

Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



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2010 Youth Advocacy Day BY ASHLIE LANIER



"Today is for youth in the foster care system to see and speak on change."
- youth participant Region 4

On February 19th 2010, The Mockingbird Society hosted the twelfth annual **Youth Advocacy Day**. Youth Advocacy Day is a day where youth involved in the Mockingbird Network, as well as youth from other organizations, come out and learn how to be their own best advocates while speaking truth to those in power. The Mockingbird Society is dedicated to inspiring the youth voice and making sure the youth know how important and effective their voices are. On Youth Advocacy Day, we have the opportunity to go to Olympia and be heard about changes that need to take place in the child welfare system. After all, these changes affect not only our lives but the lives of the children who, in the future, will find themselves in the child welfare system.

The day began with over 200 people coming out to support us including the Mockingbird Network chapters and many other organizations from all across the state. After people got settled, each organization and chapter had the opportunity to come up and share a little about themselves. "This was my favorite part of the day: to see all these programs that I've been with throughout the past couple of years

come and meet; a lot of them happen to know me," said a youth participant from Region 4.

We then focused on our legislative agenda which was divided into Tier 1 and Tier 2. Tier 1 is our top legislative items and Tier 2 we focus on supporting other organization's advocacy efforts. The Tier 1 agenda consists of saving the **HOPE beds** and the **Responsible Living Skills Programs (RLSPs)**, the **Foster Care to 21** program, and the **Independent Youth Housing** program. Tier 2 includes **Subsidized Guardianships; Expanding Sealing Juvenile Records, 8-hour Notification**, and retaining funding in the **Passport to College** pro-

vid Buck explained in more detail about each legislative item with participants from each region coming up to share their personal experiences and discussing why this specific legislative item was important. You could really see the impact another youth's story had on some of the participants. For me it was like looking in a mirror, we all have something in common and without these programs all of our lives will change.

As the day moved forward, we had some guest speakers. They all came to discuss the importance of the youth voice, how important it is for us to be there to put a face to the issues that they are fighting for in legislation, and a little bit about what they do

and why we have their support. I know this meant a lot to youth in the crowd, seeing and hearing from important people who are able to make change. Our guest speakers included **Representative Roger Goodman, Representative Mary Helens Roberts, Representative Reuven Carlyle, Representative Ruth Kagi, and Representative Mary Lou Dickerson**. After that, **Laurie Lippold**, lobbyist, gave us a brief description of her job, sort of like a "day in the life of a lobbyist." She also answered some of the questions from the participants in the audience. It really gave youth a better understanding of how many other

important issues legislators are forced to choose between.

Then we marched around the capital. A memorable moment was the cry, "Give us hope... Give us beds!" as all of us marched around the capi-

ADVOCACY DAY, CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



On Youth Advocacy Day, foster youth, alumni of foster care, and their supporters met with senators and representatives to advocate for legislation critical to the success of youth in care. The day's events included a march around the capitol.

Photos by Dee Jones, Open Door Photography

gram. We are asking the **Washington State Legislature** to assist with each of these bills. In the past, The Mockingbird Society has played a pivotal role in getting most items on our Tier One agenda passed through legislation and hopes to be successful this year as well.

Network Representatives **Ian Grant** and **Da-**

Assistant Secretary Denise Revels Robinson Listens to Youth BY JERRY BOBO



When I have the chance to interview people that are making a difference in some form or fashion for youth, it excites me. This will be the second issue where **Assistant Secretary of Children's Administration Denise Revels Robinson** has been featured in the *Mockingbird Times*. She is a great ally for youth to have on their side. She is ready to take **Children's Administration**, her department of the **Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)** to a new level- which will allow youth to have a bigger effect on the legislative agenda. Out of the many questions I asked Mrs. Robinson, the answers to three of my questions stuck out in my mind: How she sees the partnership with The Mockingbird Society (MBS) working and what she wants to do with the Mockingbird Network, how she feels about equalizing resources for homeless youth and foster youth, and what ways youth make an impact on the legislative agenda.

