

# Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



May 2010

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## 2010 Legislative Successes BY DAVID BUCK



The legislative session is over. When the Mockingbird Society and the State Advisory Council (SAC) came up with its legislative agenda we were informed early on of the budget crisis. It was explained to us that the governor is required by law to instate a balanced budget. In other words, the Governor and the Legislature needed to find a way to pay for all the state's needs off of a small check. That being said, the only way this could happen was if the Governor and Legislature raised taxes, or cut programs. So our primary goal was just to be able to hold on to what we had if we could.

After much debate, The Mockingbird Society and The Mockingbird Network's State Advisory Council decided upon the legislative agenda that protected basic needs and civil rights. In terms of priority there were two tiers: Tier 1 included the issues that the Mockingbird Society directly would be advocating for; and Tier 2 were those items that our community partners would lead, with the Mockingbird Society in a supporting role.

Our Tier 1 priority was "Safe Housing and Support for Youth in Care: Save the HOPE in the HOPE Act!" The Hope Act provides safe living placement for homeless youth from care and transitional services. In addition, Tier 1 priorities included HB2735. This law requires notification of the right to request counsel in dependency proceedings. And, HB6832 which added youth or an alumni of foster care to the Transformation Design

Committee. They passed this law including full voting rights for the youth on this important reform committee. With respect to Tier 2, there were three important bills that were ultimately signed into law. These included subsidized guardianships, expanding the sealing of juvenile records in certain circumstances, and an expansion of the 8 Hour Notification in certain circumstances to ensure stability and safety of youth.



Members of The Mockingbird Society and State Advisory Council pose with Governor Gregoire.

Throughout the legislative session Jim Theofelis, Executive Director, The Mockingbird Society and Laurie Lippold of Children's Home Society went down to Olympia on a regular basis to speak on behalf of these issues. And, with a very successful Youth Advocacy Day – attended by more than 200 youth from all corners of the state – and the support of many state legislators, everything in our legislative agenda passed. When asked about the success of our advocacy work and the passage of our legislative agenda Jim Theofelis said: "I believe it was a combination of hard and smart work on behalf of Mockingbird Society's youth and alumni, as well as a dedicated determination among our

legislative champions to ensure that the children, youth and families in foster care are valued as an important part of our community regardless of the economic climate. They are our children!"

The legislative agenda was passed during a 2.6 billion dollar deficit, which means it's safe to say those on Capitol Hill really do care about youth. And, there are a few people who should be thanked for their efforts: Representative Roger Goodman for championing HB2735 which encouraged the need for representation of children in dependency matters; Representative Mary Lou Dickerson for championing HB2752 a bill which modifies provisions relating to providing shelter to a minor (8-hour notification reform); Senator James Hargrove for championing SB6561 which restricts access to juvenile offender records. Senator Hargrove and Representative Ruth Kagi deserve special thanks for championing HB6832 which added youth to child welfare reform committee – with full voting

**"With a very successful Youth Advocacy Day – attended by more than 200 youth from all corners of the state -- and the support of many state representatives, everything in our legislative agenda passed."**

rights; And, Representative Mary Helen Roberts for sponsorship of the HB2680 which allows for the use of federal funds to provide subsidy payments to relatives serving as guardians for children exiting the system. We, the youth at the Mockingbird Society, youth and alumni of care and kinship care want to express our deepest thanks for your continued support.

## May Marks National Foster Care Month BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



Every May since 1988, National Foster Care Month (NFCM) has been celebrated and acknowledged. It began when the National Foster Parents Association gained support from Senator Strom Thurmond to proclaim May National Foster Care Month. When this campaign first began, it was dedicated to showing thanks to all of the foster parents who have made huge contributions and improved the lives of youth. NFCM now promotes foster care awareness, bringing attention to the issues in the foster care system, and encouraging individuals and organizations to support the lives of youth and families.

As a part of this national awareness effort, kinship caregivers are recognized as well. In Washington State, May 19th marks Kinship Caregiver Day. On this day we will celebrate and thank the grandparents, aunts, uncles and even close friends that take care of young people close to them. There are many youth in relative/kinship care that are living with someone they know, rather than living with strangers, or moving from home to home. Kinship caregivers save the state thousands of dollars every year by taking on the responsibility of parents. But more important, we know that when children are able to remain with a relative that it leads to better outcomes

for youth. Often kinship care increases stability and allows children and youth to remain in their school, and be with their siblings (if applicable).

