

Mockingbird Times



FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION

November 2009

Volume X, Issue XI

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH!

In This Issue

Letter From the Editor

Jim Theofelis
Page 2

Toy Soldiers

Ashlie Lanier
Page 2

Reunification

Diamonique Walker
Page 3

Sharing Our Stories

Ian Grant
Page 3

Being in the System

David Buck
Page 3

Creative Corner:

Godly Sorrow

Anthony
Page 4

Creative Corner:

Listen

R.J. Howard
Page 4

Calendar of Events

Page 4

News From The Mockingbird Network

Page 4



To Ms. Michelle Obama,

Your biography written for the White House Web site states that you found your true calling in life was to serve communities and their neighbors. I share that common calling in the concept of serving my community by informing them of the many issues within the child-welfare system and getting them resolved. The reality of being a youth in care is that you grow up often not knowing your rights. When I joined The Mockingbird Society (MBS), I had no idea that living with my cousin and friends was considered informal kinship care. I also had no clue about all the many resources available to me.

I work for MBS as a Senior Network Representative. MBS is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to improving the lives of current and future youth in the foster care system. Our mission is to "Build a world class foster care system through innovation, collaboration, and advocacy." The Mockingbird Society consists of two programs: The Mockingbird Family Model and The Mockingbird Network. I am a part of The Mockingbird Network, Region 4, King County. Our chapter name, Region 4 for Change, was inspired from the 2008 Obama/Biden campaign. **President Obama** speaks about change and how important it is for us as citizens to be inspired by hope and our supporters.

The Mockingbird Network is a Washington State-wide initiative bringing together youth and alumni of foster and kinship care, with a vision to develop individual leaders, engage and strengthen communities, and reform the foster care sys-

A Letter to Ms. Michelle Obama BY ASHLIE LANIER

tem. There are a variety of ways in which The Mockingbird Network accomplishes these goals.

One avenue that youth use to advocate for themselves and other foster youth is through the *Mockingbird Times*. Over 22,000 copies are distributed every month and there is also a digital version on the MBS Web site www.mockingbirdsociety.org. The Foster Youth & Alumni Leadership Summit is another way that youth from care can advocate for themselves. This opportunity gave me the ability to learn more skills on what it takes to become a better leader. It also allowed me the opportunity to get together with youth like me to discuss key issues and challenges we face every day while being able to present those issues to important policy makers. For youth in today's

ries and meaningful statements, the legislators were left with decisions to make. On April 21st 2009, **Governor Christine Gregoire** signed HB-1492 Independent Youth Housing Program. On April 25th 2009, she signed HB-1938 Sibling Visitation and HB-1961 Fostering Connections. On May 11th 2009 HB-5811 Notification of Rights was signed into law.

Ms. Obama, MBS is one of the most change fulfilled organizations I have ever been a part of. I understand government officials are concerned about health care and jobs but what about the youth? More specifically, what about the youth who are a part of the child welfare system, a system based on a concept that suggests that the government is our parent? Today's youth are our next presidents, legislators, judges, lawyers, and other professional people of importance. With a broken child-welfare system, how do we expect

the children to succeed? You cannot put a dollar amount on a child's life.

No one asks to be brought into the system. I, along with other representatives, would love it if you personally or someone from your administration could come visit our headquarters and go through the

Culture of Foster Care training, a training created and facilitated by the government's children and tomorrow's leaders. I think it would be a great asset to your calling of serving communities and their neighbors.



society, advocacy is the strongest way to implement change and get our voices heard.

Youth Advocacy Day is yet another method that youth use to stand up for themselves and others in care. This last year we marched throughout our beautiful capital in Olympia, shouting for our rights. ("We don't want no garbage bags we want homes!") I actually sat down in the hearings for the bills and watched youth testify. After hearing heartfelt sto-

Mockingbird Family Model Expansion BY JERRY BOBO



The population of the State of Washington in 2008 was 6,549,224. Out of that number, there are 10,068 children in the foster care system. Of that, 52.3% are between the ages of 13 and 21.¹ That's a big number. Prevention is the key to stability, and having a better child welfare system is part of the equation. The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) is an award-winning, innovative model for foster care delivery that offers practical, cost-effective solutions to improve the lives of our most vulnerable children and youth.

