

# Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



February 2010

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## The New DSHS Leadership BY JERRY BOBO



On January 14<sup>th</sup>, Mockingbird Network Representatives had the opportunity to have a meet and greet with, **Secretary Susan N. Dreyfus** and **Assistant Secretary Denise Revels Robinson**, both of the **Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)**. Combined, these women have over 50 years of experience working in child welfare.

Before coming to Washington, Denise Revels Robinson served as the Executive policy advisor for the **Wisconsin Department of Children and Families**. One of her many accomplishments was as Director of the **Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare**, a state run county child welfare system where she helped safely reduce the number of children in foster care from 6,800 to a low number of 2,600 in just six years. This was done by focusing on reuniting children with their families in 70 percent of cases. 30 percent were adopted within 24 months of entering foster care. At the University

of Minnesota she was a part of the faculty for the School of Social Work. As a leader in the child welfare system, Robinson has made an impact within her state and now is bringing that leadership to the State of Washington. In October 2009 she was

appointed to her position by Secretary Susan N. Dreyfus.<sup>1</sup>

Susan N. Dreyfus was a resident of Wisconsin before being appointed to the position of DSHS Secretary in May 2009. She has held many different positions that were involved with the child welfare system including Executive Vice President for Strategy with **Rogers Behavioral Health System, Inc.**, the largest nonprofit behavioral health provider in Wisconsin. Before Rogers, she was the Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Of-

areas, including child welfare practice, system design and management, contracting, policy, and financing on both state and federal levels. As Administrator of **Children and Family Services** in the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Susan led many state reform efforts. In all of the positions held by Secretary Dreyfus we see one common goal: improving the child welfare system to better serve vulnerable children and adults.<sup>2</sup>

Washington State DSHS is in the hands of two

women that take their jobs very seriously, not because it is required, but because they are passionate about their work. "Throughout my career, I have been committed to improving the lives of vulnerable children and adults and their families," says Dreyfus. That is a dedication that can truly be appreciated. Dreyfus has identified four areas to focus on in Washington State: Quality, Consistency, Accountability, and Partnership. Here at The Mockingbird Society we are excited to have two people in leadership with so much ex-

perience working in child welfare, and we believe our partnership is going to make a difference.

<sup>1</sup> [www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/eq/MeetRobinson.pdf](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/eq/MeetRobinson.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/eq/MeetSecDreyfus.pdf](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/eq/MeetSecDreyfus.pdf)



Youth representatives from The Mockingbird Network met with Secretary Susan N. Dreyfus and Assistant Secretary Denise Revels Robinson to discuss the future of DSHS.

ficer of the **Alliance for Children and Families**. As the Senior Vice President, she consulted with nonprofit service agencies across the country in a range of governance, organizational, and program

## Constructing Villages BY IAN GRANT



It takes a village to raise a child. Or so we've been told, often enough that repeating it here probably drew groans from some of you. But what of the youth without villages; the youth that have been pushed out of their village, or were never born into one? What of the youth that lack not only villages but homes? How do we build a community around vulnerable youth to protect and nurture them as they grow into adulthood?

There are a lot of social service programs in Seattle, but the majority of services for homeless youth are concentrated in the University District. **YouthCare**, a large agency that provides services including housing, education, life skills, employment and employment training, counseling, and basic needs like food and showers, makes its home there, as do many smaller agencies like **Teen Feed** (a free dinner program for homeless youth), **SYM** (Street Youth Ministries, a drop-in center that also provides life skills and case management), and **SEA** (Seattle Education Access, an agency that provides scholarships and educational assistance).

One of the problems that any homeless youth or former foster youth faces is having to deal with several different agencies to get the services they need to achieve their goals. Because each agency has its specialty, youth are often stuck between many well-meaning organizations, many with mandatory classes to attend and meetings that sometimes conflict. How do agencies help eliminate these barriers so that the youth they serve can get the help they need?

In social services, you hear the term "wrap-around services" a lot. Briefly, providing wrap-around services means that you give youth everything that they need: basics like food, shelter, and

clothing; case management; education support; job training—everything that they require to get their life back together and accomplish their goals. It's an ideal; obviously it's incredibly hard to do everything for an individual youth, but there are agencies that come very close.

