scarves that were given to them so that they could repre-

The day wasn't over after hearing all the voices raised; we still had a full day ahead of us. Next, we marched! This was a chance for everyone to raise their voice and hold signs so that maybe a legislator could see or hear that the issues we were fighting for are important, and they can't be ignored. It was an opportunity for the youth who are affected by these laws to be seen as human beings, not just a budget number. Some people carried signs that read: "Make it count, show up unannounced," and "To reach our full potential, keep us residential," The capitol echoed with: "A safe place to

Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



Dear Friends,

Youth Advocacy Day continues to prove to be a powerful testament to the importance of standing up for what you believe and doing so with respect for all who are willing to listen. It is truly one of my favorite days of the year. February 18th, 2011 was highlighted by **Governor Chris Greigore** proclaiming this day Youth Advocacy Day in honor of youth and alumni of foster care, kinship care and homeless youth. This high honor presented on behalf of the Governor by **Andi Smith, Executive Policy Advisor**, shines a bright light on the importance of building a world-class foster care system, and on the potential of every child or youth who has experienced it.

This year more than 250 youth, with The Mockingbird Society's orange scarves warming them, filled the tent at the Capitol Campus, voicing their own experiences in care, advocating for reform such as safe housing for youth aging out of care, unannounced visits for safety in care, and retention of street youth programs.

The Mockingbird Network took the lead providing a platform for youth from across the state and hosting dignitaries including **Children's Administration Assistant Secretary Denise Revels-Robinson, Mary Mienig, Director, Office of Family & Children's Ombudsman**; and many of our legislative champions including **Representative Mary Helen Roberts**, prime sponsor of HB 1128 to extend foster care to youth who have not yet achieved their high school diploma or GED. We also heard from **Representa-**

tive Rueven Carlyle, Representative Roger Goodman, Senator Adam Kline, Representative Jamie Pederson and Representative Eric Pettigrew. We also hosted community speakers such as **Bill Block from the King County Committee to End Homelessness** and held an incredible open-mic session.

As I reflect on the day, I am so grateful for the leadership of so many and their willingness to meet with youth and alumni in each and every corner of the state. These tough economic times have put tremendous pressure on many, and Legislators take time to listen and are committed to change.

The highlight of the day for me came during the march. It was in this trek around the campus that I met Donnie Sellers, a young woman, who was supported by two crutches and walked every inch in the cold, negotiating stairs and crowds, who told me she came that day on behalf of medically fragile foster youth, so that we begin to truly recognize the issues faced by this segment of our foster care population.

Her strength, conviction and resiliency is an inspiration to us all.

Every year, I come back to what grounded me in our name taken from the classic novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Atticus Finch said, "Mockingbirds don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us." On Youth Advocacy Day, it was clear to me that the world was listening.

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Correction

The following corrects a story focused on the Arc of King County published in our print version of *The Mockingbird Times* in February 2011 (The online version was correct). The printed article should have stated that Khadijah Toms is a parent of a child with a development disability. In addition, Ms. Toms was trained at the University of Washington Center for Human Development & Disability.

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 a weekend of: Leadership development, positive peer relationship building and support, and formation of recommendations for The Commission for Children in Foster Care. Applications are due April 13th, 2011! Mail applications to: Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit, Attention: Milissa Morgan, 2100 24th Avenue S. Suite 240, Seattle, WA 98144

Questions? Email Milissa Morgan: milissa@mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-5437

Space is limited.

Thank You!

Rebecca Wilson, Catholic Family and Children Services, Pierce County alliance, Community Youth Services, YMCA center For Youth, Community Youth Services, Dae Shogren, Heather Guz, RYANNE SIMONSON, Kat Cooley, Cat Fritz, Alex Tarasar, Nina Berenfeld, Jana McKinley, Scott Young, Nikki Brown, Maureen Macklemore, Zoe Torres, Christina McVeigh, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Matching Gifts Program, Karen Cowgill, Kikora Dorsey, Federal Way Walmart Supercenter, Steve and Patty Fleischmann, Linda Foley, Deanna Grace, Makeba and Aaron Greene, Jillian Gross, Ilana Guttmann, Jo Ann Herbert, Judy Johnson, Margaret-Ann Leroy, Lyman Legters, James Maki, Microsoft Matching Gifts Program, Microsoft Community Affairs, Alicia Tonasket, Eric Trupin, Melissa Havens, Lisa Predovich, Jonelle Tuffs, Judy Tuffs, Linda Foley, Lura Miller, Peter Morrison, Joyann Spahn, Charlotte Tucker, Katalin Hausback, Tre'mika Washington, Heather Guz, RYANNE SIMONSON, Alex Tarasar, Kat Cooley, Aubrey Mathwig, Nina Berenfeld, Catherine Fritz, Mercer Island Martial Arts

