

NOVEMBER 2023

THE MOCKINGBIRD TIMES

OUR FIRST ISSUE SINCE 2019



Bunni, a former Mockingbird Network Representative Intern, at Youth Advocacy Day 2023. Read their piece on page 3.

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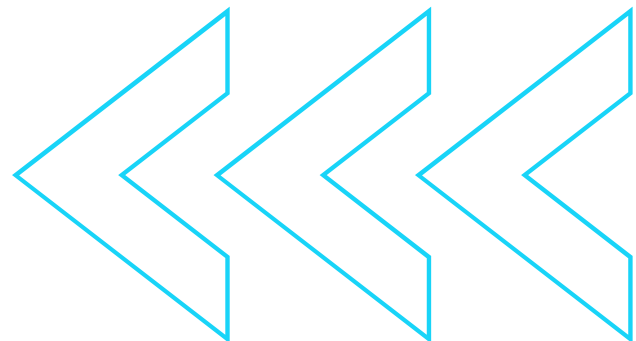
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ABOUT THE MOCKINGBIRD TIMES

The Mockingbird Times is a publication aiming to amplify the voices of youth and young adults with lived experience in foster care and/or homelessness. The Mockingbird Times was the very first project launched after The Mockingbird Society was founded in 2000 and has since played a key role in our Youth Programs. Not only does the publication provide an opportunity to elevate the voices of our young advocates and the issues they're facing, it also provides a picture of young leaders balancing their roles as powerful, positive change agents in our community with all the joys, challenges, and questions experienced by youth and young adults.

The Times has historically been distributed across the state and nation and has been included as an insert in Real Change, a Seattle-based community newspaper.

While it took a hiatus during the pandemic, the goal is to return to a consistent publishing schedule and distribution plan in partnership with other community organizations, including Real Change. All young reporters and contributors (ages 13-26) from across Washington state are compensated for their submissions to The Mockingbird Times.

This process will take time and will center young people's perspectives on operations, content, and publishing as this program is rebuilt. We believe it is important to create space for young people to share about all their passions—including, but not limited to their advocacy work—to honor and provide a fuller glimpse of the whole human beings contributing their compelling voices and talents.

With that, enjoy the November 2023 issue of The Mockingbird Times!





MOCKINGBIRD

A POEM BY RAIN, A LIVED
EXPERIENCE EXPERT

Mockingbird, won't you sing to me?
Required or not, I'm sure you will, please?
Coaxing thee, with all of my seeds.
I've neglected the others, so please hear my plea.

Come, won't you come? Surely you'll freeze.
You've built me a house, I need not more than thee!
It's not about debt, or your own modesty.
You're worth more alive, and our services are free!

This may be true, but the other birds think I'm weak!
I must save myself, to need help, I'm not free!
I hear you alas, every word from your beak!
But, freedom's gained from cooperation, and does not
stem from tragedy.

"I'll come in, finally!" The mockingbird said with glee.
No truer words may be spoken, in simple things or
sovereignty.
We can't always make it alone, and it is okay to be
afraid.
More often than not, the strongest seek out aid.

REFLECTIONS FROM YOUTH ADVOCACY DAY 2023

BY BUNNI, FORMER NETWORK
REPRESENTATIVE INTERN



Youth Advocacy Day, out in the Peninsula Region.
People are waking early to greet the bus, early at 6am.
The shuttle arrives to take us on our way.
Half on board is tired and resting, the other is alert and ready to go.
Driving miles to the venue, just a few blocks off from the Capitol Building.
On arrival at the destination, everyone shuffles out of the vehicle.
Some scurry off to a coffee shop, while the rest scuffle into the main hub.
Food laid out, muffins, treats, water and plain black coffee awaits.
One by one, people grab what will satisfy and spread out amongst themselves.
Nerves rattle as the place begins to bustle.
Dozens pour into the room, sitting in rows, chattering envelopes the crowd.
Stepping up to vocalize our feats
Speech after speech, advocating for equity, safety, inclusivity, understanding and change.
Clapping, laughing and pouring trust through our words, to be heard.
Quickly after gathering, everyone who can march to the Capitol to chant, make an impression
and be seen.
A misty haze of rain comes down and each person receives a rain poncho, lining up along the
sidewalk.
A few people grab a megaphone in hand and others grab posters.
Walking from block to block, talking and reciting taglines for advocacy issues.
Smiles upon many faces despite the gloomy exterior of the day.
Once the march reaches the Capitol building, people break out into their regional chapters.
Most of which will advocate for Bill proposals and ask for funding.
Speaking to senators and representatives on topics that everyone has worked tirelessly all year
long to prepare for.

