

Mockingbird Times



Recipient of 2005 Congressional Angels in Adoption Award
Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth.

November 2007

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation

Volume VIII, Issue 11

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-KIDS (5437)

NOVEMBER IS
NATIONAL
HOMELESSNESS
AWARENESS MONTH

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Second Annual Foster Youth and Alumni Summit BY ANDREA ROLDAN

October 20th-21st was the *Second Annual Foster Youth and Alumni Summit*, held at the **Cedarbrook Leadership Center** in Seattle, Washington. The purpose of the Summit was to bring foster youth and alumni from around Washington State together to create *One United Voice for Change*, this year's motto. Foster youth are youth who are currently in care and the alumni are youth who have aged out or are no longer in care. By participating in the workshops and groups sessions, youth were able to explore commonalities with others who have similar experiences in care or the system, develop individual leadership skills and further develop growth, expansion, and action within the six regional groups.

These were founded at the *First Annual Foster Youth and Alumni Summit*, and are formed into different areas of Washington State. The most important session that took place at the Summit was the regional groups' presentations to the **Washington State Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care**. Each presentation contained a specific recommendation for the Commission to take into consideration for the 2008 legislative session. The previous legislative session proved the Summit to be helpful; two of the biggest issues raised at The First Annual Summit resulted in a passing bill: Medical care for foster youth is now extended until the age of twenty-one and foster youth can continue to remain in care while attending school after the age of 18.

The youth prepared to give powerful presentations to the Commission by attending different workshops that honed their communicative skills. Youth discussed experi-

ences in care with other youth—what worked and what didn't work. They compared the numbers of those who have experienced common situations and challenges and focused on what recommendations would make the system work more efficiently. After thinking about how many common experiences foster youth share, the participants specifically practiced self-advocating with concise and effective delivery.

Later, foster youth, alumni and allies discussed the workings of partnership, partnership between organizations, regions, groups of people with similar ideas or a situation where two parties can benefit from an idea. Along the same lines as partnership, next came organizing similarities of popular themes to narrow down the amount of issues that need to be addressed within the foster care system. This will also help produce effective, more thorough recommendations.

Some of the most popular themes raised at this year's Summit were: more social workers and smaller case loads; independent allowances for youth; fewer placements and family amputations; more training and preparation for youth who will be transitioning; more funding for clothes, vouchers and resources; extending foster care benefits to kinship care; and random, more thorough, inspections of foster homes. Most of these issues were ad-

ressed by the eight presenting groups.

Presentation and delivery to the Commission was intense because of the lack of time, but some issues received an immediate reaction from the Commission because of the large number of youth in the crowd who supported the idea. Figuring out the process for foster youth to obtain licensing from the Department of Licensing was one of these. This was my first time attending the Summit and I am excited to see the results during the next legislative session.

At one point during the presentations, I questioned myself and why I even attended the Summit. I thought to myself "Why do I work to change the system? I'm not in care anymore. I'm emancipated, I don't receive benefits from the state, and any new bills that get passed for the foster care system won't affect me. Why does my heart find fulfillment in advocating for foster youth?" For a moment I was saddened because I didn't understand the importance of what I was doing and its role in my life. I looked around. I saw **Jim Theofelis**, The Mockingbird Society's Executive Director, **Najja Morris** The Mockingbird Society's Youth Lead Coordinator, my regional members and more than 50 foster youth from around the state advocating for *themselves*. At that moment I had an epiphany; "I know why I love doing this, why this is important to me."

I have a younger sister who's 15 years old. In a short amount of time she has found herself in a plethora of extremely dangerous situations on the streets. Addicted to heavy drugs, prostituting herself for money and drugs, sleeping wherever she can find a place;

SUMMIT, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



The Mockingbird Society Senior Youth Representative Sam Martin looks on as cohorts make a presentation at the Summit.



Participants at the Summit attend a workshop on how to effectively use their voice.



The Elizabeth Gregory Home BY JESSICA MARTIN

In hopes of homeless women feeling supported and nurtured, the **Elizabeth Gregory Home (EGH)** in the University District has opened a drop-in center for women 18 and older.

EGH is the only transitional housing program for women 18 and older in the University District and one of only 5 transitional housing providers for single women in King County. Not only that, but it serves the hardest to place women—women with criminal histories, mental health and substance abuse issues, immigrants, and women with chronic health problems or permanent disabilities. Within six months of opening, EGH was deemed a "critical community resource" by the **Crisis Clinic's Community Info Line**.