Everything has a process to it, including a partnership. The MBS has many partnerships, but the partnership between DSHS and The MBS is a partnership that will continue to grow and give youth a voice and an upper hand in another area of their lives. So I asked Ms. Robinson how she sees the partnership working out. She stated, "I see it as a very close and open collaborative professional relationship: Work with The Mockingbird Society to continue to work and hear from the youth and young people directly about their current or past experience in foster care or involvement with

the child welfare system. I also want to hear from them recommendations to continue to improve how we primarily serve older youth because most of the recommendations come from older youth. I want them to help inform, help educate, and help come up with solutions to serve adolescents. I also want their active involvement as we are developing policies around primarily older youth." To know that someone that is employed by the state and who can make major changes wants the youth to be involved while the policies are made about and for youth is amazing.



Asst. Sect. Robinson and Onalee Stewart on Advocacy Day.

There is a price to pay when becoming a homeless youth and many times you don't have access to certain resources even if you are a part of the foster care system. I asked Ms. Robinson how she feels about equalizing resources for homeless and foster youth, and she said, "My commitment is to understand what the needs of homeless youth are, and to try and address those issues so we can

serve them better. I wouldn't say equalize, I would say understand the needs of homeless youth." It was uplifting because she doesn't want to equalize resources for both homeless and foster youth, but she wants to understand what it is that homeless youth really need and how it is they can be better served.

Youth Advocacy Day was the week following this interview and Denise Revels Robinson was one of our guest speakers. On that day she said that it is important to, "recognize that even though the legislative process is still going, it is important to testify on bills and provide information about [your] needs to Children's Administration." No matter how many times I hear that youth need to be responsive when it comes to the legislative agenda, I feel somewhat responsible. I am an advocate for youth, and even though there are many other youth that advocate for other youth, there aren't enough of them and Ms. Robinson wants to see that change.

It was hard to pick and choose only a few highlights of our conversation but the more I read over the interview, the more I kept coming back to these questions. Then I thought about the times I've seen her speak over the past few months. She has the same passion and drive that we do here at The Mockingbird Society. Its more than just a job, it's a job that others need to see done well, and, when dealing with youth, a person's heart has to be there. The Assistant Secretary of Children's Administration is doing her job right. I feel her passion and know she puts her heart into her work.

Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



One of my favorite days of the year is Youth Advocacy Day. This year's event surpassed all others in so many ways. First, we had over 200 youth and allies attending from all across the state of Washington proclaiming their belief that the issues facing the children and youth in foster care should be front and center in the public discussion regarding balancing the state budget.

This year was highly successful for so many reasons including the increased leadership role that youth and alumni from the Mockingbird Network have taken. When I say success I mean more than the number of youth and organizations that attended, although this year was a record. I also mean more than the trainings that were conducted by youth and alumni in all six of the Mockingbird Networks' regional Chapters. These trainings occur the week or so prior to Youth Advocacy Day and cover the political process in Olympia (How a Bill Becomes a Law) as well as the specific issues on The Mockingbird Society's Advocacy Agenda. Youth who attend these trainings report being much more prepared to be strong advocates and leaders when they arrive in Olympia.

All of this and more contributes to the day being successful, including youth and alumni meeting directly with lawmakers to ensure a mutual understanding of the issues facing youth and alumni from foster care. I am so appreciative of all of the legislators and their staff who took the time to meet with youth and alumni on Youth Advocacy Day. This has always proven to be so powerful for both youth and the legislators.

It was especially wonderful to have **Susan Dreyfus** (Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services) and **Denise Revels Robinson** (Assistant Secretary of Children's Administration) address the group at our closing ceremony. But the highlight for me was listening to youth who carry the burden of abuse and neglect, multiple placements, and separation from family being young leaders calling for unity, engagement, and opportunity. It is listening to these young mockingbirds sing their song of hope that inspires me, and I hope you as well.

Jim Theofelis
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Adopting a Foster Child BY AMANDA BEVINGTON



Adopting a child from the foster care system is extremely important. There are still so many children that are looking for loving families that are still in care. Adopting a child from care makes a big impact in the child life. This should not be stressful, but does take time. The requirements and steps are worked out with your adoption agency.

