

# Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION

September 2008

Building a world class foster care system through collaboration, innovation and advocacy.

Volume IX, Issue 9

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## Introducing The Mockingbird Network BY SAMUEL MARTIN



Earlier this year I wrote about "The Network", which is now known as **The Mockingbird Network**. The idea is to have statewide youth-driven chapters to allow youth to grow individually, improve their local communities, and to help with system reform in the statewide child welfare system. An example for improving a local community is where the youth might build up a park that has been trashed for years. They would fundraise as well as ask for support from the local neighborhood businesses and people to help improve that area. The theory behind the network is to develop young leaders in the world, as well as for them to realize that they can make this world a better place step by step. One of the biggest lessons I have learned at The Mockingbird Society is that its not about me, it's about the other kids that will come through foster care. "How do I help them?" is a question I constantly ask myself.

Later this year the statewide chapters will begin having meetings and doing activities in their local communities. We are currently working on the logistics and have established host agencies and resource specialists in regions around the state. We have five chapters up and running this year. What has made this all possible were three grants we received from **Casey Family Programs**, **The Stuart Foundation**, and most recently the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**.

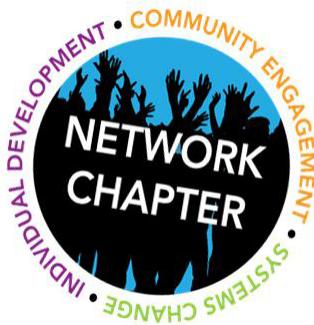
At this time, we have established five out of six host agencies, a local organization in every region that has partnered with

The Mockingbird Society (MBS) to form The Mockingbird Network. The host agency's responsibility is to provide meeting space for the youth representatives and the Resource Specialist. The host agencies are **Casey Family Programs**—Region 2, **Youth Net**—Region 3, **The Mockingbird Society**—Region 4, **Pierce County Alliance**—Region 5, and the **YWCA** in Vancouver—Region 6.

A Resource Specialist is a part-time employee of MBS and the host agency. His or her primary responsibility is to recruit youth and ensure stability in the chapter. Early on they will be responsible for leading meetings and guiding things along at the same time training youth leaders with the tools and abilities that they need. They are also responsible for helping to get youth to chapter meetings. They basically make sure all things run smoothly. Five of the six Resource Specialists have been hired as well: **Tammy Soderberg**—Region 2, **Eva Ervin**—Region 3, **Nicholas Ruff**—Region 5, **Heather Jones**—Region 6 and our own **Georgina Ramirez**, the Resource Specialist for Region as well as a Senior Youth Representative with Youth LEAD.

The biggest thing that will put The Mockingbird Network in gear is **The 3rd Annual Foster Youth/Alumni Leadership Summit**, where youth from around the State of Washington can come and meet other foster youth. It is an opportunity to develop leadership skills as well as find out that they are not alone. My first year at MBS I went to the summit and it was very powerful. I remember spe-

NETWORK, CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



## MB Times Youth Reporter Returns for Internship

BY SHAKURA FELDER

After an extensive but productive second year at Bethune-Cookman University, I wanted to do something meaningful and couldn't find anything more enjoyable than spending a portion of my summer vacation with The Mockingbird Society (MBS). Throughout my brief stay, I found myself entirely reminiscent. My mind constantly traveled back five years to the time when I was first introduced to the organization through the **Seattle Youth Employment Program (SYEP)** in 2004.

Having faced many obstacles growing up in a single-parent, low income household as a person of color, things weren't so easy. My family and I were often faced with hardships that seemed almost insurmountable. I am very grateful that programs such as SYEP and organizations like MBS provide outstanding opportunities to the disadvantaged. Being a part of the organization has been a great privilege and an enriching experience as I continue to strive towards greater success and academic achievement.