EGH is named in memory of a long time University Lutheran Church (ULC) member who was a lifelong advocate for women and children. In 2001, ULC's congregation decided to support a housing program for women in transition. More than 75% of ULC's membership supported EGH with over \$250,000.

Having been open for just over a year as a transitional housing program, EGH has now

opened a drop in center to provide a safe daytime environment for women hoping to get their lives together. Homeless women are often forced to leave emergency shelters during the day and have no place to turn but the streets. The drop-in center provides women with access to basic human necessities like hot meals, clothing and hygiene banks, and laundry services. It also provides services like Internet access for things like job searches and a network of support for their journey off the streets. All of this should help enable the women to break the cycle of homelessness.

The EGH drop-in center anticipates serving 20 to 25 women daily and between 550 and 700 women monthly. It is open 7 days a week and is open to any homeless woman 18 and older in Seattle. Located in the University District, it will be the only day center offering services to homeless adult women in the area, but will be available to any homeless women in all of Seattle. The following are some other services available to young adults:

• **University District Youth Center:** ages 13-22, open M-TH 1:15-3:45PM. Services include: drop-in, food, clothing bank, interagency school, case management. 206-526-2992.

• **Orion Center,** Downtown: ages 13-21, open M-F. Services include: drop-in, food, clothing, interagency school, case management. 206-622-5555.

• **Lambert House,** Capitol Hill: ages up to 22, call for hours. Services include: GLTBQ drop-in, case management, showers, laundry, bus tickets, clothing, housing/medical referrals. 206-322-2515 x19.

• **New Horizons,** Downtown: ages up to 22, call for hours. Services include: counseling, employment education, drug rehab, mail and phone services, food, laundry, clothing and showers. 206-374-0866.

• **Street Youth Ministries,** University District: ages 13-22, open M, T, TH, F 7:30-9:30pm. Services include: showers, phone use, laundry, snacks, mentoring. 206-524-7301 x186.

• **Rising Out Of The Shadows (ROOTS),** University District: ages 18-25, open 7 days a week 9PM-8AM. Services include: overnight shelter, food, showers, laundry, clothing. 206-632-1635.

• **The Landing,** Bellevue: ages 18-24, open Sun-TH nights. Services include: overnight shelter, food, showers, laundry, clothing. 425-822-9349.



Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS

This issue of the *Mockingbird Times* is yet another example of the courage and determination that so many of the youth we serve demonstrate each and every day. Several of the articles in this issue provide a detailed view of the world from a young person's perspective. How many of us could not only tolerate what so many of these young people have endured but also continue to persevere striving to create a life that includes what they deserve—hope, support, and community.

I am so proud of Jessica for her courage to face issues head on. As a strategy to support her, The Mockingbird Society has agreed to ensure she continues to receive her regular paychecks while she is in treatment. Sam Martin shares the struggles of his senior year in high school but also makes it very clear that his determination and commitment toward his goals will ultimately prevail. Sam is an amazing young leader who has endured so much but yet continues to strive toward achievement and connection. All of the youth in this issue show us the way through their honesty and courage.

November is the month of Thanksgiving and I, like many of you, have so much to be thankful for. I am so thankful for all of the foster and kinship parents who each and every day give the "second efforts" to kids in their care. I am thankful for the state social workers who are continually asked to go the extra mile and often do so without others even noticing.

I want to remind us that November is also the month of Veterans Day and, as such, I am so thankful to the men and women who have answered the call of duty and especially to their children and loved ones. I am so thankful for the children, youth, and young adults who enrich me and the quality of my life every day. Finally, I want to share with each of you how much I appreciate the support you have given to The Mockingbird Society and the kids and families we serve. Together we can build a world class foster care system. Happy Thanksgiving to you and those you love.

 Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org



My Senior Year, pt. 2 BY SAMUEL MARTIN

It has been a very successful month in some ways and an unsuccessful one in others. I have been working on a lot of things inside of myself realizing that I have more to learn than I thought. I have made the mistake of putting all of my energy into one thing instead of managing myself equally. The good news for this month is that I have been the starting defensive tackle. On the bad side, I have put every ounce of energy I have into football so that I didn't have anything left for school. This month has been very different. Unfortunately, the fire I had from last month isn't burning as strong.

