

# Mockingbird Times

Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth



November 2004

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak out Across the Nation

Volume IV, Issue 11

Visit us online at [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org) or call 206-323-5437 (KIDS)

## IN THIS ISSUE

Letter from the Editor  
Jim Theofelis  
Page 2

Quote of the Month  
Compiled by Courtney Konietzko  
Page 2

Lambert House Part II  
Misty Lou Cook  
Page 3

Mockingbird Constellation Project Youth Speak Out  
Larishica and Terasa Asher  
Page 3

Poetry Corner: The Street  
Yasmina Damjin Ellis  
Page 3

Capitol Hill Homeless Youth  
J. Eboh  
Page 4

Seattle Shelter Merge  
Courtney Konietzko  
Page 4

Check out Our Exciting Bonus Articles Section Online at [mockingbirdsociety.org](http://mockingbirdsociety.org)

## Candidates for WA State Governor Face Off

COURTNEY KONIETZKO



*It's scary when the line blurs between Democrats and Republicans. Mockingbird staff were recently invited to sit in on a meeting with the Seattle Post-Intelligencer Editorial Board and Washington State's candidates for Governor. At times it seemed like the candidates were saying the same thing as far as what they cared about. I guess what makes them different is how they approach the issues and what parts of the issues they are willing to support because every good governor should care about employment and education. It's a matter of who will do a better job.*

ON OCTOBER 11, 2004 ONE OF THE

**MANY MEETINGS** between the two gubernatorial candidates in Washington state, Dino Rossi and Chris Gregoire, took place at the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. There were striking similarities in Gregoire's and Rossi's priorities. Both stressed that making new jobs happen is their number one priority. Gregoire said she would create 250,000 new jobs by retraining the unemployed, supporting meaningful Tort Reform (Tort Reform commonly refers to laws passed on a state-by-state basis which place limits or caps on the type or amount of damages that may be awarded in personal injury lawsuits, according to [www.uslegalforms.com](http://www.uslegalforms.com)), and allowing employers to buy into insurance at wholesale prices. Rossi stated that on September 16<sup>th</sup> the national unemployment rate dropped when Washington's went up, and 75% of job growth is going to come from small business.



Chris Gregoire

Education came up as the second big issue for both candidates. Gregoire stated it was important to invest money in ECEAP (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program) and Head Start and is fully committed to implementing Education Initiative 884 (a measure that would create a fund designated for preschool through college education by increasing the retail sales tax rate by 1%) if it passes. When asked if they were 'voting' for I-884 Gregoire said no and Rossi said, "I am voting against all initiatives." Rossi's website is divided into six reforms/priorities if he

is elected governor. Reform four is education. He plans on reforming education by giving local control to the school districts to remove ineffective teachers. Gregoire pointed out that Rossi cut 160 million dollars in education when he was a senator.

Rossi said, "I will never use the most vulnerable population as a political pawn." Gregoire pointed out Rossi raised a tax on nursing home beds. Neither addressed homelessness or foster care. This was the closest they came to either of these issues.

When asked about stem cell research Rossi said he supported 'adult'




Dino Rossi

research fits in this category) will help create more jobs for people.

stem cell research and when pressed on whether he supported embryonic stem cell research he refused to answer, saying that it was not part of his platform. Rossi stated that therapeutics and diagnostics are the strengths of Washington's economy. Gregoire said that Washington is the leader in the world in this and that the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center is where it all started. Gregoire pointed out that 400,000 people were diagnosed with Parkinson's here in WA state and that stem cell Research is a crucial step to finding a cure for Parkinson's and other debilitating diseases. "Life sciences is the penicillin of the 21<sup>st</sup> century," stated Gregoire. Gregoire believes that life sciences(stem cell

research fits in this category) will help create more jobs for people. Another issue that came up was what they were going to do to protect the environment. Gregoire stated that water quality and quantity was the number one issue as far as the environment went. Gregoire cited finding and using alternative energy sources as important (like black rock or bio fuel) and commented that Washington has the largest wind farm in the U.S. Gregoire went on to say that, "We cannot continue relying on electricity, natural gas, and oil."

