

Change

Puget Sound's Newspaper of the Poor and Homeless • Volume 8, No. 17

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The Families Issue

Inside: Foster youth speak • Welfare office closing • Parenting through poverty • I-71 meets the challenge.

NADIFA ABDI HAGALEY, RIGHT, WITH HER HUSBAND ABDULRASHID HAGALEY, LEFT, AND THEIR TWO SONS, 3-YEAR-OLD JEYTE, LEFT, AND 1 1/2-YEAR-OLD ABDIRAHMAN. PHOTO BY ERIK CASTRO.

Workfirst or Kids First?

Women balance work and family on the poverty line

By Shauna Curphey

Welfare reform means more than work requirements and time limits. It means the quiet, tough decisions mothers make about where to put their kids while they head off to a job or training. It means a huge demand for affordable child care. And it affects the lives of Washington's poorest children.

Under welfare reform, parents must work or prepare for work in order to receive cash assistance from the state. The new system is (appropriately) called Workfirst. Since its inception in 1997, the state's welfare rolls decreased 44 percent, producing a dramatic drop in state spending on welfare grants. At the same time, the legislature tripled its funds for child care for low-income families. A large portion of that \$304 million annual spending goes to Working Connections, a program to help low-income working parents pay their child care expenses. The number of children receiving Working Connections tuition subsidies has grown 65 percent since the program began in 1997.

Despite this hefty public investment in child care, Workfirst parents still struggle to balance the demands of rais-

ing their children with the demand to work. In that, they are not unlike most parents; they just have to do it all with less.

Welfare families are fragile

Washington's average cash assistance recipient is a 33-year-old single mother with two children and a high school education. Washington's new welfare moms are by necessity working moms — or at least moms getting ready to work. Seventy-four percent of Workfirst parents are single. They don't have a spouse present to share time away from work when a child is home ill. They have no one to call to pick up the kids if they have to work late. It's this lack of support that seems to keep poor families down.

"The one thing families don't have is backup systems. They don't have as many options," says Ruth Engle, coordinator for parent services at Child Care Resources, a private nonprofit organization working to improve the quality, affordability, and availability of child care in King County.

Recipients face a five-year lifetime limit on cash assistance. According to

a study conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, more children in the household and the presence of young children rank among the top factors that increase time on the Welfare rolls.

Statistics from a recent state Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) study of parents eligible for child care subsidy show that child care can be a major hurdle on the road to self-sufficiency:

- Fifty-nine percent of parents eligible to receive the Working Connections child care subsidy reported that they were unable to work certain shifts due to problems caused by child care in the past year. Missed work means missed pay.
- Fifty-seven percent made new child care arrangements recently. Among them, 24 percent did so due to a job or schedule change.
- Thirty-nine percent said they were distressed or distracted at work, school, or training due to child care problems.
- Twenty-nine percent had to work fewer hours on a regular basis due to child care arrangements.
- Fifteen percent turned down a higher paying job in the past year due to child care responsibilities.

As they work to beat the cash assistance deadline, the exigencies of parenthood can turn the way out of poverty into a revolving door. According to a study conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, since welfare reform, more recipients cycle on and off the caseload: 35 percent who leave cash assistance behind are back again within 12 months.

Works, doesn't work

Working Connections is good for Audrea Love. She used the child care subsidy to enroll her one daughter in the YWCA child care program at Dunlap Elementary. Audrea works at home caring for her elderly mother, so her hours are flexible. She's able to walk her daughter to and from child care.

"You just have to take some time and call around," says Love. "It's a good program, if you allow it to work for you."

Audrea has one child, child care in her neighborhood, and flexible work hours. For other families, special needs, additional children, odd hours, and transportation can complicate the search for child care. Just ask Cindy Bunch.

Continued on Page 14



A pointed name

Dear Tim Harris,

I often buy your newspaper. I will not again. My problem with you is the headline of your latest issue, Jew Boy (July 26). I find that headline extremely offensive. I was told on the phone when I called your office that it is in reference to an interview with the author of a book by the same name. That's well and good, but I certainly think that you could have chosen a headline that indicates that, rather than JEW BOY.

Sincerely,
Diana Kilsheimer (via email)

Dear Diana,

Jew Boy is the name of the autobiographical book written by the author that is interviewed. I assume he chose that title to make a statement, and we put it on the cover for pretty much the

same reason. It is an ugly phrase, but a powerful one nonetheless, and that is exactly the point. I suppose that when Dick Gregory published Nigger several decades ago, many people reacted similarly. Sorry that you've taken offense. The title is a commentary on the power of racist language. It is not meant to be racist in and of itself.

I think that if you read the article, you'll find it a valuable contribution to an understanding of anti-semitism in our time.

Tim Harris (via email)

A nod to Notes from the Kitchen

Dear *Real Change*,

Just a quick "thanks" for the newspaper. I buy it each time, either at PCC Fremont or Ballard Bartells. I especially like Liz Smith's "Notes from the Kitchen" and the article on race recently.

Sincerely,
Diana Rainwater

Humbly removed

Hi,

I read your newspaper last night for the first time and was amazed by the absolute honesty in your paper. Thanks you so much for your positive contribution to society. After reading your newspaper, I wrote this poem.

Humbly removed,
I stand quietly in awe of a time so near,
yet so far.

In a world of hypocrites, i am just another

I have never felt hunger
only pangs of yearning for more.
Ashamed of what isn't
treasuring my surroundings,
I still stand, a silent hypocrite
among a world catapulting toward
extinction.

A blurry daze of hopeful assimilation,
this is what they want.

I want to scream.

Still I stand.

In silent protest,
I stand, hopeful for change.
Hypocrite no more, I stand.
Slowly, antagonizingly, I move forward.
I take the step,
and catapult MY world towards change.

I'd really like to contribute in any way possible, but as a 15-year-old with only limited transportation available to me, I'm not sure how. Any suggestions?
Thanks for hearing me out.

Sincerely,
Rosa

Correction

Adam Holdorf's front-page story on the city Human Service Department's assessment of SHARE ("Trouble at SHARE," June 28) got a couple things wrong. The City asked SHARE to hire a financial director, not an accountant as *Real Change* reported. SHARE has an accountant, based out of the Archdiocesan Housing Authority, who performs financial audits. For the past three years, SHARE's financial reviews have come out clean.

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Change

Puget Sound's Voice of the
Poor and Homeless

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Mission Statement:

Real Change organizes, educates, and builds alliances to create solutions to homelessness and poverty. We exist to provide a voice for poor people in our community.

Goals

Provide a foundation for grassroots organizing. Publish the views of marginalized communities. Create direct economic opportunity. Build bridges with a broad range of allies in the struggle against poverty.

The *Real Change* Homeless Empowerment Project is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Programs include the *Real Change* newspaper, the MacWorkshop computer lab, StreetLife Art Gallery, the StreetWrites peer support group for homeless writers, the Homeless Speakers Bureau, and the First things First organizing project. All donations support these programs and are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Editorial Policy

Articles appearing in *Real Change* reflect the opinions and perspectives of the authors. We encourage the submission of journalism, opinion, fiction, poetry, and artwork, and hope to create a forum where the many perspectives on poverty and homelessness can find expression. *Real Change* reserves the right to edit any material for length and style. Articles considered libelous or which encourage violence, sexism, homophobia, or racism will not be considered for publication.

Beyond Charity

Support justice and dignity for all

You don't have to read very far into this newspaper to find some of the best poetry, photography, and journalism that you will find anywhere. All of this is brought to you by a host of volunteers and a small dedicated staff, without foundation or government grants. The StreetLife Gallery, StreetWrites, a bustling computer lab, and the Homeless Speakers Bureau, all projects of the Real Change Homeless Empowerment Project (RCHEP), are supported equally through contributions and grants. Make Sid the cat happy and help ensure our future by donating time or energy. The *Real Change* newspaper is now a project of the Real Change Homeless Empowerment Project, our 501(c)3 non-profit umbrella, so all donations are tax deductible.

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Going up the River

Mockingbird Society hopes to change foster care system

By Jim Theofelis

There is an old story of three women walking along a river in the middle of a hot summer day. They walk together, listening to the steady roar of the river in the background and feeling the warmth of the sun upon their shoulders. Suddenly one of them notices a baby floating down the middle of the river.

Across Washington state, there are approximately 12,000 infants, children, and adolescents who depend on our public Child Welfare System (CWS) for their survival and growth. Administered by the state's Department of Social and Health Services, a major responsibility of the CWS is supervising the foster care/group home system.

The foster care system, similar to a strong and powerful river, can be host to thousands of incredible experiences. Talk with some of the thousands of dedicated foster parents in this state and you will hear stories of deep and meaningful experiences that have occurred because they were available and present to a child in need. Talk with young people who have survived "the system" and they too have stories of caseworkers, counselors, and foster parents who "went the extra mile."

However, overall the foster care system in Washington State has major problems. Sixty percent of the adolescents in the system do not graduate from high school. It is not uncommon to hear stories from young people who have had 10 to 20 different "placements" or homes. Siblings placed in care are frequently separated and sent to different homes. One-third or more of the homeless teenagers in Washington are also in the legal custody of Washington State.

The first woman to reach the river safely grabs and hands the baby to the second woman who hands the baby to the third woman. At once they are exhilarated and horrified. They take turns holding, cuddling, and smiling at the baby. After a short period of time one of the women gasps in horror:

The Mockingbird Society is a newly founded organization dedicated to improving the current and future lives of the infants, children, and adolescents who have involvement with the Washington state foster care system, including those who are homeless. The Mockingbird Society is based in the philosophy that all children and adolescents deserve a safe, warm, nurturing environment to live and grow. Through program

initiatives, advocacy, and public education, the Mockingbird Society will work diligently to preserve that which is positive about the foster care system and changing that which is not.

The Mockingbird Society is proud to announce the *Mockingbird Times*, a monthly newspaper designed and produced by young people, ages 12 to 22, who are currently or have been in foster care. The *Mockingbird Times* will be paid employment for the young people involved, which for some will be their first "real job." The *Mockingbird Times* has hired a staff

"Look at that!" As they looked upstream every 10 feet they see another baby floating in the river. Without thinking they immediately plunge themselves back into the river. After several hours they are cold, hungry, and exhausted. No longer are they able to look at each baby as unique or special. Finally, one of the women can stand it no longer. She turns and walks away. "Where are you going?" shouts one of the others. She continues to walk away, glancing at the pile of babies, and replies: "I'm going up stream to find out who is throwing babies in the river."

of young people who are smart, thoughtful, and willing to work hard. During their experience at the *Times*, they will learn many new skills and at the same time receive the rewards of honest, competent work.

Our inaugural edition is on pages 9 through 12 of this issue of *Real Change*, which has agreed to include the *Mockingbird Times* as an insert once a month. Additionally, the *Times* is developing a list of different distribution sites across the state and we will also publish the paper on our website (www.mockingbirdsociety.org).

Each edition of the *Mockingbird Times* will have a specific theme exploring an issue, program, policy, or individual(s) relevant to the foster care system. The *Mockingbird Times* will be interactive with young people from around the state by publishing their articles, opinions, poetry, and art.

We are excited about the opportunity and responsibility of being a statewide voice for young people who are or have been in foster care. Our commitment and focus is to work with the thousands of other individuals and programs across Washington State to build a foster care system where children and adolescents do more than survive, but actually thrive. ■

Jim Theofelis is the executive director of the Mockingbird Society. For more information, call him at (206)322-0438.

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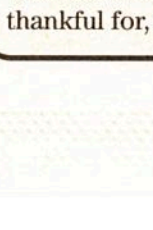
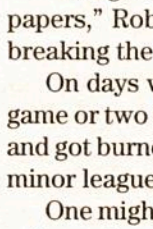
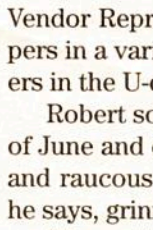
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RC Profile Robert Hansen was born and raised in Seattle and began selling *Real Change* seven years ago, about the time *Real Change* came to print.

Because of his long, reliable track record as a vendor, Robert holds the well-earned distinction of *Real Change*

Vendor Representative. You can find Robert selling papers in a variety of locations downtown, as well as others in the U-district, Seward Park, and West Seattle.

Robert sold more than 800 papers during the month of June and owes his keen salesmanship to a quick wit and raucous humor. "Everyone knows I'm a jokester," he says, grinning wide.

"You gotta kid around a little bit when you're sellin' papers," Robert adds. "It makes the time go faster and a little bit easier, breaking the tension between you and your customer."

On days when he's not selling *Real Change*, Robert will often take in a game or two of Farm League baseball. "I worked at the King Dome 20 years and got burned out on [the big leagues] a little bit, so I'd go to some of these minor league games and watch the people comin' through the ranks."

One might say Robert's done the same, earning a formidable reputation with customers and fellow vendors. In fact, when asked what he's most thankful for, he replied, "Bein' me." ■

— Jude Karel-Adamski



Initiative 71: eight weeks, 25,000 signatures

On Wednesday, August 8, Citizens for Shelter with Dignity finished its six-week signature-gathering campaign by turning in the last of more than 25,000 names to the city of Seattle, in an effort to get Initiative 71 on the ballot this fall. If at least 18,830 of those signatures are validated, the initiative will be referred to the City Council for review, where it can be passed as a law or put on the November ballot.

Once on the ballot, it has a good chance of passing, according to Citizens for Shelter with Dignity, a coalition of homeless service providers and advocates organized by *Real Change*. In a recent poll commissioned by the initiative's sponsors, Seattle voters favor I-71 by nearly three to one. Campaign manager Trevor Griffey says that, "Generally speaking, I think Seattle people are very supportive of actions helping the homeless. That's reflected by the fact we were able to get so many signatures in just two months, being an all-volunteer campaign that's operating beneath the media radar screen."