One Night Count BY DAVID BUCK



On January 27th, Seattle/King County Coalition on Homeless (SKCCH) hosted a "One Night Count" intended to serve as a snapshot to the US Housing and Urban Development or HUD which allocates money to local service organizations helping homeless populations. In a time of economic crisis, where people's jobs and livelihoods are walking a thin line, it is imperative to all involved that we have a true and accurate account of the reality facing the homeless.

One would think, considering the struggling economy, that homelessness is on a rise, but the One Night Count of 2011 for Seattle/King county area reported an 11% decrease over 2010 in the number of homeless people on the street. The combined number of people on the street and in emergency shelter dropped 4%. This obvious disconnect, causes me a great deal of concern and should raise concern for anyone who serves homeless populations or anyone who is struggling with homelessness.

HUD is a department of our government that oversees the development and execution of housing and social services involving housing, which includes the funding and development of transitional programs for homeless. The "One Night Count," which is conducted as it states, for only one night, is done to get a good sense of the number of homeless people in the area so that HUD gets a better picture of what is going on in our communities. It must be done every two years as a condition of HUD receiving McKinney Vento Act funding.

This critical data gathering effort is done completely by volunteers under the "Let's Make Everybody Count!" campaign. Each volunteer participates in a few days of training and they combine that with sheer will and determination to get the most accurate numbers they can. It is a valiant effort, but I believe more needs to be done. HUD is basing its policies on an army of dedicated volunteers, who conduct "One Night Count" 'sleep overs' armed with clipboards. They march through the streets and parks, in attempt to count the homeless.

Statistics show that unemployment is at a 9.8% high and the economy is still struggling. With this in mind you would think that homelessness

would be on the rise. But the Seattle King County One Night Count results strangely showed a 4% overall decrease in homelessness in comparison to last year's results. I had an opportunity to speak with Colin, an employee at ROOTS homeless shelter, and he was kind enough to give me a few words. He said, "Last year we saw about 115 different youth, and to date this year we've seen as many as 130." The 2011 results and the increase that Roots is seeing don't add up. What this says to me, is that at least in the homeless youth department, the numbers are going in the wrong direction. He also kindly remind me not to be too critical, as the One-Night Count, is as far as we know, the best chance we have of getting numbers for HUD on which to address our regional needs.



Mockingbird youth during Youth Advocacy Day

In my opinion, the fundamental problem with the One Night Count is that it is just for one night. If you are trying to get an accurate number as to the homeless population, especially in an urban area, you're going to need more than just one night to do so. It's hard for me as someone who pays such close attention to the homeless community to actually believe that the 4% overall decrease is accurate when you have shelters like ROOTS that have to turn down youth due to overcapacity. There needs to be a more accurate way of determining the needs of the community since lives do, in fact, depend on it.

I also received information from **Bill Block, Director, King County Committee to End Homelessness.** He said, "The count is only a snapshot. We have been building a lot of supportive housing and received \$6.4 million in new money from the federal stimulus for prevention, rehousing and other programs."

My feeling is the One Night Count is a good volunteer effort to determine the reality of the homeless populations in the area. It is conducted

ONE NIGHT, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

National Social Worker Month BY DEONATE CRUZ



March is **National Social Worker Month!** This is a shout out to all the social workers who strive to make the child welfare system a better place by working hard and making a difference in individual lives. This year's theme for **National Social Worker Month** is "Social workers change futures," promoting the role of the social worker as a positive change agent.

According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) there are 640,000 professional social workers in the United States who have dedicated their careers to helping people transform their lives or improving the environment so such work is possible. So anytime you see a social worker in March, make sure you let them know you appreciate what they do and show them some love.

