

# Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION

October 2009

Volume X, Issue X

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*"Changing policy, changing practice and putting a face on the issues."*

On October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009 about 500 people came to hear about how The Mockingbird Society (MBS) brings the simple idea of protecting the innocence of youth by ensuring they are protected and have the same resources available as youth in intact homes.

**Eric Liu**, who I interviewed in the August 2009 issue of the Mockingbird Times prior to being recognized as our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Luncheon Emcee, introduced the day and started us off with recognition of our Co-Chairs, **Virginia Anderson** and **Laury Bryant**. These women helped us broaden our network of supporters by connecting new table captains, guests and sponsors to our work and mission.

They then gave special gifts to the founding members of the **Mockingbird Scouts**. Mockingbird Scouts are a select group of community members who generously contributed a leadership gift to our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Benefit Luncheon. All the Mockingbird Scout's were given a personally signed certificate by **Harper Lee**, renowned author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, for their commitment to the work we are doing together for foster children and their families.

Next we had a heartfelt and family oriented speech from **Deanna Grace** of **Children's Administration** in regards to the Mockingbird Family Model. "Foster care is stranger care; kids are moving in with strangers. Change is possible and the Mockingbird Family Model provides that change."

Ms. Grace provided the audience with a personal portrait of the Mockingbird Fam-



According to **The Child Welfare League of America**, kinship care is defined as "the full-time care, nurturing, and protection of children by relatives, members of their tribes or clans, godparents, stepparents, or any adult who has a kinship bond with a child." There are two main types of kinship care: one is formal licensed kinship care and the other is informal unlicensed kinship care. Formal licensed kinship care is quite like foster care, where the child or youth is in a licensed home but with relatives and has gone through a court dependency hearing. The child or youth is eligible for the same benefits as if he/she were in stranger foster care.

However, informal unlicensed kinship care is when a child or youth is living with a relative or a close friend of the family. The child or youth did not go through a dependency hearing and is not in foster care but in a living arrangement with kin. With informal kinship care, the youth is not eligible for the same benefits as children in foster care.

## We Believe We Can Fly BY ASHLEY LANIER

ily Model, providing details of how the Hub Home and constellation works and real system reform.

Then there was the video, the final product of real life understanding in the Mockingbird Family Model and the Mockingbird Network. **Ian Grant**, one of our Network Representatives, **Lisa Carscadden** and **Degale Cooper**, both Hub Parents in the Mockingbird Family Model, showed what it was like to be in their respective programs. Ian was filmed in the Mockingbird Network office providing insight about what an average day of a network representative looks like. Everyone had a per-

need facts, testimonies, and proof. **Tammy Soderberg** and **Jerry Bobo**, two alumna of care who are part of the Mockingbird Network, provided just that. After watching some experiences on film, these two youth shared why what MBS does is so important.

As Tammy nervously walked on the stage, you could see the excitement and passion she had about her subject. She started her speech with past and presents details of her life with MBS. After fighting barriers such as a lack of notification of her rights, and not being able to see her siblings, Tammy stands today as an alumna of foster care, a Resource Specialist for The Mockingbird Society in Region 2 and Youth Advocate at **Casey Family Programs**.

Jerry, known for his great emceeing, was next up to speak. With high inspiration, he spoke of his experience in kinship care: all the pain, the struggles, feeling alone, feeling less important than his other family members. "Growing up, my family always made sure that I was aware that the woman raising me was my aunt and not my mother, but to me she is and always will be considered my mother."

Looking at life as a road, we face speed bumps. It's up to us to get around them and keep on pushing forward. I initial-

ly introduced Jerry to The Mockingbird Society and connected him with all the important things and people that are here. He started off as a Youth Lead Representative, pushed forward to Chapter Leader of Region 4 for Change, then finally excelled to being one of the Senior Network Representatives here at The Mockingbird Society.

LUNCHEON, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



*Around 500 people attended The Mockingbird Society's 3rd Annual Luncheon to support the rights of youth in foster and kinship care. Excellent speakers provided first-hand insight into The Mockingbird Society programs.*



sonal story of how they got to MBS, how MBS helped them, and their position. Ian shared his story and showed the audience his individual experience. Ms. Carscadden and Ms. Cooper went about their days of meetings and gatherings, providing the audience a look at what it is like to be part of a constellation and some of the things that take place in a hub home or "Big Mama's House."