MFM is a simple yet innovative concept which establishes a sense of extended family and community around the participating children, youth, and families. In each MFM Constellation, six to ten families (foster, kinship, foster-to-adopt, and/or birth families) live in close proximity to a central, licensed foster care family called a Hub Home whose role is to provide assistance in navigating systems, peer support for children and parents, impromptu and regularly scheduled social activities, planned respite nearly 24/7, and crisis respite as needed. By taking this model and expanding it, The Mockingbird Society is going in the direction of prevention.

I asked **Jim Theofelis**, Executive Director of The Mockingbird Society, where the idea of expanding the MFM into prevention came from and he replied, "The prevention applica-

tions have always been part of the concept— we needed to first demonstrate effectiveness with the traditional approach of the MFM. Also, **Dr. Wanda Hackett** and the MFM team have been incredible in their efforts and their learning about what makes the MFM work and how to best apply it to other sub-populations. But again, in the effort to build a world-class foster care system, we believe we need to support the families and communities caring for children **before** they are removed and placed into the formal foster care system."

The average time a child spends in foster care is 2 years. 7,595 foster children are waiting to be reunified with their birth families, and 2,179 are waiting to be adopted with an average waiting time of 40 months.² A constellation directed towards prevention would definitely lower these numbers drastically. Not only that, but it will be a form of motivation and support. A constellation is a positive and effective way to put a program geared towards prevention together. A prevention constellation will also help lower the time that a youth is waiting to be adopted by a family. I asked Dr. Hackett, Director of Family Programs here at The Mockingbird Society, how this method will connect children with adoptive families better than the standard MFM way.

She said, "The foster-to-adopt application of the MFM would connect families looking to adopt children to existing Constellations. The intent would be to incorporate pre-adoptive families into the Constellation activities

(monthly meetings, social events, etc.) so families could get to know children (free for adoption) and children could get to know the families. If an adoptive 'match' occurs, great! The goal is more time to build a relationship and achieve a 'more natural match' between children and potential adoptive families then is usually the case."

I could have been in foster care but I was lucky enough to stay with my family in unlicensed kinship care. The whole time that I was living with my relatives the main goal was to be reunited with my birth mom. That reunification was a very important part of my life. Negative experiences molded my perceptions on trust and positive experiences helped me to grow and appreciate what little prevention help I received.

The Mockingbird Society expanding the MFM design in the direction of prevention is not only great for the organization but for youth and communities as well. The constellations will provide the nurturing that is needed to prevent disappointment, trust issues, and fear. The MFM is continuously growing and making a difference in the lives of those involved. MFM is a family working with families and supporting families. Prevention is the key when you in the foster care system.

^{1, 2} states.fosterclub.com/washington/resources/statistics

Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



I like November if for no other reason than it seems like it is the month that both prepares us for and shifts us into a season of special days. Of course, Thanksgiving is this month and a wonderful opportunity for each of us to reflect upon our many blessings for which to be thankful.

But even before the "big holiday" in November we have others that also call upon us to take a moment and consider not only our blessings but of the contributions and blessings of our fellow citizens. For example, November typically brings us an election and this year is no exception. We are so fortunate in this country that we have the right to vote and make a direct impact upon how our democracy comes alive. **I encourage each of you to exercise your right to vote.**

Additionally, November is the month of one of my favorite holidays which is Veterans' Day. I personally want to thank the men and women in uniform who are serving our country. I especially share my gratitude with those who are serving on foreign soil away from their loved ones during such a precarious time in our history. **To the Veterans who have returned from their tour of duty and especially to those who come home injured, I say, "Thank you for your sacrifice and your service!"**

As November welcomes us to the change in weather including more cold and rain and less light, we are challenged to bring our own warmth and light to our cherished relationships, to those less fortunate, and to our own healing and growth. These are trying times for so many of us and our neighbors and yet there is opportunity all around to reach out and share a simple act of kindness to those around us.

As you enter this season of holidays I ask you to keep The Mockingbird Society in mind and heart. **We remain dedicated to our mission of building a world-class foster care system so that our most vulnerable children and teenagers are also reminded of just how special they are to all of us. On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of The Mockingbird Society I wish each of you a very Happy Thanksgiving!**

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Update Your Subscription

If you have recently moved, need to change the number of issues you receive, or if the address we are mailing the *Mockingbird Times* to needs to be corrected, please complete and mail the subscription request form below so we can update our records.

Thank You!