Let's all give thanks to the kinship caregivers in our communities!

**"National Foster Care Month campaign not only promotes foster care awareness, but it also raises interest in adoption and gaining and retaining foster parents."**

Currently, there is an estimated 463,000 youth in out of home care nationwide. As of 2008, in Washington State, an estimated 10,323 children were in the foster care system. National estimates indicate that our country is home to 12-million foster care alumni. And, each year 20,000 youth age out of care nationwide.

Over the past 20 years the numbers of youth and alumni of care has grown, and NFCM has grown too. The campaign now supports youth exiting care as well as youth in care. National Foster Care Month has become the "frame work" for broader awareness of the need for reforming the system. The leadership of Casey Family Programs and the National

Foster Care Coalition (NFCC) helped to pass the Chaffee Foster Care Independence Act. Along with Casey and NFCC, there are many other nationwide organizations that support NFCM and foster care altogether.

National Foster Care Month campaign not only promotes foster care awareness, but it also raises interest in adoption and gaining and retaining foster parents. In the past 12 years about 11,300 youth have been adopted. The campaign could have possibly influenced some of these adoptions. I know some youth that are unhappy because of their adoption situation, but many youth feel blessed and thankful to have been adopted, and I was able to get some insight from one of the many. "Being adopted has been a the best thing that has happened to me, for many reasons; here are a few: I am in a stable home, I have the most amazing parents a kid could have," said Kieran, age 17 who has been adopted for 3 years.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ca/07Report4Permanency1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info\\_services/state/Washington.pdf](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/state/Washington.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fostercaremonth.org/About-FosterCare/StatisticsAndData/Pages/default.aspx>

**Letter From the Editor** BY JIM THEOFELIS



Dear Friends,  
As we celebrate National Foster Care Month (NFCM), it is a great time to reflect on where we are and how far we have come to improve the lives of children and youth in foster care; and those touched by and in the child welfare system. Our heartfelt thanks go out to foster parents, kinship caregivers, CASAs, social workers, service providers and all those who see the potential in our youth.

At The Mockingbird Society, we continue to be guided by the principle that children in the system deserve the same resources, love and support that your children and my children do. It is that fundamental belief that has allowed the work of NFCM and organizations like ours to create system change.

In fact, the 2010 Washington State Legislative session marks another reason to celebrate and be energized in our work. Despite the continuing budget challenges, we

protected basic needs from Safe Housing and Independent Living Skills programs to sibling relationships.

This work is possible because of a growing coalition of mobilized advocates from across our state led by The Mockingbird Network -- both youth and alumni of foster care and kinship care, homeless youth, ASK-Y, The Child Welfare Advocacy Coalition, Children's Home Society, many philanthropic partners, and each and every one of you!

Thank you. Together we can build a world-class foster care system.

Jim Theofelis  
jim@mockingbirdsociety.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.

**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.

**Thank You!**

Heather Riley from Casey family programs and Alex Okerman from the YMCA, Virginia Miller House, American Baptist Churches across the Pacific Northwest, Rose and Brian for all of their support

**The Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name**

The 1962 American classic *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, The Mockingbird Society. Atticus, the widowed father of Jem and Scout, joins Miss Maudie in teaching his kids that it's a sin to kill a mockingbird because "...Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us."

What if we created an organization, a community, indeed a world, in which our most vulnerable children and youth were protected and valued with the same commitment that Atticus had for mockingbirds?

Join The Mockingbird Society today and help us give young people a safe place to nest and sing.

**Debunking Media Stereotypes** BY IAN GRANT



It's hard to evaluate the way that the media portrays the youth in foster care. On the one hand, it's overwhelmingly negative; but on the other hand, so is the system.

On the one hand, it sometimes informs the public about horrific abuses in the foster system, but on the other hand, that's really all it seems to do: the story is usually some variation on "Local foster child beaten with variety of blunt objects; film at 11." In fact, that's the problem, right there: even in more positive media coverage of foster care, foster youth are objects, not subjects; cute little kids who horrifyingly sadists abuse or who incompetent bureaucracies neglect. Occasionally, there will be a positive story about one particular foster youth who "made it," but those are few and far between.