The initiative, which calls for the funding of an additional 400 shelter beds for Seattle's homeless, as well as support services such as housing placement, employment assistance, child care, domestic violence intervention, and health services, would be the first city initiative directly addressing homelessness.

I-71 states that "the City of Seattle shall pursue all possible options to fund the new shelter and services... but shall not take, or in any way interfere with, funding from existing or planned expenditures for health, human services, and housing programs." The initiative also wouldn't require new taxes in order to be enacted. Citizens for Shelter with Dignity states that by providing additional shelter and services, I-71 would save the city money in the long run, by helping reduce spending in the courts, jails, and hospitals.

The initiative also states that "the City shall pursue creative options for low-cost shelter, including faith-based shelter and self-management strategies."

Griffey explains that the new homeless shelters need not be newly-constructed buildings, but can be set up in partnership with other organizations that have extra space which is not being utilized: "working with other community members; using buildings that are in existence now, like church basements, instead of building new ones. We want the city to consider this as an option."

Griffey says that he and other organizers of I-71 expect to work with the city in the planning process if the initiative is passed, but it is not a requirement written into the initiative.

"It's not going to solve homelessness," Griffey says of the proposal. "What we hope is that it will address the current underfunding of homeless services by making shelter more available and services more effective."

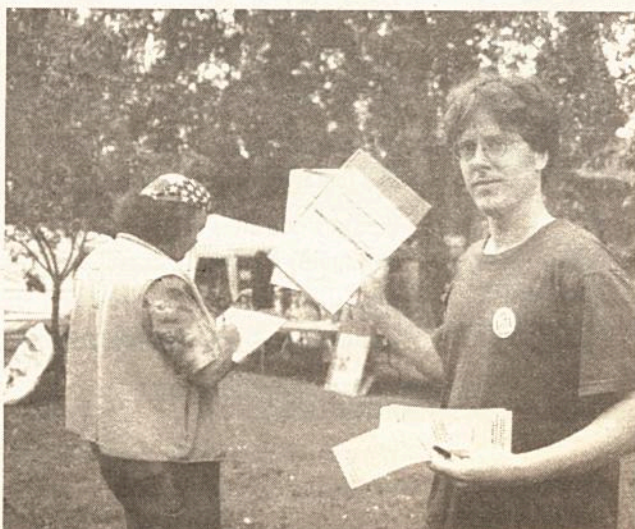
—Casey LaFran

Rainier Vista: Dissed by the feds

An arm of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency concerned with environmental justice has knocked Seattle Housing Authority's proposed Rainier Vista redevelopment, saying the federally funded demolition and reconstruction at the 481-unit housing project displaces low-income residents, banishes the disabled, and ignores the wishes of residents who felt left out of the planning process.

The EPA also wonders why SHA never approached them for comment earlier this year, while an environmental review was being conducted.

The EPA's regional Office for Civil Rights and Environmental Justice, a new office monitoring the impact of federal projects on minorities and the poor, offered its criticisms to SHA in a letter July 24. Environmental protection specialist Mike Letourneau, who drafted the letter, acknowledged that SHA doesn't have to address the concerns, since the comment period on the



GOT SIGNATURES? I-71 CAMPAIGN MANAGER TREVOR GRIFFEY BRANDISHES A PETITION.
PHOTO BY GEORGE HICKEY.

project environmental impacts had closed, but that he hoped they would be taken into account anyway.

The EPA's letter says that the \$35 million redevelopment project will disperse recent immigrants, who make up a significant portion of Rainier Vista's population, out into communities where fewer services exist. "Community members rely on these services for medical care, job placement, education, spiritual guidance, and sources of information... relocating residents from Rainier Vista... not only removes them from their homes, but distances them from valuable community services," Letourneau wrote.

The estimated 153 residents with disabilities will also be prevented from returning, says Letourneau, since just 22 new homes planned in the redeveloped Rainier Vista will be built to suit them.

And what about the 170 residents who signed a petition expressing frustration at their lack of input on the redevelopment plans, and telling SHA to fix, not destroy, their homes? Letourneau writes that, "Meaningful public participation is the ultimate goal of Environmental Justice," and that "the draft EIS is silent regarding the petition, suggesting that the concerns of a significant population of Rainier Vista have not been addressed."

What's the right thing to do? It may be to simply fix up the existing units, advises EPA. That's not an option, according to SHA's existing impact statement.

The EPA's comments are prompted by Executive Order 12898, released by President Clinton in 1994, which sought to bar federal funds from going to projects that disproportionately impact the health, habitability, aesthetics, or accessibility of low-income and minority communities. It's an extension of Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In 1998, the EPA incorporated environmental justice concerns into its oversight. That's why the EPA can get involved.

A Seattle Housing Authority spokesperson says that the agency will incorporate the EPA's comments into the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). U.S. law requires federal agencies to issue an EIS on major undertakings — in this case, the federally-funded HOPE VI demolition. This EIS follows the federal department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines, city environmental law, and the state's Environmental Policy Act. Staff in the EPA civil rights office expected to be solicited for their comments; they say that's routine, under the National Environmental Policy Act.

"We are trying to investigate why HUD reviewed the state Environmental Policy Act but not NEPA," says Elaine Summers, staffmember in the Office of Civil Rights and Environmental justice. "We thought, 'How come we're left out?'"

But SHA says it will address environmental-justice concerns in a separate process, called an Environmental Assessment. EPA's 1998 rules on Executive Order 12898 say the Environmental Assessment has "fewer detailed regulatory requirements... as to content, format or public participation" than the EIS, which is "for major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment."

This is the first governmental criticism of the Rainier Vista redevelopment's impacts on current residents. But other officials also have their doubts. On July 30, the Seattle City Council voted 7-2 to up-zone an area close to the Seattle Housing Authority's Rainier Vista redevelopment, in preparation for the Sound Transit light-rail line. They postponed an up-zone for Rainier Vista itself, while Council and SHA draft a Memorandum of Agreement granting public oversight of the project. That agreement should be out August 13. ■

—Adam Holdorf

Portland homeless camp may become permanent

The past month has been full of good news for residents of Portland's homeless tent camp, Dignity Village. In late June, city officials said they would lift a looming eviction notice and allow the campers to stay on their long-time squat, a vacant lot north of downtown, until September 1. Then, last month, the campers got another plum: the city is offering a legitimate lease, then will incorporate Dignity into the city's social-services system, which tries to move people off the streets into permanent housing.

The temporary tent camp was formed last December, in the wake of a Multnomah County judge's ruling that overturned a ban on camping within city limits ("Tent City South," May 31).

The group continues to expand: It's now pondering a housing collective for currently housed people who volunteer for the Out of the Doorways Campaign, and are themselves at risk of becoming homeless. It's also started a small farm north of town, growing zucchini, squash, tomatoes, potatoes, and pumpkins. Dignity Villagers hope to create work and raise money by selling the vegetables. ■

—Adam Holdorf

Do you have any stories we should look into? Call Adam at 441-8143, and just maybe we will.

The Client Shuffle

Welfare cuts prompt office shutdown, client headaches

By Andrew Block

On a lugubriously gray morning, when the sullen cloud-line over south Lake City Way moves faster than the cars below, Brandi Alderson waits impassively in the nearby Community Service Office (CSO) for her child care benefits to be authorized.

Alderson, a single mother of two, has made this trip four times in the last three months to obtain food stamps, medical referrals, and child care support. As a part-time bank teller downtown, she's been grateful for the proximity of her CSO, a subdivision of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), which is located a mere five-minute walk from her apartment.

By January 1, however, Alderson will be singing a different tune, as the Lake City welfare office is closing, a victim of state budget cutbacks. More than 4,100 north-end households will begin seeking benefits at the Ballard CSO. Alderson's easy access will change, becoming a cross-town trip.

"I don't know how I'm going to do it," she sighs, as her three-month-old son gurgles and flails on her lap. "All I know is that it's going to be tough."

"It will be challenging," admits Francis Carr, public relations manager for DSHS' Region IV, which governs King County's welfare offices. "But the decision was based merely on the issue of cost effectiveness and efficiency. The merger was the best way by which we could minimize costs without compromising our services."

A kinder cut

Including the office in Lake City, there are currently 11 CSOs around King County. Although not everyone is within walking distance, each client is assigned a CSO based on his or her respective residential zip code, thus ensuring a variable degree of convenience.

Since the elections in November, DSHS has been brainstorming various ways of cutting expenditures. The department believes that closing the Lake City CSO is the most cost-effective, and theoretically the least debilitating, cutback.

"We're a people business," explains Pat Smith, administrator for the Lake City CSO. "We don't want to cut services or staff, so the third place we look is what we call bricks and mortar. The only place we can really cut is facilities."

"Many people are concerned about traveling further."

Everybody hates to see it happen, especially since there is not a direct bus route from here to Ballard. It is, however, the most viable option."

Pat Smith, Lake City CSO

"Our caseloads are dropping all over the county," adds Smith, identifying why Lake City was initially targeted for closure. "However, they are dropping at a much higher rate in the north, lessening our need for office space."

Perhaps the most pragmatic and definitely the most fiscally significant reason why DSHS decided to close the Lake City office is rooted in the price of the real estate. The lease for the office building, located just north of 115th Street, is one of the most expensive of all their office properties. Some have questioned why the closure of the Lake City CSO is occurring at such a seemingly hurried pace, without much warning. "We had to take a proactive approach," explains Francis Carr. "The lease is running out at the end of the

year, and we didn't want to have to sign a new, multi-year lease." In addition to eliminating the costs of a new lease, the Lake City CSO will be exempt from signing a new janitorial contract, as they will share the custodial services currently under contract at the Ballard offices.

DSHS administrators say there's plenty of room at the cross-town office. "We have an underutilization of space in Ballard," explains Carr. "The Ballard office is large enough to accommodate all the staff from Lake City and their caseloads."

Modems or Metro

All this monetary wrangling has worked out expediently for administrators, saving DSHS a estimated \$4.8 million over the next five years. But it leaves many Lake City clients high and dry. For people such as Alderson, who balance one or two jobs between an often-frantic home-life, the gratuitous travel will be another burden. Clients like Alderson generally do not have access to public transportation.

"Many people are concerned about traveling further," says Smith, furrowing her brow. "Everybody hates to see it happen, especially since there is not a direct bus route from here to Ballard. It is, however, the most viable option."

The options that Lake City residents (without private transportation) have been left with include extensive busing and using the CSO call-in center, as well as the newly instituted DSHS online CSO.

In preparation for the merger, DSHS officials have composed various Metro bus scenarios, charting a course from Lake City to the Ballard CSO. Each of the scenarios involves at least one transfer; only one out of the six scenarios has a roundtrip commute time of under three hours.

In the face of this inconvenience, Smith endorses the call-in center as a mode of service that gives the client human contact from home. Many clients are reliant on staffers to guide them through referral processes, and the call-in center serves as an interme-

diat step between assistance and self-sufficiency, the latter of which is DSHS's ultimate goal.

On the other hand, Carr is excited about the potential of the Internet to abolish the need for CSOs entirely. "It's another means of providing access to information on public assistance programs. The public can go online to see if they are eligible for certain benefits, or if they want to apply online they can do so without ever having to go to the CSO."

Although the online CSO will work well for a small population, the large body of DSHS clients do not have the access or necessary skills to be able to function on the Internet. It's a fact that Carr recognizes.

"This is not a one-shoe-fits-all situation," she says. "There are many people who need the human touch. Online access shouldn't be a problem, though. Clients can go to their local library or community center and likely find most of the services they need."

Brandi Alderson looks forlorn at the mention of the Internet.

"I never use computers," she says. "I wouldn't know what to do or how to do it."

Many officials hope that the merger is only an interim step in consolidating the Community Service Offices in north Seattle. Officials such as Carr and Smith are proponents of a future Northgate site for north-end residents. "It would be a central location that would draw equally from all areas," explains Carr hopefully. "Plus, Northgate has a Metro transit center that would be compatible with public transportation."

In the meantime, the entire CSO division will go through a tumultuous process of zip code transfers. As the 4,117 Lake City clients are transferred to Ballard, 933 will shift over to the Belltown CSO; some in the Rainier office will also go to Belltown, and so on. The domino effect that will roll through nine of the county's 11 welfare offices, swelling the caseloads at four of them. DSHS hasn't yet announced how it will shift caseworkers to accommodate the changes, nor whether more staff cuts are in the works.