When we left off, I had not been getting very much playing time in football. I almost quit, then I realized that I wanted to quit every single day. It takes perseverance to keep going. Since I came to that realization, I went to practice every single day for six weeks straight. Unfortunately, toward the end of the season, I had to miss a couple days of practice. All in all I have been a starter, playing very well and doing what I need to do to try to get to the next level. I am very glad of my decision of continuing going strong in football.

On Friday November 2, 2007, I played the last game of my high school career. It feels completely different. I have been torn between feeling upset and feeling complete because I have been physically hurting. I have referred to my last game as "One more Friday night under the lights."

I have, unfortunately, not been doing as well as I would like in school. I have had a lot of trouble going to class, a common problem with a lot of high school seniors, and some college students even. Part of it has to do with my over commitment to certain things. I really am upset that I haven't been going to school; I just need to get myself in the game again. I only have 4 weeks to get in gear. It hasn't been that I am not doing work; I am just not taking it as seriously as I should.

I realize that if I don't get great grades now, it will hurt my chances of getting into college and after doing so well in school now is not the time to start messing up. I also understand that I need to start man-

aging my time better and only commit to what I absolutely know I can do.

I have a few words of advice for those of you who are also having some trouble with things like "senior-itis." It is best to look at school in an optimistic light because even if you think it isn't influencing your future, it really is. Colleges look at your course load and the difficulty of those classes. It would be a disservice to yourself to not finish strong your senior year. I know you have worked hard the previous three but now is not the time to mess up.

I realize now that I have been slipping up but I am going to look for help in other places which can get me what I need. This is another tip I would extremely suggest:

"You've got to say, I think that if I keep working at this and want it badly enough I can have it. It's called perseverance"

~Lee Iacocca

Self-help is not all it's cracked up to be. You can't do it all on your own. There is nothing wrong with being independent but you also need to know when and how to find the help you need.

As you can see, I have a different issue every month. As I wrap up football, I am beginning to work on school and work a lot more. Now I have to see if I can do what I need to get the best possible grades I can while also learning how to manage my time and my energy. There is a lot going on but I think it will all work out. If any of you have any suggestions for myself, or information you think would be useful to other people my age, you can send it to The Mockingbird Society and I will use it to my best ability. Once more, thank you for taking the time to listen and help me through my journey.

It's time to prepare for the

2008 Legislative Session and Advocacy Day

What change would you like to see for foster and homeless youth?
What message would you like to send to the legislature this upcoming year?

NOWS YOUR CHANCE TO BE HEARD AND MAKE CHANGE

Please join us for our next ASK-Y (Advocates for System Kids and Youth) meeting on November 26th from 3:30-5 at the 2100 building (2100 24th Ave south, Seattle). At this meeting we will be finalizing our agenda for the 2008 legislative session and preparing for our annual Youth Advocacy Day! Hope to see you all there!

For more info, please contact Lauren or Najja at The Mockingbird Society, 206-323-5437.

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.

Become a Member of The Mockingbird Society

We welcome you to join us in making a difference in the lives of our nation's most vulnerable children, youth, and families. As a supporter, you'll receive a monthly edition of the *Mockingbird Times*. Thank you for your contribution.

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
PHONE _____ E-MAIL _____

Enclosed, please find my check made payable to **The Mockingbird Society** in the amount of (please note amount on appropriate line):

\$1,000 +	Protector	\$
\$500 - \$900	Champion	\$
\$250 - \$500	Advocate	\$
\$50 - \$250	Supporter	\$
\$25	Contributor	\$

- My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.
- I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.
- Please do not include my name on published donor lists.

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

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 \$8 and \$11 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 50,000 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 ©2007, The Mockingbird Society.*

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My Story by Rhonda Smith

Violence has affected my life in so many ways. My mom and I were talking one day about my dad because I've never met him so I wanted to know a little bit about him. She told me my dad was the meanest man she has ever been with. My dad use to beat up my mom. One day he stabbed her over a stupid argument. When my older siblings would try to get into the middle of the fights, he would threaten them. I'm so thankful I was not around for all that. When all the fighting was going on my mom was pregnant with me. That's why I hate my dad and I'm going to be mad at him for more years to come.