In order to support an idea or a theory, you

## Kinship Care BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER

Kinship care can be a positive experience for youth in some ways. For one, youth get to be with their family which can mean a lot regarding connections to their culture and knowing their biological family. Unlike most foster parents, kinship caregivers can usually show their youth his/her own baby pictures or tell stories about the youth's parents that a typical foster parent wouldn't know. Often when in kinship care, youth are able to see and talk to their siblings because their siblings may be right there in the same home with them. No one would wish a youth to be out of their birth home, but being in kinship care and with one's relative family when licensed can be the best of both worlds for a youth in out of home placement. Not only would a youth be around family, but he/she would also get the same benefits as children in foster care which can help the family a lot in the long run.

"Nationwide, an estimated 2.2 million children are cared for by relatives, 58 percent more than in 1990. Washington State has experienced a similar trend over the past decade. Relative caregivers are now rearing approxi-

mately 32,000 children in Washington, representing approximately one out of every 50 children in the state. The majority of kinship care is informal: there are nine informal kinship arrangements for every formal arrangement. One-third of children placed in non-institutional, or family, settings by the state live with relatives."<sup>1</sup>

Although there are many good things about informal kinship care, there are some negative things about it as well. For example, with informal kinship care youth do not receive benefits such as Medicaid to 21, Governor's Scholarship, ILS Services, and Foster Care to 21. Not only that, but unlike in foster care or licensed kinship care, there isn't a lot of other financial support so informal kinship care youth may not always get the things they need even for daily living. In addition, when in informal kinship care youth don't usually have a caseworker that comes and checks on them regularly. These youth don't always get the attention they need. Also, just because

KINSHIP, CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



I want to share my deep appreciation to all of you who attended our Third Annual Luncheon and helped us celebrate our eighth anniversary.

One could feel the energy in the room with over 500 guests listening to our incredible speakers **Tammy Soderberg**, **Jerry Bobo** (Alumni and Mockingbird employees) and **Ms. Deanna Grace** from **Children's Administration**. All three of them spoke with expertise, experience and passion. **Mr. Eric Lui** was our emcee and did such a wonderful job and is such a humble, brilliant leader committed to nurturing the human spirit. Check out his just released book *Imagination First: Unlocking the Power of Possibility*.

I also want to thank **Virginia Anderson** and **Laury Bryant** who served as our phenomenal Co-Chairs. They brought great leadership to this event which is not surprising since they are great leaders in our community.

Finally, the video was absolutely superb and a special thank you to **Ian Grant** who gave us all a better appreciation for the roles of foster care alumni and Network Representatives at The Mockingbird

Society. A very special thank you to **De-gale Cooper** and **Lisa Carscadden** who are the original Hub Home parents and have recently celebrated their 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in these roles. We could not have had such a great luncheon without the support and participation of all of these amazing individuals.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all of the staff and volunteers at The Mockingbird Society for producing this year's luncheon. It is really an incredible amount of work that goes into an event like this and I am so proud of the staff at The Mockingbird Society. In particular I'd like to thank **Darcie Gray**, **Alicia LeVezu**, and **Ros Ghan** for all of their amazing work, "second efforts," and attention to detail for this event.

My thanks to each of you who attended and donated to help make this year such a success. If you have not donated and wish to do so, please do not hesitate—our work depends on the support we receive from folks like you!

Jim Theofelis  
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

## KINSHIP, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

they are in a home with a relative does not mean they are being treated appropriately. Another thing is that kinship caregivers often have children of their own to care for in addition which can be exhausting.

Recently, The Mockingbird Society and **Casey Family Programs (CFP)** partnered in organizing a Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) Constellation to support informal kinship care providers to prevent children from going into out-of-home placement/foster care. I had the opportunity to interview **D'Artagnan "Bernard" Caliman** and **Kristie Lund** from CFP to get their insight on this new program for informal kinship caregivers and their families. This kinship Constellation will be similar to a typical MFM Constellation and have the main components such as a Hub Home, Satellite Homes, monthly meetings, and community-based support. One difference with this Constellation is that the Hub Home parent will be the only licensed caregiver within the group mainly to provide respite/child care. Another difference is that these living arrangements are permanent.

"Our goals for this are to support families and keep youth out of foster care, connect families to resources, equip them with skills to navigate the systems, and create a community for these families," says Mr. Caliman. Finding a competent Hub Home was one of the biggest barriers in the planning of this Constellation. A home that was culturally responsive and knew how to access resources in the community was a priority. After working with the Hub

Home, the Satellite families will eventually be able to "graduate from the Constellation" and go on to provide mentoring to other informal kinship care providers in support groups they form.