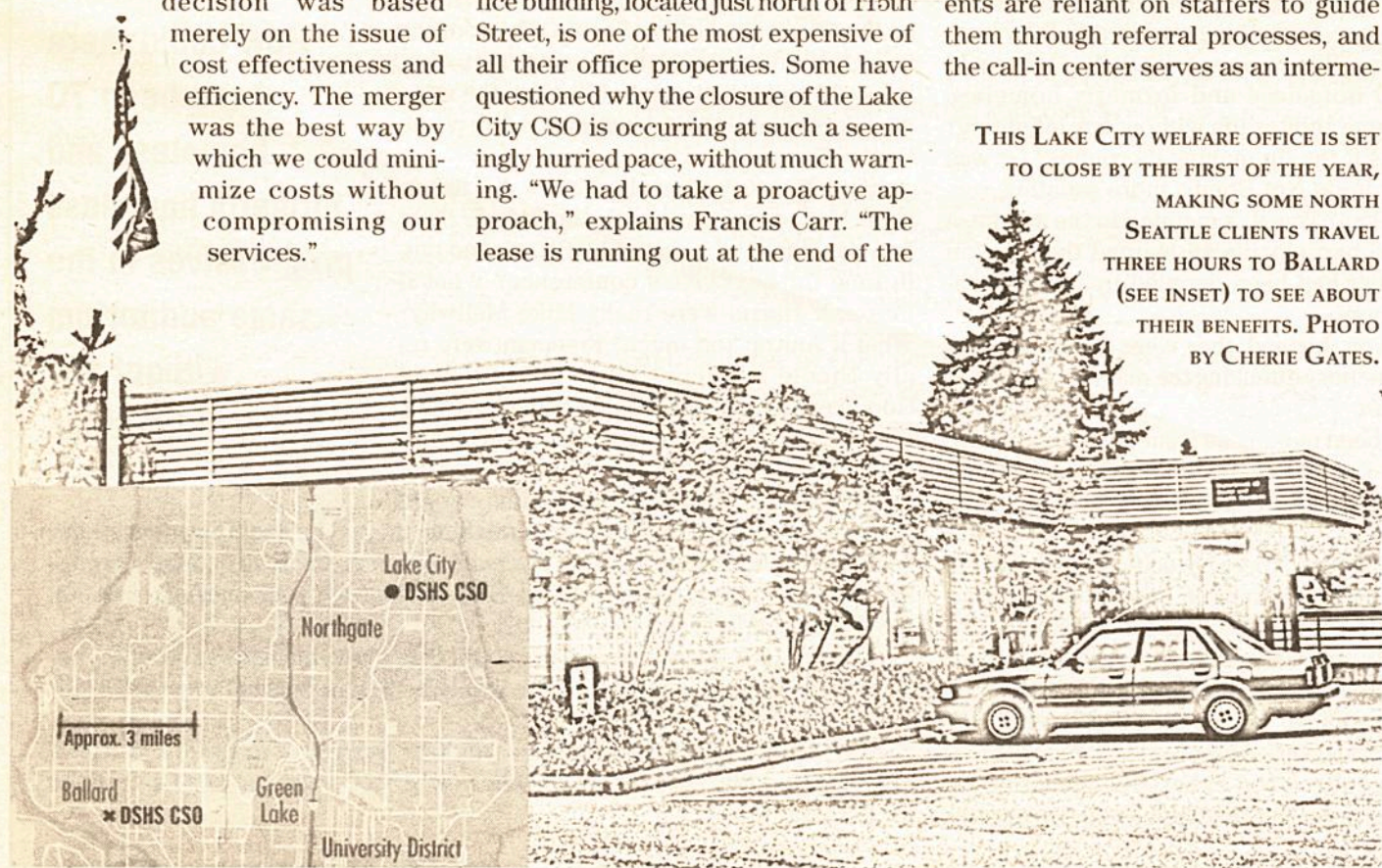
Although some Lake City patrons, like Brandi, have heard rumors surrounding the merger, the clients have not yet been officially informed. "We plan to make a public announcement at least a month before the merger," explains Carr. "We figure 30 days will be enough for the customers to strategize how they will access our services."

While it may seem deceitful that DSHS officials are trying to put a happy face on an unfortunate situation, it may be the best they can do under adverse circumstances. This does not, however, help those like Alderson, who must now figure out how to navigate the commute from Lake City to Ballard to Downtown, all on the Metro system.

"I wish they would stay," Brandi half-whispers as her supervisor opens her office door and calls the young woman in with a warm smile.

"But I guess there's not much I can do." ■

THIS LAKE CITY WELFARE OFFICE IS SET TO CLOSE BY THE FIRST OF THE YEAR, MAKING SOME NORTH SEATTLE CLIENTS TRAVEL THREE HOURS TO BALLARD (SEE INSET) TO SEE ABOUT THEIR BENEFITS. PHOTO BY CHERIE GATES.



poetry

In Motion

Only the same ...
 the
 one:
 (he's close to me
 my
 brother!)
 is the
 only—
 and, this is
 hard to see!
 same
 friend to me at

 home
 that he is on the corners of
 any
 street,
 passing.
 It's confusing.

 —STAN BURRISS

Politics As Usual

The hungry men are not without charm.
 Their agile words slither from throats.
 With sympathetic mouths, they pretend to logic,
 make their emphasis with metaphor.
 They want the world and live in clever houses
 with clever wives. In the garden,
 the bells are silent, a blue hydrangea
 fades to white. Their faith
 has nothing of the flash of snakes
 or tambourines, but all of the power.
 Too fast to notice, too much trouble to dissect.
 A slow disappearance of tree or time,
 a faltering song by a frail, human voice.
 The hungry men eat as candles flicker.
 You can hear the click of teeth and the sucking
 as the bones pile up.

 —MERCEDES LAWRY



Adventures in Poetry with ©Dr. Wes Browning

Let's deal with the elasticity of light.
 Once again we at Adventures in Poetry have had the good fortune to bless a North American Street Newspaper Association conference with our presence. This one was at San Francisco. Fog City, USA.

Actually, it didn't really fog while we were there, unless you count the conference. Something was dreadfully wrong. There was no infighting! What was up with that?! How could there have been 70 homeless and formerly homeless progressives in the same auditorium without any infighting?

Were they ill? Was it the flu making its rounds? Or was the food supplied by Food Not Bombs more satiating, owing to the added chicken? Was it something in the smoke, a Cheech and Chong effect? Or had the participants all learned their lesson from previous NASNA conferences that had been derailed by the disputations of the More-Progressive-Than-Thou?

No, they had not, I am here to tell you. Instead, they were distracted by a bigger enemy than each other. They were busy attacking the mainstream press, especially the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Here's the deal. The *Chronicle* has been making an issue of the homeless, especially those who hang out on San Francisco's main drag, Market Street. It's mostly typical Sidranesque stuff, blaming the victim for bleeding on the nice clean sidewalk kind of stuff.

It's a bit more convoluted though. SF has expensive self-cleaning toilets, for instance, similar to the kind Seattle was planning to buy. So before complaining about homeless people urinating and defecating behind dumpsters, it's necessary for them to explain that the self-cleaning toilets around Market Street are mostly broken. But that's blamed on the homeless too. It's all those "homeless AND prostitutes AND drug addicts." That's the phrase used over and over again, as if those three categories were equivalent.

San Francisco's television isn't too enlightened either. One television report of a demonstration on behalf of the homeless briefly showed demonstra-

tors talking, followed by a long sequence of archived shots of people breaking laws on the sidewalks, as if only homeless people use sidewalks, as if the demonstrators were supporting criminals, and as if weeks of archived shots were all showing crimes that happened yesterday. It's a crime wave! Run for your lives!

It's too bad we don't have anything as bad as the *Chronicle* here in Seattle. Think of the fun we could have verbally abusing them. Also, it would make it that much harder for us to mistake ourselves for mainstream, a fate worse than oblivion.

Sometimes, reading the *Weekly*, I'm not so sure. Maybe we're mainstream and we don't know it. What if the rest of NASNA found out, in time for next year's conference? What if Permess'r Harris were really Mike Mailway? What if Anitra "too much" Freeman were really Nicole Brodeur? What if I was Jean Godden? No wait, that wouldn't be a bad thing. I meant, what if I were Erik Lacitis? The horror, the horror.

If this were a mainstream column, would there be any difference? Well, for one thing, there'd be a lot fewer questions, and a lot more answers, surely. The mainstream press in this country always has all the answers for everything. How to improve your marriage and still play more golf, Life and the Arts, D2!

This couldn't be Adventures in Poetry. There is no mainstream poetry, contrary to popular misconception. We would be Excursions in Prose. Or Strolls in Speech.

But I think the biggest difference would be the lack of reflection. You have to be able to stop, before you can stop and reflect. They don't call it a stream for nothing. ■

**How could there
 have been 70
 homeless and
 formerly homeless
 progressives in the
 same auditorium
 without any
 infighting?**

Backwards

On the sides!
 where you stand,
 now — there
 fall (and,
this is hard to see!)
 in
 time!
everything,
 strange. It
 is!
It is, if you call it
 that.
 —STAN BURRISS



A Random Rational Thought

If one per cent of the population
 —The homeless
Account for ten per cent of
 The murder victims
It seems obvious that an easy way
To reduce the murder rate
By ten percent
Would be to simply house
That one per cent
 —RENEENE ROBERTSON

Man On Exhibit

You only see the house, soot
covered walls, the brush and comb
Laid carefully, at angles, on the lace.
Shot of the bed.
Shot of the sink.
Straw on the hook.

“I cried for him,” the photographer says
in the story beside the pictures.

Living years beyond his brother,
who’d managed every detail,
he followed the same daily paths,
rarely accepting a neighbor’s help.

In this house of slow decay, he did
as he’d been told, too gentle
to resist the tide of family will.
Yet, he wanted his own life.
He said that, near the end.
The family had stolen it, given him
instead, this infinite loss.

Everywhere, the ravaged hand of time.

The only shot of the man
was a yellowed studio portrait
where he was young, with slicked hair
and a determined face.

—MERCEDES LAWRY

The Rainbow Barrette

I was three
My grandma gave me
A rainbow barrette
I liked it a lot
It looked pretty in my dark hair

One day while playing outside
At our apartments
I lost it
Left it behind in the Scary Zone

It wasn’t scary all the time
Only when the Wolf Pack ran
School time was safe time

The sun told me
When the safe times were
I didn’t know
How to tell time with clocks

The sun said
Short but safe
So I hurried back for my
Rainbow barrette

It sparkled in the sun
I had just picked it up
When I saw them
My surprise delayed my escape

Daylight saving didn’t save me
 —RENEENE ROBERTSON

Parenthood

Lessons learned along the way

By Lisa Brisbois

Graphic by Eleanor O'Neill

The day I found out I was pregnant was the anniversary of my being clean and sober one year. I was in between jobs, without health insurance, and still very much "out there" after having had the much-needed but drastic change from active addict to recovering one. I was a nut! And I certainly hadn't had enough time to clean up all the damage that my using had done.

At first I was a little excited. The idea of having and raising my own child gave me an interesting charge. However, the reality of the thing terrified me: There I stood, a positive pregnancy test in hand, looking around me for my life. This wasn't *my* life, I wasn't parent material. I was an unemployed, uninsured rock musician freak with a past history of drug and alcohol abuse. I drove a 1972 Ford pick-up that rarely ran. We lived in what could easily qualify as a glorified tree house, precariously perched on a slowly disintegrating hillside. We didn't have the money to move or buy a new car. How would my husband and I afford a child?

My husband. Husband? Oh yeah, I was married! Finally, something that seemed somewhat normal and parental. The panic began to cool. "That's right, I'm married," I chanted to myself like some warped mantra. "And we still *like* each other." I began to think that perhaps we could pull this reproduction gig off. Maybe I didn't have to run from the "adult" behavior that I was dabbling in.

While my tears dried, I reluctantly crushed out my last Old Gold. I thought that perhaps my tears were for my long-time smoking habit that I was about to give up... for who knew how long. I said a ceremonial goodbye to my cigarettes as my husband and I plunged headfirst into the unknown adventures of parenthood.

During my pregnancy, I vacillated between fantasy and my sad reality. Sometimes I was a glowing earth mother full of love and acceptance of this wonderful gift of nature. I would see myself gliding, no, floating through

the next nine months with more love and maternal gratitude that even the Virgin herself could muster.

Then I would wake up, sitting on a overcrowded Metro bus taking me to my DSHS appointment, where I would apply for aid for food, medical, and other minor details of life. The case-workers would send me downtown to

pick up my WIC vouchers, good for crazy amounts of cereal, milk, and cheese to help keep me and the baby healthy. I would wait in more lines and answer more questions.

Then it was off to Safeway, where the grumpy checkers kept a watchful eye on the government-approved cereals and cheeses as they crept toward