According to the **Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)** the number of children adopted from care in 2007 was 1,283 out of over 10,000 in care in Washington State that year.¹ As you can see, there are still so many children that are in care that are waiting to get adopted and the number of children being placed in foster care are increasing every year. Over and over, children that are in care explain that a forever family is one thing they want. They want a place to call their own and the knowledge that they are wanted and loved.

The requirements to become an adoptive parent vary from state to state. The minimum age to adopt a child is 21. You do not need to be wealthy or in a long-term relationship—you can even be a single parent. According to **The**

Collaboration to AdoptUsKids, the following characteristics are necessary to be a good adoptive parent: stability, maturity, dependability, flexibility, and to be able to advocate for your child.²

There are three stages to follow in order to adopt a foster child in Washington State. Stage 1 is to choose an adoption agency that best fits you. Next you will have to have a home study done which includes verification of income to meet your expenses, a criminal background check, fingerprinting, no prior records of child abuse or neglect, references, recommendations, and much more. Then you have to take a parent preparation course which is known as PRIDE (Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education). The classes are free, but are a total of 30 hours spread over several weeks. Stage 1 can take up to three to six months. Stage 2 is where you work with your agency to search for your child which can take anywhere from a couple of days to years. Stage 3 is post placement through adoption finalization. This means that from the moment the child is placed in your home, you will be the child's foster parent until the adoption is finalized. This process takes a minimum of 6 months to longer.

As you can see, this process can take a lot of time. However, it means a lot to foster kids when we feel like we belong. It's hard enough to be taken away from your home but imagine how it feels when foster kids get stuck in the system until they turn 18 or longer. Everyone deserves a chance to be loved. Foster children just want a place to call home. For more information on how to get started with adoption, visit www.adoptuskids.org, Northwest Adoption Exchange at www.nwae.org, or www.dshs.wa.gov. I would recommend contacting a foster to adopt agency. A complete list of adoption agencies in Washington State can be found at www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ca/exchange.pdf.

¹ www.dshs.wa.gov

² www.adoptuskids.org

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 hope to be "live" by mid-year. 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.

Thank You!

Sadikifu Akina-James and Mt. Zion Harriet Tubman Circle; Sherilyn Anderson; Anonymous; Nikki Brown; Rep. Reuven Carlyle; Catholic Family and Child Services; Karen Cowgill; Bruce Cross and Perkins Coie; CYS Front Desk staff; Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson; Sect. Susan Dreyfus; Rep. Susan Fagan; Rep. Roger Goodman; Heather Guz; Sen. James Hargrove; Brian Hatcher; Corina Hester; Bernadette Irish; Deborah Jacobs; Jeffris Wood Foundation; Dr. Karen Johnson and Junior League of Olympia; Judy Johnson; Rep. Ruth Kagi; Sarah LaGrange; James Maki; Chris Marsh, Attorney at Law; Sen. Joe McDermott; Maureen McLemore; Microsoft Community Affairs; Nancy and Paula; Steve and Kelly Nolan Shafer; Northwest Children's Fund; Alex Okerman; Rep. Tina Orwell; Pierce County Alliance Staff; Rep. Skip Priest; Asst. Sect. Denise Revels Robinson; Heather Riley; Rep. Mary Helen Roberts; Rosie's Place staff; Seattle Foundation; Shemanski Trust; Dae Shogren; Alex Tarasar; Zoe Torres; Vancouver ILS staff & youth; Norma Wallace; Mary Williams; Julie Wilson; Mark Wittow and K&L Gates

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.

ADVOCACY DAY, CONT. FROM PAGE 1

tal shouting for what we wanted. "No more secrets...no more lies...tell us our rights!" I watched legislators watch us walk pass with our American flags, shouting for our lives, trying to reach out to them, inform them of our importance and the necessity of the programs that are giving us our chances at successful lives. "I'm an independent youth...and I am not recession proof!"