While studies and statistics tried to limit me to a world of hopelessness and failure, I was able to beat the odds by proving them wrong. I wasn't prepared for the amount of rejection that came with the college admission scholarship process and I suffered from a great deal of disappointment, but I now realize that those things made me stronger. I became worried because my family had no way to fund the education of my twin sister and

me. Then, an opportunity struck. I was blessed with a full academic scholarship upon graduation during my senior year of high school in 2006. From then on I knew the possibilities were endless, and I never wanted to make the mistake of forgetting those that supported my efforts in the pursuit of accomplishing my future aspirations.

MBS gave me a chance to share my joy of writing throughout the community as well as abroad. The experience has definitely widened my perspective of life as I gained skills to better my future. Through them I have been able to experience the values of compassion, leadership, teamwork and networking. Although the office is now renovated and occupied with a fresh set of adventurous, determined staff, it's still the same place with the same unique mission. The happiness, laughter, and encouragement in the Youth LEAD department fills me with warmth and makes me feel like I never left. It's amazing to see the tremendous growth and expansion that has taken place over the years. I am glad I've been given the opportunity to contribute my skills for a good cause and I am hoping that I've been as much as a positive influence and inspiration as MBS and its many staff have been to me.

To the youth, I would like to say that no matter what circumstances you may have gone through in life, never give up. Use your struggles as strength to motivate and excel. Thanks to everyone and happy anniversary!

## Kinship Caregivers Have Fewer Resources

BY JULIAN BARRINGTON



Kinship caregivers are entitled to far fewer benefits than licensed foster caregivers. This is where the primary distinguishing factor between kinship caregivers and those who are officially licensed "formal" foster care providers comes into place.

One thing we do have to remind ourselves any time are talking about kinship care providers is they become caregivers unpredictably, often without legally-recognized, written consent from the biological parent. "I don't have legal custody of my children, but when their mother was sick she signed a TANF document saying she was giving her kids to me," **Anetrice** a kinship caregiver of two explains. **Linda** talks about how she lost her daughter and that how her kids are the only piece of her daughter she has left.

The unpredictability factor is a sudden shadow that falls upon kinship care provider families. According to the 2002 Kinship Care Report to the Washington State Legislature, people become kinship caregivers due to the mental and physical ills of the biological parent such as serious illness, incarceration, homelessness, mental health or chemical dependency problems which cause them to be unavailable and frequently unreachable.

Without parental permission, kinship caregivers are not recognized as licensed foster caregivers and aren't entitled to the same benefits. "It is estimated that less than half of relative caregiver families in Washington State are currently accessing benefits or services through DSHS programs. Caregivers on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) have access to considerable fewer resources."<sup>1</sup> **Anetrice** has experienced this situation, "I get a survival benefits check in which I receive \$180 a piece for each child," she explains. "I only get \$700 under TANF and it's so sad because yesterday I just received my medical coupons for the kids when I've been asking for them for months."

A similar situation happened to **Linda**. "I have to go to the food banks, stand there for hours, only to find 7 Pampers in my hand just to keep Pampers on my baby," she says. "My oldest child complains how he's the only one at school without a uniform that I can't afford to pay for, and I can see the hurt in his eyes." There are lots of relative caregivers who don't have access to the programs and services that are out there to help them and/or aren't able to access them due to health conditions. "I miss a lot of the information out there because I'm sick and just can't make it," **Anetrice** explains.

But all is not hopeless. Some are glad they're in the organizations they are in now. "The grandmothers' support group has allowed me to see others like me, and lets me know there're other organizations out there," **Linda** explains. There are a range of organizations out there specially aimed to help kinship caregivers such as the Economic Services Child Support Enforcement, King County Bar Association, Casey Family Programs, Northwest Women's Law Center, Seattle Human Services Department, and Aging and Disability Services. Visit [www.kckinship.org](http://www.kckinship.org) or call the King County Kinship Collaboration at (206) 268-6785 for more information.

<sup>1</sup> 2002 Kinship Care Report to the WA State Legislature

## Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



Happy September! I want to begin by saying how appreciative I am of the staff and Board of The Mockingbird Society. As you can see from this issue of the *Mockingbird Times* "we really have it going on." We are busy planning the annual Youth Summit which is co-sponsored by **Casey Family Programs, Court Improvement Program, The Center for Children and Youth Justice, and the Children's Administration.** We have youth from across the state ready and eager to come together for a two day Summit to focus on improving the Washington State child welfare system.