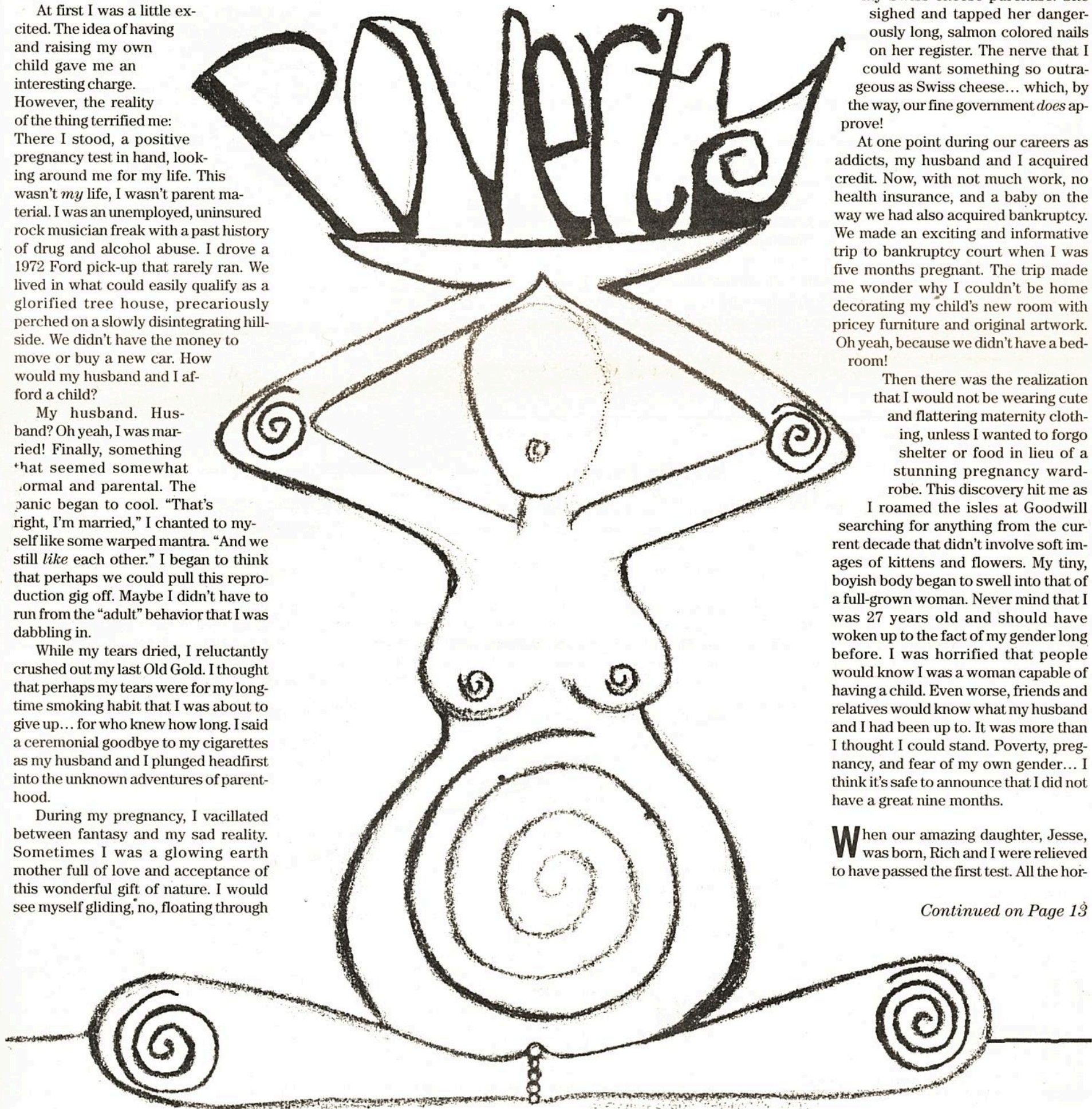
us on the black conveyer belt. "I don't think Swiss cheese is WIC approved," a particularly curt checker said one day. "I'm going to have to call my manager." I stood there at the register and tried to focus on the horrible woman's employee nametag instead of her disapproving glare while I and about a thousand other irritated shoppers waited for her manager to come and approve my Swiss cheese purchase. She sighed and tapped her dangerously long, salmon colored nails on her register. The nerve that I could want something so outrageous as Swiss cheese... which, by the way, our fine government *does* approve!

At one point during our careers as addicts, my husband and I acquired credit. Now, with not much work, no health insurance, and a baby on the way we had also acquired bankruptcy. We made an exciting and informative trip to bankruptcy court when I was five months pregnant. The trip made me wonder why I couldn't be home decorating my child's new room with pricey furniture and original artwork. Oh yeah, because we didn't have a bedroom!

Then there was the realization that I would not be wearing cute and flattering maternity clothing, unless I wanted to forgo shelter or food in lieu of a stunning pregnancy wardrobe. This discovery hit me as I roamed the isles at Goodwill searching for anything from the current decade that didn't involve soft images of kittens and flowers. My tiny, boyish body began to swell into that of a full-grown woman. Never mind that I was 27 years old and should have woken up to the fact of my gender long before. I was horrified that people would know I was a woman capable of having a child. Even worse, friends and relatives would know what my husband and I had been up to. It was more than I thought I could stand. Poverty, pregnancy, and fear of my own gender... I think it's safe to announce that I did not have a great nine months.

When our amazing daughter, Jesse, was born, Rich and I were relieved to have passed the first test. All the hor-

Continued on Page 13



PARENT Continued from Page 8

ror of pregnancy left me when I held her for the first time and somewhere deep inside I knew that we could be decent parents. However, I was still haunted by the shame of being poor and having to accept government assistance. I tried to join a parenting group for new moms, but it was too much for me to sit in those expensive homes and worry about what these middle class women would think of me if they knew I rented a run-down apartment, drove a 1977 Ford Mustang II, played in a rock band, and had no career. I'm sure they were too busy living their own lives to worry about how I was living mine, but at the time, I couldn't see through my poor self-esteem, so I quit going.

My husband, Rich, worked outside the home, and I worked at home both as a mother and a bookkeeper. It seemed like we were working all the time, but there was still never enough money to catch up. At one point we were two days away from being homeless, because it seemed no one wanted to rent to a family of three with a history of bankruptcy. Some landlords flat-out told us that they didn't think their apartments were good for children. I was too tired to fight them.

There were the endless credit checks that the landlords charged up to \$20 to run. We were in competition with young, single people who showed up at open houses driving \$20,000 cars and carrying resumés and references. I began to look at our run-down station wagon as more than just transportation. Could we live in there? At that moment, I understood how easy it was to become homeless. I hadn't lived on the streets since I was a teenager and something told me that it might not seem as adventurous as a married adult with a toddler. Had it not been for our family and friends, we would have been among the many families that live on Seattle's streets.

After the housing crisis came the daycare fiasco. My home employment came to an end. In order to pay the bills I had to take employment outside of the home. When I did the research on pre-schools and childcare I found that most

places cost more than our rent. The cops that I looked into had huge waiting lists just to get in, and all the scholarships had been given away. I found out that people put their children on waiting lists up to one year prior to when the child is going to attend school! I had no idea.

I would take Jesse to the park and listen in on the other mothers as they talked about pre-school and childcare. Their kids were learning to swim, how to speak other languages and play musical instruments. I wanted those things for my child, but what I needed was a safe place that my daughter would feel comfortable in while I worked. It was frustrating to see all these wonderful choices available to those with larger incomes and know that I might not be able to enjoy those same things for my daughter. As it turned out, I did find a pre-school that fit our parenting style, and when I checked out DSHS I found that we qualified.

But once again, there was the shame of accepting help. I felt as though I had to hide our economic situation to everyone and I worried what all the other parents would think of us. I was embarrassed to drive our beat-up car to the school and park it next to all the shiny, new SUVs. I tried to tone down my appearance whenever I

dropped Jesse off or picked her up, lest anyone think I was a recovering drug addict. I made myself crazy with all the stories I created in my head about what people *might* be thinking about me. Fortunately, none of my morbid fantasies have come true. There are some amazing parents and teachers at Jesse's school. We have become involved in the activities there; no one seems to care how we look or what we drive. I was starting to see that I judged myself much harder than was probably healthy.

Things have improved so much since I first found out I was going to have a baby. None of it was easy, but my husband and I both stayed sober and continue to practice recovery today. We released a record and are preparing to record another. I found other parents with similar situations and we have given each other support and friendship. I found a great deal of parenting resources for musicians, artists and writers, and for people who do not fit into the traditional parenting molds. Our jobs have improved, and so has our financial situation. We still accept help from the state for childcare

and medical insurance, but instead of feeling ashamed, I am grateful that it is there for others and for us. Our daughter is healthy and happy and she doesn't care that we live in a one-bedroom apartment or that I buy her clothes from second-hand shops. We have never had to compromise our morals or ambitions, and it has paid off.

One of the biggest gifts to come my way has been the realization that there is nothing wrong with my family or me. Being low-income does not make me defective. It sounds pretty obvious, but it has taken me a long time to accept that idea as a truth. I have also come to realize that there are more people in my situation or worse than there are living in \$350,000 homes, driving two cars, and vacationing in exotic lands. They are out there, but somewhere along the line I had myself convinced that they were the norm! I am not a wealthy person, but I have become incredibly rich in family, health, opportunity, and lessons learned. ■

Lisa Brisbois writes and plays in the rock band Four Hour Ramona.

Our daughter is healthy and happy, and she doesn't care that we live in a one-bedroom apartment or that I buy her clothes from second-hand shops. We have never had to compromise our morals or ambitions, and it has paid off. One of the biggest gifts has been the realization that there is nothing wrong with my family or me. There are more people in my situation or worse than there are living in \$350,000 homes and vacationing in exotic lands.



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CHILDCARE Continued from Page 1

"I've always been for working," says Bunch, a Workfirst participant, "I just think of my kids first."

Cindy is a single mother of five children, ages 2, 5, 7, 11, and 13. While the oldest two take care of themselves after school and the youngest two spend their days at Kindercare, the 7-year-old has no place to go when school gets out — except home with his mother. He's developmentally disabled and on medication for ADHD.

Although the Americans with Disabilities Act requires licensed child care providers to serve special-needs children, less than 50 percent of daycares in King County have the expertise to serve them, according to a report by Child Care Resources.

In SeaTac, where she lives, Cindy can't find a provider who will take her 7-year-old. Some programs exist in Seattle, but she can't afford to drive him there, and can't see how she'd work that out while getting the other kids off to school and daycare. While she tries to figure out what to do, a calendar on her refrigerator serves as a daily reminder that she has one year to go until she reaches the five-year limit for cash assistance.

"I have to have a job," she says. "Now I'm getting upset. It's like, oh my god, I only have a year."

New order, new challenges

According to a 1999 study by DSHS, nearly 30 percent of families eligible for the Working Connections child care subsidy report difficulties finding child care.

"The biggest challenge is simply finding a provider that is convenient to the home or work location and that reflects the family's values or parenting style," says Frances Carr, community services division spokeswoman for the King County region.

In some areas, child care is in short supply. As the state's economy took off, child care workers left the field in search of better wages. In particular, the number of providers offering care in their homes dropped significantly in the past five years. In 1998, wages for child care aides and teachers averaged \$6.98 and \$8.53 per hour, respectively. The state tried to increase child care employment through the Career and

Wage Ladder Pilot Project, which provides financial assistance to help fund salary increases for child care staff based on education and experience; and through the Child Care Careers Program, which trains Workfirst participants for employment as child care workers.

While subsidies makes it easier for parents to afford child care, it can also make it harder to find. Some providers balk at accepting subsidies, because the state doesn't pay their full rate. To avoid inflating child care costs, DSHS sets its maximum reimbursement 10 percent below the area's prevailing rate.

In addition, the state will only pay for the days the child attended, even though most providers charge parents by the month. Finally, subsidy disbursement can lag a month or more behind the provider's billing period. In an effort to address these barriers, last month the state created the Division of Child Care and Early Learning to improve the subsidy program.

Work schedules can further complicate the search for child care. Due to limited training resources and lack of

higher education, many Workfirst parents find jobs at retail stores, call centers, restaurants, or elsewhere in the service sector. These jobs often require work during evening and weekend shifts. According to research conducted by Child Care Resources, only 2 percent of centers and 14 percent of family homes provide evening care in King County. Even fewer offer care on the weekends. While the state offers reimbursement incentives for providers who offer odd-hours care, in a recent DSHS study, more than half of parents eligible for subsidies who report problems finding child care said their odd work schedules make it difficult.

For some parents, transportation complicates child care choices, says Frances Carr. Parents who rely solely on public transportation face limited child care options. Parents with cars fare better, but breakdowns can spell trouble. In Washington, you're ineligible for cash assistance if your car is worth more than a set limit. While Workfirst helps out by giving families up to \$750 a year for car repairs, car trouble can mean missed days at work or training.

State stretched thin

While the state is working to help Workfirst families overcome these obstacles, it doesn't seem to be enough. Even the parents who make it off cash

assistance still struggle to pay the bills. A recent state Employment Security Department report reveals that 62 percent of those who left cash assistance in 1999 were still living in poverty at the end of 2000.

It could get harder before it gets better. In June, the legislature passed a two-year state services budget that cut welfare by \$23 million. The proposed King County 2002 budget puts the county child care subsidy program on the chopping block. It also includes cutbacks in funds for Child Care Resources.

"It seems like everything is supposed to work out wonderful, but it isn't always that easy," says Cindy Bunch. "There's a lot of obstacles in the way of reaching goals."

Cindy's goal is to complete her GED and take a class in medical terminology, so she has a shot at an open position at the

Highline Medical Services Organization. She worries about meeting Workfirst requirements while pursuing the training — and about the time she has left on cash assistance.

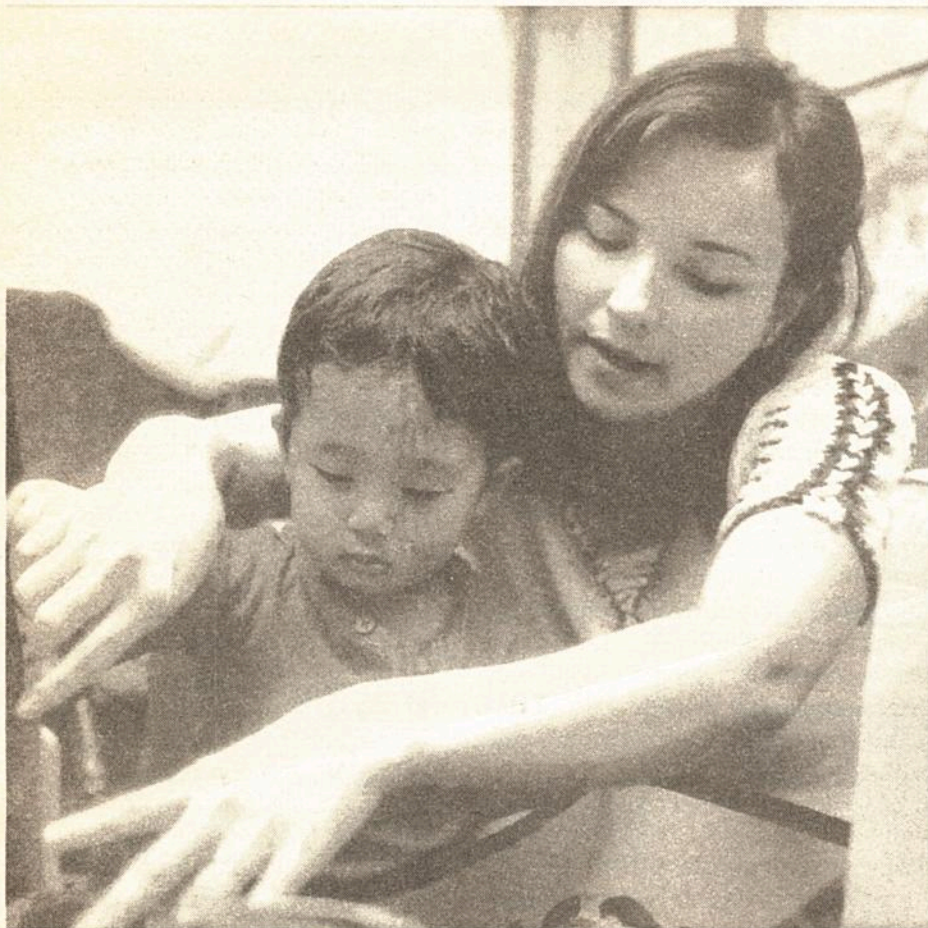
"They always stress how many months I have left, to keep you going. To keep you thinking ahead of time," says Cindy, "Which is good I think."