Anonymous; Lucy Berliner; Bob Bowman, Rosauers; Casey Family Programs; Paula Clapp and Matthew G. Norton Co.; Community Youth Services Independent Living staff and volunteers Heather Guz, Brian Hatcher, Danille Kettel, Sarah LaGrange, and Dae Shogren; Steve Garcia, Albertsons; Krista Goodman; JoAnn Herbert, in memory of June Herbert; Jana Heyd, Sandra Howard; Williams Kastner, in memory of Raymond Sims; James Maki; Mary Meinig; Megan Notter; Refugee Women's Alliance; Heather Riley; Ray Sandy and Jillian Gross, In Celebration of Maegan and Leo Dirac; Steve Shafer and Kelly Nolan Shafer; Alicia Tonasket; Sean Walsh; Sara Wolfgang

Toys Soldiers BY ASHLIE LANIER



In school they teach you that violence is never a way to solve issues. Teachers and counselors continuously remind us that violence will only lead you to two places: a grave or prison. Yet over the last two years there has been a huge increase in youth violence. There are 12 and 13 year old teens playing with fire, trying to make sure that people know who they are and how much work they put in, but for what? To represent the area they live in? To show their peers how they deal with issues when they are upset?

In 2006, Washington State recorded 539 firearms fatalities. It is too easy for youth to get their hands on guns. In 2008, there were 19 teens tried as adults for gun-related crimes. So far this year there have been at least 36 teens tried as adults, nearly all for gun-related crimes.

Youth are turning to guns to fix problems. Whatever happened to talking it out? Peer Mediators?

Counselors? The amount of teens buying guns has made it so that few places are safe. People in the communities should not be afraid

to go outside and live life. Friends turn on friends and enemies become your worst nightmares.

On September 10th, people gathered at Seattle Central Community College for the **Aaron John Sullivan Memorial Anti-Gun March**. Aaron Sullivan was killed last July with a military assault rifle fired by one of his peers. His incident was not gang-related or drug-related; it was simple a gun-related crime. The march was to inform the community of this particular act of violence and to fight against it as well as celebrate Aaron's journey to enlightenment.

Between January and June 15th 2008, the number of incident reports showing some kind of gang involvement was 66, according to department statistics. During that same period this year statistics show there were 88. Every day there is a child that grows up without a father figure, or a child that enters care, or a child that takes on the responsibility to care for another sibling. Every day there is a youth that joins a gang.

Youth join and involve themselves in gangs for many different reasons. Some search for that father figure and most likely find it in what gangs call Big Homies. Many join to become a part of the hustle, to feel the family vibe and a sense of comfort. Others join because they just want to live the life of a gangster. You see it on television all the time; the music videos, movies and late night documentaries that promote gang violence. They make it seem as if it would give you a sense of belonging and a name for yourself. This type of promotion leaves troubled teens open to suggestion.

Youth violence (gun and gang-related) in Seattle has increased 22 percent in the first seven months of this year compared to the same period last year. However, homicides have decreased in 2009. So far there have been 15 in Seattle, including 10 shooting deaths. That's down from 21 during the same period last year.

In order to provide a solution to this problem there are many programs and

"Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him"

~Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

events dedicated to change. For example, the **Aaron Sullivan Weapon Ban** bill which would ban the sale and discharge of military type assault weapons in the State of Washington. It might not solve youth violence as a whole; however banning the most fatal weapons available to youth in our communities is a great start.

There is also **Washington Ceasefire**, "a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to reducing gun violence in Washington State through education, research and advocacy." There are more than 6,000 members across the state, all citizens affected by gun violence who came together.

Another great organization is the **Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative**, "taking a new approach and intensively focusing on 800 young people living in central, southwest, and southeast Seattle facing the highest risk for perpetuating or being victimized by violence."

Youth are around our neighborhoods buying, selling, and shooting guns. Youth are around our neighborhoods affiliating themselves with gangs. Our future, our youth are becoming toy soldiers.

References: www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/em-trauma/injury/data_tables/washington-ceasefire.org/resource-center

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.

Support The Mockingbird Society!

We invite you to join us in making a significant difference in the lives of our most vulnerable children, youth and families. In gratitude of your support, we will send you a monthly issue of the *Mockingbird Times*. Please join us today!

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY/STATE/ZIP _____
 PHONE _____ Email _____

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

- Please do not include my name on published donor lists (check box).
- I prefer to receive my copy of the *Mockingbird Times* at the email address provided above.