Additionally, **The Mockingbird Network** continues to develop including having established Chapters in five of the six Children's Administration regions and the Resource Specialists to support the Chapters are hired and onboard. As part of our mission, we want to provide meaningful resource guides to youth and alumni of care and, with that in mind, I am pleased to report we have completed the long awaited **Foster Youth Rights Manual** and expect that to be released very soon. The manual will be in both hard copy form as well as on The MBS Web site.

Speaking of Web site, we have just completed our redesign. **Please check out the launching of our new Web site at [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org)!**

**The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM)** is also expanding, developing in new ways (soon we will have out-of-home prevention pilots underway) and gaining international attention. Please read the great article by Georgina regarding our recent guests from Japan. It was wonderful to host such committed professionals and to listen to their challenges, hopes and vision. The MFM is also being replicated across Washington and I can only say how appreciative I am of our MFM staff and the staff from Children's Administration for their leadership and hard work on this critical and complicated effort.

Finally, I want to draw your attention to the amazing youth and alumni featured in this issue. It is through their ongoing perseverance, hope and talent that we hold the promise of a true "world class foster care system."

Jim Theofelis

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## NETWORK, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

cifically there was an activity called "What we have in common." Sitting in that room I saw a young girl shed a single tear when we began to talk about how we were all separated from our siblings. Even though it was sad it is those single emotions that stained my heart. The summit is two powerful days, with a lot of information and a lot of powerful stories, that lead to even more powerful change.

Denis Waitley put it beautifully: "There are two primary choices in life: to accept conditions as they exist, or accept the responsibility for changing them." I want

you to think about what choices you are making in your life. Are you taking the responsibility to create change? If you believe in what I am saying and believe in what MBS does, come get involved. There are so many opportunities, we need the help. I took a stand a long time ago to take on this responsibility. I don't know where my life would be I didn't do this work, not just for the youth but for myself. Now I ask you one more time to get involved and help make the lives of some of the most unsupported youth better.

## A Vulnerable Population At Risk BY DELILAH BRUSKAS

Losing family through foster care is a traumatic experience and I believe that children in foster care deserve support and guidance during their time of distress. This is one of my core beliefs and my life's mission. As a nurse and alumna of foster care, I believe that foster care interrupts children's developmental stages of childhood.

I wrote about my beliefs and my convictions in a paper titled: **Foster Care Children: A Vulnerable Population At Risk.** I was thrilled beyond belief to learn that it was accepted for publication in the Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing. My work was accepted on Mother's Day of 2006. I told everyone I knew about it, but nearly two years later, I was still waiting for it to be published. I did not realize that an accepted work could take so long to be published. After a while, I felt like a "broken record" and thought others might doubt my claims. Honestly, I was discouraged more than once and feared that my article would not be published.

When it finally did get published, after being bumped another three months, I could not believe it. But the best part was realizing that it got published in May, the National Foster Care Month. I felt like God was smiling or winking down at me. It was so much better than being published back when it was supposed to be published in February.

The person who designed my Web site tried to comfort me once and told me that I would surely have a delayed gratification when it got published. He was so right. The delayed gratification was awesome.

My article briefly explains what foster care is and addresses foster care outcomes. It also points out the risk factors for poor mental health associated with foster care but it mostly emphasizes the oppression and domination that those in foster care experience. I use the writings and definitions of oppression and domination of Iris Marion Young to show how those from foster care are oppressed.

In the "Five Faces of Oppression" Young (1990) states that only one of five conditions is needed to determine if a group of people is truly oppressed. These five conditions are: Exploitation, Marginalization, Powerlessness, Cultural Imperialism, and Violence. I show how children in foster care not only meet one of Young's five conditions, but how they meet all five of them.

