

Mockingbird Times



Recipient of 2005 Congressional Angels in Adoption Award
Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth.

June 2007

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation

Volume VII, Issue 6

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-KIDS (5437)

NEXT MONTH:
THE MOCKINGBIRD
TIMES WILL BE IN
FULL COLOR!

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JAMICA HENDERSON

"The Seattle Foundation's inaugural Youth Grantmaking Board (YGB) was established in the fall of 2006 to help young people use philanthropy to bring about positive change in their community. Comprised of students from local public and private high schools, the 2006-07 board is committed to helping all youth lead safe, stable, and productive lives. The YGB's first-hand understanding of the challenges faced by young people gives them a unique and valuable perspective on youth-focused grant making. Through training and collaboration with The Seattle Foundation staff and community experts, the YGB performs the same functions as other Foundation grants committees: assessing community needs, developing a request for proposals, reviewing grant applications, conducting site visits, and making final funding recommendations to The Seattle Foundation Board of Trustees."

The Mockingbird Society Youth Lead entered a grant competition with the Seattle Foundation. The grant is for \$5,000 and with that grant we want to make up a tool that will help youth and young adults with advocating skills year round. Instead of being interviewed by adults, we were interviewed by youth in our community. We at Mockingbird know that we have to advocate for ourselves every day of our lives. We also know that we as foster youth have a lot of advocating to do and sometimes we get stuck. Well, we have come up with a plan to help us in our stuck situation. What do you think about having your own Life Advocacy 101 tool with you at

The Mockingbird Society Wins Grant

all times? You can use it in all situations that you have to deal with like work related issues, school issues, friends and so on. We all have those days when we are just ready to give up, but if you just had that one word of encouragement, you would see and feel a little differently. I can say that I have had some days like that, but someone or something has helped me get through. It would be great to have a resource to go to because I know sometimes it is going to be me alone with no one to calm me down. We, as an organization, feel it would be a big help to those who need that advice/reminder every day. With the help of this grant, we will also have training days to show youth how to use this tool and why it is important. At the end of the training, you will have your own Life Advocacy 101 pamphlet to take and keep with you.

When the Seattle Foundation came to interview us, it was very interesting and good learning for us as well. To see youth in our community wanting to be a part of what's going on for the future was awesome. It allowed us to feel comfortable and explain why we should get the grant and what it would be used for. We had an example of what the tool would look like. Once the interview started, the youth on the grant-making board told us a little about themselves. The youth who were on the board were doing this at no cost, but as a learning experience. It was cool to talk to youth in our age range and explain why it would be good to have Life Advocacy 101 at all times. You can tell that they were learning a lot about us as well. We all gave a brief description of ourselves including how long we have been a part of The Mockingbird Society, our lives in the system, and our experiences with homelessness. We told them about our advocacy in getting laws changed to

help better the foster care system and how life advocacy is needed year round.

After the Youth Grant Board interviewed us, it opened another door of advocacy for us here at Mockingbird. We all learned a new skill that day in advocating not only for ourselves but for The Mockingbird Society Youth Lead. We all felt very confident and that we had made a difference. Later in the month, we got a call saying that we were one of three groups to receive the grant. Everyone was so excited! We can't wait to get started on our Advocacy 101 tool and teach youth how to advocate for themselves and others.

A quote from Lily Albrecht, one of the judges who interviewed us at our site, illustrates why the Youth Grantmaking Board chose us as one of the three awardees: "As for why we chose The Mockingbird Society, I think the major reasons were that you guys had a very clear goal, as opposed to some other organizations which proposed life skills tutoring but were not specific; your officers came off as trustworthy and competent; and you asked for a reasonable amount of money." Jessica Alberg, one of the Seattle Foundation board members, had this to say: "We chose The Mockingbird Society as one of our choices because we love what this program does and the impact it makes on the lives of others, helps youth and young adults with their life skills in all aspects of life. We love the fact that they have youth advocating and representing those in their shoes and making it better for them. We were all very impressed by the way this organization helps not only themselves but the future that is to come. We are very proud of what they have done and wish them the best. Keep up the good work." [1 www.seattlefoundation.org/page28153.cfm](http://www.seattlefoundation.org/page28153.cfm)

NSBE Conference

members' everlasting, burning desire to succeed and achieve in a very competitive society, while also positively affecting the quality for life for everybody. The lighting bolt represents the strike and impact that is going to be felt by this industry due to the contributions and accomplishments made by all the committed members of the National Society of Black Engineers.