My gift to help children, youth and families in foster care is (check box):

- \$1,000+ Protector
- \$500 - \$999 Champion
- \$250 - \$499 Advocate
- \$50 - \$249 Supporter
- \$25 - \$149 Contributor
- Other _____

Payment Options:

- Check (payable to The Mockingbird Society)
- Credit card: Visa MasterCard AMEX

Account Number: _____
 Expiration Date: _____
 Credit card billing address (if different than mailing address): _____
 Signature: _____

Please charge my credit card: One time Monthly Quarterly
 My employer will match my gift. Company Name: _____
 (Please enclose your matching gift form.)

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.

MEET OUR STAFF

Executive Director Jim Theofelis; **Operations Director** Ros Ghan; **Mockingbird Family Programs Director** Dr. Wanda Hackett; **Youth Programs Director** Tiffany Washington; **Executive Assistant** Lauren Frederick; **Development/Communications** Darcie Gray; **Finance Manager** Catherine Lanham; **Mockingbird Network Coordinator**; Kara Sanders; **Mockingbird Family Model (The MFM) Coordinator** Amy Converse; **Administrative Coordinator** Diana Clark; **Administrative Assistant (AA)** Liliana Davies; **Mockingbird Network AA** Milissa Morgan; **The MFM AA** Stephanie (Stevie) Glaberson; **Development Assistant** Alicia LeVezu; **Resource Specialists** Eva Ervin, Graham Parrington, Georgina Ramirez, Tammy Soderberg, Lauren Steed, Samantha Valle; **Senior Network Representatives** Ashlie Lanier, Jerry Bobo; **Network Representatives** Amanda Bevington, David Buck, Ian Grant, Diamonique Walker; **Contributing Writers & Artists** Anthony, Francesca Cantu, Sam Evans, R. J. Howard, Demaria Kirk, Onalee Stewart, Josie Toohey; **Volunteer** Chrissie Jackson; **Copy Editing and Layout** Kelly Hawkins

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*.

Reunification BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



When youth age out of care, whether it was foster care or kinship care, often one of the first things they want to do is reach out to their birth parents if possible, a process called reunification. Reunifying may not be so simple because the youth might have feelings such as abandonment, resentment and anger towards their parents. Even with negative feelings, reunifying can be important to provide closure on a youth's foster care experience as well as open a door for a fresh start with birth parents.

Sometimes youth are able to reunify with birth parents before they age out of foster care which can be an even more difficult transition, especially for younger children. This can sometimes be better though.

Whether youth get taken away from their parents because of abuse, neglect, domestic violence, or whatever reason, they sometimes are able to be reunified because Child Protective

Services (CPS) feels that the parents have their stuff together and are capable of being adequate parents. The transition can be difficult on the youth's part because they may have insecurities about being sent back into foster care whether it is for their parents not doing the right thing or themselves not doing the right thing.

I was in a kinship placement then I transitioned back into my mother's care when I was 16. Reunifying was made easier for me by gradually spending more and more time with my mom then finally living with her again. I think having reunification be a gradual process is what made it easier on me and my mom. Not everyone



has as good a reunification experience as I did though. Someone I know, who is an alumna of foster care, had a not so great reunification experience. After emancipating out of care, she pursued relationships with both of her birth parents. "I wanted my mom's love like no other... When I got older and closer [to my mom] things got bad, my mom's addiction took over our relationship, she stole from me and said some things that can never be taken back," she said. "My dad had me fooled. He was playing like nothing could tear us apart again. He tried to buy my love and I fell for it, but he eventually got back hooked on drugs and that ended our relationship."

Reunification isn't always a good thing. Youth may come to find out that their parents really don't want anything to do

with them when they age out of care. Parents sometimes don't change from their old ways that got their child put in foster care to begin with, so it makes renewing their relationship after care nearly impossible, as with the alumna that I mentioned.

In some cases when youth get reunited with parents before aging out, their parents may have mislead CPS to believe that they are capable parents although they haven't refrained from their old ways that got their child put in care. Then the youth may eventually end up back in foster care.

While some youth have negative experiences reunifying with birth parents, it is still important. It can open up doors for other family bonds. "Yes, I am happy that I got to meet my parents, the only great thing that came out of it was meeting my siblings who love and care for me and will always be there for me no matter what," said the alumna mentioned above.