"In this Constellation, I hope to see these families develop advocacy skills for themselves and form a sense of community for the children as well," said Ms. Lund. A kinship caregiver, Ms. Lund believes that if she had been apart of something like this it would have helped her decrease the feeling of isolation, helped her to better navigate systems and to access community resources, which is what this program is designed to do. Having this prevention kinship Constellation is very important because there are so many informal kinship families in this state and in this country but not many agencies provide support for them specifically. These families are typically isolated and this adds to the lack of services and support. This Constellation will encourage kinship caregivers and families to receive and give support to one another and to the kinship care community.

While I was in informal kinship care, having this kind of support would have helped me and my caregiver (my sister). A lot of times we didn't have adequate resources so I had to go without some basic necessities. Having someone like a Hub Home parent to guide and direct us to what we needed as a kinship family would have helped us a lot.

<sup>1</sup> [www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/KinshipCareWA.pdf](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/rptfiles/KinshipCareWA.pdf)

## Thank You!

Alene Alexander, SETuP; Anonymous; Steve Antonoff; Linda Breneman; Kevin Brock; Susan Brook; Jessica Chadwick; Terese Clark; Karen Cowgill; Ellisa Dannen; Sandi Everlove; Cherokee Frazier; Free Cakes for Kids; Michael Gause; Naame Griffin; JoAnn Herbert, in memory of June Herbert; Nancy Iannucci; Alexandra Jesse, in Celebration of Matt and Natasha Tronsdal's Wedding; Molly Lawrence; Sarah Mack; Sarah Maffahy; Delena Martin; Najja Morris; The Moyer Foundation; Northwestern Women's Networking Group; Pfizer Corporation; Pierce County Alliance; Pistol Skate Shop; Sarah Rafton; Vanitha S. Raman; Barbara Reid; Katoyce Rolax; Rosaires Super Market - John Tschirgi, Store Manager; Safeway - Robin Clark, Public Relations; Cody Schmidt and Cherokee Frazier; Schultz Family Foundation; Joan and Doug Stewart; Lyn Tangen, in honor of Virginia Anderson; Lynn Thomsen; Kayla Weiner

## 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.

## Governors' Scholarship: Apply Now

The deadline for the Governors' Scholarship for Foster Youth is quickly approaching! The scholarship application must be postmarked no later than November 10, 2009.

To be eligible for the Governors' Scholarship for Foster Youth you must:

- Be a permanent foster care youth in Washington State or in federal or tribal out-of-home care
- Be enrolled as a Washington State high school senior and on track to graduate from high school during the 2009-2010 academic year
- Have resided in Washington State for at least three academic years prior to high school graduation
- Have a cumulative high school grade point average of at least a 2.0

The application is available on the CSF web site at [www.collegesuccessfoundation.org/gf/index.htm](http://www.collegesuccessfoundation.org/gf/index.htm).

## 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!

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

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

## MEET OUR STAFF

**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** Leona Bill, Ashlie Lanier, Jerry Bobo; **Network Representatives** Amanda Bevington, David Buck, Ian Grant, Diamonique Walker; **Contributing Writers & Artists** Holly Allen, Annasia Ellis, Sasheena Ellsworth, Imara Johnson, DeMarea Kirk, Crystal Sharp, Onalee Stewart; **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*.

**TDC Meeting Update** BY IAN GRANT



[This is the second article in a quarterly series.]

September 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> was the second quarterly meeting of the Transformation Design Committee (TDC). The purpose of the TDC is to implement HB 2106, the **Accountability in Child Welfare** bill, which, among other things, mandates performance-based contracting for child welfare services in two demonstration sites in Washington State by 2012. I am honored to announce that I have been chosen to sit at the table as the foster youth representative. This quarter, I corresponded with **Catherine Lanham**, a foster mother who is on the TDC as the foster parent representative.

According to Ms. Lanham, the role of the TDC is "to provide community involvement... in a transformational experiment," which will take place in the two demonstration sites to be selected by December 2009. Ms. Lanham has seen how "the foster system can fail children and rip their lives and their birth families apart," and says she wants to be "an advocate for foster parents because I believe foster parents need to be respected, our voice and concerns understood and remedied for any transformation of the system to work."