Stepping away from the chapters, standing in the Capitol building surrounded by colleagues, reflecting on the space that everyone is in, conversating to pass the time.

Understanding the power imbalances in such an environment, who were the workers that built the Capitol from the ground up and the hourly meetings with hundreds of people that always keep the place bustling.

The historic aspect of the building and the symbolism in the architecture, flowers from up above and down below, surrounding the people walking around.

Gathering outside of the North Stairs to hear a word from representatives.

Grouping up to rally and encourage everyone to keep spirits going.

All of Mockingbird and Representatives included, huddling together on the breezy steps to take photos to commemorate Youth Advocacy Day.

In mass and with each individual chapter based on region, bringing smiles and excitement with each photo.

One last run through in our march around the capital

Taking heed and moving forward

More chanting and shouting our taglines with more vigor and excitement

We conclude our promenade and round everyone up to head back to the venue

All hungry and tuckered out from the days work in advocating

Sandwiches, chips and drinks laid in store for us

And in waiting, a performance from dedicated young artists at Bridge

Talented musicians presenting their creativity and talent

While the show is on, some people run off to the back rooms to regain their strength for the long drive ahead

After it all, we start packing up

Conversing on the day and what's to come while waiting for the bus to take us home.



ART BY BUNNI, INSPIRED BY THE 2023 YOUTH ADVOCACY DAY RALLY & MARCH



Mockingbird's 2023 Youth Advocacy Day was the first in-person lobby day for the organization since the beginning of the pandemic. Advocating for change during Youth Advocacy Day (and the entirety of Legislative Session) is the culmination of Mockingbird's annual advocacy cycle. During Youth Advocacy Day, youth and young adults traveled to Olympia to meet with legislators and discuss policy proposals.

Young people advocated fiercely throughout the 2023 Legislative Session, and contributed to key legislative wins like HB 1406 (Youth Seeking Shelter & Safety bill. This bill allows youth to lawfully remain in a shelter for 90 days and receive services from a community support team), and budget wins like the approval of the statewide implementation of MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ (an alternative approach to foster care that emulates an extended family for young people in care).





YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

2023 RECAP

After continuing through the Annual Advocacy Cycle by identifying challenges that young people face in child welfare systems and defining solutions to those challenges, young people brought their ideas to our annual Youth Leadership Summit on August 1.

During Summit, Mockingbird Youth Programs Chapters gathered to share their perspectives and policy ideas with system leaders. Summit is a key time for these political and community leaders to connect young people to resources and next steps to further their advocacy work. This year marked Mockingbird's 18th annual Summit!



SELF-REFLECTION:

FINDING THE BALANCE OF SELF-LOVE

BY A MEMBER OF MOCKINGBIRD'S CENTRAL CHAPTER

"If people have harmed us, that part is usually a protector whose need to cause injury comes from desperate attempts to not feel destroyed by the pain and fear they are carrying. Generally they are not conscious of this process, but it likely mirrors what has been passed down through the generations in the family." — Bonnie Badenoch

Growing up, I never knew my situation wasn't normal; I thought I was one of the lucky ones. All of the pain and suffering I went through seemed like it was only the fault of my own, as other people in my family confirmed to me that I should only continuously count my blessings. While there were many to count, it didn't take away from the fact that I was continuously abused for the majority of my life and gaslit into believing I wasn't. In fact, I never came to terms with the word "abuse" or realized the situation I was in until I was 19 years old and finally told my story to someone.