MEET OUR STAFF

Executive Director Jim Theofelis; **Deputy Director** Ros Ghan; **Youth Programs Director** Tiffany Washington; **Public Policy Director** Rose Berg; **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; **Administrative Assistant (AA)** Lilia Davies; **Mockingbird Network Program Assistant** Milissa Morgan; **Resource Specialists** Jerry Bobo, Sarah Mahaffy, Graham Parrington, Georgina Ramirez, Tammy Soderberg, Samantha Valle; **Senior Network Representatives** Ian Grant, Terrell Rosetti, Diamonique Walker; **Network Representatives** Amanda Bevington, David Buck, Deonate Cruz; **Contributing Writers & Artists** Brandy Baxley, Abigail Antionette Brunner, Jasmin Esters, Sam Martin, Garrett Nadeau, Noah Stiles, Janessa Thomas, Amanda Urwiler; **Design & Layout** Highdive.com

Pro Unannounced Visits BY AMANDA BEVINGTON



2011 is shaping up to be a big year for foster youth and alumni of care, and all of us at The Mockingbird Society. We have come so far, and accomplished so much, over the past few years. As you know, this year we are advocating for many important laws to improve safety in foster care. SB 5393 & HB 1697 have been proposed to strengthen the state's ability to conduct unannounced visits. If these bills pass, the Washington State Children's Administration (CA) will continue to provide the required monthly visits to each child/youth in foster care. And, this policy will be strengthened by requiring that 10% of all children/youth will be chosen randomly to experience at least one unannounced visit per year. This will help ensure that foster children and youth are provided the highest quality of care.

All of the work that we do at The Mockingbird Society is focused on improving the lives of children in care, not only for today, but for the kids who come after us. I believe unannounced visits will improve and increase safety, as well as help to create the loving and supportive homes that each child and youth deserve. All the hard work seems to be paying off. We have a sponsor for the bills in each chamber of the legislature. **Representative Mary Helen Roberts (D-21st District)** is prime sponsor of HB 1697 and **Senator James Hargrove (D-24th District)** is prime sponsor of SB 5393.

Not only will unannounced visits help improve lives, but this bill will give youth the chance to properly advocate for themselves by giving youth the assurance that the social worker could come unannounced. I feel like the system needs a lot of improvements and this is a great place to begin. There are so many precious lives in the foster care system, and given my own experience, I know we need to do all we can to make sure each child and youth are getting the proper care. Safety nets like the unannounced visits policy help educate and support, not only the youth, but the foster parents too. And, if children and youth are safe at home, they are going to do better when they age out of care and become adults.

There are many good foster homes, but I believe there is a lot more we can do to help improve the system, and to make sure each

child or youth in care is treated equally. It is so hard to be taken from your home and loved ones and be placed into a house full of strangers. So imagine how hard it is for a 6 year old child to explain their strengths and weaknesses to a social worker inside their new foster home. Most young children may not understand exactly what makes a good home or a bad home. But what they do know is that they should be getting unconditional love, support, and happiness from each parent. This makes me think of my favorite quote from **Jim Theofelis, Executive Director, The Mockingbird Society**. He asks: "Would you drop off your own child at any day care, with the understanding that as a parent you could not stop by any time to see how your child is doing?" Ninety-nine percent of responsible parents will say, "Heck no!" The same idea applies to unannounced visits.

I was able to interview **Degale Cooper**, who has been a foster parent for several years. She testified on the importance of unannounced visits and she was very passionate about the potential to raise awareness and improve safety in care for children and youth. She said, "The purpose of unannounced visits is to improve the environment for all members of the family. And, with guidelines, knowledge and understanding, better parenting, and partnership things will improve." She also said this proposal provides an opportunity for the youth and families to ask questions and for them to be answered. She believes it also will help give caregivers the extra help and support that they need. According to Ms. Cooper, unannounced visits benefit children and youth, as well as the caregivers.

In conclusion, I'd like to say how I feel. I just know how hard it was to be in foster care, and most of my years in care were pretty negative, so I hope that in addition to new laws such as unannounced visits, that I can and will make a difference for future and current lives in the foster care system. I do not want to see any child or youth ever have to go through what I have been through while I was in care. And, the sad part about it is that many children are suffering right now due to multiple failures in the foster and child welfare system. I believe, if you are dedicated to create change in the system then let's do so together, as our actions speak louder than our words.

Peaceful Advocacy to Make Change BY IAN GRANT



NOTE: This article was written in the very brief period between Mubarak's February 10th speech, in which he refused to step down as president, and his stepping down as president on February 11th. This is offered as one perspective from a 21 year old first year college student watching democracy in action.