She's still searching for care for her developmentally disabled son. ■

Some providers balk at accepting child care subsidies, because the state doesn't pay their full rate. To avoid inflating child care costs, DSHS sets its maximum reimbursement 10 percent below the area's prevailing rate.



NADIFA ABDI HAGALEY, LEFT, WAS ABLE TO BALANCE HER WORK AND HER CHILDREN BY WORKING WITH CHILDREN THROUGH THE CHILD CARE CAREERS PROGRAM, COORDINATED BY FAYE MELTON, RIGHT. PHOTO BY ERIK CASTRO.



HOA NGUYEN IS ABLE TO EARN MONEY AND SPEND MORE TIME WITH HER OWN KIDS AND OTHERS, LIKE 1-1/2-YEAR-OLD A.J., AS A GRADUATE OF THE CHILD CARE CAREERS PROGRAM. PHOTO BY ERIK CASTRO.

Child Care Careers Create Child Care Choices

By Shauna Curphey

It's just after breakfast in Hoa Nguyen's home in Seattle's Rainier Vista Seattle public housing site. A small girl in blue pajamas works on a computer at a child-size desk in the corner of Hoa's living room. At a nearby table, a plump toddler and a little girl in a white dress squish Playdoh in their small hands. Above them, a Buddha gazes serenely from a small altar. As a family child care provider, it's Hoa's business to look after these children. As a recent immigrant to the United States from Vietnam, it's her version of the American dream.

Nguyen is a graduate of the Child Care Careers Program, a statewide project created two years ago as part of Washington state's welfare reform legislation. It trains 250 welfare recipients each year to enter the workforce as child care providers, either setting up shop in their own homes, or going to work at child care centers. Child Care Resources, a private non-profit, administers the program in King County — under state contract to train 75 individuals each year.

"I'm happy to have a job," says Hoa, "I love to work with children. That was my hobby, now it has come true."

Hoa received her child care license in 1999, three months after she started training with Child Care Resources. Before she started the program, she wasn't earning an income. She now watches five children in her home. The money she earns has allowed her to move off the cash benefits program Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Since she opened her business, she gave birth to her second son, 8-month-old William, named for William Jefferson Clinton.

"Usually with clients, there's a lot of support and intensive mentoring," says Faye Melton, who coordinates the program for Child Care Resources. "Hoa was very clear with what she wanted to do."

It usually takes nine months or more for participants to complete the training and obtain a license to open a family child care program. Trainees complete over 120 hours of instruction in English as a second language, first aid, HIV/AIDS, CPR, child growth and development, professionalism, and curriculum development.

Continued on Page 18

Where to get help

With average rates in King County ranging from \$335 a month for school-age care to over \$800 per month for infants, child care is, for some, the single largest expense in raising kids. In Seattle, the cost of four years of child care for preschool-age children is more than double the cost of four years of tuition at the University of Washington. The following services can help working families make ends meet.

Working Connections Child Care Program

A statewide program that helps low-income working families pay their child care expenses. To be eligible, parents must fall below 225 percent of the federal poverty level and be working, looking for work, or enrolled in job training. With Working Connections subsidy, a three-person household earning a monthly income of \$2,000 would have a co-pay of \$162.

Parents can apply for child care subsidy online at www.onlinecso.dshs.wa.gov or they can pick up an application at a local Community Service Office — there are 11 throughout King County. Some CSOs allow parents to call and complete the initial child care application over the phone. Children subsidized through Working Connections now make up 20 percent of all the children in licensed child care in Washington state.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program

The Washington legislature created ECEAP to help low-income or at-risk children succeed in school. The program serves three- and four-year-old children whose family's income is at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level. A family of three making less than \$1,341 per month would qualify.

Parents can call for more information at (206) 386-1050, or outside Seattle at (360) 725-2839. ECEAP serves nearly 7,000 children and their families statewide. However, as costs for this program increased faster than funding, it saw a reduction of services in the last fiscal year.

King County Child Care Program

The King County Child Care Program provides child care tuition subsidies for low-income working families living within King County but outside the Seattle city limits. Families qualify for the subsidy if they meet specific income guidelines and are not eligible for other subsidies. Under the program guidelines, a family of three earning between \$2,654 and \$3,538 a month would qualify.

To learn more about King County Child Care, call (206) 296-1362. The program typically has a six- to 12-month waiting list. As part of widespread county budget cuts, King County Child Care is on the chopping block in the proposed 2002 county budget. Child care advocates urge parents who qualify for this program to call King County Executive Ron Sims' office, or their county councilmember, to express their concern. The program serves 370 families in King County.

City of Seattle Childcare Program

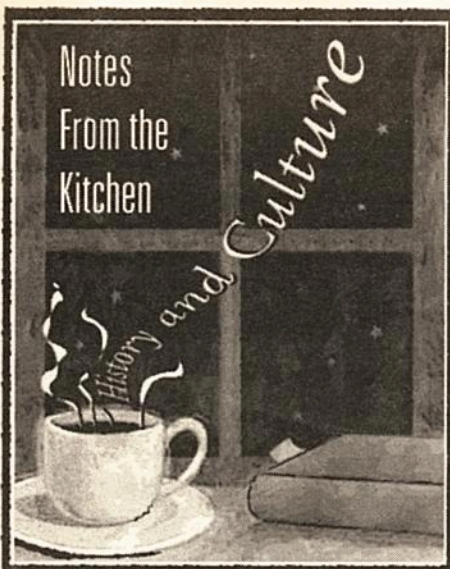
The City of Seattle offers its own child care subsidy program for low-income families who are not eligible for any other subsidy. To be eligible, the parents must live within the city limits, meet income guidelines, and be employed or in job training. Under the city income guidelines, a family of three earning between \$2,744 and \$3,657 a month would be eligible for subsidy. Parents can call for more information at (206) 386-1050. The program typically has a three- to six-month waiting list.

King County Child Care Resources

Child Care Resources is a private nonprofit organization working to improve the quality, affordability, and availability of child care in King County. The organization helps families seeking child care by providing information and referrals, both online and over the phone. Their site (www.childcare.org) offers free advice on how to select a child care provider, along with information on financial assistance. All parents can access their referral services for a small fee, and discounts are available for low-income families. Each year, the program helps over 1,500 families find child care; 80 percent of the parents who request assistance are low-income.

For more information, call (206) 461-3207 in Seattle-North King County, (253) 852-3080 in South King County, (425) 865-9350 in East King County, or visit their web site. As part of the proposed county budget cuts, Child Care Resources will lose \$250,000 in funding. ■

—Compiled by Shauna Curphey



Cold Comfort for Peasants

By Liz Smith

Any student of 20th century history would soon comprehend that a large maximum-security jail could be filled with its despots. Notable for their rotten immorality and inordinate cruelty, some (Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot) are so monstrous that their names will forever be identified with supreme evil. Then there are some who inflicted great harm yet are scarcely thought of nowadays: namely, Generalissimo Francisco Franco, dictator of Spain for 36 years.

Spain held democratic elections in the spring of 1936, giving power to a coalition government called Popular Front. This state of political equilibrium lasted five months, during which time a coup was plotted. On July 17, Franco launched his troops from Casablanca in Morocco. They ferried across the Strait of Gibraltar, began fighting in Andalusia, and then battled throughout Spain. The Nationalist rebels, on the side of Franco, received help from Mussolini, dictator of Italy. Hitler contributed soldiers and his Condor Legion aircraft, which bombed the city of Guernica, immortalized in Picasso's tragic mural. The Nationals were also helped by Franklin Roosevelt, who sent trucks, tankers of oil and fuel, and other war materiel. The troops on the other side, the Republicans, received aid only from the Soviet Union and a battalion of soldiers from around the world, called the International Brigade. Part of this body of soldiers were young and idealistic men and women from America — the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

This bloody and terrible war, with hundreds of thousands of casualties, ended in 1939. Franco declared himself El Caudillo — The Leader. He ordered the Guardia Civil to arrest returning men as they stepped off the trains, and send these "enemies" to concentration camps, or worse. As a final devastation, Spain suffered a drought for two years. The rest of the world was occupied fighting World War II. In her isolation south of the Pyrenees, Spain was alone in her grief and starvation.

Spain, as so many countries after civil war, was in a sorry state, yet was able to claw and gasp her way to prosperity. Franco, eyeing the dwindling pile of pesetas in the national treasury, began encouraging foreign investment. He let the United States establish military bases in exchange for U.S. dollars. He lifted passport restrictions. In came floods of tourists and their fat wallets, and out went the landless peasants, to go off and wash dishes in other parts of Europe, and send money back home.

Finally, Franco's death was announced in November, 1975, and by the end of that day the liquor stores were out of champagne. Juan Carlos ascended to the throne, democratic elections were held, and a new Constitution was approved.

During the coronation ceremony, Juan Carlos stated he would be "king of all Spaniards." He presided over the change from fascist totalitarianism to a free society governed by a parliamentary democracy. He is still the king today. Spain was fortunate to have such a wise and politically mature leadership. Why can't they all be like that?

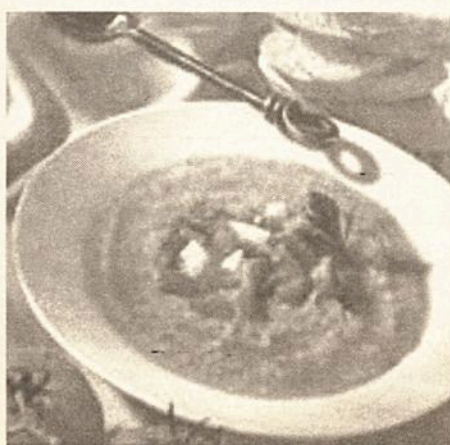
Anyway, that's enough about politics. The recipe for you today is from southern Spain, in Andalusia, the poorest region in the country. The soup — gazpacho — got its humble beginnings from the wages of the laborers, who were paid with bread and oil. To this meager fare was added whatever vegetables were at hand. This is peasant food; I have kept the recipe as traditional as possible. ■

Gazpacho

(yield: six one-cup servings)

- 1 large yellow bell pepper
- 2 red bell peppers
- 3 large ripe beefsteak tomatoes
- 4 slices of white bread
- 1 large cucumber
- 1 large clove of garlic
- 4 tbsp fresh lime juice
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 7 tbsp tomato paste
- 6 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 6 tbsp water
- 3-4 tbsp diced sweet onion

1. Roast bell peppers a few inches under the broiler, turning until skin blackens. Put in a plastic bag to steam and set aside until cooled.
2. Slice tomatoes in half, sideways, and scoop out the seeds with a butter knife. Blast under broiler for about two minutes. When cool, remove skin and stem. Set aside.
3. Toast bread, leaving in oven to dry out thoroughly, then break into small pieces.
4. Peel the peppers and remove core and seeds, reserving juice.
5. Peel cucumber. Cut lengthwise and scoop out seeds with a teaspoon. Cut into chunks.
6. Peel garlic clove. Cut lime in half and juice, to equal 4 tablespoons.
7. Puree everything in the blender, in this order: lime juice, garlic, salt, pepper, sugar, peppers and juice, toast, cucumber chunks, tomato paste, tomatoes.
8. Pour into a big bowl and stir in the olive oil and water.
9. Chill soup for a few hours, to let flavors blend and mellow. Serve in chilled bowls, garnished with the diced onion.



This soup got its humble beginnings from the wages of the laborers, who were paid with bread and oil.

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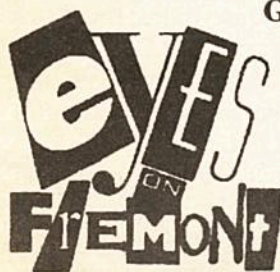


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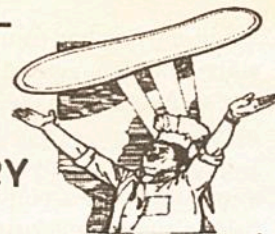


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**Wednesday, July 4, 3rd Avenue and
James Street, 5 p.m.** Officers were
flagged down by a 60-year-old white
male, who said he had been sleeping in
the bus shelter, and when he awoke
found his money and bus pass missing
from his pants' pocket. He said he had
been robbed three times in the past
month. He appeared intoxicated and
was uninjured — no action was taken.

Thursday, July 5, Pine Street, 10 a.m.
Police received a call about a shoplifter
in custody at Nordstroms. They
responded to the security office and
were informed by the store detective
that the suspect, a 44-year-old
transient black female, had picked up
a set of body wash and spray, and then
walked over to the register and
attempted to return the items for a
refund without having purchased them.
A records check on the suspect showed
an outstanding warrant for theft. The
suspect was booked into King County
Jail.

