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2009 Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit by Ashlie Lanier

On June 27th and 28th 2009, The Mockingbird Society held its **4th Annual Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit**. The Summit gives youth the opportunity to gain skills on what it takes to become a better leader as well as come together to discuss key issues and challenges youth in care face every day. The summit also provides the opportunity to present those issues to important policy makers and important people who can make change.

This year was totally different than last year. For starters, there was a much smaller group of us due to budget cuts. Each region had 4-6 participants so, during our Team Building/Icebreaker Activity on the first day, it was really easy to connect with everyone. Personally, by the end of the summit I knew everyone by their first name.

This year there was only one main workshop, “The qualities of being a leader,” led by **Dr. Wanda Hackett**, Director of Family Programs for The Mockingbird Society. Each region was given one of six qualities and had to come together as a team to present them the rest of the participants. Dr. Wanda directed us to use the theory, “Tell ‘em, tell ‘em what you told ‘em, and tell ‘em again” in order to get our message understood. This theory would later be used as an important key to effective communication while presenting to the **Washington Commission on Children in Foster Care**.



Attendees of the 2009 Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit.

Do you know how impactful the youth voice is? How much credibility you are held accountable for when speaking to policy makers, legislators, and others as a youth or alumni of care? Our voice has been heard and resulted in change. We have had four laws passed because of youth that spoke at the last three Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summits. That is one of the many reasons why this summit is so important.

The first law, **Medicaid to 21**, is a program in Washington State that allows foster youth to receive health care benefits until the age of 21. The second law, **WA State Identification Cards**, made it so that social workers can request WA State Identification cards for youth placed in foster care including youth placed in WA State through ICPC (Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children). The third law was Sibling Visitation, which asks adoptive parents to consider keeping sibling connections. The fourth and last law was **Notification of Rights**. This law says that, at the age of twelve, youth in care are to be informed of their rights in the foster care system.

On day two of the summit, each region developed their Washington State message. Each region presented to the Commission their key issues, challenges, or request for change. The commission members present were **Jim Bamberger** (Director of the **Office of Civil Legal Aid**), **Justice Bobbe Bridge** (**Center for Children & Youth Justice**), **Julio V.A. Carranza** (Foster Youth Alumni Representative), **Mike Curtis** (Executive Director, **Commission on Children in Foster Care**), **Susan Dreyfus** (DSHS Secretary), **Chlorie Folkman** (NW Intertribal Court System Representative), **Stephen Hassett** (Senior Counsel, **Attorney General’s Office**), **Ron Hertel** (Supervisor, **Readiness to Learn, OSPI**), **Sassi Jarvela** (Foster Youth Representative), **Allison Krutsinger** (Legislative Assistant to Rep. Ruth Kagi), **Judge Richard McDermott** (Judge, **King County Superior Court**, representing SCJA), **Joanne Moore** (Director, **OPD**), **Representative Mary Helen Roberts** (21st Legislative District), **Dianne Schulthesis** (WA CASA Board member & Legislative Committee Chairwoman), and **Tess Thomas** (Vice-chair, **FPAWS**).

Regions one and six talked about the importance of having surprise health and safety foster home visits. Region two presented the need to have region-to-region case transfers. Region three presented the importance of youth having more control in their own placements. Region four presented the need for youth to have legal representation. Region five presented the benefits of the **Foster Care to College** mentoring program.

After each region presented, the people on the Commission had many questions. They were truly concerned and willing to do anything in their power to help. They also saw growth in the network as a whole. One Commission member stated, “Every year I come to the Summit, I see the maturity and professionalism within each region grow.” This makes me strive to continue to grow individually as a leader and an advocate. When people see how articulate foster youth can be and how we take every aspect in our lives seriously, it proves that our voices can be heard, will be heard, and we will make change. Hopefully after presenting these issues and leaving memorable impacts on the Commission’s hearts, we can get many of our issues on the 2010 Legislative Agenda.

On behalf of MBS, I would like to thank all the co-sponsors of the Summit this year: **Casey Family Programs**, the **Center for Children and Youth Justice**, the **Department of Social and Health Services Children’s Administration**, and the **Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care**.

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The Mockingbird Society and Washington Women's Foundation Join Forces by Jerry Bobo

On June 17th 2009, The Mockingbird Society (MBS) was awarded a \$100,000 grant by the **Washington Women's Foundation** (WWF). Over the next two years, the grant will be used to give strength for a better foundation, capacity, sustainability, and give more width to the core programs at MBS. The Mockingbird Network and the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) are programs that adjust the elevation of the voice and presence of children, youth and alumni of foster care, being involved with the evolution of public policy, service delivery, and system progression and reform.