This past March I had the opportunity to attend my first ever National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) Conference in Columbus, Ohio. It was probably one of the greatest experiences that I have ever had. It gave me the opportunity to see a different side of myself and my culture. Being around 10,000 African Americans, all of whom were driven by their own individual purposes, was wonderful. It was almost like tasting a piece of purpose for myself. I had never been on a plane and the only time I have been out of state besides going to Oregon.

I was selected by Seattle Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) a program that promotes things like NSBE and selects 12 students to go to the National Conference every year. Seattle MESA has opened many opportunities for me and this by far is the greatest. I would truly like to thank them for the chance to go and do something like this. I was a nervous wreck when I stepped on the plane at Sea-Tac International Airport. It honestly is not as easy as most people say when you fly for the first time. When I landed, I had

to adjust to a three hour time difference for the first time in my life.

After registration, I found out that I was a part of the pre-college initiative (PCI). After the first day, we began with an opening session in a huge room that was absolutely amazing, with tons of fantastic speakers and important people were introduced. I was astonished. Being in that room gave me this feeling of something great and that's exactly what I feed off of for greatness. I knew at that moment that this was not the minor leagues. As we began the second day's morning session, Cousin Jeff from Black Entertainment Network (BET) spoke. He really did not hold back and gave everybody the real deal. We were offered a tour of Ohio State University. It was an amazing campus that was very beautiful.

After that the real conference began and I had to cope with the fact that I had to be up at 6:00AM. We began to go to workshops. I honestly thought they were not going to be good at all then soon realized that they were a lot better than I expected. I went to one that explained how not to take all unnecessary drama in life it was entitled *Don't take No...* The presenter had five different endings for that statement and he was real and you knew that he was there to give people something more. One workshop I went to was entitled *Guaran-*



SAMUEL MARTIN

"To increase the number of culturally responsible Black Engineers who excel academically, succeed professionally and positively impact the community."

In 1971 young students Edward Barnette and Fred Cooper approached the dean of engineering at Purdue University with the idea of starting a Black engineering society. They wanted to get and recruit more Black engineering students. At the end of the 1960s, 80% of all Black freshmen who entered the engineering program dropped out. To these two men, these numbers were upsetting. The dean supported the idea and assigned Arthur J. Bond, the only Black man on staff, to advise the process.

Barnette was the first president of the Black Society of Engineers (BSE). The group started to gain momentum in 1974. They began to bond and Barnett and Cooper mentored young men who were about to become the founders of the National Society of Black Engineers. These young men were known as the "Chicago Six." They consisted of Anthony Harris, Brian Harris, Stanley L. Kirtley, John W. Logan Jr., Edward A. Coleman, and George A. Smith.

The torch of the NSBE logo symbolizes the

NSBE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



JIM THEOFELIS

Letter From the Editor

Happy Summer to all of you! What a glorious time of year for children of all ages to enjoy. Parties celebrating the achievements of those graduating from high school and college seem to dominate the early weeks of June. We at The Mockingbird Society want to express our congratulations to all graduates but especially those who have navigated the foster care system and still managed to secure such a wonderful achievement.

I want to express a special note of congratulations to **Marie Goines** who is our newest staff member at The Mockingbird Society. Marie will be assisting **Dr. Wanda Hackett** and me in the replication of the Mockingbird Family Model and I am so pleased that she has joined us as the eighth staff member of The Mockingbird Society. Marie graduates this month from the University of Washington with her Masters in Social Work. Marie is an alumna of the foster care system and she comes to us with lots of smarts and passion about our work. It is clear that her life mission is aligned with our organizational mission: build a world class child welfare system to serve our most vulnerable children and youth.

On another note, I want to send a major "Thank You" to the Seattle Foundation

and their Youth Grantmaking Board. The innovation and commitment of the Seattle Foundation is legendary and they demonstrated that again through the Youth Grantmaking Board, which is comprised of high school age youth who were given the money and authority to disperse thousands of dollars to local non-profits. The youth from The Mockingbird Society responded to the grant request by proposing the Life Advocacy 101 project. With our grantwriter, our youth developed and worked on the grant proposal for this project. The youth from the Seattle Foundation came to The Mockingbird Society to conduct a site visit and meet with staff from Mockingbird to discuss the grant proposal.