**Friday, July 6, Harrison Street, 5:20
p.m.** The complainant, a 19-year-old
homeless man, and his two brothers
were playing music for donations on
the Seattle Center grounds. He reports
that after having finished playing, they
counted their tips, which amounted to
around \$100. They noticed a young
male approaching them, who then
grabbed the money from the homeless
man's hand and fled the Space Needle
vicinity. The thief was not found.

**Monday, July 16, 1300 block of
University Street, 12.30 p.m.** While
police officers were investigating a
robbery, a 35-year-old black male
approached them and said he wanted
the state to euthanise him. The officer
spoke with the man, who explained
that he was sick of his life and his job
and he wanted to die. He had no
money, was homeless, and had just
lost his car. He said he had attempted
to commit suicide a few days ago with
a gun, but could not as his hands were
shaking too badly. The gun was with
the lost car. He was transported to
Harborview Medical Center for a mental
evaluation. ■

**Streetwatch is compiled from Seattle
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CAREERS Continued from Page 15

For every woman like Hoa trained by Child Care Resources, there are five more low-income families who can go to work knowing their children are in licensed, culturally-appropriate care. Since the legislature reformed Welfare into Workfirst in 1997, parents receiving cash assistance must work, attend job training, or perform community service. This mandate created a huge need for child care. Not just any child care: Workfirst families need licensed child care close to their homes, close to their values, and in their own language. In a 1999 study conducted among parents eligible for or receiving child care subsidy, DSHS discovered that 95 percent of parents chose their current child care arrangement because the provider spoke their language. A majority of parents also cited shared values and a convenient location as deciding factors.

"A lot of families want to go somewhere where people speak the same language and eat the same food," says Melton. Most of the providers trained in King County's Child Care Careers program are bilingual, and all of them accept state child care subsidy. Melton counts the program's ability to increase the availability of culturally-appropriate child care as its biggest success.

Her program is not without its challenges. Despite the huge need for licensed care in low-income communities, Melton has a hard time convincing people that child care pays off as a career choice. Child care workers earn \$7.73 per hour on average. The two providers interviewed for this story did not wish to disclose their monthly earnings. But family child care providers like Hoa fare a bit better than these poverty-level wages — and, since they are home with their young children, they spare themselves child care hassles and expenses that other Workfirst families face.

Across Martin Luther King Boulevard, but culturally a world away from Hoa, Nadifa Abdi looks after six Somali children in her Rainier Vista family child care program. From Somalia, Nadifa journeyed to the United States by way of Kenya and Italy. When she arrived in the states in 1997, Nadifa was pregnant with her first son. Seven months after he was born, she enrolled in the Child Care Careers program.

When she finished training, Nadifa convinced her husband, Abdurashid, that she should open a child care business in their home.

"My wife pushed me to do it," admits Abdul. He's convinced now: Together they transformed their home into a bustling child care program for four Somali children plus their two young sons. While we talk, their oldest son, three-year-old Jeyte, leaps into the room, yelling "Superman!" and sporting a baby-blanket cape. "He's an active boy," smiles Nadifa. "Whew! I'm tired."

Despite the time Nadifa devotes to caring for six lively children, she and her husband mentor other women in the program. Some come to Nadifa as interns completing their child care training. Others are friends and neighbors. "They're able to see Nadifa doing it," says Abdul, "They see, 'This family has tried, why not us?' So they try it themselves."

Abdul and Nadifa also help families untangle paperwork and other licensing hurdles so that they too can open a family child care program. Abdul was recently elected to serve on the Child Care Resources board of directors.

"When you come to another country, even though we have a background and education, it's like starting all over," says Abdul, "we felt very lucky to meet Child Care Resources."

Melton and her colleague, Connie Powell, spend 75 percent of their time in the field, visiting alumni, forging partnerships with community organizations, and screening new recruits. Much of their work can't be counted on a progress report. It's dealing with the day-to-day struggles women face as they embark on a new path.

When Nadifa needed to build a fence around her small yard in order to meet family child care licensing requirements, Child Care Resources helped secure funding for the expense. At a recent visit, Faye and Connie discovered that Hoa has been paying out of her pocket for food for the children in her care. They told her she qualifies for funding to pay for meal expenses and promised to bring her the information she needs to sign up.

Since 1998, they've enrolled over 150 women. "The ladies we've helped all over are off TANF," says Faye. "We've helped them become business owners or receive skills to find employment in child care programs. They're working towards self-sufficiency." ■

"I'm happy to have a job; I love to work with children. That was my hobby, now it has come true."

—Hoa Nguyen, day care provider

The Child Care Careers Program's ability to increase the availability of culturally-appropriate child care counts as its biggest success, believes coordinator Faye Melton.

CLASSICS CORNER



by Perfess'r Harris

Ever since we at Classics Corner received word that our \$300 tax refund check is in the mail, we've been thinking about Cimon, a popular aristocratic politician in fifth century B.C. Athens whose politics consisted of buying off the poor while defending the interests of the rich.

Most of what we know of Cimon comes from Thucydides, the historian of the Peloponnesian War, and Plutarch, the first century A.D. teacher, priest, politician, and biographer. Both were aristocrats themselves, and Thucydides was even a relative. But Plutarch, who considered Cimon's pro-democracy rivals to be radicals, is his biggest fan.

Much to Cimon's dismay, Athenian democracy expanded during his lifetime to include the poorest citizens in nearly all levels of government. Naval power, which depended upon working poor sailors and rowers, had become the foundation of Athenian wealth and empire. Through a mix of bribery, personal charisma, and political connections, Cimon managed to keep this rising class happy for quite some time, all without giving them political rights.

Within Athenian democracy, which had no chief executive or formal political parties, the path to power was to become a general in the military, one of the few elected offices available. Most political appointments were made literally at random, a fact that Plato, among others, despised. Nonetheless, a popular general could become known as the First Citizen, a position of power, prestige, and leadership that depended upon the fickle goodwill of the people, good military fortune, and a strong political network. Most generals, not unlike Al Gore or George Bush, came from wealthy, aristocratic families.

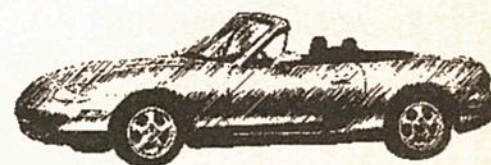
As we read Plutarch's brief biography of Cimon, we are struck by a number of other parallels. In his younger years, says Plutarch, Cimon was not known to be the brightest bulb on the tree. Young Cimon is described as "disorderly in his habits, fond of drinking," and "having nothing whatever of the quickness and ready speech of his countrymen." Cimon was also known to have had a thing for his sister, Elpinice. While we have no knowledge of incest within the Bush family, superficial evidence points quite certainly toward some degree of inbreeding.

While his democratic rival Pericles was said to have a rather Al Gore-like stick up his butt, Cimon had the common touch. Like the early machine politicians of Boston and Chicago, Cimon would dispense largesse wherever he went. Well-dressed attendants were known to routinely give their cloaks away to the poor. According to Plutarch, "He enjoined them to carry a considerable quantity of coin about them, which they were to convey silently into the hands of the better class of poor men." For a time, he was the most popular man in Athens.

Once the people tasted real power, however, Cimon's bribes meant little or nothing. We at Classics Corner, being of firm belief that we know better than the Bush administration how to spend \$300, will happily take the money. But come November, we'll be voting Democrat. We might be craven, but we're not stupid. ■

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Mid-August Notables

Saturday, 8/11

Campaign 5000/ African American Community Endowment Fund invites you to join us for a day of walking, eating, and entertainment at the Walk-A-Thon 2001, sponsored by Black Dollar Days Task Force, a nonprofit agency working to promote economic self-sufficiency among inner-city residents; for info and pledge forms 206-684-1744 or 206-324-3114.

World Conference Against Racism informational meeting on the United Nations, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., at Bastyr University; free, lunch provided, register by sending contact info to Robert Yanas, C/O United to End Racism, P.O. Box 1711, Seattle, WA 98111, 206-720-9781, robryan98122@yahoo.com.

Cannabis reform event at Myrtle Edwards Park, corner of Alaskan Way and Broad St., Pier 70, 5 - 7 p.m., volunteers needed to set-up, rage, and break down for the Aug 18 - 19 Hempfest, meeting at the 3 Big Rocks sculpture in the middle of the Park; orientation/walkthrough for volunteer staff members; for more info <http://www.seattlehempfest.com> or volunteers@hemp.net or 206-781-5734.

Monday, 8/13

Potluck meeting for Out Front Labor Coalition / Gay Pride at Work, AFL-CIO, at Labor Temple, Room 208, 2800 1st Ave. at Broad St., 6:30 p.m., everyone who is pro-union and pro-GLBT is welcome and encouraged to join OFLC (Union membership not required), contact co-chairs Bruce or Sarah at 206-903-9488 or oflcpride@aol.com.

Meeting of Seattle Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Seattle First Baptist Church, 1111 Harvard Ave.; 7 p.m., this and subsequent second Mondays, PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons, their families, and friends, info 206-325-7724.

Tuesday, 8/14

Experience Homo Project (EHP) day conference "by and for queer youth," at Seattle Central Community College; 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., free; EHP is a one day by and for queer youth conference, including queer writers space, fashion and drag by VAIN, self defense by Home Alive, queer musicians panel, and many others, info Michal Blum, Seattle Counsel-

ing Service, 206-323-1768 or michalblum@hotmail.com.

Ongoing series of potlucks for the progressive community to come together and share ideas, meeting at the Trinity United Methodist Church, 6512-23rd Ave NW, near buses 18 and 75; 6:30 p.m., this and subsequent second Tuesdays, no formal agenda, a few tables will be set aside for specific topic discussion of the group's choosing. Bring food and beverages to share along with your own dishes and utensils, info 206-632-7828 or seattlepotluck@yahoo.com.

Wednesday, 8/15

Deadline for applications to fall **Movement Activist Apprenticeship Program**, help train the next generation of organizers and next generation of people of color organizing for social change; interns receive a \$200 per week stipend for the six weeks in the field, with all housing, health care, and local transportation expenses covered. At the conclusion of the program, MAAP connects graduates in promising jobs with progressive community and labor organizations, contact Irene at training@ctwo.org or 510-594-4046.

Thursday, 8/16

Monthly meeting of the planning committee for **International Women's Day**, this and subsequent 3rd Thursdays, 8 - 9 a.m., at the Crocodile Cafe, 2200 2nd Ave. in Belltown everyone is welcome to attend and help plan the event near March 8, info 206-632-8547 or femme2@scn.org.

Meeting of Bellevue/ Eastside Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, this and subsequent 3rd Thursdays, 7 p.m. at First United Methodist Church, 1934 108th Avenue NE, Bellevue, info 425-468-9345.

Tuesday, 8/21

The Safe Schools Coalition meeting, a public-private partnership of 91 organizations and 400+ individuals working to help Washington State schools become safe places where every child can learn, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, all are welcome, this and subsequent 3rd Tuesdays, 2 - 4 p.m. summer hours, at University Friends

Meeting House, 4001 9th Ave. NE; info <http://www.safeschools-wa.org>.

A basic publicity workshop for non-profit arts and social-service organizations that need to publicize events and services on a shoestring budget, workshop-goers are also invited to bring current publicity or marketing materials for a free, on-the-spot consultation after the event; 2 - 4 p.m., at Bellevue City Hall, Council Conference Room, 11511 Main St., Bellevue; \$15 per person, pre-registration suggested, participants are welcome to bring a brown-bag lunch, info 206-523-7300.

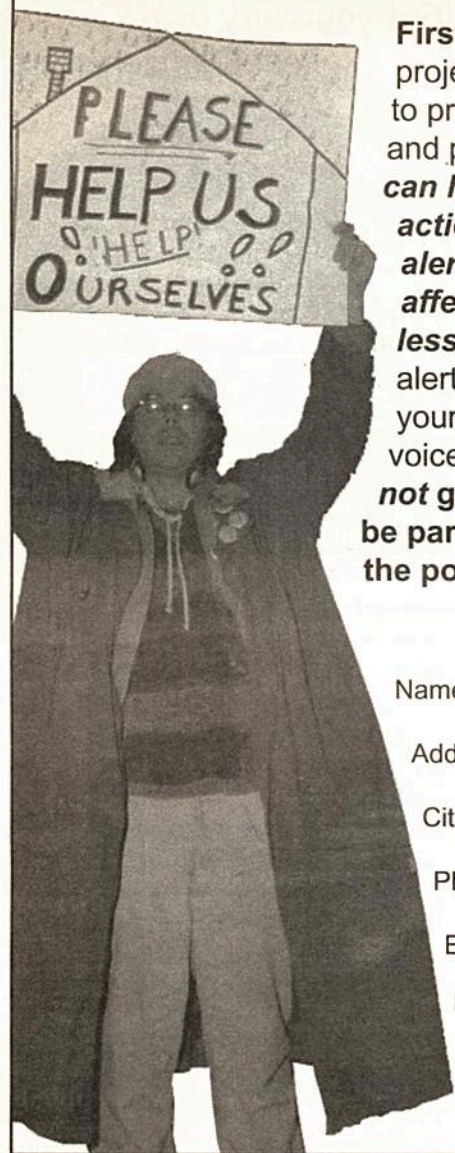
New adoption support group for Gay / Lesbian / bisexual / transgender folks, Kaleidoscope of Families, a program of Stonewall Recovery Services, will offer a monthly support group for those contemplating or already involved in adopting children; open to individuals involved in any form of adoption; free, this and subsequent 3rd Tuesdays, 6:30 - 8 p.m., at 430 Broadway E.; for info or to receive e-mail announcements about the group contact Michael Butler mbutler@stonewallrecovery.org or 206-461-4546.