Being in the System BY DAVID BUCK



The child-welfare system as a whole is problematic for youth, but what I hope to be able to give you is a better understanding of just how the system affects children. I will be focusing on one of several issues on how the system makes things difficult. Psychological problems manifest themselves everywhere: in social situations, on the job, in families, etc. I'm going to be focusing today strictly on the social issues around the child-welfare system.

Whatever problems led youth into the system, the consequences are usually the same. Being removed from their families is hard on youth, as is being separated from their neighborhoods, their schools, their friends, and other family and this sense of loss is very traumatizing for those so young. Take these emotions into a new environment where children need social relationships such as friends, family, and mentors you got yourself a big heap of problems.

According to **Casey Family Programs**, more than 500,000 children are in foster care in the United States. Most of these children have been the victims of repeated abuse and neglect and have not experienced a nurturing, stable environment during the early years of life. A 2003 issue of the **Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry** says that neglect can distort the attachment aspect of a child's development. They go on to state that "children who have experienced chronic abuse and neglect during their first few years may live in a persistent state of

hyper-arousal or dissociation, anticipating a threat from every direction." According to the **Child Welfare League of America**, some 2,500 kids were removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect in Washington State alone.

Psychologists with the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** who studied the affects of the child-welfare system on children have pointed out that many of these youth have almost completely avoided attachment in their lives. It's very common for a youth in care to feel like the only person he or she can trust is him- or herself.

When I was in care that was how it was with me: I refused to make friends because I always felt like they would be lost too quickly and abruptly down the road. A twenty year old alumna of the system, **Zematra Bacon**, says, "I stayed very private about myself with the friends I did have and didn't talk about issues I was having."

Research shows this continues into the youth's adult lives; it makes it very hard for youth to feel like they can trust anybody even into adulthood. "It was hard for me after leaving the system to get the ability to be open with people again," Zematra says. Loving relationships developed at this time can be tough on both the alumna and the people the alumna cares about. This often results of the cycle of abuse continuing, a very real problem that needs to be addressed.

According to the **American Psychiatric Association** which studied the effects of those in the system, the best treatment option for those in these situations is large support groups for

Sharing Our Stories BY IAN GRANT



Everything has a price. For foster youth, telling our story is the price we pay for getting people to listen to us, to help us. It is ironic that the part of us that we would most like to forget, the part of us that most of us wish could be erased from existence, is the one that we are constantly called upon to share in order to better our lives and the lives of those who come after us.

I spoke to an alumnus of care, whom I will call Jack, about this contradiction, and how it affected his life. He left his home at age 11, after running away several times. His parents wanted him gone because they were concerned that he was a bad influence on his younger siblings, that they would follow in his footsteps. He couch-surfed for a while, and then a social worker placed him in a group home, where he lived until he was 15 years old. He spent the remainder of his time in care placed with a foster family, before aging out at 18.

Jack struggled with the expectations of the people that were assigned to his case, saying "I had to share with people that I

didn't know, and didn't have a relationship with. I didn't trust those people... After therapy sessions, I would wonder if they were going to say something, or if I were going to get in trouble. It was uncomfortable."

Although Jack acknowledged that it was important to build trust with his service providers, he felt that they often went too far—"They're always trying to dig deeper. I felt like they were probing me, like I was a science experiment... and when you're 11, you... don't know how to cope with that sort of thing. I learned to tell my first psychiatrist what I thought he wanted to hear."

Jack is doing well now. Although the meetings with service providers were sometimes uncomfortable, he feels that "in the end, it was worth it. It got the pressure off my chest... [and] helped me with my behavioral issues." He said that service providers "need to trust their kids... social workers are there to build relationships that help kids, and if you're digging and probing, you aren't able to do that."

After I talked with Jack, I spoke to **Henry Author Jenkins, Jr.**, a case manager with the **YMCA Independent Living Program**. He has worked as a case manager for the last five years, and regularly interviews youth in care and alumni of care in order to provide them services. He tries not to bring people's history into things initially—the questions he asks at the first

meeting are along the lines of "What do you want from this program?" and "What are some of your goals?" He knows that most people "aren't going to tell me their whole life story the first time they meet me. Ultimately, I need to know what drives them—why they want to achieve the goals that they have set for themselves." Like Jack, a lot of foster youth have learned to tell service providers what they want to hear, and Jenkins says he often finds himself in situations where youth "tell me what I want to hear, what [they] told other service providers."