Near the end of the day, **Secretary Susan**

Dreyfus and Assistant Secretary Denise Revels Robinson of **Children's Administration** came and spoke with us. They let us know we, the youth, are top priority in their book. They admired us for speaking up for change and we admired them for making a decision to influence change. This year's Youth Advocacy Day was a blast and very informative. I could tell youth were ready to see change happen and willing to do whatever it took to get it done.

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*.

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
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PHONE _____ Email _____

So that we may recognize you for your gift, please write how you would like to be listed:

- Please do not include my name on published donor lists (check box).
 Yes! I would like to receive a monthly issue of the *Mockingbird Times* (email address required above)

My gift to help children, youth and families in foster care is (check box):
 \$1,000+ Protector
 \$500 - \$999 Champion
 \$250 - \$499 Advocate
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 Other _____

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Expiration Date: _____
Credit card billing address (if different than mailing address): _____
Signature: _____
 Please charge my credit card: One time Monthly Quarterly
 My employer will match my gift. (Please enclose your matching gift form.) Company Name: _____

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*.

National Network for Youth Symposium BY DAVID BUCK



From January 24th to the 27th, homeless youth representatives from organizations nationwide got together to represent themselves at the **National Network for Youth Symposium** in Washington DC. The **National Network for Youth (NN4Y)** is the country's largest advocacy organization for homeless youth. It includes counselors, clinics, advocacy organizations, runaway shelters, and many other organizations working to benefit homeless youth. Their mission is "to connect and champion the needs of runaway, homeless, and other disconnected youth through our "TOOLBOX," which includes advocacy, innovation, community building and services."¹

I had the honor of being one of the four delegates representing **YouthCare**, along with **Ian Grant**, another Mockingbird Network Representative. YouthCare is a Seattle-based organization whose mission is "to build confidence and promote self sufficiency for homeless and underserved youth by providing shelter, hope and support."² In 1974, YouthCare established the first shelter for homeless youth on the West Coast, and now administers seven transitional living programs, two shelters, and a drop-in center providing education and job training, among other things.³

The symposium went well. On the agenda were workshops covering various topics in the field of homeless youth services, as well as plenary speakers **Kathleen Sebelius**, the Secretary of the **Department of Health and Human Services**, and **Ron Sims**, Deputy Secretary of the **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**. But I and others believe that the symposium could have been structured better to utilize the experience and knowledge of youth leaders. It is my recommendation that the symposium should be restructured so that barriers between homeless youth and services providers are lowered and honest discussion about policy and legislation can take place.

The point of the symposium was to encourage homeless youth to use their experience as homeless youth to create change. I expected that there would be dialogue and discussion

between service providers and youth about legislation and policy that youth deserve to have a voice in. Instead, the structure of the symposium served less to break down barriers between homeless youth and service providers and instead reinforced them, making honest discussion about policy nigh-impossible. For example, the Sunday night town hall meeting which was marketed as an honest discussion between youth about how the NN4Y should direct their legislative and policy agenda for the next year, felt like a simple brainstorming exercise for youth without any meaningful dialogue. There was no discussion of policy objectives.

The most important day of the symposium was Hill Day, when youth as well as providers went to Capitol Hill to meet with senators and representatives from their states and inform them of the issues that need to be addressed so that homeless youth can continue to get the resources they need to live healthy, happy, and productive lives. YouthCare's Executive Director, **Melinda Giovengo**, who went with our delegation, said, "Often it is hard for political leaders to hear from this particular constituency and symposium and the NN4Y believe the tale and needs are best told by the young people themselves." We had the opportunity to meet with staffers for both **Senator Pat Murray** and **Senator Maria Cantwell**. We also had the honor of speaking directly with **Representative Jim McDermott** about the challenges facing homeless youth and what can be done to help meet those challenges.

I was honored to attend the National Network for Youth Symposium. The symposium's presence on Capitol Hill was very powerful but I feel there is room for improvement, such as reforming the way interactions between youth and programs are handled. I honestly believe if barriers were broken down NN4Y might find that their ultimate goal would be reached at a much faster pace. All in all, I thank the National Network For Youth for their hard work and will continue to be a supporter.