Gregoire seemed really passionate about the environment and closed with, "we have to maintain the environment to have a vibrant quality of life." Rossi stated, "this is how I will go forward, the three R's, reasonable, rational, and responsible." Both Rossi and Gregoire agreed that parks are important and want to fight to preserve them. It was great seeing politics this close up. I hope the best candidate wins! 

## NAACP Provides Youth a Voice For Equality and Justice

HOLLIS RIGGINS



**IMAGINE YOU ARE AN 11-YEAR-OLD BOY WHO ATTENDS EAST HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** and as a form of restraint you are forcefully held to the ground, by a security guard, with the full weight of his body and his knee in your back. Furthermore, you are repeatedly handcuffed despite a warning from your primary-care physician that you should not be restrained because of a medical condition. Now put yourself in the shoes of a seven-year-old who also attends East Hill Elementary School. You are repeatedly made to stand alone in a darkened room as a punishment. Who do you turn to? Who do you call?

For these students as well as several others, the answer was simple. They turned to the Seattle/King County Branch of National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).\*

For nearly a century now, the Seattle/King County NAACP has answered the call for social justice. Since 1913, this branch has provided a voice for the concerns of African Americans and other minority groups. They have strived toward providing educational and employment opportunities, human rights, open housing, and voter registration.

The Seattle/King County NAACP has assisted African Americans in gaining employment opportunities in several sectors of the local

economy such as department stores, including Nordstrom's and the Bon Marche (now Bon Macy's) grocery stores like Safeway and Albertsons and municipal agencies including the Fire Department.

Lately, the Seattle/King County Branch has been a voice of concern and consciousness regarding law enforcement. It has challenged police actions (shooting incidents and use of the taser) resulting in death and/or injury. Carl Mack, the local NAACP President along with Chief Kerlikowske, even volunteered to be tased to demonstrate less lethal technology ([www.cityofseattle.net/police/](http://www.cityofseattle.net/police/)).

To increase African-American involvement in the political process, the Seattle/King County NAACP supports voter registration by registering people at local grocery stores, high schools, churches, and through special voter empowering events. The NAACP also recognizes that the youth are the future. It has provided opportunities for them to develop through the Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics (ACT-SO), Youth Councils, and College Chapters.

ACT-SO is a year-long program designed to recruit, stimulate, improve and encourage high academic and cultural achievement among African-American high school students. The ACT-SO program centers on the dedication and commitment of community volunteers and business leaders to serve as mentors and coaches and to promote academic and artistic excellence among African-American students. There are 25 categories of competition in the sciences, humanities, performing and visual arts.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Letter from the Editor

JIM THEOFELIS



**NOW IS THE TIME WHEN WE BEGIN TO REFLECT** about the year that is coming to a close and start to look forward to the year ahead. Organizations are very similar to individuals in this regard. As the Executive Director of The Mockingbird Society, my initial review of 2004 is one infused with pride, hope and determination. My pride is a combination of our achievements and the young people and families who have secured these achievements. We have remarkable youth who write for the *Mockingbird Times*, provide public speaking and participate in the Advocates for System Kids and Youth (ASK-Y) program.

The *Mockingbird Times* now enjoys a circulation of nearly 60,000 monthly issues distributed through three community newspapers throughout Washington and to every state in the nation. Our Youth Speaker's Panel receives more requests than we can respond to and consistently receives the highest praise for their speaking engagements. In October, Mockingbird youth were part of two panels, one at the Fall Judicial Conference in Spokane, sponsored by the Washington State Minority and Justice Commission, and the other at the annual Foster Parents of Washington State conference in Wenatchee. The feedback from organizers and participants from both events was extremely positive.

During the 2004 legislative session, youth from ASK-Y and the several organizations who are members of ASK-Y were leaders in the effort to educate lawmakers

on the barriers young people face when turning age 18 and struggling to exit foster care or "street-life." The result was the passage of House Bill 3078 (Sealing Juvenile Records Bill), the only juvenile justice bill passed during 2004. This bill will help an estimated 10,000 young people who have been crime-free since being adjudicated with a felony as a juvenile. In fact there is a group of dedicated attorneys who are providing pro bono assistance to youth and families who need assistance in getting their juvenile record sealed.