The meetings so far have "provided an opportunity for us to get to know each other, to express common values, to learn more about the Child Welfare System and to talk about the process and rules to be followed by the committee," Ms. Lanham

says. "The work of the Committee is just beginning. The most positive development so far is having so many community partners with differing opinions sitting together with enthusiasm for positive change and a focusing on making the system better for dependent children. Now, we need to really dig in to the great amount of work before us."

There are a few obstacles, however. Ms. Lanham believes "the timeline is a challenge because even though we have five years ahead of us as a working committee, the timeline gets tight when you think about the massive change we are discussing and how long the RFP [Request For Proposal, the State's mechanism for contracting with private agencies] process takes..." The report by the committee to the Legislative Children's Oversight Committee, released earlier this month, states that "there [seems] to be insufficient time for community involvement... for both the transition to performance-based contracting and the site selection identification process."

While the opinions of Ms. Lanham are her own and do not necessarily reflect the position of either The Mockingbird Society or the Child Welfare Transformation Design Committee, I'd like to thank her for providing a look at what the TDC is doing from a foster parent perspective. I would encourage everybody to visit the website of the TDC, [accountabilityinchildwelfare.org](http://accountabilityinchildwelfare.org), and I look forward to updating everyone after the next meeting in December.

**My Last Day** BY LEONA BILL



My last day working for MBS (MBS) was September 22nd. I have been a part of MBS on and off for six years. I started out as a Youth Reporter having my first piece published in 2002. I made a lot of transitions with MBS during my time here. There have been a few changes in my position. In 2005 I was a satellite reporter. In 2007, I was a Youth Representative and over the past year I have been a Senior Network Representative. Over the years, I've wanted to be a part of MBS to help create change for future foster children.

I am proud to say that I am thankful for my time spent here at MBS. I am also proud to say that this definitely will not be my last article. I am looking forward to still participating in a few activities with MBS. I want to thank MBS for all that I achieved while working here, especially making changes in the foster care system. I am proud to see how far MBS has come from what it used to be, and how many bills that they have fought to have passed. When MBS went statewide I was amazed and excited to see what would happen. Now I have met with youth across the state and actually had fun working every day with MBS.

This was a job for me that wasn't anything like a job; it was my favorite part of my life because of the events that I was a part of while working here- the trainings, Advocacy day, the Youth Summit and the luncheons. I was also excited when the Mockingbird Family Model became a part

of MBS and how it is continually growing. I am glad that I am leaving MBS in such a good way with wonderful memories. My proudest moment here was when I finished one of my first two college classes and passed both at Shoreline Community College and I came to share the news with MBS. One of the funniest ones I have is when my current supervisor, **Kara Sanders**, was in training with **Najja Morris** and she was leaving for the day. It was about a couple days before she was going to start her position and her car was towed so the representatives got to go home early so Najja could drive Kara to get her car from the towing company.

My goal after leaving MBS is to continue my education. I am interested in attending the University of Phoenix. I also want to be able to do internships while attending this college and I believe that this school will be a great opportunity for me.

Thank you to all of my readers. I encourage you all to go online and come to the events that MBS has because no matter what they are, they are always fun and a lot gets accomplished. Some of you have approached me in the past and thanked me for writing about my experiences and said you loved reading what I wrote. I really appreciated that. I also know that the holiday season is coming up and since I will no longer be here with MBS, I want to wish you all Happy Holidays and have a wonderful new year. And to my daughter Francesca, happy first birthday.

**LUNCHEON, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

The Mockingbird Society's 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Luncheon was filled with power, emotion, and compelling speakers. Special thanks to all the community members and donors who made this event a success! We raised about \$160,000 to support youth and fami-

lies in the child welfare system. We'd also like to give a special thanks to our Luncheon Co-Chairs Virginia Anderson and Laury Bryant. Through all your contributions, you have proven the power of Believing We Can Fly!



**TEENLINK CAN HELP**

Teen Link is a confidential, anonymous, and non-judgmental help line answered by teens from 6-10PM, 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**.



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# THANK YOU!

**THANK YOU!**  
The Mockingbird Society would like to thank all of the extraordinary community members and donors who made our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Luncheon a great success. Thank you for your passion, commitment and generosity towards building a world-class foster care system.