¹ www.nn4youth.org/about-us

² www.youthcare.org/index.php/about_us/mission

³ www.youthcare.org/index.php/services

Reinstating the Rights of Birth Parents BY IAN GRANT



There are a lot of foster youth in Washington State that don't know that they have a shot at going back to their birth families. And I believe they should.

A law was passed in 2007 giving youth the right to petition the court for the reinstatement of their birth parents' parental rights. According to Keith Hanson, a social worker at the Counsel for Defense of Chelan County (CDOCC), there are four known cases in Chelan County where youth were not notified of their right to petition the court to reinstate their parents' rights. It is DCFS (Department of Children and Family Services) policy that social workers are required to tell youth that they have that right under state law.

Robert Gower, an attorney with CDOCC, believes that without a legislative mandate DCFS will not act to inform youth of their rights, saying "...in almost all cases, both the social worker and the guardian ad litem were in favor of termination of parental rights. As such, neither the social worker nor the guardian ad litem is likely to believe that reinstatement is in the child's best interest... We simply cannot expect the parties that advocated for termination of parental rights to later advocate for reinstatement of parental rights."

According to legal experts, the reinstatement statute, RCW 13.34.215, gives youth the right to petition the court to end their dependency and put them back with their parents if the State, three years after the original termination of parental rights, has not achieved permanency for the youth. ¹ Permanency is a catch-all term in the Child Welfare System for

a variety of outcomes including reunification with birth family, adoption, and guardianship. This means that if the child has been adopted, is in guardianship, or in some other clearly permanent situation according to their permanency plan, the statute does not apply.

Youth have the right to attorneys during this process: any youth bringing a petition is, by law, supposed to have an attorney appointed for him or her. ² The youth, through his or her attorney, and the parents have the responsibility of proving to the court by clear and convincing evidence that the youth hasn't achieved permanency, that going back to the youth's parents would be in his or her best interests, that reunification wouldn't present a risk to the youth's health, welfare or safety, and that the parents have fixed the problems that caused the dependency in the first place. ³

If the court finds that all this is true, parental rights are reinstated for a six-month trial period. If the youth has to be removed from the home again due to abuse or neglect, and the court finds that the youth was actually abused or neglected, then the order is dismissed and the parents lose their rights again. If not, at the end of the six months, the court orders that the parents' rights be permanently reinstated and dismisses the dependency. The statute also protects parents from liability for child support for the time that the youth was in care. ⁴

If you would like to exercise your right to petition the court to reinstate your parents' rights, the best thing to do is to talk to a lawyer. If you haven't been appointed a lawyer, the first step is to let the judge or commissioner know as soon as possible or at your next de-

Life After The Mockingbird Society BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



At The Mockingbird Society (MBS), we are strong believers in youth development and that youth are the future. The MBS gives youth the opportunity to use his or her voice and the training to use it effectively. Youth are instilled with qualities of leadership and values that can be implemented in their professional, educational, and even personal lives, for the rest of their life.

I recently interviewed three former Mockingbird Network youth, **Samuel Martin**, **Rhonda Smith**, and **Jessica Martin**, to ask their views on how The Mockingbird Society has changed since they left, as well as what they have been doing since leaving The MBS.

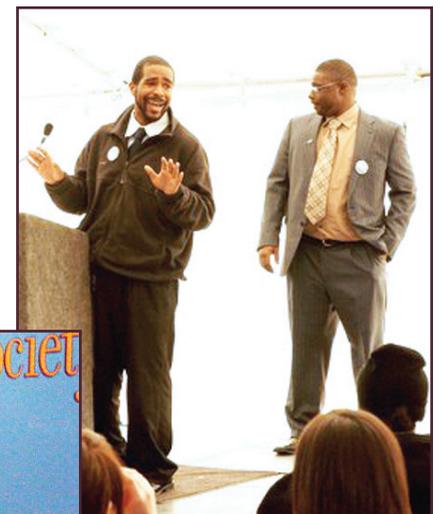
While at The MBS, these youth learned skills that they are still using in their lives today. "Advocacy is the biggest thing, I can use it everywhere. Public speaking and using my voice, and being able to write are huge. I use writing in school all the time," said Samuel. When I asked Rhonda she said, "Advocacy is one thing that I use every day. I advocate for myself to get what I need all the time." Rhonda learned not only the skills to advocate, but "[While at The MBS,] I learned a lot of communication skills." All of these skills are those that can be used in many parts of your lives, whether youth or adult.