"The future is inherently a good thing. And we move into it one winter at a time. Things get better one winter at a time. So if you're going to celebrate something, then have a drink on this: the world is, generally and on balance, a better place to live this year than it was last year." —Warren Ellis, Transmetropolitan

I will have to miss Youth Advocacy Day this year due to academic considerations. However, my mind very much remains on the struggle that we face as a community of advocates. This winter has not been a good one for foster youth. Although both of our primary initiatives (HB 1128, extended foster care for youth working on their diploma; HB 1697, unannounced social worker visits, and efforts to save street youth programs) are still going strong, and this year's Youth Advocacy Day promises to be one of the best yet, we have to acknowledge that both initiatives are very much compromises; they are an attempt to limit the ground we will lose in this budget firestorm.

As I write this, Hosni Mubarak, the (for the

moment) President of Egypt, has just finished broadcasting what should have been an historic speech. Over the last few weeks, agitation against Mubarak has risen to a fever pitch. He has ruled the country as a dictator since 1981, using the country's Emergency Law to suspend the constitution and prevent elections. Today, he was expected to finally resign... the word was leaked to the US Embassy and others that Mubarak would transfer his power to his Vice President (and former head of the secret police) Omar Suleiman. But the speech he gave made it clear that he had no such intention; that, while he would delegate certain responsibilities to Suleiman, he would retain the office of President until elections are held in September.

The Al-Jazeera network has been broadcasting a live view of Tahrir square in Cairo, and although the thousands of protesters there are very vocal about their anger, they are currently peaceful. It remains to be seen if more violence will break out.

Although the crisis in Egypt and our fight for decent foster care in Washington are on very different scales, I believe the solution to both is the same: democracy. Mockingbird, and the youth and families we have touched, have been part of the discourse for years now. And as a result, things have gotten, on average, a little bit better every year. That is the power that we wield as

Con Unannounced Visits

STATEMENT FROM MIKE CANFIELD

CO-PRESIDENT, FPAWS

As Co-Presidents of the Foster Parent Association of Washington State (FPAWS), Beth and I appreciate and share the concern that foster care alumni have for the safety of youth in care. Beth's brother was placed in foster care when she was 11. My parents started fostering a brother (age 9) and sister (age 2) when I was 9. Many members of our Board are foster care alumni and continue to dedicate their lives to making the foster care system safer for all. Those alumni and the entire FPAWS Board have unanimously rejected any Bill before Legislature that would lead to or make unannounced visits law. Unannounced visits can happen already, and they should happen if a home is suspect. FPAWS has a website www.fpaws.org that all foster youth should be aware of. Foster youth have the opportunity to reach out to caring foster parents and other caring members directly or anonymously through our phone line 1-800-391-2273 and our TIP/TIC Sheets (Taking In Praise/Taking In Concerns). **Jim Theofelis** of The Mockingbird Society and **Children's Administration Asst. Sec. Denise Revels-Robinson** have suggested they promote TIP/TIC Sheets as a tool for youth in care. FPAWS works closely with Children's Administration and feel we have the ability to creatively address any concern foster youth have related to their safety in care. FPAWS has members throughout the State of Washington and is connected regionally and nationally with people that share our concern for youth in care.

BESTYAD, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ever have before," said a youth participant. Advocacy Day showcases the great work all of our dedicated youth and it is "shouted out" all at once. The bills we are fighting for all came from something our youth felt strongly about, and now the youth and everyone can see how their input and voice has made a difference for all of the system's youth.

advocates; that over time, if we continue to participate, we can make foster care just that much better. Youth Advocacy Day is over now, but we need your voice more than ever.

This winter has not been good for foster youth. But we're doing the best we can. And we have achieved significant things. We owe it all to your continuing enthusiasm, voice, and vigilance. We will need it even more, as we head into spring and the resolution of the questions that we've all been asking the past few months. And, of course, there's always next winter to think about.

¹<http://www.fidh.org/THE-EMERGENCY-LAW-IN-EGYPT>

²<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middle-east/2008/04/2008615165753239535.html>

³<http://tucsoncitizen.com/in-the-aggregate/2011/02/10/breaking-blown-call-hosni-mubarak-says-he-is-not-leaving/>

SPEAKING UP, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The day was a long day but well worth it. I now know the importance of advocacy. Many people sometimes complain about issues. This is different. You must take that issue and advocate to make a law pass that will change things for individuals, and those who come after you.

Jim Receives the Jefferson

Award BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



The Jefferson Award is named after U.S. President Thomas Jefferson because The Board felt that "Jefferson best reflected the spirit of excellence in America." This is an award

to recognize that there are extraordinary leaders, on a community level that are making positive and impactful changes in peoples' lives.