I finally reached a breaking point and left home. When I did so, I also realized that none of it was the fault of a child and there were many nuances to the situation. I am not excusing their actions by any means as they chose their own lives as adults, but many of the adults in my life are still children at heart. They went through so many traumatic moments at a young age that never gave them the chance to mature.

Not only was this trauma something lived, but it was something in our blood, something plaguing us since before any of us can comprehend. From the time of colonization, my ancestors' families

were forced apart, leaving running scars through each of us to this day. I believe my mother and many other people in my family have narcissistic personality disorder. Something developed from a lifetime of abuse as a self-preservation strategy in the brain, something we are not cognizant of. In coming to terms with all of this backstory, I learned that I can still love my family and see the nuances to their character outside of their abuse but also can advocate and love myself for who I am. For me that meant needing to go no-contact as my means of self-preservation.

Although I don't regret leaving and becoming homeless and I will never put myself in that abusive environment again, I would like to take this moment to see how I can reflect on my life and use my trauma for good, helping others heal from their generational trauma overtime. When I gain my Master's in psychology, hopefully I can be that main support that I wish I had growing up all those years ago. I am eternally grateful to mockingbird society for giving me this platform to be able to help others with the skills I have now and, in turn, heal myself as well. I am not a victim of the situation I grew up in any longer and I will make my life one I have always dreamed of, day by day.



HELENA

A POEM BY RAIN, A LIVED EXPERIENCE EXPERT

I saw you drowning in a lake, a haunted forest all alone.
You screamed needing help, yet I could not move a bone.
A dark haired forgotten child, who craved a loving home.
In darkness dreaming of light, outside the mind you wished to roam.

You died, awake I scream!
Only sadly for us, this nightmare was not a dream.
A prisoner suffocating, the repression of myself.
Afraid inside a closet, a doll upon a shelf.

She eventually got to blossom, filled with guilt he was consumed.
In the light you finally were loved, in death believed to be doomed.
These visceral feelings were haunting me, resuscitated back to life.
Warmth inside the embrace of a mother, after a lifetime of internal strife.

Fear leaves us a hostage, children deprived of love. For even in
oppression, honoring individuality brings you above.
I'm happy to hadn't lost you, as painful was that night.
But, finally having found you, I'm glad you are alright.



THE STORY BEHIND HELENA

When I was 16, I had a very haunting nightmare that I was a little boy alone in a dark forest with a lake. In that lake was a little girl, who I subconsciously identified as Helena. She was a beautiful and innocent little girl with black hair drowning and screaming for my help. I couldn't move or speak, crying and forced to watch her drown. I am Helena, she is a Jungian Archetype representing the girl I am that I was repressing out of fear and kept hid away. She is a lost childhood, a girl deprived of family, friends, light, or the ability to really be a child and experience the world or anything beyond darkness, isolation, emptiness, and cold. Yet even through all this, her innocent and warmth intact persevering beyond this hellish prison inside of my mind. Having come out of the closet as transgender and transitioned and being able to be myself and receiving love and support, "Helena" (My middle name), finally escaped her prison and made it into the light. The embrace of a mother that is referred to is my adopted mother, having finally felt like I was truly loved and having that warmth and sense of a mom in my life as I've always felt distant and disconnected/alone, having grown up alone and without anyone, and a lack of support from biological parents.