A special space for transgendered or trans-questioning youth, ages 14 to 22 for those who want to hang with similar youth; this and subsequent 3rd Tuesdays, 7 - midnight, at Lambert House, 1818 Fifteenth Ave.; info Miles Conrad, Lambert House Transgender Youth Program coordinator, 206-322-2515x13 or miles@lamberthouse.org or <http://www.lamberthouse.org>.

Meeting of white women organizing against racism, a place for white women to get support from one another in doing anti-racist work; purpose to challenge racism at personal, cultural, and institutional levels and to transform ourselves into allies of people of color; this and subsequent 3rd Tuesdays; 7 - 9 p.m., at Lesbian Resource Center at 23rd and Jackson; info Sarah Mello Temple 206-323-2396 or stemple@ywcaworks.org.

Green Party of East King County monthly meeting, the Eastside's newest political party, all are welcome, this and subsequent 3rd Tuesdays, 7 - 9 p.m., at Redmond Public Library to receive future announcements, email eastside-greens-announce-subscribe@yahoo.com, info Roger hecleblanc @yahoo.com or 425-822-2480. ■

Do Something!



First things First is the organizing project of *Real Change* that works to preserve low-income housing and put a roof over every bed. **You can help by pledging to take action when First things First alerts you to critical decisions affecting the poor and homeless.** When you join our action alert list we will contact you by your preferred method when your voice needs to be heard. **You will not get a lot of junk mail. You will be part of creating real change for the poor and homeless.**

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Mail to: Real Change
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Call (206) 441-3247 for more info.

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You can also visit us at: <http://www.realchangenews.org/StreetLife>

citizens participation project



Don't Let Congress Skimp on Food Stamps

Issue: The House could decide as early as October how much money to give to the Food Stamp Program.

Background: The Food Stamp Program is scheduled for reauthorization by Congress by October 1, 2002, but may well be decided by October, 2001. The reauthorization will make critical decisions on who is eligible for food stamps, how easy or difficult access to the program is, how adequate benefits are, and other key questions. There are about 17 million people relying on food stamps for basic nutrition, and millions more who are in need but not receiving benefits.

On July 26, the House Agricultural Committee — of which Washington state congressman Rick Larsen is a member — began marking up a farm bill which includes a series of positive improvements in the Food Stamp Program. After a very brief discussion, the committee voted to approve over \$3 billion in new Food Stamp funding, as compared to an earlier proposal that only contained \$2 billion, and even earlier versions that had no new Food Stamp money.

The full House is expected to take action on the bill after its August recess.

According to the Food Research and Action Center, there is considerably less hunger in America than there was before the Food Stamp Program was overhauled in the mid 1970s. One crucial reason for that is growth and improvements in food stamps, other nutrition programs, and the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Food stamps are a critical support for millions of working families and should be (and can be) a support for millions more. In an economy that still is not providing enough year-round, full-time, high wage jobs — and with a politics that has allowed the minimum wage for a full-time job to fall far below the poverty level for even a small family — a set of effective public supports that help make work pay is essential. Food Stamps, the Earned Income Credit, Medicaid, and child care help are the most crucial of these.

Food stamps have one distinct advantage: they are provided on a monthly basis and are more readily available to meet the family's urgent current needs. For low-income working families, food stamps often make the difference between hunger and food adequacy. And the food stamps help free up cash that is badly needed to stay current on rent and utilities, get access to medical care, or pay school fees.

Action: Contact your local congressman and tell him or her to support the current bill provisions for \$3 billion for food stamps.

North and East King County
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(425) 640-0233
jayinslee@mail.house.gov

Island, Skagit, Whatcom Counties
Rick Larsen
Member of House Agricultural Committee
(425) 252-3188
(800) 562-1385

Most of Seattle, Vashon Island
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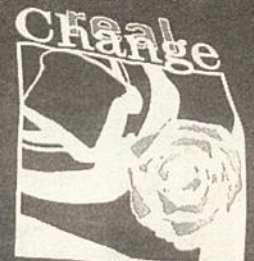
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Mockingbird Times

Washington State Foster Care
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AUGUST 9, 2001

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VOLUME I, ISSUE 1

Teaching the Birds How to Sing

Foster care advocate Jim Theofelis hopes to put the ideas of kids back into the system

BY AMANDA SHAMAN AND ELI WILSON
ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS BY JULIA HIGUERA

IN 1977, JIM THEOFELIS HAD A DREAM. He wished to start a company that focused almost solely on changing the way that Washington State deals with foster and homeless youth. Twenty-three years later, his dream has blossomed into The Mockingbird Society, a statewide, non-profit organization that has this paper as one of its major components.

Theofelis has worked across the board and back in senior management positions within different agencies, in group/residential homes, and, for the last 15 years, as a therapist with his own practice. He was also instrumental in passing the Homeless Youth Prevention Education Act of 1999. The HOPE Act provided \$2.8 million to help fund centers for kids who want to leave the streets, and to start a living skills program for 16 – 18-year-olds poised to leave the foster care system.

Even though he has a Masters degree in counseling and psychology, Theofelis believes, "The real education I've got is from the young people. They've taught me about surviving and making it through."

Last month, Jim Theofelis sat down with the *Mockingbird Times* and gave us the scoop on The Mockingbird Society.

What made you want to get involved in foster care?
I remember the first night I worked outreach on First Avenue and Pike. There were probably 300 to 400 kids down there and every night you'd see the same thing. It was called the Famous Donut House, right across

the street from the Public Market. I remember feeling like this is where I belong. I felt comfortable talking to the young people.

There was also this piece of it, I realized many years later after I went through my own therapy, that although I was down there trying to save kids, there was also a part of me that was trying to save the kid in me. The kid that was wounded and hurting and did not have the awareness at that time to know that. I think the other thing that brought me here was that I have an affinity for young people who are struggling against all odds.

Why do you stay involved year after year?

I was told one time to find something you love then find someone to pay you to do that. I have been very, very lucky to be in a field that really feeds me in a lot of ways. So as long as I continue to enjoy that work, and get something out of it, I'll continue to do it. I have had a fair amount of trauma in my life and one of the things I learned pretty early is the good fortune of having someone who cares about you going through the trauma with you.

I think that's some of what my compassion is for kids in the foster care system who have had, many of them, much more trauma than I, and have also managed that and survived all that on their own. The strength that they've shown and the resiliency that I've seen from young people have really been an inspiration to me.

What gave you the idea for The Mockingbird Society?

In some ways I have had the idea, although not formulated for many years, of starting my own organization that will be helpful. I think that in many ways the system and organizations get to a place where it's easy to burn staff out. Over the years, I've seen too many programs where you essentially have abused and neglected adults taking care of abused and neglected youth.

Can you give an overview of The Mockingbird Society (MBS)?

MBS currently has three main components to it: a newspaper designed and produced by youth; a training institute for professionals in the field as well as foster parents; bringing creative and different models of care to the foster care system.

How would you change the foster care system?

I think there are a couple huge problems that have to be addressed in order to make meaningful change.

First, find ways to reduce the number of placements most kids experience. It is mind boggling that we can be talking about kids who have "attachment issues," and then we move them into 20 different homes. Many kids come into the system because their family had some problems, but after 10-15 different foster/group homes, now they really do have some serious problems.

The longest a youngster can stay at one place is 18 months. I think that's not a bad general guideline, but if

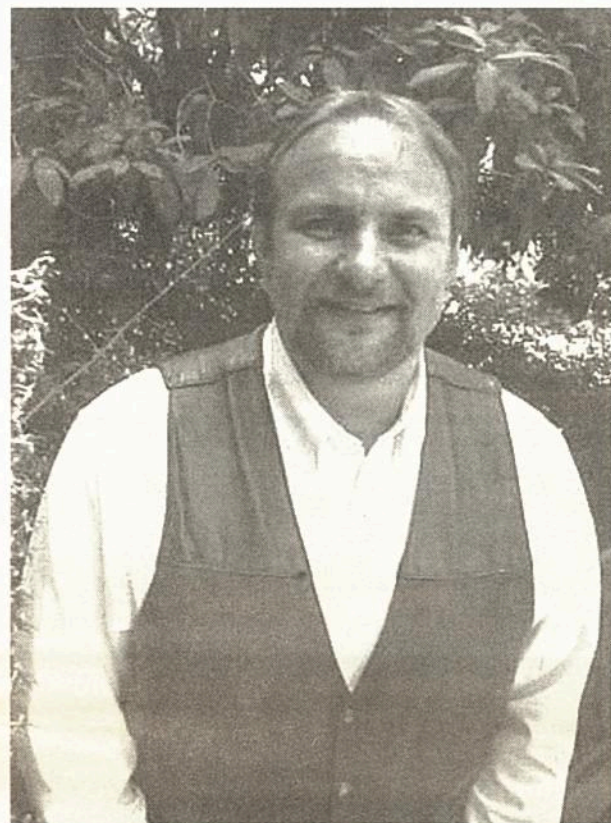


Photo of Jim Theofelis.

there is a young person in a foster home or group home who has been doing really well and is connected there, to move this person, just to move that person, is ludicrous. I think there are these arbitrary rules that say we should move a kid at 18 months because somebody decide that was a good number.

A second big issue for me is sibling separation. When kids come to the system, if they have a brother or a sister or more, we have to find a way to keep them together. All of a sudden we take the younger kids one way and put the older kids by themselves in another home. So many of those kids experience depression, rage and all kinds of feelings because they feel abandoned or like they should be taking care of their younger siblings.

Third, my experience is that when kids first come to the system, there is a lot of movement within the first 30-60 days, when people are trying to decide if these kids are going to go right back home or if Child Protective Services is going to keep them in foster care. Wouldn't it be better to have a place where kids could go and stay with all their brothers and sisters until we have a plan and could move them then into long-term placement?

We also need to do a better job with some populations — kids of color, kids who already have a mental illness, gay and lesbian youth who come to the system at a later age and their sexual identity starts to emerge. Their families or communities can't handle it, so they are kicked out or run away, as a way to protect their family from knowing this information about them.

THEOFELIS CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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Mockingbird and nest logo by Julia Higuera

Letter from the Editor

GREETINGS! On behalf of the entire staff and board of directors at The Mockingbird Society I both welcome and introduce you to the *Mockingbird Times*.

This is our inaugural edition of what we hope becomes a regular monthly event for years to come. The Mockingbird Society is a newly founded organization dedicated to improving the current and future lives of those children and youth who are in the legal custody of Washington State. We hope to build an organization that provides creative opportunities for young people to participate and provide leadership in the social justice movement to improve the foster care system.

The *Mockingbird Times* will serve as a forum for young people who are or have been in the foster care system to speak out. For the young people on staff at the *Mockingbird Times*, this is also paid employment with all of the benefits and expectations that come with a "real job." I am so proud of the current group of young people we have hired. All of them have life experience in Washington's foster care system. They have brought a sense of passion and thoughtfulness



Mockingbird staff pictured clockwise from top left: Jim Theofelis, Amanda Shaman, Valerie Douglas, Molly Rhodes, Julia Higuera, and Eli Wilson. Siri Throm Saxe not shown.

to the *Mockingbird Times* that I am sure you will recognize in their writings.

We need your support. We have raised enough "start up" funds to carry us through December of this year. We are busy writing grants, planning fundraisers, and speaking to community groups. On behalf of the thousands of children and adolescents from around Seattle/King County and the entire state of Washington, I encourage you to consider a gift to the *Mockingbird Times*.

Join The Mockingbird Society and declare your commitment to our most vulnerable children and youth. My commitment to you is that we will work hard, embrace the difficult issues, and above all, we will continue to create new opportunities and hope for the children and youth we serve.

Jim Theofelis

Poetry Corner

New What-Ifs?

New House, New Home
What if I cry?
It's not my own
I've moved yet again.
No time to say goodbye.

New House, New Family
What if they don't like me?
Gotta get along.
Don't know them,
Don't even know my mom.

New House, New Rules
What if I break them?
Will they throw me out?
Gotta try harder.

New House, New School
What if I fail?
I'm out of my area,
my friends, all gone

New House, New Kid
What if this is where I can stay?
Safe... warm... LOVED.
Too good to be true,
But I am hoping.

!!CRASH!!
Oops!

New House, New Home
It's never my own.

AMANDA SHAMAN

If you're a young poet anywhere in Washington State, we want to publish your poetry. Submit your poems to www.mockingbirdsociety.org

If there's an issue you want to see *Mockingbird Times* cover, we want to know about it. Contact the *Times* with your ideas and suggestions at www.mockingbirdsociety.org



Quirky Bird Quote

"Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy... [and] sing their hearts out for us"

— Atticus Finch
in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Meet Our Staff

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jim Theofelis

OPERATIONS MANAGER

Siri Throm Saxe

STAFF ADVISORS

Valerie Douglas, Molly Rhodes

STAFF WRITERS

Julia Higuera, Amanda Shaman, Eli Wilson

THANK YOUS

Richard Hugo House, *Real Change*, Chuck Bartlett, Dani Turk, Children's Home Society, Sugar, Jim for letting us be a part of this, Independent Living Program, the staff of *Mockingbird Times*, mom and dad for giving me the strength

The Mockingbird Times
1820 12th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98122
(206) 322-0438
www.mockingbirdsociety.org

What they should ask you at an intake: What do you need to feel safe?

Join the Mockingbird Society:

make a difference in the lives of Washington's most vulnerable youth

THE MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY is an independent, non-profit organization that is dedicated to improving the safety, quality of life and future of the children and adolescents living in the Washington State foster care/group home system. We are committed to saving and improving children's lives by providing resources, leadership and expertise to the Washington State foster care/group home system.

All members of the Mockingbird Society will receive the *Mockingbird Times* monthly.