Our pride from 2004 continues with the implementation of the Mockingbird Foster Family Constellation Project. After nearly one year of operations, we have had zero placement disruptions for participating children/adolescents, siblings have been able to live together, cultural competency is embedded throughout the model, respite care has been available upon request and caregivers report high satisfaction (see the most recent evaluation from the University of Washington at [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org)). This sense of pride is combined with a sense of determination to continue this work *with* and alongside the children, youth and families involved in the foster care system.

Our determination is rooted in the philosophical position that the best folks to break down barriers, dispel myths and create positive change are those most impacted by the barriers and myths. At Mockingbird we know that the work we do is not limited to those kids in the middle of the foster care system today. Our work and our hope includes that five-year-old child and that fifteen-year-old teenager who are at risk of being "placed" in a "new" home tomorrow. Our hope is that you will join us and support us as we "build a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth." Happy Thanksgiving to you and those you love.

Jim Theofelis

[jim@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:jim@mockingbirdsociety.org)

NAACP CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1...

The NAACP has one of the largest organized groups of young people of any secular organization in the country. Some 67,000 youth are involved with the NAACP through its Youth Councils and College Chapters. Its objectives are to inspire, motivate, and create interest in civic activities, provide young people with an understanding of pertinent issues, develop organizational skills for implementation of community-related activities, and encourage active participation in these activities.

Youth units attend NAACP conventions, sponsor tutorial programs, conduct voter registration drives, hold Black History essay contests, and host Mr. and Miss NAACP pageants. Today there are more than 400 Youth Councils and College Chapters actively involved in voter registration.

The Seattle/King County Youth Council is dedicated to providing young people with a voice within the community. Having reactivated its charter just over a year ago, a primary goal of the Council continues to be community outreach. The Council has been recognized as having the 3rd highest number of recorded new members out of more than 400 Councils worldwide. While still fairly young, they are continuing to recruit new members and advance and promote the economic, educational, social, and political status of African Americans and other people of color by encouraging active participation in Council programs and activities by its members as well as the community. According to Kyle James, NAACP Youth Advisor and life member, "We will continue to inform youth of the problems affecting African Americans and other people of color as we stimulate an appreciation of the African American contribution to US civilization."

James is actively involved with the Seattle/King County Youth Council. Even though she's not a youth, James plays a big role in the Youth Council. Some of her duties include chairing the Youth/Works Committee (a committee that researches and develops programs for the Youth Council to bring to the community), advising the Youth Council on various issues, and voicing the comments and opinion of the Youth Council to the Executive Committee of the Seattle/King County Branch. Please check out an exclusive interview with James online at [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org).

This year marks Seattle/King County NAACP's 91<sup>st</sup> year in existence. That's 91 years of service in the Greater Seattle and King County Area. Congratulations NAACP, we're proud of you!

*\*The East Hill Elementary Case mentioned is part of the Kent School District Case in King County, which is currently in progress. NAACP is providing support to families involved in this case. The Seattle Times ran an informative article by J. Patrick Coolican in May about NAACP's involvement in the case.*



**United Way Designated Donor: Mark Mockingbird Society as the non-profit organization to receive your United Way Donation!**

### Quote of the Month

To make democracy work, we must be a nation of participants, not simply observers. One who does not vote has no right to complain.

-Louis L'Amour

### THANK YOU'S...

*Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Wild Geese Productions, in particular Robert and Erin Shackelford, Kyle James, Jeff Reid and Stephanie Garlich, Charlie Courtelyou, Nancy Bardeen, Dan Keiner, Pat Thibadeau, Ole Carlson, and the Fremont Rotary*

**ABOUT US:** The Mockingbird Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to building a world class foster care system and improving the other systems that serve children and adolescents involved in homelessness and foster care. 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 Mockingbird Society are paid between \$7.50 and \$8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 60,000 copies being distributed across Washington and the U.S.A. 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 2004 The Mockingbird Society.

**A Mockingbird Inside Your Mailbox:** Make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable youth.  
I want to support The Mockingbird Society

Donations may be tax deductible and all donors receive the *Mockingbird Times*. Enclosed, please find my check made payable to Mockingbird Society in the amount of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Suggested Donations:*

\$50 a year for one copy per month

\$100 a year for 5-15 copies per month

\$150 a year for 20-45 copies per month

\$200 a year for 50-100 copies per month

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Day Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, you may use my name on published donor lists.