**LUNCHEON CO-CHAIRS**  
We extend our deepest thanks to our outstanding Luncheon Co-chairs, **Virginia Anderson** and **Laury Bryant**. Through their commitment and involvement we were able to broaden our community of supporters and increase awareness about our work, mission and programs.

Thank you again for your time, resources and generosity!

**FOUNDING MOCKINGBIRD SCOUTS**

We would like the founding members of the Mockingbird Scouts for their leadership and commitment to building better futures for foster children in Washington State and nationwide.

Tom Alberg and Judi Beck  
Virginia Anderson  
Marijane Sutton Ashby  
Connie Ballmer  
Paul and Debbi Brainerd  
Linda Breneman  
Jon and Bobbe Bridge  
Laury and Bill Bryant  
The Mother House Fund  
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## Why Me?

JERRY BOBO

Man it's been over two years and the question is still Why Me? In the time that the question was asked to me, my top had reached critical mass and the eruption was overdue, but it didn't explode since I was focused and ready to take a stand alone and pursue the things that Self was unable to do, but the time had passed and overcoming pain is not working, and I'm not a cripple but me, Me is feeling so blue.

As Last Of a Dying Breed determination is all I need but it seems too late, and everything is open for the take of failing, this I know is true. So I ask

Why Me

Am I digging my own hole of pain, or is Self just being selfish with happiness that Me would love to obtain?

I only have Myself to lean on supportively since my family is still acting the same.

An empty canvas is what I'm searching for to start clean, with time on my side

As I write or sculpt out a plane for Me, and bring a handful of those that are down to ride

A two year journey that has seen no progress, just more problems, more let downs, and a new stress

Of man to man head butts, that thinks he's the best. NO it won't let him put Me down more than I am, so I will confess

Self told I that the team needs to be one as they force Me to realize he is the reason why team Myself failed the test.

Myself is the reason

Why I hurt, why I do dirt, or even why I act like a jerk

Why Me?

## Wanted

ANNA GONSALEZ

I've always wanted to be somebody in the future  
My dreams are just getting bigger.

I've always wanted a family with me.

Why did you leave me all alone?

I've always wanted a brother beside me

To guide me and take care of me.

I wanted to fit in but you pushed me.

I thought making a choice will make it better.

I wanted an education and that's why

I became intelligent.

I wanted to make my family happy, and

it worked, but

not for so long.

Wanting a lot of things to come takes time and

commitment

but face it,

it's okay to feel wanted because now,

Here it starts.

Don't let WANTED fear you at all.

## Rainbows

DEMAREA KIRK

Dark, lonely, coldness...that's the curse left from my family that hunts me down like the deathful Grim Reaper to devour my soul. There was never sweet comforting communication in my house only torment and rage. Pain behind the eyes of this creature that shines from within, steady dulls away day by day, but burns bright in the view of others. The color you see is blinded with black and white just like my mind shot, shattered into thin air. It suffered what people can't even imagine or even endure. But my lips remain sealed until the ears of a savior that prepares itself to listen to the bloody gore that has to be told. It is hidden under the collapsed brain. This isn't meant to be a colorful or happy setting it reality and for the most part its dead.

## Community Events

## Region 1

Oct. 1-25: Apple Harvest Festival, Weekends, Green Bluff; [www.greenbluffgrowers.com](http://www.greenbluffgrowers.com).

Oct. 15-31: Riverfront Fright Night 2009, haunted house and mini-golf; (509) 625-6602.

## Region 2

Oct. 1-31: Corn Maze and Fall Harvest Funland, Schell's Produce; (509) 453-3200.

First Fridays: Live music and special events, Various business in Downtown Yakima; [www.downtownyakima.com](http://www.downtownyakima.com).

## Region 3

Oct. 4: Youthnet Workshop for high school seniors about Governor's Scholarship, Mt. Vernon Youthnet Office; (360) 336-1610.

## Region 4

Oct. 10: Beyond the One Night Count: Becoming a Voice for Change, 10 AM - 12 PM, Free but must pre-register; (206) 357-3149 or [BONC@homelessinfo.org](mailto:BONC@homelessinfo.org).