YouthCare, for example, prides itself on providing wraparound services to its clients. It runs a continuum of care, from street outreach teams that distribute health and hygiene supplies to youth on the street; to a large drop-in center that contains an alternative high school, counselors and case managers, employment programs, and meals, in addition to many other services; to a network of shelters and transitional housing programs for youth in various stages of development. Because it does so much, YouthCare is big: it owns several buildings around downtown and North Seattle, and was worth about \$10.8 million in 2007.

Obviously, every agency cannot be that big. One of the ways the many small agencies in and around the University District is through the **University District Service Providers Alliance (UDSP)**. UDSP is an alliance of service providers in the University District. Member agencies include **45<sup>th</sup> Street Youth Clinic**, a free clinic for homeless youth; **ROOTS** (Rising Out Of The Shadows), an emergency shelter; and **Teen Feed**, mentioned above. Services you can get under the UDSP umbrella include health care, case management, meals, hygiene, clothing, bus tickets (includ-



roots

rising out of the shadows  
Roots is just one of the programs that make up the University District Service Providers Alliance.

ing SYM's "runaway railroad," a program that provides Greyhound tickets for youth who have run far away from home (or were displaced for other reasons) and wish to return, an emergency shelter, scholarships, help with school, and many

others. That comes very close to wraparound services and most of the agencies under UDSP refer to agencies outside UDSP for things which UDSP doesn't provide.

UDSP itself is comparatively small. All UDSP member agencies are completely autonomous. UDSP provides a way for those agencies to share information to better help the people they serve and keep each other abreast of developments in the often turbulent University District.

These are two very different models, each with their own advantages and disadvantages, each striving toward the same goal: to protect, serve, and nurture the most vulnerable of our youth on their rocky, perilous journey toward adulthood and self-sufficiency. I would encourage any-

body who is interested in finding out more about these programs and the people they serve to take a look for yourself: visit YouthCare online at [www.youthcare.org](http://www.youthcare.org), and the UDSP at [www.udsp.org](http://www.udsp.org). We need to remember that homeless youth are often alumni of care, and foster children are often thrust into homelessness when they reach maturity, and that helping one group will help the other. We are, after all, all in this together.



## Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



Washington State joins most other states across the country in trying to balance a budget that is short on revenue—short to the tune of 2.6 billion dollars in the case of the Evergreen State. The Mockingbird Society is greatly concerned about the governor's proposed budget and the numerous programs that are reduced or eliminated in the child welfare system. In particular, we have prioritized housing programs for youth under 18 and over 18 targeting those youth who are currently in foster care or aging out.

Studies show over and over what Grandma knew all along which is that those youth who have safe housing have much better outcomes than those who end up homeless and street-involved. In 1999, **The HOPE Act** was created by the **Washington State Legislature** to ensure that we protect youth and develop programs that reduce the number of teenagers on the streets. The Governor's proposed budget cuts 44% of the funding for Responsible Living Skills (RLSP) beds and \$322,000 out of the HOPE Centers. HOPE Centers provide 30 day emergency shelter for youth ages 13-18 that are living on the streets and/or are homeless. Many of the youth are dependents of the state. The RLSP provides older dependent youth, who have experienced multiple foster

home changes, with stable housing environments that focus on the skills necessary to exit foster care and transition successfully to adulthood. Both programs help keep kids safe and off the streets.

**CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS** and ask that they oppose the cuts to the HOPE and RLSP programs that the governor included in her budget. Take 5-15 minutes to do your part to ensure we do not balance the budget on the backs of our most vulnerable teenagers!

**DON'T KNOW HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS?**

Visit [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov) and click "Find your legislator" on the left hand side. If you don't know who your legislators are, enter your address in the search field. You can contact your legislator by email or phone using the contact information provided. Don't be shy—your legislators need to hear from you!