I am so excited to share that I will be presenting my work at the **19th International Nursing Research Congress Focusing on Evidence Based Practice** in Singapore on July 9th, 2008. As a nurse, I know that we cannot ignore the mental health needs of those in foster care. As an alumna of foster care, it is hard for me to understand why it is taking so long for the needs of those in foster to be noticed. As both, I am committed to making a difference and I believe that my presentation in Singapore will help.

To read my work in its entirety, you can visit my Web site at [www.alumnioffostercare.org](http://www.alumnioffostercare.org) and obtain a copy for free. The publishers have allowed me to post it on my Web site as part of my work to educate others about foster care issues.



Foster Care Alumna Delilah Bruskas as a young child.

## 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.

## THANK YOU!

**KAREN COWGILL; M. GOINES; SANDY HOWARD; POINT B SOLUTIONS; DR. DOANE RISING; ALAN ROTHBLATT, MD; T.I.P.S.; CASEY TRUPIN; ELIZABETH UPTON AND RAYBURN LEWIS**

## MEET OUR STAFF

**Executive Director** Jim Theofelis; **Operations Director** Ros Ghan; **Mockingbird Family Programs Director** Dr. Wanda Hackett; **Youth Programs Director** Tiffany Washington; **Development Director** Madelaine Thompson; **Executive Assistant** Lauren Frederick; **Development/Communications** Darcie Gray; **Youth LEAD Coordinator**; Kara Sanders; **Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) Coordinator** Marie Goines; **Administrative Coordinator** Diana Clark; **Administrative Assistant/IT** Juan Ramirez; **Youth LEAD Administrative Assistant** Milissa Morgan; **MFM Administrative Assistant** Stephanie (Stevie) Glaberson; **Development Assistant** Alicia LeVezu; **Resource Specialists** Eva Ervin, Heather Jones, Georgina Ramirez, Nicholas Ruff, Tammy Soderberg; **Senior Youth Representatives** Samuel Martin, Georgina Ramirez; **Youth Representatives** Julian Barrington, Leona Bill, Rhonda Smith, Diamonique Walker; **Contributing Writers & Artists** Ashley Abbott, Delilah Bruskas, Shakura Felder, Anna Gonzalez, John Hemingway, Samantha McDonald, Robert Parker; **Volunteers** Chrissie Jackson; **Editing and Layout** Kelly Hawkins

## 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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**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 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 ©2008, *The Mockingbird Society*.

## MFM Youth Travels to Cambodia BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



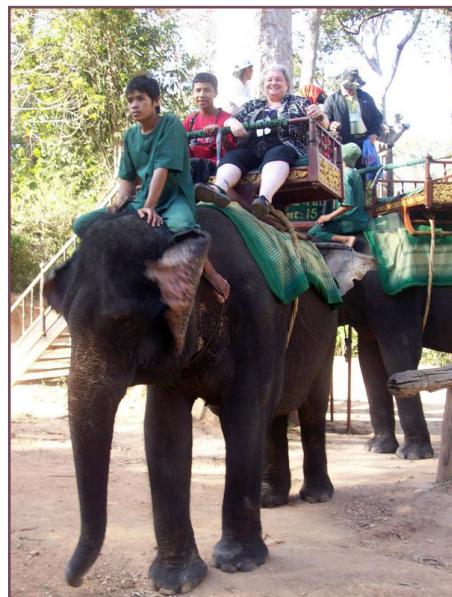
I met with **Torell Sarey**, a youth in foster care in a home that is a part of the Mockingbird Family Model, who recently visited Cambodia. He is fortunate because he got to experience his own culture and spend time with his relatives. This is important to me because it's not common that youth in foster care get to spend time with their biological family. His foster mother, **Elaine**, gets along pretty well with the family and that makes a difference.

"My grandmother tries to take one grandchild [of 30] per year [to Cambodia]," Torell said. Making this possible was not easy. "We had to get my biological mother's permission, the court's permission for taking a foster child out of the country, and a medical release." When the obstacles were overcome, Torell went on his sixteen day trip to Cambodia. He visited Siem Reap, Phnom Penh, and a village near Thailand.