Since leaving The MBS, these youth have gone on completely different paths. Jessica left The MBS to go to **Job Corps** at Tongue Point in Oregon where she graduated from the pre-apprenticeship plastering program and transferred to **Clearfield Job Corps** in Utah for advanced training in automotive repair. Now she is back in Region 4, trying to settle down and find a job. Rhonda and Samuel have stayed close to The Mockingbird Society, participating in the **Region 4 for Change Chapter**. Both having been chapter leaders recently (Samuel

said Jessica. Samuel says, "The [Mockingbird] Network is a big, strong change. I think The Network will lead into the foster care change movement, like every other cause had a movement. The Network is a beautiful thing. I was impressed and amazed at Youth Advocacy Day... Not just that but the youth working [at The MBS] have a high level of professionalism and discipline. They're always working hard. The team is strong and the retention has increased a lot." Being a part of these changes is even more amazing than it looks. I feel like I'm experiencing things that most people my age do not. And I'm learning so much from having this job.

Each of them had some memorable moments from The Mockingbird Society that they shared with me. Samuel says his was the first annual **Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit**, from where what we now call The Network really got its start. Jessica's most memorable moment was a foster parent conference in Ocean Shores. She really felt the foster parents were interested in making a difference in the lives of their youth because of their attentiveness and questions during the seminar. Rhonda doesn't have just one. She always enjoyed when all of the staff came together at events such as Advocacy Day and even staff picnics.

Even though these three don't work at The Mockingbird Society anymore, they are still very welcome in our network chapters and



Sam Martin and Diamonique Walker display a sign supporting HB 2735. Sam continues to be involved with The Mockingbird Society after leaving to attend the University of Washington. This included speaking at Youth Advocacy Day helping to motivate a new group of Mockingbird Network youth.



still is a chapter leader). Right now Samuel is attending the University of Washington (UW) and is a UW Senator as well working at JumpStart which is a program for pre-school aged children. Since Rhonda left The MBS she has faced some challenges. "But everything is turning out for the better... I am back in school trying to get my GED [General Equivalency Diploma]." I am happy to say that all three of them were at Youth Advocacy Day in Olympia.

Mockingbird has changed a lot since they were working here with the Mockingbird Network. "I really love how the statewide networking has finally been put into play. The youth also seem much more professional,"

pendency hearing that you would like to pursue the reinstatement of your parents' rights. The court should appoint an attorney for you.

From then on, it's up to you, your attorney, and your parents. Remember, knowing about your rights is the only way to exercise them. Knowledge is power, and knowing, in detail, what your legal rights are gives you the power to change your situation for the better. Good luck.

¹⁴ apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?Cite=13.34.215

events. Closing, I asked each if they could tell Jim one thing about how The MBS impacted them, what would it be? Samuel said, "I would tell Jim 'Thank you' for changing my life. [The Mockingbird Society] gave me a utility belt. I have skills that I can use in all aspects of my life that are instilled forever." Rhonda says "I would tell Jim that I appreciate the opportunity of working with a wonderful organization. I have learned how to do a lot on my own with advocating. And I would also tell him being a part of [The Mockingbird Society] team was kind of like being with a family." Last, but not least, Jessica said, "I don't even know where to begin: The family; the feeling of success; being heard; the activism and actually making a change; seeing things actually happen that make a difference to the world around me; the leadership skills; the self esteem and self-gratification."

As you can see, all of these youth were really impacted by The Mockingbird Society. Being able to use their voices and being a part of change has made a difference in all of their lives. The Mockingbird Society is all about youth and making a difference and these youth were all grateful that they were able to experience it.