Jim Theofelis  
[jim@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:jim@mockingbirdsociety.org)

### Thank You!

Casey Family Programs; Derrick Reddicks; Heather Riley; Cody Schmidt, Tricities Catholic Family Services; Reynelda Solitaire; Lynn Welton

## Conserving Resources and Honoring Your Preferences

In an effort to increase awareness of the *Mockingbird Times*—and the voice of its contributing writers, youth and alumni of care—we plan to begin publishing a more robust online edition in 2010. This also will allow us to conserve resources and reduce costs. So, watch for regular updates on our progress. We hope to be "live" by mid-year. We'll be checking in with you, our loyal readers, in the near future to learn more about your preferences.

Thank you for your support.

## The Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

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

for us."

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

## Homeless Shelters Necessary BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



Having homeless shelters is important in Seattle and any other city with an abundant homeless population. In Seattle alone, there are at least 20 shelters and/or organizations that support the homeless. There are shelters that are only for men, only for women, and there are those that just serve youth, typically ages 13 to 25.

Shelters do not have the capacity to serve all of the homeless, so there has to be a way to decide who will be served. In pretty much all homeless shelters and services, resources are given on a first come, first served basis. The person wanting shelter will have to get there in a timely fashion! If they don't, they probably won't have shelter for the night. In most shelters, you can stay for one night but then you have to get up in the morning and leave; if you need shelter again, you must come back again the next evening.

**Catalyst** is a new one-of-a-kind program that is an in-between homeless/transitional housing shelter. The program is at **Straley House** which used to house a transitional housing program. Catalyst is an extended stay shelter where a youth can stay up to 6 months and get help getting into a transitional living

program or a permanent housing placement. Youth that live there agree that there should be more shelters like Catalyst because they provide more opportunities that youth need and help them to prepare for permanent or transitional housing.

Upon visiting **Youth Care's Orion Center** (a drop-in center and shelter), I was able

**"Youth that live there agree that there should be more shelters like Catalyst because they provide more opportunities that youth need and help them to prepare for permanent or transitional housing."**

to speak with a few individuals about their homeless experiences. "I have a son and another one on the way. I sleep in shelters or on the street every night. My son stays with my mom. I would never bring him to a shelter. You don't know how hard it is to have to give a child to one of your parents," said one of the youth.

Another youth said, "I can no longer work because I had a labor job and it wouldn't be safe for me since I am pregnant, so I can't support myself... My health insurance doesn't pay for my prenatal vitamins anymore since it's something I can buy over the counter." Both youth agree that the Orion Center is one of the better homeless shelters/service providers, having been to many.

Having these shelters is very important to support the homeless population. If these services weren't available to homeless youth, more people would be on the street and maybe even stealing to get their next meal.

## SAVE THE DATE!

**Youth Advocacy Day** is February 19<sup>th</sup>. Join other foster youth, alumni of foster care, and supporters in our legislative action. Some of our key agenda items are:

- Safe Housing and Support For Youth in Care: Save the HOPE in the HOPE Act
- Notification of the Right to Request Counsel in Dependency Proceedings

Please visit [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org) for more information.

## Support The Mockingbird Society!

We invite you to join us in building a world-class foster care system. In gratitude for your support, we would like to send you a monthly e-version of the *Mockingbird Times*.

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

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

## MEET OUR STAFF

**Executive Director** Jim Theofelis; **Operations Director** Ros Ghan; **Mockingbird Family Programs Director** Dr. Wanda Hackett; **Youth Programs Director** Tiffany Washington; **Executive Assistant** Lauren Frederick; **Finance Manager** Catherine Lanham; **Mockingbird Network Coordinator**; Kara Sanders; **Mockingbird Family Model (The MFM) Coordinator** Amy Converse; **Administrative Coordinator** Diana Clark; **Administrative Assistant (AA)** Liliana Davies; **Mockingbird Network AA** Milissa Morgan; **The MFM AA** Stephanie (Stevie) Glaberson; **Resource Specialists** Graham Parrington, Georgina Ramirez, Tammy Soderberg, Lauren Steed, Samantha Valle; **Senior Network Representatives** Ashlie Lanier, Jerry Bobo; **Network Representatives** Amanda Bevington, David Buck, Ian Grant, Diamonique Walker; **Contributing Writers & Artists** Nyajuok Chuol, Katrina Dyer, Samantha Evans, Demarea Kirk, Anais Rose Lull, Sam Martin, Hunger Melson, Alyssa Quaring; **Volunteer** Chrissie Jackson; **Copy Editing and Layout** Kelly Hawkins