We determined early on that our youth from Mockingbird were well equipped to handle this meeting on their own and they were stellar. It was so amazing to watch two distinct groups of youth from very different backgrounds coming together in the best interests of our community. The Mockingbird Society was awarded the grant and the youth from both the Seattle Foundation and The Mockingbird Society have much to be proud of.

Jim Theofelis

jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

NSBE, CONT. FROM PAGE 1

ted 4.0 which was probably the best workshop I have ever been to in my entire life. I could honestly write a completely different article just on this. It was coordinated by a woman named **Donna O' Johnson** who knows how to be interactive and funny. For example, Donna says "Does anybody have a twenty?" Eagerly I say "I do, I do," and hand her the bill. "Have you ever skipped class young man?" "Once or twice." She crumples my twenty and steps on it, then she has her sister pick it up and run out of the room with it. "That's what you do everytime you skip class," she says. That was only a part of the very inspirational and serious workshop.

All in all, when you look at the National Society of Black Engineers, you find countless opportunities. The National Convention is only one. So we will continue to let the torch burn, because our Flame will never die. So all are encouraged to support the NSBE. I plan to go back and have another life changing experience.

Dear Jim,

I worked for Children's Administration in Grays Harbor County and I have recently had some contact with your agency's youth panel experts. We have had two different events where some of your kids have come down to speak about their experiences in foster care and it was amazing and inspiring both times.

We have heard lots about your foster care model and are very interested in bringing that down to our little town. We are working on some serious recruitment and retention efforts and did not know where to start on this model. If you have some contacts, ideas for direction, etc, your insight would be so beneficial. One of our foster parents may also be contacting you regarding bringing this model to our area. You are doing wonderful things.

Thank you,

Trisha Woodward

Thank You!

Karen Cowgill; Frances DeMarco; Valerie Douglas; Jerry Douglas; Eastside Friends Meeting; Autumn Eyre; Kerissa Freeberg; Amy Freeman; Henry Gordon; Henry and Jennifer Gordon; Alexandra Brookshire and Bert Green; Sandy Howard; Dorothea Kopta; Roberta L. Blayney; Margaret-Ann and Mark LeRoy; Gretchen Mueller; Rusty Pelican Cafe; Schultz Family Foundation; Seattle Foundation Youth Grantmaking Board; Joyce Showalter; Joan Stewart; Stuart Foundation; Mary Anne and Tom Thorbeck; Thomas and Mary Anne Thorbeck; Alex Wang; Windermere Foundation

Photo Gallery



Youth Representative Andrea busy saving a life at the all-staff CPR training.



Youth Representative Jessica Garcia meets foster alumna Victoria Rowell (see article on pg. 3) for more info.



Youth Representatives Andrea Roldan and Sam Martin in the Washington State Capitol reception room for bill signing.



Washington Governor Christine Gregoire speaks to attendees at the signing of House Bills 1201, 1922 and 1134 (visit www.leg.wa.gov/legislature for more info).



Attorney Casey Trupin and Mockingbird Society staff at Washington State annual bill signing.



Washington State Supreme Court Justice Bobbe Bridge, Jim Theofelis, and Adele Richardson at Washington State's annual foster care celebration.

Become a Member of The Mockingbird Society

We welcome you to join us in making a difference in the lives of our nation's most vulnerable children, youth, and families. As a supporter, you'll receive a monthly edition of the *Mockingbird Times*. Thank you for your contribution.

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
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Enclosed, please find my check made payable to The Mockingbird Society in the amount of (please note amount on appropriate line):

\$1,000 +	Protector	\$
\$500 - \$900	Champion	\$
\$250 - \$500	Advocate	\$
\$50 - \$250	Supporter	\$
\$25	Contributor	\$

- My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.
- I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.
- Please do not include my name on published donor lists.

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

ABOUT US: The Mockingbird Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation developing innovative models for improving the outcomes of foster care, while advocating with decision makers for system reform. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please consult your tax advisor regarding your specific tax situation. The *Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of The Mockingbird Society are paid between \$8 and \$11 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, and poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 50,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the USA, through a private distribution list and as an insert in *Real Change*, a Seattle-based community newspaper. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of The Mockingbird Society and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. Donations to The Mockingbird Society may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of The Mockingbird Society. All contents copyright ©2007, The Mockingbird Society.