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To donate by mail: Please fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to The Mockingbird Society, to The Mockingbird Society, 1820 12th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98122

Eli Wilson, Staff Writer

Tell us a little bit about yourself

I am 19 years old. I am a YAIT (Young Adult In Transition) resident of the downtown YMCA of Seattle. I am very involved in my community. I enjoy playing baseball and bowling with people my own age. Right now I am collecting and fixing computers.

What are some issues that you find important?

I am part of a Youth Advisory Board, and we make legislative bills on several issues. I want kids to have places to go once they "age-out." I also want people to go through more extensive and intensive screenings before they can become foster parents. We need better parenting programs.

What is your foster care experience?

I was placed in care when I was 7 years old. I went through 15 homes before the YMCA placed me in a permanent home when I was 12 years old. When I was 18, I was kicked out by my foster parents because I had "aged-out" of the system. I then spent nearly a month out on the streets until the YAIT Program turned me onto the right path.

If you could change one thing within the system, what would it be?

I would change the size of the caseloads that case managers have to deal with. This way, kids would get their needs met faster.

Why did you join the Mockingbird Times?

I thought that working for a newspaper sounded cool and would be a good use of my talents. It seemed like a great opportunity to involve foster youth in the community, and to share my experiences and poetry.

What do you hope The Mockingbird Society (MBS) will accomplish?

I hope that people can see that teens and all youth can make an impact in government, legislature, and in the community with the things we say. I also hope that MBS will give young people a voice in the matters that are really important to us, not just what adults think we think is important. 🐦

Molly Rhodes, Staff Advisor

Tell us a little about yourself

I am 26 years old, and I spend my spare time watching theatre, reading, and writing. I have a keen interest in arts funding and homelessness issues.

What's your own background that led you to this job? Why did you join the newspaper?

Tim Harris, the executive director of *Real Change*, told me Jim Theofelis was looking for newspaper help. I have laid out *Real Change* since last spring, and liked the idea of lending my newspaper skills to another paper I felt was trying to give a voice to a population that doesn't traditionally have one.

What was one of your earliest perceptions about the foster care system?

The TV character Punky Brewster in the 1980s. I figured every foster parent was like hers: they spend years with their foster child, always interacting with them like most parents do, until they can get approval to adopt this child.

What do you hope The Mockingbird Society is able to accomplish?

I believe the Mockingbird Society can help to shed light on ways to make the system more responsive to the kids it's supposed to serve. 🐦

THEOFELIS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

We've got to find ways to address the needs of these populations.

Do you think the system is doing the best it can, or do you think workers are doing what is easiest for them?

I think there are thousands of committed, dedicated professionals in the state Department of Social and Health Services and out of DSHS that are working hard every day. I also think that because the system is so intense and there are so many young people and the obstacles are so strong, it's easy for folks to give up. That's what I mean when I say abused and neglected adults working with abused and neglected kids. We still have most group homes where staff are making \$9-10 an hour. Usually the youngest and most inexperienced staff people in the field are taking care of some really difficult kids.

We end up having an attitude that nothing changes but the faces. "I know the behavior, I've seen a kid like that before." Anyone who deals with the public in an intense way risks having that come over them as a part of their style. So on the one hand I do believe there are a lot of good folks, or else we'd have a lot of kids dying. Somebody's doing some good work. At the same time, we've got some huge problems on what to do with folks when they need a break or they're burned out.

What is your goal regarding the newspaper component?

Number one, giving young people who have had direct experience in the foster care/group care system and/or homelessness a vehicle to tell the rest of us what that was like and how it can be improved. I think we've got a lot of folks running around talking about how to make things better, and even though it's a cliché these days, I don't think we ask the customers enough what works and what doesn't.

Number two, giving young people a voice for their creative talents, poetry, and how they view the world. So we can be reminded that a person coming through the system is more than somebody's treatment plan. That they also have the same kind of interests that all kids across the state have.

Number Three, educating John Q. Public about the many talents, riches, and resiliency that kids who have gone through the system have to offer to the rest of the community.

Do you think the paper will change views of people and if so how?

I think it will change people's views. I don't know how yet. Some of that depends on how good of a job we do as a newspaper. I think if we can find a way to get young people like you to say what you want to say and put your ideas out there, people reading your words are going to be changed in a really important way. I think there are still some strong, negative stereotypes about who these kids are in foster care/ group care, and who they are that are homeless. When people come to learn just how articulate you are, how much thinking you do about your life and general issues facing all Americans, I think they will be both pleased and surprised. Many of them will be shocked that you have this much talent and thoughtfulness about who you are in the world.

How do you think The Mockingbird Society will impact the kids across the State? How will the Mockingbird Times inspire youth to submit their own articles, etc.?

There is something very exciting about having something you wrote be published. I'm hoping this is something kids from Yakima, Vancouver, Olympia, Everett, and all over the state can be excited about.

THEOFELIS CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Julia Higuera, Staff Writer

Tell us a little bit about yourself

I am 21 years old. My favorite things are writing, poetry, singing, music, and interior design.

What are some issues that you find important?

I think that making sure children and adolescents have homes to go to where the foster parents care about the foster children and not about the money they will receive. Another issue I find important is when there is no help for young adults in their older years (21-25). Most people believe that at this age you should be established, but some young adults in this group are on their own or transition into a living arrangement without coming from a financially or emotionally stable background.

What is your foster care experience?

I have been out of foster care for almost four years now. My experience while I was there was not good. I was put in more than 25 homes, starting at the age of 7. Most of the parents were emotionally abusive, some physical, some neglectful. Then there were the ones who were comforting, caring, understanding, and good at heart. So my basic experience was that not everyone cares about you, but not everyone is against you.

If you could change one thing within the system, what would it be?

I would change who gets to be a foster parent.

Why did you join the Mockingbird Times?

I joined because I love to write, give my opinions, and listen to other people's opinions. I feel that writing expresses my feelings.

What do you hope The Mockingbird Society (MBS) will accomplish?

I hope that MBS will make a great paper and I hope the MBS in general will achieve all of its goals by helping teens and young adults in life with their accomplishments. 🐦

Siri Throm Saxe, Operations Manager

Tell us a little about yourself

I am 33 years old, and the mother of a wonderful 10-month-old boy. We love to garden and play in the yard, and go camping. We are very interested in education and children's issues.

What's your own background that led you to this job? Why did you join the newspaper?

I have worked in a non profit for homeless youth for the last five years as a Senior Secretary and as a Grants Analyst. Jim Theofelis also worked there, and when he told me his vision for Mockingbird Society some two years ago, I knew I wanted to be involved. I also have a degree in journalism from Western Washington, so I am hoping my ideas and experience will be useful to the staff.

What was one your earliest perceptions about the foster care system?

I guess my first public vision of foster care was the TV show *Different Strokes*. What a clouded vision. I knew it was far from reality because my best friend's mother was a huge foster care advocate. I know how proud she would be of me today, with the quality of work that Mockingbird Society does.

What do you hope The Mockingbird Society is able to accomplish?

Ultimately I'd love to see a reworking of the foster care system. I'd love to see the paper grow and in 10 years have a staff reunion and marvel in everyone's successes. Especially the young writers. 🐦

THEOFELIS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Not only across the state, because the newspaper will also be online; people around the world will be able to read what you've written. I'm hoping that's going to be inspiration enough.

Where do you see Mockingbird in five years?

I'd love to see us in policy discussions about how to change the system and make the system better. Currently, most young people I talk to know that they are one crisis away from being homeless or in the DSHS office. Another thing I hope to see is the young people who are on the Mockingbird Times staff doing things like being in the middle of a press conference and asking questions. That kind of stuff could be very, very exciting. I'd love to see writers involved in issues across the state.

What can folks who don't have any experience with the foster care system do to be helpful?

Helpful? Find out in your own community what programs there are that you can donate extra clothing to or ask what you can do to be helpful. Folks who have specific skills are able to provide some volunteer

Amanda Jo Shaman, Staff Writer

Tell us a little about yourself:

I am nearly 19 years old, a senior at Ingraham High School in Seattle. My favorite things to do are ride horses, read, write fantasy fiction and poetry, make crafts, and listen to all types of music.

What are some issues you find important?

One is giving foster youth stable placements where they are happy and able to stay. Another is giving foster parents more options for dealing with youth, case/care managers, and all the other people they meet in the foster care system. A third is giving homeless youth across the state a hotline that they can call and information on shelters within their area.

What is your basic experience in foster care?

I was first placed in care when I was 3-1/2 years old; I only recently left with minimal hard feelings. I crashed through 26 placements, not including adoptions and repeats. My longest stay was four years and the shortest was six hours. I was also a "street kid" for

about a year all told. Now I am living in a transitional housing program in Seattle. I've been through it all, but I would not be who I am today without going through everything else first.

If you could change one thing within the system, what would it be?

I would make it mandatory that kids get a two-week notice before moving out of a foster home.

Why did you join the Mockingbird Times?

I joined because I believe that knowledge is power. The more information that youth and parents have, the more they can change the system. I hope to help put that information out there.

What do you hope The Mockingbird Society (MBS) will accomplish?

I hope that MBS, with the support of the Times readership, will put the word out that people across the state are NOT giving up the fight to help themselves as well as the future generations of foster and homeless youth.

Valerie Douglas, Staff Advisor

Tell us a little bit about yourself:

I am 32 years old and have lived in Seattle for 10 years. I've spent most of my time in Seattle advocating with and for people being bulldozed by some sort of bureaucratic system. I believe that it is crucial that the people using a program or asking for a service are included in the creation and running of it. Young people are often completely left out of any decision-making process when it comes to the services that their lives depend on.

What was your first impression of foster care?

When I was in high school my mom applied for our home to become a "receiving home" for girls who had run away or were forced out of placement. The young women only stayed a few days before they were again moved back home or to a group home. We rarely ever saw them again. I remember wondering what it was like to move around so much

without your family.

If you could change one thing within the system what would it be?

I would like to see brothers and sisters staying together when placed into foster care. The system needs to look at the children of a family as an important unit that should be treated with care and concern.

Why did you join the Mockingbird Times?

I've worked with Jim Theofelis before, developing services that are created by and for young people, and saw this as an opportunity to continue that work.

What do you hope The Mockingbird Society will accomplish?

I hope that MBS is a catalyst that brings together young people across the state who are impacted by the social service system (foster care, transitional living, shelters) and encourage them to tell their stories and to advocate for themselves.

work at local agencies. If you've got the time and the energy to be a mentor or be involved in a young person's life, that would be wonderful. Certainly donating to The Mockingbird Society would be an excellent way to demonstrate your concern, compassion, and investment for a better system.

Why should these folks care about these kids?

Think of yourself as a kid that is 5 years old. Think of something really traumatic happening to you. Now think about being alone at that time. Think about the feelings that would come as a result of being alone and not having contact with your family. Think about the anger and the sadness and the loss of dreams that can come from that. I think that's the best way I can get somebody to get a sense of it. We all have trauma. We all experience crisis. The difference is, particularly for a child, having an adult who can go through that experience with him or her. That's what many of the kids that I've had contact with have not had. They've had to endure those experiences on their own. I don't know what else a civilized nation does care about, other than its children.

Exploring a World Full of Mockingbirds

REVIEW BY JULIA HIGUERA AND AMANDA SHAMAN

THE MOVIE *To Kill a Mockingbird*, adapted from the book by Harper Lee, is insightful and compelling. It's a black and white classic that stars Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch, an upright and moral lawyer who is the father of Jem (Philip Alford) and Jean Louise "Scout" (Mary Badham).

Jem's relationship with his father is not a close one. Jem refers to his father as Atticus; their emotional bond is not very strong. Jem feels as if his father doesn't have time for him, only for his work.

Atticus is appointed to defend Tom Robinson (Brock Peters), an African-American man who has been accused of rape. Racism then was just as strong as it is now, except that now we hide it under different actions. In 1932, a jury of all Caucasians males would try and convict an African American; now, a police force has the ability to shoot and kill on a whim. Many kids in school get worse marks based on the color of their skin, not based on the quality of their work. With a nation so divided, it is a miracle that we have progressed

beyond the 1932 ways of "us" and "them."

We believe the mockingbirds of the movie are Atticus, Tom, and Arthur "Boo" Radley (Robert Duvall). All Atticus does is help people, yet he is ridiculed for defending an innocent African American. When Atticus sits outside of Tom's cell, he feels everyone, no matter what race, deserves to be defended and have equal rights.

Tom Robinson is tried with a case that has no medical evidence, for a crime he did not commit. He is persecuted because of racism, when all he had done was try to help a young white woman with the chores she had asked him to do.

Boo Radley is shunned and gossiped about because he was different, but he has never hurt anyone. He was born with Albinoism, a hereditary genetic disorder, and so the townsfolk would not accept him, even as a little child. Boo reminds us of all the people we classify as outcasts or misfits in society. Based on appearances, many of us continue the vicious cycle that outcast the person in the first place. Until everyone is treated equally in deeds as well as words, outcasts will always be the

legends in small towns and the reality of big cities.

We give *To Kill a Mockingbird* 3.5 birds, because it is exceptional. It makes us think of all the issues in society and what we can do to fix problems that weren't dealt with in 1932 and that we still have today. We recommend it to all for a good family movie with a good lesson to learn and a great moral. We think that with everyone who is a mockingbird at heart, maybe our eyes can be opened and our hearts moved to fix the problems that affect the world.

To Kill a Mockingbird
Adapted from the book by
Harper Lee
Directed by Robert
Mulligan
2 hours, 9 minutes

**Help Fulfill
Mockingbird's Wish List!**

All of these items are in great demand as we launch the newspaper and the Mockingbird Society:

- office furniture
- computers
- filing cabinets
- office supplies
- computer software (word processing and desktop publishing programs)

Contact Jim Theofelis at the Mockingbird Society at (206) 322-0438 to make your donation.