**ABOUT US:** *The Mockingbird Society* is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation developing innovative models for improving the outcomes of foster care, while advocating with decision makers for system reform. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please consult your tax advisor regarding your specific tax situation. *The Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of *The Mockingbird Society* are paid between \$9.50 and \$12 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, and poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. *The Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of over 25,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the USA, through a private distribution list and as an insert in *Real Change*, a Seattle-based community newspaper. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of *The Mockingbird Society* and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. Donations to *The Mockingbird Society* may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of *The Mockingbird Society*. All contents copyright ©2009, *The Mockingbird Society*.



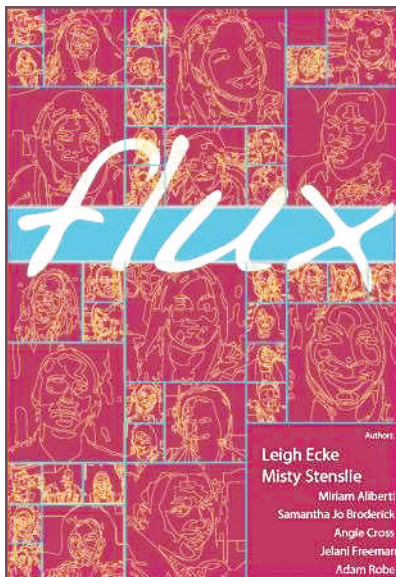
## Flux: Life After Foster Care BY AMANDA BEVINGTON



*Flux: Life After Foster Care* is a book by that follows more than 100 alumni of foster care across the US and Canada throughout their time in the foster care system until they reach adulthood. The alumni in this book talk about their struggles, challenges, opportunities, and successes. This book is aimed to support young people in their emotional transition from foster care to adulthood.

"FLUX: Life after Foster Care was written by foster care alumni from across the US and Canada for our younger brothers and sisters. The development and compilation of the book was led by [their] FLUX Management Team and sponsored by Foster Care Alumni of America [FCAA]."<sup>1</sup> FCAA was established in 2004 with the support of Casey Family Programs to advocate for the needs of youth in and alumni of foster care. "The mission of FCAA is to connect the alumni community and to transform policy and practice, ensuring opportunity for people in and from foster care."<sup>2</sup> FCAA was formed.

FLUX: Life after Foster Care provides questions to help you through your transition into adulthood. There are six different chapters in the book that talk about transition: Who Am I Now, Support System, Biological Family, Intimacy, and Parenting. Topics like this can really help young adults that are either in or have aged out of foster care. Personally I don't like to read, but I enjoyed this book a lot because I could relate to it. It made me look at life differently. It's interesting to read stories from other alumni that have experienced the same things that I have. The book is not just a book that shares a lot of different personal stories, but one that teaches young adults about real



life experiences and how to deal with them in a healthy, mature way. I believe people that have experienced the foster system in some way are very curious about the topics that are in this book.

The book was helpful to me because sometimes there are things that I might want to talk about or get answers to but don't know who to ask because guilt or fear take over. This book helps you figure out what you want in life and how to get the help and support that you need. Personally, I liked this book because it's a good support system. Flux has a lot of good advice that I can relate to. It's not just where alumni talk about their personal lives, but where they encourage and lead youth to head on the right path, and tells them where to get resources that will be helpful in the long run.

Janiva Magness, alumni in the foster care system, said in the book, "I have a life today I could never have imagined. You know, your fate does not have to be your destiny. Fate is what you are handed. Destiny is about what you could be. I'm living proof. The tragedies of my life no longer define me." I picked this quote, because I can relate to her words. This quote makes me feel like

never giving up no matter what the circumstances are.