I got adopted when I was three years old. The first couple years were great until my adopted dad's first wife passed away. He remarried to an evil lady. I don't remember my adopted dad being violent before his wife passed away. But when he married this lady, he started hitting me and so did she. It wasn't spankings that they gave me; I use to get bloody noses and deep scratches from day to day. This went on for at least six years. I hated my

life and everyone in it. I was only a little kid who didn't do anything to deserve to be treated that way.

I was sexually abused by my adopted brothers for three years, from age eight to ten. That is just about the worst thing that has happened to me in my life. I would rather get beat up than go through one day of that again. Honestly, I would rather be dead. I was eight years old; I didn't even know what was happening. Being scared to go to bed every night is really not cool because you know what's gonna happen when all the lights go out.

The violence in my life has just been out of control crazy and I wouldn't wish any of what I have been through on my worst enemy. People always used to say, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger," but I don't know about that. I'm not dead physically but mentally and emotionally I've been gone. Sometimes I think it might have been easier if I were dead so I wouldn't have to deal with the pain that I'm still dealing with.



Holiday Memories BY MELISSA STRINGER

When you think of the holidays you think of getting together with family. You think of everything that you guys do together. You think of all the laughter, the games. Just everything you do. Whether it be the smell of the Christmas tree at Grandma's with smell of warm apple cider cooking on the stove, warm apple pie in the oven, or ham soaking getting ready to cook. Presents under the tree keep giving you that itchy feeling of wondering what you got. You are sitting there watching all the little kids making gingerbread cookies. And all you feel is love in the air. The holidays are a time for love and memories from the past. When I think of the holidays, I always think of how great it feels to be with my family, the love I feel when I walk into a room full of people I care about.

I asked a friend what he thought of the holidays. At first, he was a little scared to

answer the question but then he replied honestly. He said, "I don't like the holidays. I never had a real one. I was always left behind. My family thought I was a mistake." I felt horrible for him because I simply never had that happen to me.

Sometimes I find myself thinking of what the holidays really mean to someone and how they really treat people. Whenever it gets close to the holidays I get this itchy feeling inside me knowing that I will be with my family really soon. The holidays aren't always about getting to eat good food, or money, or presents at that. It's about spending time with your family and giving to those who are less fortunate. It could be anywhere from the kids on the Avenue in the University District to the people in Pioneer Square. It doesn't ever matter. It should never matter what a person looks like. If someone is unfortunate, your giving to them should not be based on anything.

SUMMIT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

her story is unimaginable. We were both in care when we were a lot younger and grew up in unstable, unsafe environments. We are two very different young women and emerging from our pasts we have arrived at different places in life.

All the people and services I've referred my sister to—both personal and professional, my family and others—have unanimously suggested that she become a ward of the state. But my sister has such bitter memories from our experiences and a living fear of the foster system's bad reputation that she refuses to be part of it and, instead, she runs. I assured myself that I advocate for foster youth and push for positive changes in the system for my younger sister; to prevent other children from being afraid of the system and, instead, be able to accept the support that it has to offer; and I work to help make what they have to offer the best.

Having a deep, personal revelation, honing my leadership and storytelling skills, and even connecting with my regional group for the first time wasn't the best part of the Summit. The best part was both a gift and a curse. I arrived at Cedarbrook and prepared to spend the weekend really focused, professional and (because I didn't know anyone except the Mockingbird Staff) reserved. I knew I had some important work to do that weekend,

but I didn't know I would also be able to have a LOT of fun. Factually, the most fun I've had in months. In the evening, when we had finished all the workshops, group discussions and initial preparations for the presentations, there were plenty of opportunities to have tons of fun and make friends.

Saturday evening was exciting, memorable and funny. I met a lot of youth from different regions that I had a lot in common with. I spent a majority of Saturday night building a few really memorable friendships with people while participating in some of the activities offered. Exercising with everybody was really fun; we practiced the latest dances, gymnastics, even karate. Karaoke was next! No longer feeling reserved, I performed with some of the people I had gotten to know pretty well and had a lot of fun.

On Sunday though, as the time passed, the excitement faded because I knew that after our presentations I'd have to say goodbye to all the new friends I had made. Because some were from different regions, I didn't know when I'd see them again, if not at next year's Summit. The fun new friendships are the gift, and the distance gap between most of us is the curse. In the end of it all, I am just really excited about next year's *Foster Youth and Alumni Summit*.