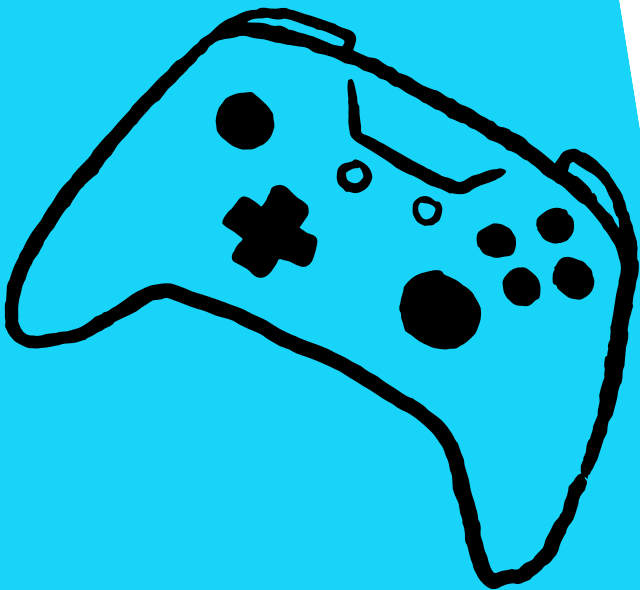
THE THREE E'S

BY BARRETT, A LIVED
EXPERIENCE EXPERT

Three guidelines to prioritizing hobbies as a form of self-care

These rules bring about more than just enjoyment from any hobby. Remembering Escape, Erase, and Endurance, the three E's, will be beneficial for anyone because the rules can be easily applied to any hobby. Escape is a measure of immersion and time management. Erasing will ease stress by building strategies, achieving goals, and accomplishing achievements. Endurance asks you to follow through with your goal, your goal might change along the way, but it's important to cross the finish line. Even if you don't finish the way you wanted or in the time you allotted yourself, progress is still a win.

These rules were created from my own thought process when it comes to consuming media of multiple types. Video games, TV shows and movies have all been tools that I have used to get through some difficult times, and I haven't always had a system for it. Now that I have a system that aligns with my thought process, I don't question why I do things, and instead know the exact reason. These rules have helped me to manage my time better and feel happier in general. I encourage you to incorporate the three E's into your life, and be intentional about your self-care. My hope is even if the three E's don't work for you, this at least helps you identify a system that does. It's important to prioritize and love yourself, so make a goal of it.





#1: ESCAPE

Escaping into a hobby entirely is to lose track of time and thought. Whether it's spectating sports or reading a book, people often use entertainment as a tool without even realizing or intending to. Even something as simple as watching a TV show for an hour can be extremely beneficial, especially when a goal is set. Setting a goal to "Escape" while participating in a hobby can be thinking to yourself 'I am going to have a good time building this birdhouse' and then following through with that. Escaping is allowing yourself to be engrossed. It's important to set a side time so you can fully immerse yourself in whatever your self care activity is and not be distracted by whatever stress is going on in your life. Utilizing escape is making short term goals every time you indulge in a hobby. Be intentional with your free time.