I would really recommend this book to anyone who has experienced the foster care system in some way. This book made me really think what I want out of life and how to love myself and those around me, to review my morals and what I think is right and wrong. Again, this is a really good book. If you want more information about Foster Care Alumni of America, call 1-888-Alumni-0 or (703)299-6767 or visit [www.fosterCareAlumni.org](http://www.fosterCareAlumni.org).

<sup>1</sup> [www.fostercarealumni.org/resources/FLUX/FLUX-ManagementTeam.htm](http://www.fostercarealumni.org/resources/FLUX/FLUX-ManagementTeam.htm)

<sup>2</sup> [www.fostercarealumni.org/about\\_us/mission.htm](http://www.fostercarealumni.org/about_us/mission.htm)

## Am I Homeless? BY ASHLIE LANIER



Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines homelessness as: "having no home or permanent place of residence."<sup>1</sup> Here in Washington State, we classify homelessness in three different sections.

- **Section One:** an individual living outside or in a building not meant for human habitation or which they have no legal right to occupy. As well as living in an emergency shelter, or in a temporary housing program which include a transitional and supportive housing program if habitation time limits to exist.
- **Section Two:** those living on the streets, temporarily living with family and friends, or "doubled-up" aka couch surfers.
- **Section Three:** chronically homeless. According to HUD (the Department of Housing and Urban Development), chronic homelessness is defined as having a disabling condition, having been homeless for a year or more, or having had at least 4 episodes of homelessness in the past three years.<sup>2</sup>

Statistics from 2007 *Second Statewide Point in Time Count* show that there were a total of 11,959 homeless individuals (not including

families with children). 4,835 were unsheltered, 3,346 were in transitional programs, and 3,778 were in emergency programs.<sup>3</sup> This is a 2% increase from in homeless individuals from 2006 to 2007. Within Region 4 King County, there were 7,902 homeless people--5,680 sheltered and 2,222 unsheltered.

As a young adult (youth) you are classified as homeless if your living situation is determined to fit the Washington State definition of homelessness or the HUD's definition of homelessness. Being able to understand what sort of homeless group you fall into and understanding what that means, is really important when applying for special resources.

Like many youth who have experienced informal kinship care, my experience with homelessness is couch surfing. I stayed at different friend's houses or my cousin's houses for long as well as short periods of time. I was never really aware of any resources that were available to me because I always assumed that since I'm not a ward of the state and my mother still has full custody of me there would be no available resources for me. Little did I know, there are a lot of resources to help youth in these situations such as help with transitional living and rental assistance. In order to get these supports, you have to research your options and find someone to help you apply. Most of these places have

**"In order to get these supports, you have to research your options and find someone to help you apply."**

## Youth Drop-in Centers BY JERRY BOBO



In the State of Washington, there are a number of drop-in centers for young adults within urban areas. In January, The Mockingbird Network Representatives and I went to visit a few of them in King County. These are places that provide different types of resources to youth that have aged out of the foster care system, youth that are homeless, and youth that need another support system. I had the chance to speak with Emily Bandy at the University Family YMCA, and Gina, a teacher at the Orion Center. These are a few of the different drop-in centers that help youth in the Seattle area.

When we visited University Family YMCA, we met with Emily Bandy, and had a conversation about their program. The majority of drop-in centers are available for youth Monday through Thursday, but the YMCA is available for youth on the weekend as well. Emily told me how many youth visit the YMCA on the weekends. "On average, we serve up to 65 youth on Saturday and up to 55 on a Sunday. We help youth between the ages of 13 and 25, but the average age of youth coming in for help are between the ages of 20 and 23." I then asked her what types of resources are available at this YMCA location. "There are tons of resources available in this area. Job training, housing resources, general emergency, chemical dependency counselors, as well as food and shower facilities. We don't have case management resource but can refer the youth."



The University Family YMCA drop-in center is open for youth to receive services on weekends.

I had no idea you could receive that type of help from the YMCA. The University Family YMCA is the place to be on the weekend if you are a homeless youth and in need of help. Even though they do not have case managers, there are other drop-in-centers that offer that resource.