Of the many nominees chosen to get the prestigious Jefferson Award, **Executive Director of The Mockingbird Society, Jim Theofelis**; and four astonishing others received it. "I am so humbled and know this means that our community recognizes its responsibility to foster & kinship youth, youth aging out of the system and homeless youth in our community," Jim said upon receiving it. The fact that Jim received this award shows that others in our community are aware of the hard work that he and The Mockingbird Society are doing to make a difference in the lives of the vulnerable youth in Washington State. By founding Mockingbird, Jim has given youth across the state some of the tools they need to use their voice to make the changes they want to see in their lives and for others with similar experiences. I've worked with Mockingbird for three years now, and I've seen nothing but amazing and uplifting change happen. Not just that, but I've been a part of the positive changes being made and it's an honor to me to be influenced by Jim's leadership.

With The Jefferson Award, the power of voting is critical. It is up to the people of our community to vote and decide which of our five awardees will receive national recognition for their amazing work. During the week of March 28th to April 1st, Evening Magazine on King 5 News will be spotlighting our community heroes to give the public a chance to get to know them better. Voting for the national nominee will be open online the week of April 1st to April 8th at KING5.com. There will also be a breakfast on April 13th to honor our community heroes and at which The Board will announce who will be representing Washington nationally. For those of you that know Jim's amazing leadership I encourage you to vote.



ONE NIGHT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

nationwide in nearly every city, but the recent results suggest we need even more emphasis and time to count this vulnerable population. I believe having accurate numbers is crucial in the decision process of determining what HUD, and we as the community, need to do next to prevent and end homelessness.

We can't do it without accurate numbers. The One Night Count is simply not enough to get an accurate look at the homeless situation in an area.

¹http://www.homelessinfo.org/one_night_count/

²<http://www.google.com/#sclient=psy&hl=en&q=us%20unemployment%20rat&aq=f&aqi=&aql=&oeq=&pbx=1&bav=on.1.or.&fp=d4a7e52ef0af3d83&pf=p&pid=3000>

³<http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/states/utah/news/HUDNo.2011-01-19>

Creative Corner

Welcome To The Show

By Abigail Antionette Brunner

Welcome to the show I am the main attraction. You will notice my life consists of Horror, Comedy, Drama and Action. You will notice not all of my relationships were of love and passion. You will notice that I am happy, confident and outstandingly cocky, and then you will notice the days where I am not me.

You will notice I am unstable emotionally, you will see my moods are changing constantly. My personality is most interesting. I am who I am today because my experiences built me.

So welcome to the show I am the main attraction. I am amazed at all the people I have attracted. They cling on to my every word and crave my thoughts and story like an addict.

Then all I hear is how sorry they are about how bad I have had it.

I don't want apologies or sympathy, just don't talk and start listening. I hope you will then stop trying to play god by judging me.

So again, welcome to the show I am the main attraction, you will notice my life consists of Horror, Comedy, Drama and Action...

You're Not Alone

By Jasmin Esters

You think you're all alone in this cold world. You think you have no one who cares about you and nothing to keep you safe. You're crying for help.

You think nobody understands you, but they do.

So you're walking home by yourself and... Bam! Surprise! You're not alone

You have a family who cares for you, supports you, loves you, and cherishes you And now you know you are not alone with your family.

Community Events

Region 1 (Spokane)

Thru March: Riverfront Park. \$2 Tuesdays in the Ice Palace and Free skating on Thursdays (with coupon in Inlander)

Region 2 (Yakima)

March 26th: Life Advocacy Day Training - 2-4pm. Casey Family Programs

Region 3 (Everett)

March 17th: Chapter Meeting - 4:30-6:30pm. Youthnet, 3331 Broadway, Everett WA 98201

More info contact: Georgina Ramirez (206) 838-6646.

March 25th: Friday Night Live - 6-9pm. Pine view Community Center. More info contact: Julia (425) 348-7895.

Region 5 (Tacoma)

March 19th: Tacoma Rainier's Job Fair - 9am-2pm. Reach Center.

Region 6 (Olympia)

Every Friday until April 8th: Free Tax Preparation - Community Youth Services. More info: Call 2-1-1 or visit www.thurstonabc.org.

2nd and 4th Mondays: Young Adult Grief Support - 6:30-8pm. More info contact: Shara Shadwell (360) 493-5928.