He noticed some cultural differences. "They were a lot less materialistic and they couldn't believe I was American." In the Cambodian culture, many of the possessions that we care about do not really matter to them, for example their top priorities are not cell phones and iPods, like most Americans. Also, he noticed that a lot of Cambodians wear long sleeves for working in the fields to prevent tanning. To them, the darker you are, lower in status you're considered. If you can imagine how hot it is there, wearing long sleeves while in the sun is showing dedication to this cultural standard.

For Torell, this trip was historical, cultural, and even emotional. After he visited the "killing fields," this excerpt from his journal shows the sensitive side of the trip, "Man, Pol Pot, a freak of nature, he made people make their own grave [and] shoot them. That's wrong. If I was there then I don't know what I would do. It was hard for me when I saw the bones. I wanted to leave but Elaine wanted to process it."

Torell and his foster mother shared a brief history of the Cambodian genocide. In 1975, Pol Pot, the leader of the Khmer Rouge (Red Cambodians) used violence to attempt to make Cambodia a communist society. In attempt to eliminate Western life, city life, religion, and any other form of foreign influences, he sent them to work, harvesting fruit and rice that they were not allowed to eat. This became known as the "Killing Fields," where thousands of Cambodians worked and starved and where those who resisted his rule were killed



*Mockingbird Family Model Foster Youth Torell Sarey and his foster mom ride an elephant while in Cambodia.*

and their remains left. Over the course of the four years Pol Pot was in power, over 2,000,000 Cambodians died under his rule. Pot's inspiration came from China's Communist Cultural Revolution executed by Mao Zedong.<sup>1</sup>

Torell's family was among the many Cambodians who fled the country in fear of the take over. His family fled to a refugee camp in Thailand. They stayed in the refugee camp until they could all leave together to go to America, which ended up taking around three years. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) was the organization that helped get them here. Torell and his 29 cousins are the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of his family born in America.

## Mockingbird Goes International BY GEORGINA RAMIREZ



Is the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) about to go international? MFM attracts attention from overseas. Child welfare professionals from Japan traveled to The Mockingbird Society (MBS) to learn more about our innovative approach to foster care. Once Japanese social worker **Miho Adwazu**, from the MFM constellation in region 3, informed **Ryoichi Yamano** about this innovative approach to foster care, Yamano returned to Japan to inform his colleagues. This inspired other Japanese social science and child welfare professionals to come and hear more.

When the Japanese guests arrived they were able to provide some insight on the way foster care is approached in Japan, its similarities and differences. In Japan, 40,000 cases come to the attention of Child Protective Services (CPS) and out of those cases, only 10% get placed in new homes. Many more Japanese foster youth are placed in large orphanages and, on average, younger youth stay in the orphanages 4.5 years. However, 10% of youth in orphanages stay longer than 10 years. It was interesting to hear that most of the youth who are placed with families graduate from high school and go on to attend college, while youth in orphanages graduate from high school but few attend college. Foster youth who age out of the orphanages are offered government jobs; these blue collar jobs also provide on-site housing.

Japan has recognized the fact that their system is in need of change and is making an effort to examine other approaches to foster care. **Hiroe Izumi**, a social science professor at Nihon Women's College, is the Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Anne Fund Project, Japan's only foster family support network. The Anne Fund Project is a program in Japan that focuses on how to fundamentally change the way the Japanese treat their kids and play a teacher role to the foster parents of Japan.

**Dr. Wanda Hackett**, MBS Director of Family Programs gave a thorough explanation on how the MFM is addressing foster care issues that are prevalent in the United States. The MFM is a foster care service model that addresses multiple issues that create trauma and problems in the lives of

foster youth as well foster care providers. The primary issues that MFM addresses are youth being moved to multiple homes, changing schools, sibling separation, and respite for foster parents.