Please fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to:  
The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South Suite 350, Seattle WA 98144

- Please bill me for the amount indicated.
- My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.
- I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.

### MEET OUR STAFF

**Executive Director**  
Jim Theofelis

**MFFCP Coordinator**  
Shannon Barelo

**Administrative Assistant**  
Lauren Frederick

**MSW Intern**  
Erin Daniels

**Staff Reporters**  
Dennis Fisher, Courtney Konietzko,  
Darius Reynolds

**Satellite Reporters**  
Shay Doney, J. Eboh, Rico Evans,  
Ashley Grant, Anthony Guess,  
Jamica Henderson, Princess  
Hollins, Echo Speed, Hollis Riggins,  
Shakura Felder, Misty Cook

**Contributing Writers**  
Yasmina Damjin Ellis, Terasa Asher,  
Larishica Asher

**Volunteers**  
Anna Trombley, Kirsten Hansen-  
Day, Aleta Kennedy, Denise  
Redinger

# Lambert House: An Oasis for Homeless Queer Youth Part II

MISTY LOU COOK



ON JANUARY 1, 2004, THE CITY FUNDING FOR THE LAMBERT HOUSE DROP-IN CENTER WAS CUT. The Lambert House is a drop-in center for queer young people in Seattle. In the September Issue, I discussed the importance of the Lambert House and interviewed some of the Lambert House community. Here I am continuing to focus on the queer (identifying as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Two-Spirited or Transgender) and homeless youth who are being interviewed and speaking about the Lambert House community from their own perspective.

Mario is a 19-year-old youth of French and Italian descent. I've seen Mario around the Lambert House for quite a few years now and I happened to run into him on a Monday evening. I asked him how the Lambert House is different than other drop-in centers. Mario said, "It's much more focused on the queer community. We can feel free to talk about ourselves and talk about what we want to talk about. It's a safe space for us." I asked Mario how the Lambert House has helped him and he replied, "When I'm feeling depressed about who

I am I come here to hang out and it helps me feel better about where I am. It gives me hope."

I asked Blue, a 17-year-old who is mixed with "a lot of European" and Ukrainian, why he first became homeless. He replied, "I feel like there can't be a home unless there's love."

Remy is a 22-year-old who is mixed with "Spanish, Irish, Chinese, a lil' black and something else." I asked him what the effects of homelessness were for him. He said, "It makes you a lil' scared, depressed and uneasy about people. When you're in a situation where you are trying to find a place to stay, a lot of people will try to take advantage of you."

Rob is the manager of the volunteer program and a 25-year-old self-proclaimed "Euro-Mutt." Rob is one of the two paid staff at the Lambert House. I asked Rob why the Lambert House was first established. Rob said, "It was established because there was no other agency or program to help queer youth and also to give them a place to find people like themselves."

Rob told me it would take "\$30,000 per month" to keep the Lambert House alive and running. He said, "It would take \$180,000 for 6 months and \$360,000 for a year." Rob commented about the funds necessary to keep the Lambert House open and effective. He said about the money, "That's a bare bones budget." And "with more money we could do some really awesome arts programs."

Rob also told me about the volunteers that make the Lambert House's continual existence possible. He said that a community of individuals volunteer "600-700 hours per month" and emphasized that "there's no way we could pay for that." Rob told me that quite simply, "Without volunteers, we wouldn't be here."

"So Rob, why did you start volunteering at the Lambert House?" I asked. He replied, "Well, because I wish that I had a place like this when I was growing up. You'll probably get the same answer from any volunteer you ask...the reason I stay is because I love seeing people grow up and find friends...grow up healthy," Rob said with a sincere look in his eyes.

The value of the Lambert House to the queer and homeless youth of Seattle cannot be weighed in words or gold. Whether this is through volunteering, grant writing talent, soap donations or whatever, this is our community and we need to support it. It is up to you and me to provide safe spaces for the outcasts, the queers, the geniuses, the working poor, the homeless, *the people* of this Nation and World.

I am organizing a Lambert House benefit scheduled for November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004. There will be live music and poetry and admission will be by donation! For more information about the **Lambert House Benefit**, or if you would like to get involved, contact Misty at [lamberthousebenefitshow2004@yahoo.com](mailto:lamberthousebenefitshow2004@yahoo.com).