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

"As we 're-set' and face the realities of our current economic client, we must continue to prioritize and protect our most vulnerable citizens."

~Jim Theofelis

Region 1 (Spokane) UNITE! (Understanding Needs and Implementing Transformations for Everyone) by Noah Stiles

Starting off the New Year, Kristina, Sarah and I flew to Seattle to attend the State Leadership Council meeting where we learned how to properly facilitate the Legislative 101 training. At our January 24th Chapter meeting, Kristina and I presented to the group. We explained how a bill becomes a law and went over the 2011 Legislative Agenda. Our next meeting took place on February 8th where Region 1 began preparing posters for Advocacy day and discussed ideas for community service projects. On February 18th, Kristina, Josie, Sarah, James, Sean, and I made a journey to the state capitol for Advocacy Day where we joined our fellow youth in the march around the Capitol Building for a peaceful protest. After that we met up with **Representatives Andy Billig** and **Timm Ormsby** who represent us from Spokane. We stressed the importance of retaining street youth programs, preserving Independent Youth Housing Program (IYHP), and the importance of unannounced visits. Advocacy Day was a huge success, so we are going to use that energy now and get our chapter really excited about the 2011 Foster Youth & Leadership Summit.

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

We had 2 trainings to prepare our youth for Advocacy Day. I hope everyone enjoyed this amazing Day as much as Region 2 did! We were so happy to meet and talk with **Senator Curtis King** and also with **Representatives Maureen Walsh** and **Norm Johnson**! I would

like to thank them for their time. Our region had the honor to lead the march which was AMAZING!!! Thank you to everybody who helped make the 2011 Advocacy Day possible! On March 12th we are going to serve lunch at our local Union Gospel Mission. Have a great month everyone!

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

What a GREAT MONTH in Region 4 for change. On February 18th we had our YOUTH ADVOCACY DAY! We did something very significant by going together to Olympia and asking for legislative change and exercising our right to free speech. This is important because too often do the people who are the most vulnerable in our society get left without a voice in big decisions that affect their lives. We also had our Legislative Advocacy Training which was a huge success. It helped prepare our young people on how to conduct themselves to effectively deliver our message in Olympia. Also our chapter is making great strides in progression and development. We are effectively continuing our relationships across the community and are building the strongest partnership with Treehouse, YMCA, as well as DSHS. Region 4 for Change is going strong!

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

In the month of February Region 5 COURIGE: Changing Our Unique Responsibilities Individually Gaining Empowerment prepared for Youth Advocacy Day. In preparation for this we had our second chapter meeting. During our meeting we facilitated the legislative training. This training was about how a bill becomes a law, and what would be on the agenda for Youth Advocacy Day. Region 5 combined efforts with Independent Living Skills and worked on posters. We created ideas that came together in chants and during the rally. COURIGE also helped put together letters to give as gifts to the representatives and senators. Our "MBS" year is just beginning. We are planning on doing community service. We are also planning our next chapter meeting. With that being said, we have so much to look forward to and to be just as excited about the 2011 Leadership Summit.



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

This month was a big month for the HEYMAC chapter. The meeting focused on implementing new and exciting changes into how to make HEYMAC stronger than ever. We also geared up for Youth Advocacy Day and informed our new members about what it was and why it is so important! We had Subway and goodies for the food. We had the most members show up yet which was an exciting way to kick off the year! We also sat down as a chapter and started planning out the coming year to make sure we are able to make as much of a change as possible in the following legislative session. It is our hope to make this another great year for The Mockingbird Society's work on behalf of foster youth and to make HEYMAC one of the strongest regions this year! GO REGION 3!!!!!!

News From

The Mockingbird Network

Your Needs, Your Voice



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

by Amanda Urwiler

This month, Region 6 participated in Advocacy Day. We had a LOT of fun together in Olympia. There were more than 200 people there to support The Mockingbird Society, foster youth, alumni and homeless youth. I made a speech on the Street Youth Outreach Programs that are being cut, and Chris Bauer made a speech about why implementing unannounced visits will increase safety for youth in foster and kinship care. We also had a meeting with **Representative Finn of the 35th district (Shelton)** at the Youth Advocacy Day event. The meeting went very well. During the march, we got to scream our lungs out and MAKE OUR VOICES HEARD!!! Overall, Youth Advocacy Day was AWESOME!!! On March 16th, we will host a Culture of Foster Care training for Thurston County Juvenile Diversion volunteers. Stay tuned!