The Orion Center is another drop-in-center I visited in January. Last year, someone at the Orion Center helped me fill out my FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

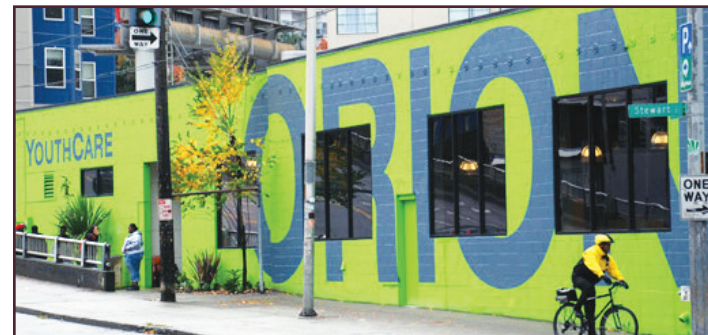
someone available that can help you through the process if you don't have a caseworker.

Previously this month The Mockingbird Network Representatives went to visit local drop-in centers and homeless shelters for young adults. I was pleased with all the hard work and dedication each program put in to help youth in care. As far as eligibility goes, all programs pretty much had the same expectations. For starters, you need to be a young adult in need of help. I learned that different programs have different age ranges, many end at 21 and many start after age 13.

Of course, depending on what resources you apply for, there may be some more requirements for that individual program. After speaking with various youth at the different centers, I was given a clear understanding that you have to have motivation to get things ac-

Working for The Mockingbird Society, I knew what the Orion had to offer youth, but my knowledge grew once I got the inside scoop from a teacher named Gina Cassinelli that works with 14 different interagency schools. An interagency school is a school that helps homeless youth, youth in transition, and youth that want a smaller class setting with a learning plan to fit their style.

Gina works with students that have English as a second language, ESL, and bilingual students. Gina told me that her responsibilities as a teacher at the Orion center are, "to teach and support teachers with teaching youth



The Orion Center, one of the youth drop in centers in the Seattle area, works with interagency schools to help youth complete their education.

how to read and write, and passing the WASL, getting their GED [General Equivalency Diploma], or Diploma." With this being a more casual environment than a traditional school, youth find it easier to understand what is being taught, stay on track, and pass the WASL and obtain a diploma, or earn a GED.

Gina explained to me how the credit system works. "The rules are the same as public or private schools. They are a little modified to fit with the interagency school here at the Orion Center. The classes are credited the same and the expectations are just a little different." This is great information for those youth that are

homeless, in transition, or just wanting a different pace for learning and getting an education.

The good thing about drop-in centers is that they maintain close connections with one another. For example, if there were a homeless youth that was visiting the University

Family YMCA and wanted to finish getting their high school diploma, the YMCA could refer them to the Orion Center. Or, if a youth was at the Orion Center on a Friday and wanted to come back on the weekend, they would be referred to the YMCA. Drop-in centers want to make sure that youth know they are there to help them, no matter what the youth's situation is. If there were not drop-in centers, where would all the homeless youth, and youth in transition go for help?

accomplished. For example, when dealing with caseworkers you have to check up on resources you apply for or other assistance that you need. One youth I spoke with said, "You can't just wait around for them to tell you what's going on you know? You have to be a bug-a-boo." This statement makes sense since if you want something done that affects your life it's extremely important to advocate for yourself.

I would like to give a special thanks to all the youth that let me interview them and the places we visited: YouthCare's Orion Center, Catalyst, Roots, and YMCA's The Center.