My Path To Treatment by Jessica Garcia

I started using drugs when I was 14 years old. I used drugs because I had no control over my life and I had no control over the situation that I was in. When I was using, however, I would forget about all of my problems. When I was on drugs, I felt like I could forget about my life and being in foster care and it seemed like the best thing to do. Plus, everyone else used drugs and they seemed fine. They were going to make something of themselves right? I also felt like I was really cool because we had a gang and we all did the same things. I felt safe and secure even when I was getting high.

It all came down, though, when I was hanging with my so-called friends. Everything seemed cool but people ran out of money and we had to do things like rob houses so we could get our next fix. Some people would do licks (just do a little bit) so they could get high more often. Cops would question us and half of us had warrants so some of us would get arrested.

The more high, I got the more I seemed to forget about who I was. I was like a zombie. When it was time to come down from drugs, I would turn myself in and that sucked because while I was locked up for 30 days I would come down off my high and be rude and agitated. I didn't want to change my ways because nothing really bad happened.

While I was high, I and the people I kicked it with all had one thing in common and that was that we all liked the same drug, the same high and we weren't friends if we didn't use. Some of us grew up in bad situations and some of us just wanted the crazy life. When I used, I felt like I was on top of the world and I could do just do about anything. Nobody could stop me or even touch me and what authority said to me didn't mean anything, it went in one ear and out the other.

Over and over I tried to stop using but I couldn't. Somehow the streets kept calling me. I followed that call because I missed the crazy life and the adrenaline rushes I would get from my high. I would run from my placement just to get that rush again. While I was on the run, I wouldn't be with the same people I was with the first time I got high. I would end up with different people but they liked the same drug. It was hard to stop because I liked the fact that I had something in common with those people: we all used drugs for some reason or another.

I have now decided to stop using because the life that I keep living is a bad pattern. I do drugs not for good reasons but for bad. When things get a little hard and I feel like I can't handle it then I use and fall right back where I was. I keep putting myself on this rollercoaster ride for no reason. I'm tired of lying to myself and staying sick for no apparent reason I'm tired of doing drugs over any problem that comes my way.

What I hope to accomplish from not using is to become the successful young woman I know I can be. I want to think clearly and make better decisions for myself. I want to be a bet-

ter person and be able to accept the hardships and realities of life. My goals are to get clean, start college and do the things I want like owning a car and a house and being able to save money instead of wasting it on stuff that in the end is going to kill me.

What scares me the most about going to treatment is that I'm going to open up the door to reality and I'm going to see who my real friends are and be able to see more clearly who and what I want around me. I'm scared to give up the bad people because I feel like that's going to be most of the people in my life.

The process for treatment has been hard for me because I want to just say "No, forget this, I don't need treatment. I'm better and I can do this on my own." But in reality, I have to wait and be patient and call the treatment center to see when my start date is. It's hard but I have to do this.

My plan to stay clean is to drop anything and everything that I used to do, the places I used to kick it, and people I used to hang out with. I'm going to go to church and twelve-step meetings and stay away from clubs where I know I have gotten messed up on drugs. I'm going to try to find better ways to be clean such as exercising, volunteering at schools and food banks, going to work, and starting college.

My advice to people who want to stay clean, get off the drugs, and start a better life is to stop surrounding yourself with the people that keep you sick. Find better places to hang out. If it looks no good, stay away. It's hard to stay clean; I'm not saying that it's easy because trust me, it's not. If it's really bad, talk to someone about getting into treatment and go to detox because they can help you find a place to go and help you get in faster.

THANK YOU!

MOSS ADAMS; ANONYMOUS; JUDI BECK AND TOM ALBERG; VIRGINIA BLAYNEY; PAUL AND DEBBI BRAINERD; KATHRYN BROOKS; KAREN COWGILL; DOUG AND JERI DONNELLY; WANDA HERNDON; GENEVIEVE HEUER; LINDA JOHNSON; SHELLEY KERSLAKE; CHRIS MARSH, ATTORNEY; JUDGE HARRY J. MCCARTHY; MARY MEINIG; ANN RUDNICKI; SHEILA AND JOHN SCATES; DON STARK; CYNTHIA STROUM; TAYBOT; MARY ANNE AND TOM THORBECK; SUSAN WEISS

Austin Foundation
Transforming Lives Through Fitness

FALL FITNESS FESTIVAL

AUSTIN FOUNDATION PRESENTS

YOUTH & FITNESS

FALL FITNESS FESTIVAL
Creating Access & Equity in Health

Saturday, November 17, 2007
1:30 - 4:30 p.m.
Garfield Community Center
2323 E. Cherry
(corner of 23rd Ave. S. & Cherry)

Please join the Austin Foundation's Youth & Fitness participants for a fall celebration of health and fitness.