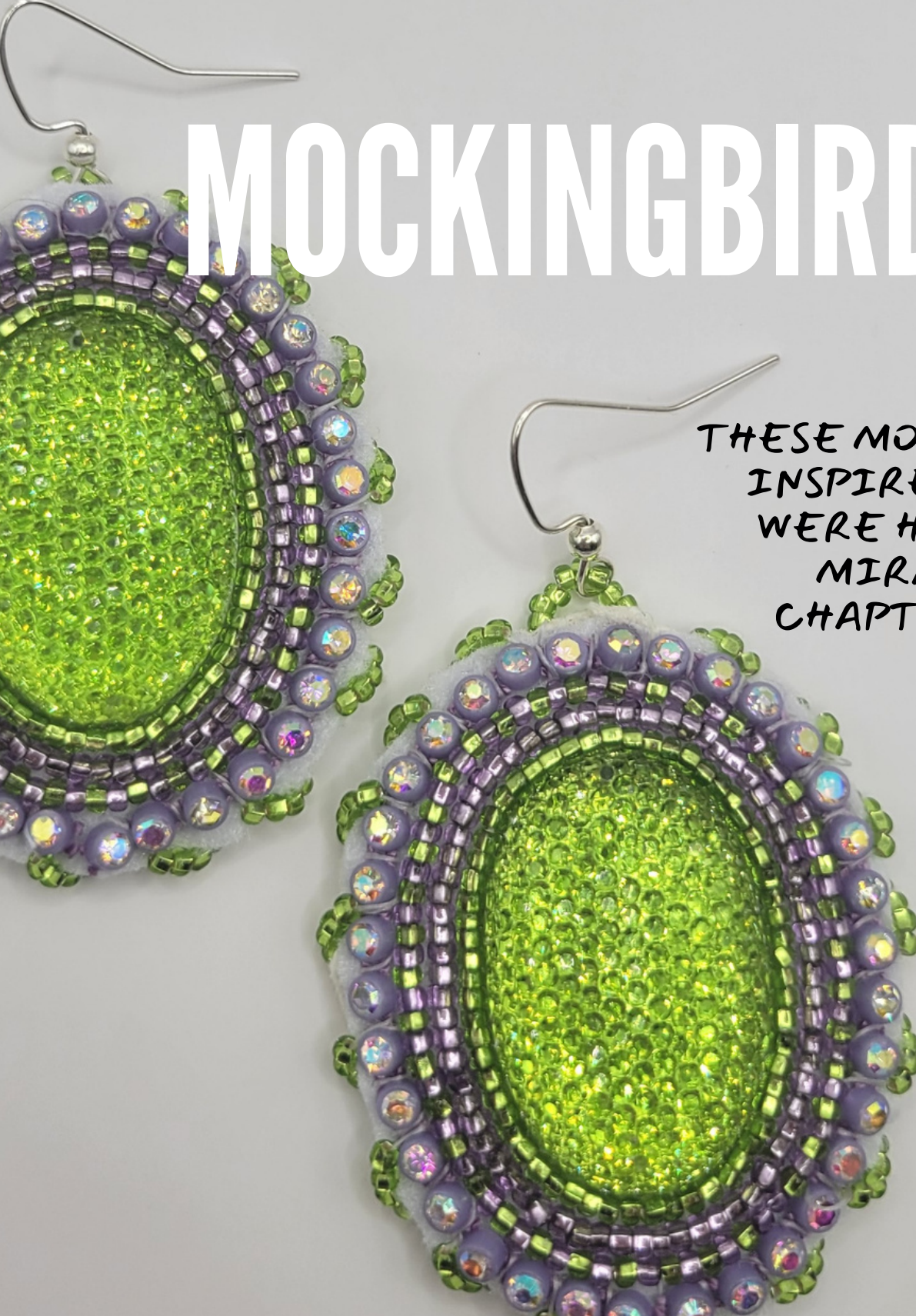
#2: ERASE

Utilizing Erase is making long term goals that are highly specific in order to feel a sense of accomplishment after having followed through with those goals. These goals can, and should, be tailored to suit someone's specific needs. A chef might want to make ratatouille, but they first need to practice their knife skills due to the precision required for this dish. The chef could set a long term goal of making more precise cuts and slices over the course of a month or two, to perfect the dish. Or they could buy a mandolin. Regardless, the accomplishment this chef will feel after overcoming a challenge is great, especially after having failed so many times. Failing is an important part of setting a goal because it helps to narrow down what needs improvement. Because of this, a goal should never be static, and always changing to suit your needs. If you aren't getting anything out of it, why have the goal in the first place?

#3: ENDURANCE

Asking yourself if your goals are working, and if you are getting anything out of your hobby, is very important. Enduring for too long trying to achieve the unobtainable is pointless. In the same vein, not having to go through any difficulty can make future obstacles too challenging to overcome due to a lack of experience. Is the birdhouse we were building earlier fun to make? If it isn't fun to make, then maybe we are just trying to push through and achieve our goal of making a birdhouse. When setting your goals, you should challenge yourself and stick to them. Utilizing a strategy is always beneficial when it comes to tackling your goals.

MOCKINGBIRD ART



THESE MOCKINGBIRD-
INSPIRED EARRINGS
WERE HANDMADE BY
MIRA, A CENTRAL
CHAPTER MEMBER.

Mira

**ARE YOU AN ARTIST OR CREATOR?
SHOWCASE YOUR WORK IN THE MOCKINGBIRD TIMES.**

SHARE YOUR WORK.
 SHARE YOUR ART.
 SHARE YOUR STORY.



If you're a lived experience expert and you paint, take photos, sketch, write, or create any other type of art, send in your work to be featured in The Mockingbird Times! Contact your Regional Engagement Coordinator or our Communications Manager at laurenmorelli@mockingbirdsociety.org.



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