Twisted Teacher

HUNTER COVINGTON

Teachers put on a smile when you talk smack,
But really, they wish they could talk back.
We don't realize how hard they try,
That sometimes they cry that they have lives,
And us as kids just act like fools.

We think it's cool when we get in trouble but we ain't
cool with trouble.

Teachers, they can't discriminate but they intimidate,
When students dominate the halls, but all greats must
fall, right?

Teachers have the power, but won't do what they must,
And all the while trying to build the trust,
Of superintendents, and overrated principals, not that
they're all bad,
I just need to vent a little.

Well now, kids think teachers don't think
And teachers think the kids don't think
And that is the problem at hand.
Perfection is perfected so I'm gonna let it sit.
But nobody's perfect so I guess we're all twisted a little
bit.

Little Sister

SIR DONALD L. STALLWORTH

My little sister is the queen
For her crown gleams
With the shine of a thousand suns, for she is the one.
My little sister, man how I miss her
Without her, my pain is like an empty abyss
For there are no more roses, they are all dead
With my heart painted red, it's slowly turning black
Hacking through my feelings, hacking through my soul
The pain is unbearable for me as a whole
Taking its toll on me, taking its toll on us,
For in God we trust, and this is a long process,
We must be patient, we must not rush.
My little sister, oh how I miss her
For her name is Queen
For there is no shade, there is only truth.
For my truth is her and sometimes pain
Although they are not the same
For we share the same blood, we share the same momma.
We share the same pains and we share the same drama
We share the same eyes, we share the same ears
We share the same heart, and we share the same fears
She protects her love, I protect her with my tears
That's the beginning of our lives, through all the black-
hearted years.

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**

Mar. 2+: **Loeff Carrousel re-opens**, Riverfront Park; (509) 625-6602, www.spokaneriverfrontpark.com.

Mar. 14: **Music of Heaven and Earth, Spokane Symphony Chorale**, 3:00 -4:30 PM, Showalter Auditorium, Cheney.

Region 2

Mar. 25: **100 Jobs Career Fair**, 1 - 5 PM, Southeast Community Center; For youth only.

Region 3

Mar. 10: **Getting Ready for College**, Kulshan Creek Neighborhood Center (Casa Azul); (360) 650-2381 or Jose.Rodriguez@wwu.edu.

Mar. 27: **Snohomish County Transition Resource Fair**, 4 - 8 PM, Everett Community College, FREE; (425) 388-7320.

Region 4

Mar. 30: **Hip Hop Hoop 3 on 3 Tournament**, 1 - 4 PM, Rainier Beach Community Center; FREE; (206) 386-1925.

Mar. 30: **Movie Day and Popcorn**, 4 - 6 PM, Van Asselt Community Center; FREE; Please RSVP (206) 386-1921.

Region 5

Mar. 10: **Mockingbird Network Chapter Meeting**, 3:30 PM, Pierce County Alliance; (509) 853-8000.

Region 6

2nd and 4th Thursdays: **Transitional Housing Program Orientations**, 3 PM, Center for Youth Services, Goldberg Room.

2nd and 4th Wednesdays: **Moms & Moms 2 B**, [for ILS participants] 5:30-7 PM, Center for Youth Services, Rosie's Place.

"Never give up on something you can't go a day without."

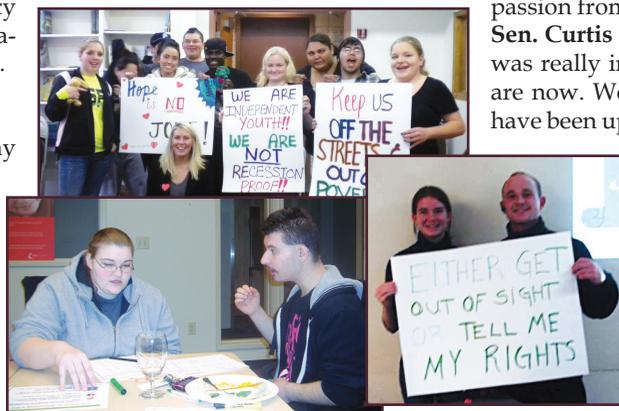
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Region 1: UNITE! CHAPTER IN SPOKANE COUNTY BY ONALEE STEWART

Lauren and I facilitated a Legislative Advocacy 101 training for 12 youth and alumni to prepare for Advocacy Day on Feb. 19th. We had a Valentine's Day theme for our Chapter meeting on the 17th and thirteen of our youth and alumni made posters for Advocacy Day. We talked about the upcoming Leadership Summit and handed out applications. **Katrina, Jocey, Lauren**, and myself had a great time at Youth Advocacy Day.