But the media rarely seems to focus on what the system is doing well, or on efforts to improve the system. I think that's unfortunate. We need both sides; we need the media to let us know when things are going badly so that we can intervene, but we also need the media to let us know when things are going well so that we can muster the political will to expand what works. We need to show the world that we can do better, and we are doing better, and we need the continued support of the whole community to continue doing better.

I'm happy to report that efforts are being made to change the picture of foster care in the media. For example, there's Daniel Heimpel's Fostering Media Connections (1) project. Fostering Media Connections is a "media-driven, grass roots initiative to speed the implementation of sweeping federal foster care reform and increase general awareness of the foster care system." (2) Heimpel, as well as Eytan Elter-

man, who handles media and public affairs for the project (3), are traveling the country to find as many stories, positive and negative, as they can about foster youth, the systems around foster youth, and the efforts to change them.

Heimpel believes that "constricting newsrooms" have contributed to a "dearth of real enterprise journalism," a world in which journalism is not as lucrative a career as it once was. Heimpel hopes that "when [journalists] aren't making huge fiscal profit, they will want to make a profit in principle." Thanks to a shrinking commercial news machine, Heimpel believes that media is now "hungry for content," and the idea behind Fostering Media Connections is basically to package positive content around foster youth, with



Documenting a meeting at Fostering Media Connections.

MEDIA STEREOTYPES, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



**MOCKINGBIRD HUB HOME FAMILY NEEDED**

Ryther Child Center, a long-term partner with The Mockingbird Society, has an opening south of Seattle for an experienced foster family to provide Hub Home support for a constellation of 8 foster homes.

Please visit both [www.ryther.org](http://www.ryther.org) and [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org) and contact Heather Perry at (206) 517-0273 ext. 11 if interested. We look forward to hearing from you.

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

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Please mail this completed form and your check to The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Avenue S, Suite 240, Seattle, WA 98144. For more information, call (206) 323-KIDS (5437) or visit [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org).

**MEET OUR STAFF**

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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*.

## Juvenile Detention Needs Resources BY AMANDA BEVINGTON



When I was younger I had a difficult experience in the juvenile justice system and at a juvenile detention center. It was extremely hard to accomplish anything toward my personal goals or self-improvement while being locked up. When I was locked up I wanted to give up on everything. While I was incarcerated, I couldn't celebrate my birthday, talk on the phone late at night, or even have loved ones visit me. When I was locked up, all I thought about was my release date, and where I could go or what I could do when I got out of jail. Being locked up was defeating, but it helped me realize that I needed to seek help and stop making the same mistakes over and over again. As I reflected on my juvenile detention experience, I kept thinking about resources for youth in the system. Resources inside and outside of jail help youth and young adults with direction, and with those resources comes the

## Youth of Incarcerated Parents BY JERRY BOBO



When people get incarcerated they are leaving behind many things: a life, family and friends, and children. Not only does being incarcerated have an effect on the person being locked up, but it has an effect on everyone that is apart of that person's life. It is worse for those with children. They miss out on so many different aspects of their child's life. On any given day, more than 1.5 million children in this country or approximately two percent of minor children have a parent serving a sentence in state or federal prison. These children are affected by this in many ways, not knowing where the relationship will go, the mental stress affecting concentration while in school and the impact it has on general life emotionally and socially. The relationship between child and his or her parent will force hard decisions as time and life goes on.

In March 2010 MTV had an episode of *True Life* called; I Have a Parent in Prison. This episode followed around two young men of a different race, age, and city. Austin, a 16 year old white youth has only interacted with his father as an inmate his entire life. But, his father is being released from prison and wanted to build a relationship with Austin. On the one hand, Austin was excited and nervous because other than the monthly visits to the prison they had no relationship. But, he was not open to having another parent let alone a father that was never there. He wants the connection to grow, but he also didn't want to force it. Pe'Andre is a 26 year old black male who had to fend for himself from his early teens into his adulthood because both of his parents were incarcerated. He and his mother have a growing relationship and that has inspired Pe'Andre to want to connect with his father for the first time in 14 years.