*Life is what you make it! You're given a head start, but how you handle the race to the finish line is all on you.*

~ Jerry Bobo

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

Region 1 voted on a name; UNITE! This stands for, "Understanding Needs and Implementing Transformations for Everyone." This will also be our mission statement because we feel it speaks exactly as to what Region 1 hopes to accomplish. We also voted to have a one year leader, **Onalee Stewart**, and a three month leader, **Katrina Dyer**. We explored possible choices for a community action plan. As a group, we came up with preparing and serving food for various organizations around Spokane and also to volunteer at the Spokane Humane Society. We made our own personal pizzas and watched skits about phone etiquette from Independent Living providers at Volunteers of America demonstrating the difference between successful phone calls and not so good calls. We also discussed an upcoming CASA Conference here in Spokane on October 16<sup>th</sup> that four of our members will participate in. We are looking forward to an exciting next month!

## Region 3: Hey Mac CHAPTER IN SKAGIT COUNTY BY EVA ERVIN

This has been a very active time for the Region 3 Chapter. We kicked off the month with a very successful Know Your Rights training. Hunter did an amazing job as our facilitator; we discussed some really hot topics, and we learned a lot. Our second meeting was also quite fun. We played Pin The Tail on The Donkey and created competing golf ball ramps using just tape, straws, paper, and pipe cleaners. These were really fun games and a great group bonding experience. We also made plans to attend the Mt. Vernon City Council meeting in October, and many group members shared strong feelings regarding the importance of supporting Legal Representation for Foster Youth. It was an exciting month, and we would like to particularly thank the staff from **Service Alternatives Group Home** for their wonderful support and their regular involvement. We always enjoy having you involved!

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

September was a busy month for Region 2. We were invited back to Sunnyside to do a follow up on the diversity discussion. We played diversity bingo and there were fabulous prizes for the winners. We had our chapter meeting where we talked about legal representation and what we want to advocate for during our Advocacy Day in Olympia. The next Saturday we participated in the **Day of Hope peace march** where we marched for Mordeice Davonche Adams and all who have been victims of gang violence. It was great to walk with hundreds of people who all wanted to stop gang violence! We also had a Life Advocacy 101 training in the Tri-Cities where there were about 10 new youth who joined our group! **Nathan Phelps** helped co-facilitate the training and we think that he did a great job keeping us engaged and intrigued. Next month we will be having our Harvest Party!



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## Region 4: For Change CHAPTER IN KING COUNTY BY GEORGINA RAMIREZ

This month we hosted our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Clean the Block Party. Afterward we had a BBQ and prize giveaways. We had a fun icebreaker entitled Question Conversation. We all had the opportunity to sharpen our communication skills by maintaining conversations by only asking questions. Then we shifted to our subject for advocacy day, adequate legal representation. We all had the opportunity to share our thoughts and personal experiences within the realm of dependency hearings. As a group we decided that our meetings are going to become focused on bringing in some professionals to give us more insight on this issue and the power of attorneys in dependency proceedings. Lastly we voted on new chapter leaders. We now have new leaders for the yearly position as well as the revolving quarterly position. Overall the meeting went well but truly displayed that getting ready for Advocacy Day is no small task. I hope to see you at the next meeting. Every person makes a huge difference, every voice matters, and your support is needed to ensure we help build a world class foster care system.



## Region 5: CHAPTER IN PIERCE COUNTY BY DEMAREA KIRK

In region five, we have done two Culture of Foster Care trainings. One was in Kitsap County and we presented it to the CASAs and GALs. The other Culture of Foster Care training was in Pierce County and we presented it to social workers, lawyers, case managers, and CASA/GAL. We had our back to school chapter meeting and 10 youths attended the meeting including four new youth we recruited. Finally, I sat on a youth panel with youth transitioning into adulthood. In chapter five, we are doing a lot of exciting things and we are looking forward to making change in the foster care system.

## Region 6: SPEAK UP! CHAPTER IN CLARK COUNTY BY GRAHAM PARRINGTON

We welcome our new Resource Specialist **Graham Parrington**. I've known I wanted to work for the public good since I was a wee lad, but it wasn't until I interned at a homeless shelter in college that I knew I wanted to help amplify the voices of the ignored, misunderstood, and underserved. When I'm not working or teaching my infant daughter, Tavia, how to spit raspberries or howl like a wolf, I can be found hiking in the mountains, climbing, and backcountry snowboarding - sometimes all in the same trip. I have a love affair with glaciers, which is made all the more poignant since they are rapidly disappearing as a result of global warming. Luckily, my partner, Jana, is not disappearing. I think I will also learn at least as much from the youth in Region 6 as I will be able to teach them. I look forward to growing with this awesome organization, and meeting more of you when we take our message to the Capitol.