<sup>1</sup> [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/homeless](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/homeless)

<sup>2</sup> [housing-information.net/files/Glossary.doc](http://housing-information.net/files/Glossary.doc)

<sup>3</sup> [www.commerce.wa.gov/DesktopModules/CTEDPublications/CTEDPublicationsView.aspx?tabID=0&ItemID=5800&MId=870&wversion=Staging](http://www.commerce.wa.gov/DesktopModules/CTEDPublications/CTEDPublicationsView.aspx?tabID=0&ItemID=5800&MId=870&wversion=Staging)



## What They Don't See

NYAJUOK CHUOL

My tears I don't show outside as long as the Nile River.  
Because what they don't see is my faith in me.  
Haven't seen what I had been through to judge me.  
I know I'm right but I still feel wrong for judging them back.  
What they don't hear is my voice saying  
I don't care what you think of me.  
They haven't seen the other side of me. Who are they to judge me?  
When they know deep inside they judge themselves.  
They don't know of the history of my skin color.  
I wonder do they see what is going on?  
But they don't see beyond the beauty of it.  
They're hurting me with the thorns of a beautiful pink rose.  
We just exchange mean words but for what reason?  
We don't realize what we are saying is affecting others.  
What they don't see: I'm a strong person and I stand up for myself.  
What they don't see: I can tell them what's on my mind.  
They don't want to see my anger build up inside like bricks.  
They're sailing the wrong direction farther away from me.  
They don't want to see the beauty of my culture.  
They don't see my kindness glowing in the corner.  
What they don't see is my past and why I look away.  
What they don't see: the person I became over those sinful words.  
Those wrongs should be returned with a right.  
Making them look like fools for the words they spill in front of me.  
The clouds over them, walking around like they own those words  
when the drug of life is their addiction to making bad decisions.  
They don't see that their clown's looking for fans to laugh at their jokes.  
Hurting other souls for their own selfish humor.  
They don't see the personality within me that still appears to be.  
Innocence in their eyes, they can't put me down.  
No not this girl, I'm only silent for that second.  
What they don't know is I'm not going to let them ruin my thoughts of myself. I have no reason to be sad over their opinions.  
I'm an angel and I fly high with the confidence I have.  
What they don't see is I won't take this disrespect.

## On the Inside

ANAI ROSE LULL

On the outside, all you see is the smile  
And on the inside, I cover up hurt.  
I cover it up from myself  
Because I do not want to acknowledge  
The dark feelings  
I do not want them to take over my life.  
So I try to look past them  
And I try to forget them  
And I usually succeed.

I am scared  
Of not being happy.  
I am scared  
To show hurt to my mom.  
I am scared  
To be in the dark  
To be overwhelmed with feelings of grief.

I am just so confused.  
Am I really a fake?  
No, I know that I am real.  
I am just good at controlling my emotions  
Because I am scared  
To see what happens when I let go.  
When I let go.

It's hard to be happy  
When faced with so much uncertainty  
People say that this is the hardest age  
I don't know what it's like for others  
But I know what it is like for me.

Not knowing where I'll be in the next month.  
Not knowing how my family will look the next day.  
Not knowing who my friends are  
Or if people enjoy my company.  
I am so filled with doubt – it's holding me back

From living my life.  
These uncertainties overwhelm me.

And while I try to ignore them and be strong,  
When I am alone with myself  
My insecurities come out.  
And I am left in a pool of self doubt.

## We Need Your Work!

We are in **great need** of articles, poetry, artwork, and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or with homelessness. If you want to be published in the *Mockingbird Times*, visit [mockingbirdsociety.org](http://mockingbirdsociety.org) and select *Mockingbird Times* under The Mockingbird Network or contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at [kara@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:kara@mockingbirdsociety.org). Note: If you have submitted something before that hasn't been published, we need your submission agreement in order to print it. Please submit again via the web location listed above. Because of space constraints, shorter poems have a higher chance of being published.

## Community Events

### Region 2

Feb. 11: **Annie**, 7:30 PM, Capitol Theatre; (509) 853-8000.

Feb. 17: **Harlem Globetrotters**, 5:30 PM, SunDome; (509) 248-7160.

### Region 6

Feb. 12: **Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day**, Info and registration: [salsa.democracyinaction.org](http://salsa.democracyinaction.org).

Feb. 18: **Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service**, begins at 8:30 AM, Capitol Rotunda, FREE; (360) 943-0780 ext. 159.