MEET OUR STAFF

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Ros Ghan
- Public Relations/Fund Development
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- Executive Assistant
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- Programs Manager
Dr. Wanda Hackett
- Youth LEAD Coordinator
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Maria Goines
- Administrative Assistant
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- Youth Lead Alumna
Jamica Henderson
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Samuel Martin
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- Contributing Writers
Anastasia Klatt, Jessica Martin,
Lorena Stewart
- Volunteers
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- Layout
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Youth Services: Wacky Age Limits by Jessica Martin

Youth Services: I would change age limits. I see too many young kids ages 13 - 17 running away from home, claiming "this is way more fun than being home." But it isn't fun. Fun is laughter, and living on the streets, sleeping on cold cement in the freezing rain, is by no means a laughing matter. These kids have homes to go to, many with parents that worry sick about them. In fact, there have been a few times I have seen parents come out to ask random street kids if they know their son or daughter, to tell them that they are not mad, just worried.

I believe that the age limits of drop in centers just enables these kids to stay on the unsafe streets. Drop in centers give kids a sense of security, often keeping the younger ones away from their safer homes. For the few cases where younger kids are homeless, they do have other options like under-age shelters. In fact, many of these shelters do not let the kids roam around on the streets. With the exception of important priorities like school or work, these shelter kids are not allowed out during the day. This eliminates their need for drop ins.

Yet, the street life is the only thing left for some people, their only option. They are over 18, have aged out of foster care, and/or have been kicked out of their home, and have nowhere else to go. I, personally, am about to age out of most everything. Thankfully, I am finally in housing, but if that had taken much longer, I would be screwed right now. I would be left sitting outside all day, hungry at times, for I can access the food bank once a week but cannot carry enough all week around with me.

Currently, many drop in centers allow ages 14-17 to 21-25, depending on the specific drop in center. I would change the

ages to 17-25 because many people feel stuck on the streets due to having aged out of drop-in centers.

Without the support of drop-in centers, youth have no help getting themselves out of their situations, so they continually turn to drugs. I got lucky. I got out of the drugs and full time street life just as I'm aging out of everything. Well, I actually did age out of Working Zone, Youthcare, and some other services. I was having a hard time finding housing which made it seem impossible to maintain a job so I could pay for housing. Young Adults in Transition (YAIT), one of the housing services I was still young enough for, would not let me in because of my past drug history. That made me just want to go back to drugs, which would have left me back stuck in the street life. But, thank God for not having aged out of University District Youth Center (UDYC) yet, for I instead fell back on my case manager and drug counselor who shoved another housing application in front of me before I could do otherwise.

If I had been only a couple of months older, I honestly do not know what I would have done at that time when I was cleaning up my life. I probably would have gone back to drugs, because it was the only thing I really knew how to do. In another couple of months I will be too old for Teen Feed, UDYC, teen clinic, and other services. I use the clinic often, for I cannot afford to pay for medical bills. Even though I have housing, I still go to Teen Feed sometimes. It's good to get hot meals every once in a while.

I see many people aging out and not knowing what to do or where to go. Soon I will be there with them. I will feel like a part of that void of voices, a large group of people who, all of a sudden, are being dropped off the face of the world of services.

Where the Wilderness Grows

bags and two carry ons. It was very hard to figure out what to bring. How do I figure out what part of my life I want in duffle bags?

I got to Cody, Wyoming and it was like going back to Port Angeles all over again—but smaller. When I arrived at the bus station, my cousin and her best friend were waiting to pick me up. It was cool, but I could hardly talk because the altitude is crazy out here. Even water boils at a different temperature out here. We are at least 6,000 feet. As I am typing this article, it is snowing right now, which is even crazier!!! I get to have the day off that I came here so that I could sleep. The rooms are bunk beds, mismatched furniture and gnarly carpets. It is like a nice summer camp. I am surprised by the recreation room even more because there is a big screen TV and a pool table with a soda machine for the employees to use at their leisure. We only have payphones because cell phones don't work out here in Pahaska. There are foxes that come to your rooms sometimes. There are so many mice that I can't even count them. I have seen buffalo and moose. I want to see a bear though. I will soon.