MFM connects six to ten foster/kinship homes to create a constellation and in the center of this community there is a Hub Home. The Hub Home has licensed foster care providers that assist both the children and the foster parents in the constellation. The Hub Home provides activities for youth and families to participate in as well as emergency respite. In addition, the Hub Home provides planned respite for foster parents as well, a need few foster parents receive, and this is MBS's way of taking care of the parents who make every effort to care for foster youth.

MFM recognizes the importance of and tries to honor the value of sibling connections by placing sibling with one another whenever possible. However, if siblings aren't able to be placed in the same home they still have the opportunity to maintain connections and interaction with one another at the Hub Home. Finally, the Hub Home allows youth in the constellation to maintain contact with one another. The Hub Home is what creates comfort and alleviates stress for both the youth and the caregivers; it transforms the constellation to a unified community.

Today, MFM has proven to be more than just a conceptual approach to system reform. The outcomes in the data and reports provided by the University of Washington support the credibility of the program. More importantly, the transformation of lives is evidence that it is truly a model that could very well replace the foster care system of the past.

MFM has been growing rapidly both locally and nationally. By November 30, 2008 there will be 8 constellations in the State of Washington and by late 2009 there will be 20 constellations in Washington and 26-30 nationally. If you would like more information about the MFM, reports and evaluations, or would like to hear some personal stories about the impact it has made on families involved in the constellations please visit MBS Web site at [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org).

### Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit

#### ONE UNITED VOICE FOR CHANGE

October 25 & 26, 2008

Current and former foster youth ages 14 to 24 and their supporters will:

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- Learn to use their voice effectively.
- Establish local youth and alumni action groups to address issues important to them.
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## Foster Alumna Spreads the Message BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER

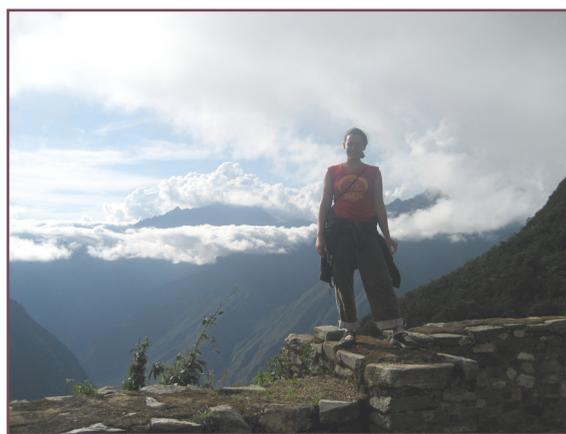


**Mary Herrick**, a foster care alumna, became successful helping youth in foster care graduate from high school, get into college and graduate from college. Now she's ready to take the next step in her career by taking foster care to places where it has never been before by travelling through Central America, South America and the Caribbean. This will be done with no help from any organizations. Some goals of hers will be to learn Spanish and be able to speak it fluently in Guatemala. Volunteering will be a major part of the trip also.

One of Mary's main focuses on this trip is to help develop a foster care system in Latin America, seeing as it does not have one. Some of the main reasons for homeless youth in Latin America are because of high birth rates, inadequate housing, unequal distribution of funds, and lack of government assistance programs, according to "Homeless and Working Street Youth in Latin America: A Developmental Review," by **Marcela Raffaelli** from the University of Nebraska (1999).

Mary is ready to transition to helping

in Latin America because she has met her goal working with the foster care system in America. She has been with College Success Foundation since 2003 (about four and a half years). She supervises statewide programs that help foster youth graduate from high school, get into college, and then



*Mary Herrick in Peru*

graduate from college. She also provides oversight to the Governor's Scholarship for Foster Youth and Make it Happen, a college experience program which occurs each summer for foster youth. She received her Master's degree in social work in 2002

and has always had an interest in the well-being of children all around the world.

Having spent over seven years in foster care, "I learn new ways it has impacted me everyday," says Mary. Being in foster care helped her handle changes and challenges with ease. Being in a job with advocacy is second nature to her because being in foster care, she, as well as most young people in care, always had to advocate for herself. Mary also mentioned a trust issue which is commonly found in youth who have been, or are in care. When I asked how foster care has helped her she said "It has given me the ability to access people clearly, not in a judging way but getting a good sense of their character."