Jenkins tries to be fair, saying "If a person tells me their story, or if a person doesn't tell me their story, I have to treat them each the same way." However, he says that knowing more about a participant's background can help him in his work: "I try to remember the stories that each participant tells me, because that's the connection I have with them... I like to take the stories to... make a parallel to whatever goal that they want to achieve." He admits, however, that it's not always easy to remain objective: "When I hear the stories,

and I try not to do this, but I do—I hurt for them. And it's hard, because I would like to be professional, but I'm still human; when I see a participant who has gone through serious trauma because of

something an adult did to them, it affects me. It makes me think about my kids... I carry it around with me. It's real."

I asked Jenkins what he would say to other case managers, and he said "When a young person tells you their story, listen intently. Don't just listen for the traumatic part of it, don't listen for how you can jump in and save the day, but just listen, and be there... And then you can take all that you've heard, and you can use it to best help the participant in whatever they are doing."

Jack and Mr. Jenkins are on opposite sides of the social services equation. But they can each see that being respectful and compassionate with the stories that youth share is absolutely central to building effective relationships with those youth, and that poking and prodding tend to undermine those relationships. Some service providers occasionally need to be reminded of this fact. Trust is the single most important factor when building a relationship and the only way to build trust is to show respect for each other. I hope that hearing these two stories helps you to do that. Good luck, and keep fighting.



TEENLINK CAN HELP

Teen Link is a confidential, anonymous, and non-judgmental help line answered by teens from 6-10 PM, 365 days a year. Teen volunteers are trained to listen to callers' concerns and talk to them about whatever is on their mind. No issue is too big or too small. Call (866) TEENLINK.



these youth: large, effective, integrated support where those in the system won't just one day feel like all those connections get ripped out. It is very common for youth leaving care, once all those supporters they had while in the system are removed, to have those old feelings returned or reinforced.

References: aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;106/5/1145, www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/index.htm, www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm07/chapter3.htm, ndas.cwla.org, abuse.suite101.com/article.cfm/child_maltreatment_and_brain_development

Godly Sorrow

ANTHONY

For what delight I feel
when early morning dew
touches my fingertips.

In the air there's a feeling of
tranquility, peacefulness.

My Heavenly mother; I've been gone too
long.

I've helped in the destruction caused
and the hand which is killing you.

For I have polluted you and abused you,
destroyed you.

And now I'll help to revive you,
nurture you, feed you. As you have me
for sixteen years.

I'm sorry you have called
and I have not answered,
for I have been blessed, yet
did not appreciate.

I turn my face
just as others have of me.
Now I face you, as you have
done to me.

How treacherous man can be
to you, my Lord.

Do not punish them for sins
they know not of; but love
them as you love me.

Help me open their eyes and
their hearts.

O' Lord, my Father, start through me.
Start through me.

And when I serve my time and meet
you face to face, you will see;

Love through me. AMEN

Listen

R. J. HOWARD

Sound the trumpet for a sacred
feast

Sing! Beat the tambourine
Play the sweet lyre and the harp

But people please listen to me
Just asking you this please

Play music have a good time
God made me and you shine

With desires so sweet...

With a fresh new beat

Help the sick, fill them with pride
Wash the sins the people bring in

One huge tide

Listen to the heart

With the beat only

It knows when to start.

Get Published ~ Get Paid!

We are looking for 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*, contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at kara@mockingbirdsociety.org.

Community Events

Region 1

Nov. 24: Brown Paper Bag Community Service Project, 3:00-5:30 PM, Crosswalk School; (509) 868-2125.

Region 2

Nov. 16-23: Deliver Thanksgiving food boxes to those in need in our community; (509) 853-4305.
Nov. 26: Serve a traditional Thanksgiving dinner at the Union Gospel Mission; (509) 853-4305.

Region 3

Nov. 12: monthly public meeting, 6:00-7:30 PM, Sedro-Woolley Alf's.

Region 4

Nov. 17: Martin Luther King Celebration Committee, 7:00-8:30 PM, CAMP; (206) 296-1002 or www.MLKSeattle.org.

Region 5

Nov. 18: Your Rights Training, 3:00 PM, Pierce County Alliance; Food and Prizes provided.