I started work two weeks ago this Friday. I work anywhere from 9 to 12 hours a day, and the first week I was here, I had only one day off due to Mother's Day weekend. I help the front line and I help the dishwasher sometimes. It is a hard job. Minimum wage in Wyoming \$5.15 an hour, but I get paid \$7.00 per hour. They charge \$10 a day for our boarding. I haven't gotten a roommate yet but I am sure one will be coming soon. I work, sleep, use the phone, and do laundry. I don't have time for anything else right now. We are short three

Meeting Victoria Rowell by Samuel Martin

I believe the most notable of those who are successful are the ones who give back to those who were in the same situation. I had the opportunity to see Victoria Rowell speak at Treehouse. She is known for her role as Drusilla on *The Young and the Restless*. She is also an author. But the most impressive of all of her traits is that she is an alumna of foster care.

Wikipedia states: "Rowell was born in Portland, Maine. Her biological mother, Dorothy Rowell, was Caucasian...Her father was African-American. Rowell knew very little about her father. Dorothy Rowell, who suffered from schizophrenia, took a taxi to a hospital to give birth to Victoria, leaving a son and two small daughters unsupervised. When she was 16 days old, Rowell (and her two sisters, Shere and Lori) were surrendered to child services."

"While living in Maine with foster mother Agatha Armstead, Rowell, then 8, began ballet lessons...Rowell received scholarships to the School of American Ballet, the American Ballet Theatre and the Dance Theatre of Harlem..."

"In the 1980s, Rowell became an in-demand runway and catalog model. She began to take acting lessons, and earned featured roles on television shows like *The Cosby Show*. In 1990, she was cast as...Drucilla Barber on the long-running soap opera *The Young and the Restless*. Rowell became a fan favorite, and was nominated for three Daytime Emmy awards in 1996, 1997 and 1998. She won ten NAACP Image Awards for her portrayal of Drucilla... Rowell also played Dr. Amanda Bentley on the CBS series *Diagnosis: Murder*..."

In May 2006, Rowell was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters by the University of Southern Maine in recognition of her work for the benefit of foster children.¹

Rowell also has some very powerful programs she has done within the community. The Rowell's Foster Children Positive Plan is a program that gets children in-

involved with arts, sports, music, and other things to help these children prepare to age out of foster care. Rowell understands that there is not a lot of preparation for these youth, so giving positive alternatives allows them to develop intangible skills and necessary traits to help them get along in this society such as how to talk to people.

Rowell came and gave us a powerful testimony about her life and she gave everyone in the room a little bit of hope through her actions and through her message. To see someone that you have seen, on television several times is motivating. I had no idea that she had been in foster care. She even let some people speak up and read some of their poetry and spoken word to give an example of the possibilities of what people can do with their work. It was an honor for her to tell me that she saw a beat behind my poetry.

After hearing her motivational words, I signed up for a program that will allow me to put some beats behind some of my work. Most people do not know how much influence a single sentence can have. It honestly isn't even the fact that she is a famous actor and dancer. It is because she made it and came back here and honestly and truly acted like she cared about us. I felt for a brief moment of her talking to the group that she was talking to me. That is powerful. Even better, she came and gave everybody signed copies of her book *The Women Who Raised Me: A Memoir*. Jessica Garcia, another Youth Representative from The Mockingbird Society said "Very inspiring; [a lot of actors] act like they are too good but she was serious, nobody talks about being in foster care. She told us about her life and wrote a strong book."

It has an inspirational quote that I would like to share with you about her experience with foster care: "Accepting that life was never perfect and rarely manifested according to my own or other people's preconceptions, I felt happier than anyone could understand to finally be a part of a family, to be a Mrs. Somebody."² This means so much because this is the stage in so many people's lives that is very hard to reach. So many people work their hardest to get to this stage but it takes time. To finally be able to understand life will not be perfect, and things don't happen the way you want them to was perfect for me. I highly recommend her book, from this powerful, strong, and brave woman. Thank You Victoria Rowell.

¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Rowell
² Rowell, Victoria, *The Women Who Raised Me: A Memoir*, William Morrow, 2007, p268.

Q&A With New Staff Member Marie Goines

Why did you choose The Mockingbird Society as the place you wanted to continue your work with youth and families?

I was drawn to The Mockingbird Society after learning how closely aligned their vision was with my own. The organization is making rapid, tangible changes in the child welfare system. It is a real honor to join The Mockingbird Society in building a world class foster care system. I am excited about the opportunity to break new ground with this organization as it moves into evidence based practice.

What are you most looking forward to about your new position as Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) Coordinator?

This is a dream position for me. I never imagined that I would find a job that al-

lowed me to use my experience as a social worker and my years of software experience. I am most looking forward to the opportunity to work with the wonderful staff here at The Mockingbird Society. I am also looking forward to working with the Hub Home families participating in the MFM as they partner with us in developing online technology.