Special Events Include:

- Aerobic Conditioning Workout with Lori Markowitz
- Guest Speakers
- Community Partner and Public Agency Booths
- Fitness Passport

To participate, volunteer or RSVP, contact Vanisha Duggal: vanisha.duggal@gmail.com or (206) 381-1841.

Strong

STAZZI

I want to be strong
To prove to the world
That I'm not just a girl

I want to be strong
To let men know
They can't take advantage of me

I want to be strong
To let others girls know
That it's ok to be that way

I want to be strong
For the sake of my little
Sister so I can protect her

I want to be strong
To take my fears and
Face them

Being strong means to me
That I can punch back when
Somebody hits me

Being strong means to me
That I can believe in anything
That I want to

Being strong means to me
That I can stand up to the
Things I don't believe in

Being strong means to me
I can tell the world that I'm afraid
of the dark
And not care what you think

Being strong means to me
When I'm in a low spot in my life
I can get back up
I'm strong.

Motivation

NYAJUOK

Motivation, who am I. I am black and African; I come to this world from my mother. These people I see ask me who I am and I say "who are you to ask me such a question?" You are my friend and I think you should know me by now. I am a red rose, but I'm the roots that hold it up. Trying to see what life is going to bring me. I sometime feel the pain and I'm being hurt within, I can show it in my walk and body language. My card is telling the truth. I need to find myself a new nourishing spot. I am 18, young female girl. I have the beauty of an African queen. I'm this daughter of a mother of lost love. Motivation, thinking of who I am. I know I've inspired and have confidence in the words I speak. I speak in good motivation, for I will speak more of what I know. Some people know me as a planner of an outgoing personality. I am a girlfriend of a hard worker that makes me love more. It is tough in our society to focus on my dreams. This is motivation, this is who I am and will be in the future. The beauty of being straight forward is staying strong enough to know who you really are and telling the truth. Motivation, being nice is tough in a mean society. Motivation, I was sitting here listening to Soul Child speak of his poem about his identity. This had me thinking, do I know where I really come from and who I am? Speaking with confidence, thinking of what I plan to do with myself. I'm here, releasing the air I breathe within. What is it that I need to know? Can I reveal what's next in my journey? Motivation.

Dad

ANNA GONSALES

Dad. U say u love me. Why don't u nourish it?

Dad. Were u there for me? Why didn't I see you?

Dad. You think about me. Why can't I feel it?

Dad. You say I look like you. Why don't I picture it?

Dad. Why did u abandon me? I wanted to be by your side.

Dad. Why don't u let me dance on your toes like ur daughter dreams of?

Dad. Will u be there when I get married? I'd love to see you.

Dad. I forgive u about the mistakes you've done.

Dad. I sometimes dream about having a dad and daughter dance. Why don't u make me happy?

Dad. I think about the good times we had together.

Dad. I love u with all my heart and soul.

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We are looking for articles, poetry, artwork and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or homelessness. If you want to be published in the Times, contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org. For more info and to check us out, go to www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

Untitled

SEVEN

After the blow came a sharp slice.
I folded over in a clean fold,
Like starched clothing.
The pavement came in a wave,
Rushing to shore,
Drowning the beach,
And I lay in the red sea
For what seemed like hours

Land of Songs

EMMA CUMMINGS

This is when a woman gets strong,
After she's been tested
And forgets about all who've done her wrong,
She unpacks her accomplishments
Hides the pain
Who ever said that all women are vain

Forget punishment
Forget revenge
This is the time
On which the future dependes

Soak it all in then let only hatred out
That's what lifes best experiences are about
So when time gets tough
Look inside
Don't fear the storm roll with the tide,

Lifes little wisdoms are what its all about
When it passes you by
reach out and touch the sky,
Capture the moment in your hand
And know in your heart that its going as planned.

Only one moment is what you have,
When you blink it will all be gone,
So cherish this moment
Imprint this moment
Before long it will slip away it to the land of songs.

Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.