Mary, having been in foster care, still became successful. She didn't let it stop her from following her dreams. She reached her career goals and decided that she is ready for the new challenges that she will face in Latin America. As a role model for youth (especially youth in care), Mary shows that you can reach your goals no matter what your circumstances are. "There are so many resources available in Washington State and there is no reason for youth not to follow their dreams," she says.

## Sad Times

SAMANTHA McDONALD

I've been pushed down...  
Slapped around  
Neglected...  
But I still try to keep on going...  
Going where she didn't...  
She didn't think about how her  
children would feel...  
She didn't even think about herself...  
She just tried to forget the pain by  
drinking...  
Every night she'd come home and  
pick up a glass  
Filling it up with whisky...  
The stuff people think gets  
rid of pain,  
But it only creates more.  
The stuff I know I hate...  
I've been cheated,  
Locked out...  
Lied to...  
But I know I'm going  
Where she isn't...  
I'm going where she didn't  
Some where I'll be happy...  
And where she won't be...  
These are sad times....

## As Time Goes On

ASHLEY ABBOTT

As time goes on, you will realize that  
it's not all about you.  
As time goes on, people will realize  
that it's not all about the streetz.  
As time goes on, you might just be in  
the wrong place at the wrong time.  
As time goes on people are going to  
change their ways on doing things.  
As time goes on you will know that  
your life is not going to change when  
you do not want it to change.  
As time goes on you will realize that  
when you're with your friends you  
might have to chose the right path.  
As time goes on there will be a  
change with every single person in  
the world.  
As time goes on you will know that  
your life will not change if you do  
not want it to.  
As time goes on everyone that's in a  
gang will realize that there are bigger  
and better things to do with your  
life and those around you.

## Creative Corner

### 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,  
Its okay to feel wanted because now  
Here it starts.  
Don't let WANTED fear you at all.

### Love is Hard

JOHN HEMINGWAY

Love is hard, why we ask must something so simple is  
so complex, love is something so big but yet so small  
at the same time. We all spend our lives searching for  
our one true goal in life, to find love and hold onto it  
for the rest of our lives; we go through pain, anger, and  
remorse to see if this is the one we want to be with.  
That is why love is so difficult but when the day comes  
and you find the one you love all the happiness in the  
world will become yours.

### SAVE THE DATE

#### King County Kinship Gathering

Saturday, October 18, 2008

9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

African American Academy

8311 Beacon Avenue S

For more information contact Barb at the King  
County Kinship Collaboration at 206-268-5785  
or [barbaraw@seniorservices.org](mailto:barbaraw@seniorservices.org)

*The happiest mind is the mind that cares for others.*

~James Gills

## News From The Mockingbird Network

### The Mockingbird Network Meets the Washington Defenders Association BY ROBERT PARKER

Foster youth from The Mockingbird Society and The Mockingbird Network (MBN) chapters in Tacoma and Seattle joined the latest MBN chapter from Vancouver, called **SPEAK UP!**, in meeting with people from the **Washington State Defenders Association (WADA)**. The WADA wanted to hear from foster youth and alumni in order to improve how our opinions are defended within the system and in court.

Around the room they had placed large sheets of paper on the wall. There were a total of four, one for each role in the court system: lawyer, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)/Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), judge, and social worker. Everyone then received sticky notes and wrote what they thought each position does. These were collected and placed on the proper paper on the wall. In general, foster youth thought lawyers are to defend their clients views and then don't, they feel case workers are there to support you and visit you or take you out to eat, etc., judges are there to make the final decision that screws your life up as much as possible and they mainly had no idea what a CASA/GAL is.