Youth in the child welfare system have problems, and when your birth parents are incarcerated that adds to the list of problems. The average stay in first foster care for a child with an incarcerated mother is 3.9 years. Few children see their incarcerated parents on a regular basis, and most not at all. Without contact, children begin to view their parents as strangers, making their adjustment more challenging and reunification with their parents more difficult. I also asked two females of a different age and race that have had experience with the child welfare system whether they felt the same way about having parents that are or have been incarcerated. They had two different views; one had their parents' absent from their life for two years, and the other had a parent who was absent on and off, destroying their relationship.

The first young lady was between one and two

months old when her mother and father got incarcerated. I asked her if she felt that her parents let her down and how she felt about the situation she replied, "I didn't know the situation and when we got call from them I simply called them mom and dad because that's what my sister did." When you don't know certain things about relatives or parents your follow the lead of your older siblings.

To see if the relationship was affected by the incarceration, I asked her if she thought it was for better or worse? She said, "I don't really know if it was for better or worse, but I think I missed out on that connection that baby's develop with their parents, especially...me and my parents were never close in comparison to my older sister."

The second lady, Jaden Harrison is 23 years old and has a father that has been incarcerated on and off for 10 years since she was born, not staying out for more than a few months. She was sheltered from the reasons he was incarcerated by her paternal grandparents, but learned why as she got older. I asked her if she felt her parent let her down and how she felt about the situation and this was her response, "I don't talk to my father. I visited him in Juneau for the weekend at age 17, and told him if he ended up in jail again for domestic violence never to hear from me again. The day after I left he threw his pregnant girlfriend. I haven't talked or seen him since."

Youth are on the wrong end of the situation when their parents become incarcerated. Parent/child relationships develop at young ages and if they are never available to the children, it will be hard to break down the wall that has been built from past problems to future problems. It is up to the youth to want to rebuild or build the relationship, but they are not at fault for not wanting to do that.

Some of you may have noticed the similarity of the name "Fostering Media Connections" to the 2008 federal Fostering Connections to Success act. Heimpel believes that Fostering Connections to Success is "a blueprint embodied in federal law" to change the system for the better, and has written about many examples of other initiatives to improve foster care. Heimpel's project is about showing the world that, while the foster system has a lot of prob-

lems and needs a lot of work, it is ultimately fixable if people are willing to invest in it rather than give up on it. Heimpel describes the general perception of foster care as "one of a system peopled by hopeful people, but of one by broken kids, and that's not true."

It's refreshing to see foster youth presented in a hopeful light. So many people describe system youth as "broken," as though we were machines, as though we were beyond help, as though we were without hope. We are hopeful; we have no choice but to be. Hope is all we have.

## MEDIA STEREOTYPES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

lems and needs a lot of work, it is ultimately fixable if people are willing to invest in it rather than give up on it. Heimpel describes the general perception of foster care as "one of a system peopled by hopeful people, but of one by broken kids, and that's not true."

Most quotes from recorded personal interview with Heimpel.

## A Fresh Start BY STARCIA AGUE

The 2010 Legislature passed a new law critically important to youth who have been in the juvenile justice system. It is known as Senate bill 6561, but in essence it is an opportunity for a 'fresh start' or to begin anew. The day the law was signed by Governor Gregoire, was one of the happiest and proudest moments of my life. It was the culmination of lots of hard work, determination, tears, laughter, meeting with many wonderful people (and some who were difficult to persuade), and learning about how a law makes it through the legislature. And, learning some things about myself along the way.

If it was possible to have "do-overs"

in life, I am not sure whether I would take them. My childhood, my friends, and my family, are a large part of what makes me, and makes all of us, who we are, for better or worse. I would not be where I am today, doing what I am doing, if I had not been convicted at the age of 15 and sentenced to six years in jail. The experience of being incarcerated for six years fueled my drive to fight for myself and other young people who deserve a second chance to become good and productive people. We all need to be able to be able to get past our mistakes made in youth, and these mistakes should not follow us as permanent punishment for the rest of our lives. Prior to passage of this bill, juvenile records could haunt a youth for their entire life, no matter what positive steps he or she took, or what obligations were met.