Region 2: A.C.T. F.I.R.S.T. CHAPTER IN YAKIMA COUNTY BY SAUNDRA HUNT

On Youth Advocacy Day, we talked with **Sen. Curtis King** about not taking away **Foster Care to 21** and **Passport to College**. He listened to us and when we got done he handed out his business cards and told us that we can give him a call if we are ever in need. Thank you Sen. King! Representative Walsh also took part in the panel and ACT FIRST would like to say thank you for all of your support! Advocacy Day was a lot of fun and very inspiring. As a chapter leader, I felt very important because we were able to lead a march that could change the future of our foster children. I would definitely encourage more youth from Region 2 to go next year because it was fun, educational, and impactful!



face to the issues they vote on so they have a better idea of who it affects. Next month we will be focusing on the Leadership Summit.

Region 3: Hey Mac CHAPTER IN SKAGIT COUNTY BY JOSIE TOOHEY

This month we had Legislative Advocacy 101 training to get ready for Youth Advocacy Day. Youth Advocacy Day was outstanding; I felt the passion from each person there. First we met with **Sen. Curtis King** who gave us some pointers and was really interested in how we got to where we are now. We enjoyed hearing what other regions have been up to and what issues were most important to them. When we marched and chanted it felt so amazing to be heard and I believe we got their attention! Later we handed out Thank You cards to some senators, some of whom took us to the Senate floor where they vote on bills. Even though they are busy people they took time out of their day to listen and ask questions. We put a

News From**The Mockingbird Network****Your Needs, Your Voice****Region 4: For Change CHAPTER IN KING COUNTY BY CHRISTINA KOSHNEY**

Last month we held Legislative Advocacy 101 training with a turnout of over 50 foster youth alumni and supporters. All contributed to making this an awesome preparation for Youth Advocacy Day. At Youth Advocacy Day this year, Region 4 had the honor of holding an open table presentation with **Senator Joe McDermott** and **Representative Tina Orwell**, where we talked about the bills we wanted passed and left the table with positive feedback and new friends in Olympia. We are working hard to improve as a chapter and to make change in our region and this is only the beginning! Thanks to all Region 4 youth that brought amazing energy to this year's Youth Advocacy Day!

Region 5: Cour'ige CHAPTER IN PIERCE COUNTY BY DEMAREA KIRK

This month we prepared for our Youth Advocacy Day. We held our Legislative Advocacy 101 training at Pierce County Alliance (PCA) in order for all youth to gain familiarity with the 2010 Legislative Agenda. We also used an Independent Living Skills meeting at PCA to talk about Advocacy Day and make posters for the march around the capitol. All the regions came together in Olympia. We got to listen to personal stories of other youth and alumni who explained what they have been through and why certain programs should not be cut. We all marched around the capitol, chanting and holding signs to get our voices heard. At the end of Advocacy Day, we went around to the Senators and legislators from our districts and dropped off thank you gifts for their work on supporting foster care youth.

**Region 6: CHAPTER IN THURSTON COUNTY BY SAMANTHA EVANS**

Last month I went to the Legal and Practices Subcommittee of the Transformation Design Committee and together we made a list of the core services to be offered for the privatization of foster care. We also had a great turnout at our Legislative Advocacy 101 training in Lewis County where we prepared for Youth Advocacy Day (YAD) and showed why it is important. It was wonderful to have everybody come to our neck of the woods for YAD. We were able to meet with the staff for Representative Sam Hunt, Representative Kath Haigh and Senator Karen Fraser. They were both very responsive and were impressed by us. At our next chapter meeting we will finally be naming our chapter.