## Mockingbird Constellation Project Youth Speak Out

Mockingbird is excited to publish the stories of two young people involved in the Mockingbird Foster Family Constellation Project (MFFCP). This project is a pilot program in collaboration with UJIMA Community Services and the University of Washington. The model is simple: create a micro-community in which families work together and support each other to increase the quality of care they are providing for their foster kids. The model prioritizes keeping siblings together and ensuring that all services are culturally relevant.

We currently have 8 families in our pilot program, with one hub home that provides respite and hosts activities like tutoring, dinners and self-care workshops. The hub home operates as an "extended family" home—providing each child in the constellation project with an alternative place to stay, kind of like "grandma's house." This is particularly important if the child is not getting along with their foster family, or if the family is in need of a break—the hub home is there to provide respite before making a disruption in the child's life—such as a new placement or running away. The young people whose stories you'll read are blossoming young writers who you will be hearing more from in months to come!

TERASA ASHER



**MY NAME IS TERASA AND MY LIFE IS NOT RIGHT.** What is not right about it is that I have been suffering. Well, that is what I would call it. I just want to have a regular life without living in foster care. I just feel that I am different from others because I'm a foster kid.

It's been four years, soon to be five, and if I could make one big wish it would be to get out of foster care. It makes me sad, ever since I have been in foster care I cry more and I think more of my life and how it has been these past four years. I just wish to be with my mom all the time and to be with my family, period. That is what I don't like about being in foster care.

I like to be out a lot to spend time with friends, go places, just to be a teenager. But I can't do that 'cause of where I am at. If I decide to do something I will do it 'cause that is what I want to do. I just like to have fun with my life and explore things that I have not done before. I just like doing new stuff 'cause that is who TERASA D. ASHER is.

What I want you readers to know is that I am a very good person if you get to know me. That is what I want all y'all to know.

LARISHICA ASHER



Just when you think you know everything there is to know about hip hop, it lets you know why you fell in love with it in the first place...

**MY LIFE IS LIKE A CD OR HIP HOP.** The reason I say this is because I am a foster child. Being a foster child could be a blast and the greatest experience of your life if you make it that way. Or being a foster child could be the worst and most hating thing that someone could let happen to their child. My experience of being a foster child is that sometimes I have both of these experiences.

The reason I have both is because I have been in some pretty s\*\*\*\* situations. But none like the one I was last in. I was at [a family member's] house. She had three kids who were messy and nasty. One would leave and eat a lot and would never get in trouble. Another did things to my [family member] that he was not supposed to do. And the other would eat and watch TV and only clean up when their mom was coming home. My sisters and I would mess up and get in trouble for what we did but it didn't seem like her kids would get in trouble for what they did. Before we moved in with our [family member], [another family member] lived there and they treated her real bad. Sometimes they would hit her for no reason. They wouldn't do her hair and she and her sons wouldn't feed her. She was only a little kid so my [family member] wouldn't let her fix herself anything to eat.

When we got there things got a little better but not so good. We were mistreated but not like she was. So we came home from school one day and found out we had to move. We were happy but sad too because we didn't want to leave our friends—[but] we didn't care anything about our family. So to make a long story short this was a pretty s\*\*\*\* situation.

The reason I say my life is like a CD or hip hop is because a CD changes songs like we changed houses through the three years we have been in foster care. It's like every time a singer or rapper changes to happy, to sad, to mad, to curious and so on. Every time we changed houses we had to change our personalities so that the people we were moving in with would like us. This is why I say my life is like a CD or hip hop.



## POETRY CORNER

YASMINA DAMJIN ELLIS

### The Streets

- The People on The Curb don't want change,
- They don't even look very deranged.
- Nor handlers of pans-
- Without permits they stand
- Without picket lines
- Or campaign signs.
- I don't see a busstop.
- They aren't using the phone.
- The only thing they have is an odd
- determination to be left alone.
- The cold rain puddles
- Hold their Nirvana
- They sit cross-legged-
- Like life-size Buddha-shrines. Meanwhile
- midnight trines.
- But the People on the Curb
- Are not perturbed
- They sing a silent song
- Of hope.
- They are peacefully assembled
- The flashing yield sign is their beacon.
- They want nothing of me.
- Yet I need so much from them.