Region 6

Tuesdays: Providence St. Peter's Drug and Alcohol Unit informational meeting, 9:00-11:00 AM, Rosie's Place.

Wednesdays: Partners in Prevention Education, 2:00-4:00 PM, Rosie's Place.

Tell me and I forget, show me and I remember, and if you involve me I understand!

~ Anonymous

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

UNITE had an awesome month! We had three alumni and two youth on a panel for a CASA training on at the Red Lion Hotel in Spokane. There were 55 CASA volunteers that participated in the training. Our youth and alumni gave powerful narratives about the culture of foster care and several of the CASA volunteers came up to thank us for our courageous stories. Many said this was the best training they'd ever been to. Overall, it was a great experience and we hope to have more chances to speak in the future. At our Halloween party we made caramel apples, decorated pumpkins, and discussed next month's Thanksgiving community service project.

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

Well, this month has gone by fast. Our region celebrated the fall season by having a pumpkin painting contest with prizes. We also had a change in our group's leadership. Congratulations to Hunter for becoming a new chapter leader! He's already doing a great job. Hunter and I lead a Life Advocacy training. An example of advocacy is talking with your teachers to explain when you're struggling in school and asking them how they can support your learning. We also talked about some important advocacy tools like speaking up, having a game plan, and having a good attitude with confidence. Hunter and Eva also did a Life Advocacy training in Everett. There were lots of youth there and everyone had a great time. We are looking forward to building our chapter with more people from the Everett area. We'd also like to say a special thanks to **Tamarack House** for joining us at our chapter meetings this month!



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

Some of the youth and alumni from Mockingbird Network went to the corn maze for our Harvest party. We roasted hotdogs and had s'mores. We all enjoyed the different events such as looking at the animals, sliding down the slide, and watching the little kids in the mini straw maze. We all took the hayride all around the corn maze. It was fun to get the truckers to honk at us! Not only did we have a blast but we also got down to business. We discussed how we would want the Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit to be like next year. We would like to speak to the lawmakers about how we could relax on overnight stays with our friends. We would also like them to understand how important support groups such as The Mockingbird Network are! Over all our Harvest Party was awesome and we bonded over the campfire. Lastly, we would like to say a big thank you to **Casey Family Programs** for donating our hotdogs and s'mores!

News From

The Mockingbird Network

Your Needs, Your Voice

Region 4: For Change CHAPTER IN KING COUNTY BY IAN GRANT

This month, our chapter had a very productive and fun meeting. We had a Halloween theme, and we all got a chance to make a caramel apple before getting down to business on our agenda. Our meeting centered on the topic that Region 4 is bringing to Youth Advocacy Day which is adequate legal representation for youth in foster care. We spent a lot of time discussing why legal representation is so important for vulnerable youth in dependency hearings, and we had **Jana Heyd**, a dependency attorney who has been practicing law for almost twenty years, give us the attorney's perspective on why this is so crucial. It was a good time, and we encourage any youth or alumni in King County who is interested in making the system better for foster youth, and in particular to ensure that the legal rights of foster youth are protected, to come to our monthly chapter meetings. We meet every second Monday at the 2100 Building, from 3-5 PM.



Region 5: CHAPTER IN PIERCE COUNTY BY DEMAREA KIRK

This month we had a group training on how to speak not only to professionals, but also how to communicate with people on an everyday basis. We also learned how not to over share our lives when speaking in front of people. During Voice Development training we talked about credibility and its importance. We have been lucky and recruited new participants to our chapter. We all have been very active in educating our peers about what is currently going on in foster care and what we can fix. Also, we are hoping to help with a food bank for Thanksgiving so families can have food on their table. All in all I'm proud of all the regions and the impact they are making for change.

Region 6: CHAPTER IN THURSTON COUNTY BY SAM EVANS

This has been a very exciting month for us. Our chapter moved from Vancouver to Olympia. We have a new resource specialist, new chapter leaders and are starting new chapter meetings. This month, Graham and I held our first training together on Life Advocacy 101. This personally was very scary for me being the first big thing to facilitate on my own and there were a lot more people there than I thought there would be. I also sat in on the **Center for Children & Youth Justice** Summit Meeting and gave my input to the members of the panel on how the foster care system should be reformed. **Graham** and I are currently planning the kick off for our chapter meetings. We look forward to seeing this chapter flourish in Olympia, right next door to the Capitol.