The juvenile system in Washington State is known as "JRA," which stands for Juvenile REHABILITATION Administration. I have been successfully rehabilitated, partly by people who believed in me along the way, and partly because I believed in myself. But, all of this effort didn't keep my

conviction being a barrier to employment in the one area where I want to work - helping kids with my type of background succeed in life despite the poor choices they made in their youth. With the passage of Senate Bill 6561 this barrier has been at least partially lifted.

With the passage of this law, individuals with Class A felonies will be able, in some circumstances, to seal their records. This will occur five years after release if the individual has paid restitution and has committed no further offenses. Moreover, individuals with Class B felonies will only have to wait two years to seal their records, pay restitution and commit no

further offenses (as opposed to five years, as was the case in the past). For Class B offenses the individual also will have to have paid their restitution in full and committed no further offenses.

This new law has opened an important door and provided an incentive to continue to work on life skills and formal education as a way out of further trouble with the law. And, more important, work toward a brighter future. Hopefully other young offenders will see that the door is open. And, knowing that it is open for them; I hope they will choose to walk through it. My guess is that some kids, having previously seen the door as being shut tight, haven't even tried. I hope they will try harder now. I am here to tell them that it is worth it. I am here to tell them that we can change our circumstances. And, that each of us can make a difference in the world, one person at a time.



Governor Gregoire signing Senate bill 6561.

### Call for Entries!

The Art4Justice Committee is a group of 8 young adults from all over Seattle who are passionate about art and social justice. The Committee has just received a grant from the City of Seattle Neighborhood Matching Fund to put on two separate youth-focused community arts events; one on May 15th and another scheduled in late June. These events will showcase the creative talent of young artists in Seattle who produce art with the purpose of lifting up their community and furthering social and environmental justice. The Committee is currently looking for youth artists! To apply to showcase your art or for more information about the events, please contact Anna Nguyen at: [annavinguyen@yahoo.com](mailto:annavinguyen@yahoo.com).

<sup>1</sup> Due disclosure: I was interviewed for Fostering Media Connections about my experience transitioning out of care.

<sup>2,3</sup> Fostering Media Connections' website at <http://www.fosteringmediaconnections.org>

## Freedom is Calling

By Jasmin Esters

Quick, hide, don't stop running  
Until you're on the other side of freedom,  
peace and family  
Don't dare look back at all  
When you cry your tear drops go blue  
Don't stop fighting for freedom in your  
life  
It's all about surviving  
Now when you cross that line  
Find your new self

## The Beginning of the End

Danielle Jones

It's the ending of school the beginning of my  
life.  
The easy part is over now the hardest part  
starts.  
I'm giving up my middle school life and  
moving on to high school.  
The familiar faces I once knew are disappearing  
quickly.  
The memories I own are going to become a  
thing of the past.  
My life begins during the beginning of the end.

### 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](http://mockingbirdsociety.org) and select *Mockingbird Times* under The Mockingbird Network or contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at [kara@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto: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

**May 8th:** Jr. Lilac Parade - Riverfront park from 10am-1pm.

**May 15th:** Spokane Lilac Parade - Riverfront Park from 7:45pm- 10:30pm.

#### Region 2

**Mother's Day:** Yakima Farmers Market opens

**May 26:** Yakima Schools Foundation is Celebrating our Youth @ Yakima Convention Center; Starting at 6:30am. Contact: (509) 457-0898.

#### Region 3

**May 17th:** Eating For Energy Monday 6:30pm

Contact: Jodie Buller Email: [cooproom@gmail.com](mailto:cooproom@gmail.com)

**May 23:** Fishing Day for Kids 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Location: Gissberg Twin Lakes County Park

Web URL: <http://www.snocoparks.org>

#### Region 4

**May 11-15:** Seattle International Children's Festival

Seattle Center - Downtown Seattle Washington

**May 28-31:** Northwest Folklife Festival 11:00AM - 11:00 PM

Seattle Center - Downtown Seattle Washington

#### Region 5

**May 12:** Chapter Meeting at PCA: Know Your Rights Training 3:30-5:00.

**May 15:** SafeStreet Graffiti Cleanup

Samantha Valle (253) 502-5494; [s.valle@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:s.valle@mockingbirdsociety.org)