# Lack of Services Impact Capitol Hill Homeless Youth

J.EBOH



**LARGE NUMBERS OF HOMELESS YOUTH** live in Seattle's Capitol Hill District. Articles about this in local newspapers are given headlines like "Broadway Struggles to Reclaim its Hipness (*Seattle-PI*)."  
*The Stranger*, an alternative newspaper, recently gave their feature on Capitol Hill the title "Sh%thole." Statements like these capture the feelings of many Seattle residents.

There is one thing about Capitol Hill that doesn't make the headlines, however. The amount of human service programs in Capitol Hill are grossly disproportionate in relation to the amount of homeless youth living there. Capitol Hill isn't the only neighborhood with a population of homeless youth. On any given night in Seattle, an estimated 800 young people ages 12-24 are without a safe place to sleep. For all of King County, the number of homeless youth nightly may be as high as 2,000 ([www.ci.seattle.wa.us](http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us)).

Lately, Capitol Hill seems plagued with drugs, sex crimes and homelessness. These issues affect many homeless youth in Capitol Hill. This is where social service programs usually step in. These groups help youth meet their basic needs, while trying to work against the causes of youth homelessness. They often provide drug and mental health counseling, prep classes for the G.E.D., job training, temporary housing and housing referrals. That is assuming that such programs exist in a neighborhood.

Youth who are homeless and struggling to meet their basic needs often turn to drugs as a means of coping. "Most people who become homeless under the age of eighteen start using" says Johnny Ohta, a youth chemical dependency counselor in Seattle. Ohta goes on to say, "If they were using drugs before, when they become homeless they may start using hard drugs. As their addiction becomes deeper they use drugs like cocaine, methamphetamines and heroin." As a last resort, some homeless youth may turn to sex trading

and prostitution. In addition to being used as a way to get money, sex can be used as a way to get one's needs met. Ohta states, "Sex trading is pretty prevalent in Capitol Hill. In other cities it's pretty obvious. But that's not the case in Seattle. It's very covert. Someone might get picked up or go to a drug house. Once there they get high and exchange sex for drugs."

-MAVIS BONNAR, HOMELESS YOUTH ADVOCATE

Another insufficient resource for homeless youth in Capitol Hill is healthcare. Rising health insurance costs ([www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A55301-2004Sep27.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A55301-2004Sep27.html)) and the fact that youth lose their free state Medicaid health insurance at age nineteen creates a need for affordable healthcare. The need is often met by seeking healthcare through community health centers or clinics specifically for homeless teens.

When these options are lacking or non-existent in a community, the youth do not have a way to get healthcare. Mavis Bonnar, co-founder and current coordinator of Capitol Hill's only youth clinic, the Country Doctor Free Teen Clinic, wishes there was more that the clinic could do. Country Doctor Free Teen Clinic offers free medical care to homeless youth through age 23 on Monday and Tuesday evenings. It is located at 19th Ave East and East Republican. "Funding for outreach and transportation to the clinic would be extremely helpful for us" states Bonnar.

Until last March, Capitol Hill did have one homeless youth medical outreach program. Safe Links provided mobile medical services to youth. It made stops on Broadway in Capitol Hill; afterwards it proceeded to the University District. It is estimated that between 2 and 20 youth were served each Monday night the organization made stops. Safe Links and its partner program that provided outreach services to youth, Streetlinks, served an estimated 1,900 youth a month, fifty-percent of whom lived in Capitol Hill ([seattlepi.nwsource.com/local](http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local)).

Safe Links provided mobile medical services to youth. It made stops on Broadway in Capitol Hill; afterwards it proceeded to the University District. It is estimated that between 2 and 20 youth were served each Monday night the organization made stops. Safe Links and its partner program that provided outreach services to youth, Streetlinks, served an estimated 1,900 youth a month, fifty-percent of whom lived in Capitol Hill ([seattlepi.nwsource.com/local](http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local)).