What do you think your first year as the MFM Coordinator holds?

My goals include continuing to learn about the MFM and its outcomes for foster youth and their families. My Primary responsibility this year is to lead the design team developing the MFM Web-based data management system as well as coordinating support for MFM families. I am looking forward to a year full of learning and growth.



VANESSA HUNT

About a week ago, I was hired to work at a lodge right outside of Yellowstone National Park. The lodge is called Pahaska Tepee, and they employ many people for the summer season because they get so many customers and people staying here for weeks (or even months) at a time. They give us lodging and meals, a TV, a computer with Internet, and actual beds.

I got here by Greyhound bus. It took me 22 hours to get to Cody, Wyoming. The bus broke down because of the computer's malfunctioning. We had to stop so that the bus driver could reboot the computer. We had to do that twice which took an hour. After we finally got to Billings, Montana, the station was packed with people that were supposed to be on a bus to Colorado. The bus driver quit abruptly after the hotel that the bus drivers stay at didn't have a smoking room. The people at the station had been waiting at least eight hours for another bus driver to come from another state. It was horrible. People were sleeping all over the place. It was chaotic.

After getting my bulging duffle bags out of the baggage place, I had to try to carry them all by myself over to the new bus I had to get on. It was not fun at all. I got on the new bus which was so gross, junky and not very user friendly. We drove through these little towns with posted signs that read population 350 people. It was hilarious. I didn't get to sleep until I got to Wyoming. In addition, I didn't sleep the night before I got on the bus because I was packing my life into two big duffle



Lonely Girl

ANASTASIA KLATT

Walking at night cold and alone with nobody besides you, because all your friends decided to get stoned fried are drunk. The rain is pouring down and you feel the chill going through your body not knowing where to crash. Should you go to the abandoned house that you got lost in, or the cold bench in the park that you froze your little body at? Because you know that you don't want to walk and wander around the city and get jumped or raped so your best choice is to go home where your daddy beats you and your mommy does not care a bit about you. But you know that you will have a roof over your head even if you are not loved because every time you come home you were ignored and the love was never there for you and you got used to it. Since you were disliked because the one child that your parents really wanted was your little brother. So you ended being hated because you're a girl! And never was accepted even though it was not always like that. It happened when your mommy had your little brother and you were just a girl not a boy. So walking alone at night thinking about where to go, the choice is up to you and nobody is going to choose it for you, but if it was your choice where would you go?



Away 'n' No Longer Missin' You

LORENA STEWART

Away n no longer missin you
Do you know the feeling so overpowering
You don't want it around but as bad
As you want to let go you shake it
Yeah it's a true feeling we all known

Away n no longer hmissin you
What can I say at one time his was mine
Or so I thought, did he ever love me at all
Are we willing to pay the price for love
Was I ever ready for the price of love

Away n no longer missin you
I feel your absence each day and dayz.
Turned to years and years I changed but
what did it matter I was your stranger
Funny, huh I thought the same thing

Away n no longer missin you
It's funny how I never thought of you as a
Stranger, but exactly what you were
Cause even if I did, we're the same people
We're two people with different mindsets

Away n no longer missin you
I say it, but know it's not true cause
Even if I wanted to lie and fool you
I can't fool myself I know that I still
LOVE YOU even if I try denying it

SAVE THE DATE

The Mockingbird Society's
First Annual Luncheon
is
Tuesday October 2, 2007.

If you are interested in attending, being a table captain or an event sponsor, or would like to volunteer, please contact Darcie at (206) 323-5437 or by email at darcie@mockingbirdsociety.org.

We believe that building a world-class foster care system through collaboration, advocacy and innovation is possible! With the help of caring community members like you, we can make it happen.

The Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, The Mockingbird Society. Atticus, the widowed father of Jem and Scout, joins Miss Maudie in teaching his kids that it's a sin to kill a mockingbird because "...Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us."

What if we created an organization, a community, indeed a world, in which our most vulnerable children and youth were protected and valued with the same commitment that Atticus had for mockingbirds? Join The Mockingbird Society today and help us give young people a safe place to nest, to sing, to fly.

The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made, and the activity of making them, changes both the maker and the destination.