#### Region 6

**Wednesdays:** Free Health Clinic 9-1

Community Youth Services

711 State Ave NE, Olympia WA, 98506

360-943-0780 x151

*"Know thyself means this, that you get acquainted with what you know, and what you can do."*

*~Menander*

#### Region 1 by Josephine Davis

At the beginning of the month, Noah and I helped facilitate the "Know your Rights" training. The highlight of the training was when everyone acted out scenarios from an activity. They were hilarious! Tiffany Washington, Director of Youth Programs for MBS, made a guest appearance and told our Resource Specialist, Lauren, that we did a wonderful job helping, and to "keep up the good work." This month we filled out Summit applications and Lauren received a thick stack on her desk. Everyone is looking forward to finding out the results! During the April 26th chapter meeting, we brainstormed ideas to present to the representatives, legislators, community members, and more. 13 youth and alumni attended, so many ideas were flowing. Our Region came up with very good topics for the Leadership Summit!

#### Region 3 by Hunter Nelson

At our chapter meeting this month we accomplished many things and had fun doing so with our 'space theme.' We came up with a voting process and elected our new co-chapter leaders: Garrett and LeShay. We are excited for their leadership. LaShay and Garrett will be serving a six month term. We spoke about the Washington Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit. We're hoping to make shirts and we're definitely going to be bringing our voices and bring change to youth around the state.

### News From

## The Mockingbird Network

Your Needs, Your Voice

#### Region 4 by Christina Koshney

"Region 4 for Change" is on the verge of many new ventures. We are leading our chapter in a new direction where the opportunity to impact our community and systems change is great. Outside of our monthly regional meetings the leaders of region 4 have been conducting trainings to empower our fellow foster youth. Most recently our team conducted the Your Rights, Your Life Training where we were able to work with the awesome young ladies of the Virginia Miller home. Upcoming events include networking and recruiting efforts to encourage new members to join! There are many opportunities to become a part of Region 4's efforts. If interested contact our Region 4 Resource Specialist, Georgina Ramirez at (206)838.6646.

#### Region 5 by DeMarea Kirk

This month we focused on the upcoming Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit. Within our chapter, twenty-three youth turned in applications to attend the Summit from which the 10 best applications were chosen. On May 15th, our chapter will be cleaning up gang graffiti in our county in an effort to keep our environment clean and healthy for the youth. By doing this we hope to help our youth avoid feeling peer pressure to join gangs. Lastly, in the next month, our chapter will be meeting to decide on a topic for the summit so we can pass a law, be heard by the legislative representatives in 2011, and pave the way for the future of foster care.

#### Region 2 by Brandy Baxley and Tammy Soderberg

We started April with a leadership meeting where we assigned Chapter duties.

On April 17th we met in Selah to discuss our topic to bring to the Summit; Youth Safety issues. Later we went to the park and watched a great Civil War re-enactment. On April 24th Sandra, Tammy, Rose, and Brian were invited to speak at the American Baptist Women's Conference. Sandra presented her

positive thoughts on Advocacy Day and The Mockingbird Family Model. We were warmly received by these great women. ACT FIRST would like to thank them

for allowing us to speak to them about all the great things that The Mockingbird Society is doing to 'create a world-class foster care' system!



#### Region 6 by Sam Evans

This month we have shortened our Chapter name to "Truth & Action for Foster Youth" - T.A.F.F.Y. We started to perfect our idea for the Leadership Summit. Several of us had the chance to go to the bill signings for HB 2680, which creates Subsidized Guardianships for kinship care providers, and SB 6832, which added a foster youth representative, with full voting rights, to the Child Welfare Transformation Design Committee. I attended another Legal and Practices sub-committee meeting where we worked on solidifying the roles of the master contractor versus the State. Our next chapter meeting is at Centralia College on May 20th from 4:00 to 5:30. In May, I will be co-facilitating a Culture of Foster Care training at the Passport to College Conference. We will be having a Voice Development training for the Region 6 youth who will attend the Leadership Summit, and we are working on having Life Advocacy and Rights trainings in Mason County and local group homes and shelters.