"Today's homeless can be tomorrow's tax payers," says Elaine Simons, a homeless youth advocate and Executive Director of Peace for the Streets by Kids on the Streets (PSKS), a Seattle agency serving homeless youth and adults. Simons goes on to say, "Many of them have the potential to get off the street and do something with their lives. And many of them will choose Capitol Hill to be their home." When asked how she might address the negative beliefs people have about homeless youth, Simons said, "[I'd] sit down and talk to them, invite them for a tour of [my] work or have them meet a homeless youth. [I'd] let them know how [easily] it could be their children."

Bonnar comments, "Our society tends to make extremely harsh judgments of those people who are chronically traumatized. It is so easy to rely on the simple dichotomy of "us" and "them" and avoid recognizing the similarities between people and the striking unfairness of the circumstances of human lives. Should we learn some of the story behind an individual homeless youth, our heartstrings might be plucked, but the empathy is often fleeting."

Bonnar, Ohta and Simons all agree on one potential solution to this problem. As stated by Bonnar, "Capitol Hill needs a structured multi-service drop-in center. It needs to offer services that have 'kid appeal' as well as foster healthy challenges in order for these young people to recognize their strengths and capabilities. This should include: a school, a job-readiness program and an effective job training program. It should also include mental health services, case management, substance abuse counseling and therapeutic recreation. Most of all it needs ongoing one-on-one relationships between these young people and adults with good boundaries who care about them." Bonnar's reply mirrors the thoughts of many who are struggling to find a solution to this very real problem.

**NEED A JOB? CAN'T GET ONE BECAUSE OF YOUR JUVENILE CRIMINAL HISTORY? Come to the free juvenile records sealing clinic! Lawyers and students will help you seal your records at the Peterson Law Clinic, 901 12th Avenue Seattle, WA 98122 Call Kim Ambrose at 206-685-6806 for more info!**

## Seattle Shelters Merge to Improve Service to Homeless Youth

COURTNEY KONIETZKO

ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2, homeless youth service providers in the University District, street-involved youth, and people who care about the future of shelter attended an event celebrating the merging of the University Young Adult Shelter and Rising Out of the Shadows (ROOTS). While University Young Adult Shelter (UYS) used to serve youth ages 13-20, both programs serve young people ages 18-25 because not many youth in the 13-20 age range were accessing services.



Homeless Youth Advocate Angel, City Council Member Peter Steinbrueck and Service Provider Janet Duff

Two 10+ year shelter volunteers, Janet Duff and Woody Pidcock, were honored for their years of commitment to the shelters and Seattle City Council Member Peter Steinbrueck gave an encouraging speech at this event. Several community churches were also recognized for providing space and support to the shelter for many years. Because of the merge, the hope is that homeless youth in the University District can be better served in part because more funding can be allocated to help

keep the shelters afloat. In addition to this, there is a collective of service providers in the University District who have come together to network with each other to figure out the best way to serve young people, rather than each organization acting in isolation. This collective, University District Service Providers (UDSP) is made up of 12 service providers, including ROOTS and UYS.

Shelter is one of the most important things in a street kid's life. It is something to depend on. There is familiarity with seeing the same people night after night (old school volunteers) and food if you miss the hot meal program (Teen Feed). Shelter is a stepping stone to accessing other more long term services like transitional housing (temporary housing up to two years), mental health and drug and alcohol counseling, etc. The merge of ROOTS and UYS ensures that shelter can continue being there as an essential service for homeless youth.

### How to Help Homeless Youth!

The ROOTS program relies on volunteers to make shelter happen every night. They need "at least 3 people to volunteer during the evening (8:15 - 11pm) and 4 people to volunteer to spend the night (11pm-8am). Volunteers are asked to commit to working at least one evening shift and one overnight shift per month.

If you do not want to spend the night there are other things you can do to volunteer like: make a meal once a month for Teen Feed (a hot-meal program for homeless youth), volunteer to help with laundry delivery or morning clean-up, become an advocate for homeless youth by speaking up when you hear stereotypes, write letters to your elected officials or letters to the editor about youth homelessness, donate used clothes and blankets, or new pillows and toiletries."

Multiply your helping ability by encouraging your friends and coworkers to volunteer, (and) donate (ing) money or needed items. If you would like to volunteer with the shelter program, email [uyshelter@yahoo.com](mailto:uyshelter@yahoo.com).