~ John Schaar

It's a Hard-Knock Life



JESSICA GARCIA

When I turned eighteen this past October, I thought that everything would be okay because I was in foster care. It wasn't. Because I didn't get help, I had to do everything on my own, and figure out how to save money so I wouldn't be homeless or end up selling drugs. I just got so frustrated with everything that things began to go down hill for me. Trying to make things happen but not having proper support, made things worse.

I hit my rock bottom on March 17, 2007. I thought it was a good idea to leave where I was staying and go back to Eastern Washington. I felt it would be better for me to have a break. So what I did was pack all my stuff and put it into storage. All I knew at this time was that I wanted to get away and not deal with the frustrations that were going on. Just up and run away, and that's what I did.

I went to stay with my cousin for a

few weeks whom I hadn't really gotten along with before, but I felt I was in a different place and I thought she was, too. I was wrong. What I did was used meth for the couple of weeks that I was there. Everyone and everybody was the same except they all had kids, were locked up, or dead because they had overdosed. What was most frustrating was that a few of my family members started talking negatively towards me. This got on my nerves. Everyone around there was so miserable and I felt it! I even felt worse knowing I was falling backwards big time, and the longer I stayed there, the more I was feeling hopeless and disappointed in myself. Why I did what I did was because of all the things that were going on, in and out of my mind. I felt I was stuck.

I wasn't stuck, though. I knew exactly what to do. So, I got all my things and left my cousin's home. Back in Seattle, I had no immediate place to go, but by the grace of God, a good friend helped me and let me stay at her house for a few days. Then, I found a shelter to go to. I realized that the stresses that I thought I couldn't deal with before became worse because I had run away from everything.

What I would like to say to those who have to make hard decisions every day, to those who have to deal with foster care, or are about to age out, is: before making a huge decision just think thoroughly. Before you make a choice that can change your life, try to take full advantage of your case manager by asking questions about resources and housing. Also, I learned to have a good support system, and in order to get that, just reach out to people. Even if it's that caseworker you can't stand, just bear it and get what you need for yourself

and live well. What I see gets me off track sometimes and makes me think about my past life. Some days it feels as if I'm stuck between two worlds.

What I realize, though, is that all my hard work in the last year has paid off, and I do have things. But it's not things that matter, it's the good heart that I have, the smile that brightens the room, the good friends that keep their promises, and the people that pop in and out of my life to tell me what a wonderful young lady I am. To me, nothing's more luxurious than people who support me and lift me up. I am going to make it. Things aren't perfect but, come on, what's perfect? I am now at the YMCA's Young Adults in Transition living program. It's okay, but I just moved in so I'm still getting used to things.

Also, what I would like to address is while I grew up in the system, I was moved around a lot. I grew up in Eastern Washington. I was fifteen years old and was going through a lot. I joined a gang because it made me feel as if I was important. I came to Seattle where I experienced cultural shock. What I noticed was that a lot of young kids were doing things to get money like selling drugs, and young girls would sell their bodies just for anything they could get their hands on. The different thing about Seattle is that a lot of guys would talk to girls who acted like hoochies, and call the girls who respected themselves squares, but in Eastern Washington, the girls who treated themselves with respect got respect, and the ones who treated themselves like hoochies, got treated badly or were rejected. I wanted to go back to Eastern Washington because I missed my life, my respect, and love. I didn't know Seattle that well. I was stuck. I was on the streets for a while, scared to ask anyone for help. I felt like an outsider and I wanted to go back to my luxurious life. I thought that since I was aging out, no one could tell me what to do. So, I tried to go back and found out that the life I used to have in Eastern Washington was gone. Now that I have made my new life here, it's hard because everyone seems to have nice things

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What I'm proud of is that I have done so much from my experiences and the hardships I have gone through—the good and bad. I have learned I can achieve anything because I have come so far with my life!

Congratulations, Sam!

Mockingbird Society Senior Youth Representative Samuel Martin was recently published in the Sunday, May 13, 2007 issue of *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. His article, "Listening to children has powerful impact on them" provides a youth perspective on the necessity of providing legal representation for youth in the court system. The entire text of the piece can be found at seattlepi.nwsource.com/opinion/315380_focusgaultside13.html?source=rss. Great job, Sam!

Remember:

June is Gay Pride Month!

The anniversary of the Stonewall Riots is a time for celebrating Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgendered life, community and achievement. Seattle is host to a week-long calendar of events culminating in a parade through downtown and a festival at Seattle Center on Sunday, June 24th. For more information, visit seattlepride.org. Check local listings for events in other communities.