~ William James

**The Face of Homelessness** BY SHAYNA M. HARRIS

At least once a day, I see a homeless person sleeping at a bus stop or curled up in a doorway of a business and each time I have looked away or kept walking as if it were normal or not a problem. I didn't have much to offer or say to help the situation—not because I have never been homeless, I have been many a time, but because even though I was homeless I have never had to curl up in a doorway. I have always had somewhere to lay my head because I knew how to find such places. I had resources.

Today, I am wondering why there are so many people who have to resort to sleeping in bus stops, doorways, and other places where no human being should have to rest. I think that these people do not know about the resources that are available to them. The community should find ways to bring resources to their attention.

There are many types of homelessness and different types of people who endure homelessness. There is the runaway, the addict, the mentally ill and disabled, the immigrant, the ex-con, and the family. Each group of people goes through homelessness in a different way.

• A young girl runs away from home for whatever reason and sleeps on a friends couch for a couple of days and ends up feeling like a burden. She turns to the streets trying to make money independently. This girl might become a prostitute or a drug dealer or she might turn to stealing. Either way, she might end up in jail.

Jail is supposed to be a place where

people go to be rehabilitated so they don't do the wrong thing again. It is the perfect place to save this girl from recurring homelessness. If the jails had resources to hand out like they hand out punishment; I believe there would be a smaller number of people being detained and a much smaller amount of people living on the streets.

• The addict who has spent all he has on drugs is now homeless and all he is thinking about is more drugs. He steals something to pawn and ends up in jail. Jail gives probation and he is let out. He goes to the mandatory drug treatment but because he is also homeless, he cannot attend all classes, so probation is revoked and he is placed back into custody. This man may or may not have the will to change but before releasing this man, the jail, the probation officer and whoever else was involved with this man could have prevented wasted time and money by getting this man a place to live and the proper resources to keep his mind off his troubles so he could attend his classes regularly.

• When you are suffering from a mental illness and can't think straight, how could you possibly be expected to pay your bills or take care of yourself? Mental illnesses are medical conditions that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others, and daily functioning. Just as diabetes is a disorder of the pancreas, mental illnesses are medical conditions that often result in a diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life. Serious mental illnesses include major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder,

obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and borderline personality disorder.¹ A person suffering from depression sometimes won't even want to get out of bed, let alone go to work or pay bills. A person like that could easily spiral down to homelessness. A mental health professional is the perfect person to hand out resources to this person and help them see through the plan of preventing this person from becoming homeless.

• The fastest growing group of homeless in the United States², families have a series of the above problem, whether one or both parents are addicts, ex-convicts, immigrants, mentally ill or disabled. Their situation can affect the rest of the family. Kids that are innocent and rely on their parents to provide for them can not do anything but wait for their parent or guardian to get help.

I am a single mother who is homeless. I am part of this latter group. A month ago I was middle class. I had my own apartment, a steady income, and drove a nice car. I didn't have someone to tell me that the people who were around me were only around for my money. I had no one to show me how to be a good judge of character. Thus, I was robbed by the two people who were closest to me. I went to The Department of Social and Human Services (DSHS) and applied for public assistance but was denied due to the fact that I made too much money this year, although I wasn't to receive a penny in the near future. I had to stay with several people

on their couches or in motels. Now I am at the YWCA Shelter. It is a safe place for my daughter and me to be. I don't have to worry about where we will next spend the night or if someone is going to have a bad day and kick me out their house. I don't even have to worry about being taken advantage of by someone who knows I need them.

My situation is stable. I have gotten a job and I am also on the top of the list for housing. I also found out that if you make less than \$2000 per month you qualify for public assistance. The only reason I have this going for me is because I had somewhere to live, somewhere I could relax and just worry about my own situation. The only reason I knew of the YWCA is because I knew where to get resources and I had support.

There are several places where you can find resources and support. Here is a list of some local resource providers here in Seattle. Please search your local community to find homeless resources:

- **Orion Center:** www.youthcare.org/orion-center.cfm; 206-622-5555
- **YMCA:** www.seattleyymca.org/page.cfm; 206-382-5003
- **YWCA:** www.ywcaworks.org; 206-461-4888
- **Community Information Line:** 206-461-3200

¹ www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Inform_Yourself/About_Mental_Illness/About_Mental_Illness.htm

² www.solutionsforamerica.org/thrivingneigh/homelessness.html