**"In general, foster youth thought lawyers are to defend their clients views and then don't...and they mainly had no idea what a CASA/GAL is."**

Then the foster youth broke into groups and each group was assigned one of the positions. The groups were asked to come up with five things they thought that position should do whether it's something they do or not. WADA collected the information and then began to explain what the positions jobs actually are along with a foster child's court rights, which a surprisingly few people knew about. This was followed up by foster youth asking questions about why they didn't receive a lawyer or get to go to court when they repeatedly ask to go. They also wanted to know why they often don't even know their CASA/GAL, a person who is making suggestions about what's best for someone they have never even met?

After WADA gathered this information they talked about a few future possibilities. One would be changing court dates to make it easier for foster youth to go. Examples would be having them on weekends or at night when school is out. They are also working towards getting more lawyers so that all foster youth can have a lawyer go to court and have our voices be heard!

### Homelessness in Seattle BY RHONDA SMITH



Homelessness in Seattle is a really big problem. Living in the heart of the University District I come across homeless youth on a daily basis. I always think to myself, "What can I do to help these young people?" I realize I cannot do much by myself but I can introduce these youth to a couple of organizations that can and want to help them. Believe it or not, this city cares about the homeless youth community and offers a range of programs to help them. "People do care. Clearly that's why there are advocacy days and ASK Y meetings that the government supports," Yuka Hayashi, a **University District Youth Center (UDYC)** case manager who works with homeless youth says of the positives in King County around homelessness issues.

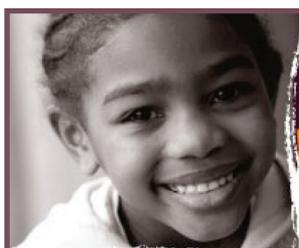
According to the 2008 One Night Count by the **Committee to End Homelessness in King County**, there are 618 homeless youth locally. Why are there so many homeless youth? Yuka believes that there is not enough affordable housing and jobs that pay a living wage available to youth. **Leona Bill**, a homeless youth and The Mockingbird Society staff member, says that although there are a lot of resources available it is the age cutoff that is keeping a lot of youth from accessing those resources. Leona says the biggest barriers to getting into housing are having a criminal history and not having a job.

Some programs that were recommended that homeless youth should look into

for resources include **UDYC**, **The Center** in the 2100 Building, **New Horizons**, **Orion Center**, and others. All these places are there to help homeless youth with their education goals, to obtain employment and housing. They all provide clothing and most of them provide up to three hot meals a day. They also provide counseling, case management, drug and alcohol counseling and many other services. **UDYC** offers employment and schooling. I attend school there and went through the employment program with wonderful teachers who do care and work hard to help students succeed.

**UDYC** also offers a drop in center where they have clothing and food, movies, and case management. The Center, located in the 2100 Building, works more with foster youth or youth who aged out of the system as a lot of kids who age out of foster care become homeless. The Center provides Independent Living Program (ILP) case management and help with school and housing. **Orion Center** is part of an organization called **Youth Care**. They provide schooling, transitional living housing, employment opportunities, a school, counseling and much more.

I have been in unstable living conditions and I was thankful that someone gave me information to better my situation. That's the point of my article: to try to better a homeless youth's life even if it means, at the very least, finding one of these programs to have a meal or some one to talk to.



## SAVE THE DATE

Join The Mockingbird Society for our  
2nd Annual Benefit Luncheon  
Wednesday, October 1st, 2008 • The Westin, Seattle  
Registration 11:30 a.m. – Program from 12:00-1:30 p.m.

**We believe we can fly**

2008 BENEFIT LUNCHEON | THE MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY

If you would like to RSVP to attend, or are interested in Event Sponsorship or volunteer opportunities, please contact Darcie Gray at (206) 407-2136, or by email at [darcie@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:darcie@mockingbirdsociety.org).

We would like to recognize the sponsors of this event:

**Premier Sponsor: Safeco Insurance Foundation**

**Lead Sponsors: Children's Hospital; Goldman Sacs & Co.; Microsoft**

**Supporting: One Eighty/Leisure Care**

**Table Sponsors: Carey & Lillevik, PLLC; Casey Family Programs; Davidson Companies; Moss Adams; Pacific Continental Bank; Williams & Kastner**