*"You never know how strong you are, until being strong is the only choice you have."*

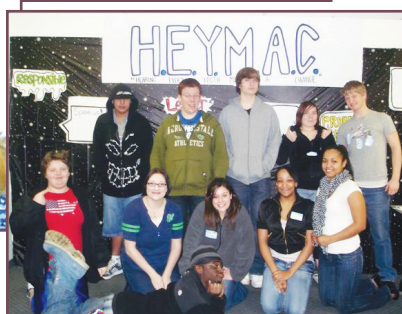
~ Unknown

### Region 1: UNITE! CHAPTER IN SPOKANE COUNTY BY KATRINA DYER

We had a New Year's themed chapter meeting with tons of food and cupcakes to celebrate three birthdays in January. We discussed the legislative agenda for advocacy day, got prepared for what will happen then, and brainstormed two chants for when we walk around the capital. I will be going to Advocacy Day along with **Onalee Stewart** and our Resource Specialist, **Lauren**. We were also able to look over the 2010 Leadership Summit agenda and make suggestions. We are so excited for Advocacy Day and look forward to going to Olympia!

### Region 2: A.C.T. F.I.R.S.T. CHAPTER IN YAKIMA COUNTY BY ALYSSA QUARING

**Tammy** spoke to us about what The Mockingbird Network has to offer in Region 2. She also talked about what she does at MBS and how she helps kids to not just survive but also to thrive. Scott, a lawyer from Team Child talked to us about how he helps youth who go in and out of the juvenile system. Team Child helps teenagers not parents; they focus on us and what we need to be able to succeed in school. Scott's job is to listen to us and help us fight for our safety. He doesn't make choices for us but it is our right to have legal representation!



### Region 3: Hey Mac CHAPTER IN SKAGIT COUNTY BY HUNTER MELSON

At our chapter meeting we had pizza for dinner and raffled off some awesome prizes and then got down to business. This was a great meeting: I saw passion and excitement in the faces of our group. **Jerry Bobo** came to help me present what the Network is all about and how we can make a difference. We all shared the importance of what we bring to Youth Advocacy Day. All the members talked about the issues that we are going to discuss with our local representatives. Next month is going to be busy as we have the legislative training on Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> and Youth Advocacy Day Feb 19<sup>th</sup>.

## News From

# The Mockingbird Network

## Your Needs, Your Voice

### Region 4: For Change CHAPTER IN KING COUNTY BY SAM MARTIN

Hey everyone! I have been elected the new Region 4 for Change Chapter Leader and **Christina Koshney** was selected for the quarterly position. I am very excited for the upcoming year and doing what I can to help develop and grow our chapter. This past meeting we got some very important things done. First we reviewed our Legislative Agenda and then discussed the upcoming Youth Advocacy Day. As a former Network Representative, I know the importance of Youth Advocacy Day and the impact it can have on the lives of youth throughout the state. Region 4 is getting prepped and ready to go. Be sure to join us for Youth Advocacy Day in Olympia February 19<sup>th</sup>!



### Region 5: Cour'Ige CHAPTER IN PIERCE COUNTY BY DEMAREA KIRK

This month held two trainings at DSHS: *Your Rights Training* and *The Culture of Foster Care*. The trainings were geared toward foster parents so they can have an idea of what rights youth have and what foster care is like. Both trainings went well and our new members did great. We hope they stay involved with helping educate foster parents and youth coming into care. We also participated in the meeting with Sect. Susan Dreyfus and Asst. Sect. Denise Robinson. I would like to thank both women for coming out and being able to hear and see things from the youth and alumni perspective.

### Region 6: CHAPTER IN THURSTON COUNTY BY SAMANTHA EVANS

This month I was given the chance to be on the board for the Transformation Design Committee's Legal and Practice subcommittee. Being a speaking member of this committee has been both nerve wracking and a blessing; I'm bringing a youth's voice to the table and making sure that our voices are recognized and respected. Being able to have an influential say in the redesigning of the foster care system is amazing and I will be working with the youth in the region to bring their voices to the table also. We are looking forward to our chapter meeting this month and getting our youth ready for Advocacy Day!