MBS and WWF are neighbors in the 2100 building. Deputy Director of WWF **Marion DeFrost** says that in order to get on the radar for possible funding, a letter of inquiry (LOI) must be submitted online. That's how MBS got in contact with the funding committee which is just the beginning of the process.



The Mockingbird Network Youth Representatives and staff proudly display the grant check from the Washington Women's Foundation.

A group of women come together, bringing their passions and experiences, to discuss a broad array of different organizations and issues and to make the grant decision. There are five categories: arts, education, environment, health, and human services. This year, there were 260 LOI's across all five categories. In the human services category, which is where MBS falls, there were 70 total LOI's and only five were chosen for the next step. Each organization chosen had to write a proposal. 12 to 14 people read and discussed all of the proposals and, from these five, selected three organizations for site visits. This visit is based on presentation of the case, the type of people the organization impacts, the depth of the impact being made in addition to the proposal, and how strong the organization seems. Out of the three sites visited, two are put on a ballot, and one final organization is chosen.

At the end of the process, MBS came out on top, starting a relationship with the WWF. The Impact Assessment Committee is a team that consists of three people, two WWF members, and an executive director of another nonprofit organization. This team reads over materials and a site visit happens around winter 2009-10. It then makes a report and a written progress summary for year one. The assessment process is then repeated for year 2. This is not just to know what's going on, but to help explore the challenges that the organization might be having. For the most part, it is to keep the relationship growing and strong.



The Mockingbird Society staff and board gratefully accept a generous grant from the Washington Women's Foundation.

WWF was started by **Colleen Willoughby**. She mobilized 116 of her best female friends together around the idea of collective giving. Since individuals give small moderate gifts to many different nonprofit organizations, they thought of putting their money together for a greater impact. So, instead of 116 small donations around the community, it would be a larger contribution when combined and given to one organization. The organization started by giving a \$100,000 grant to **Mothers against Violence in America** and since has transformed into a bigger movement. There are now 500 members of the WWF and, combined, they give out grants that total up to \$500,000. 60-70 members of the WWF decide how to break up the money and which organizations will receive grants.

This is a group of women that have much power to influence many others. I was a part of the grant receiving celebration and it was a blast. Standing next to Jim Theofelis up at the podium and listening to his powerful thank you gave me the inspiration to speak from my heart and let the wonderful women of the WWF know that, as a Network member, and alumni that works at MBS, I and everyone else appreciate the grant very much. Once again, I would like to give WWF a big thank you.

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Connecting Families to Resources by Diamonique Walker

Connecting to resources in the community can often be challenging for foster parents and caregivers. One of the main reasons for this is because "...many social workers are not aware of them and some choose not to share them," says Ms. Anne, a Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) Hub Home parent. Another reason this can be difficult is that caregivers are also unaware of how to access certain resources because they don't know who to contact and where to find out about resources.

Not connecting to community resources can affect youth and caregivers. Sometimes youth are unable to participate in various activities and events in their communities because caregivers don't know about them or don't have the resources to fund them. Caregivers come from a wide range of private agencies and state offices. Because of this, information is not shared with all caregivers so not all available resources are being used. "A lack of resources simply drains the foster parent in many ways such as a lack of funds, time management, good parental skills, and stress relief," says **Ms. Anne**.

The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) is an innovative foster/birth/kinship caregiver service delivery model based on the extended family concept and designed to support prevention and permanency efforts that both increase child safety and strengthen families. MFM supports caregivers in connecting to resources in various ways. For one, with each Constellation being a community, resources are able to be shared with all caregivers. "MFM has been an excellent help with providing activity resources, such tickets to baseball, basketball, Wild Waves, museums, and other activities, as well as connecting us with many different kinds of sponsors," says Ms. Anne. The Hub Home parent is very skilled and has been a caregiver typically for a number of years and experienced in finding resources. As a Hub Home parent, Ms. Anne is more than capable of finding resources and sharing them with her Constellation community.

Ms. Anne is a very active and resourceful caregiver and Hub Home parent. Each month, her Constellation meets to allow the parents to share and help each other. Sometimes, guest speakers put on trainings for foster parents or even come to talk about new programs and resources in the community. At every meeting, Ms. Anne has a representative from **Odessa Brown Children's Clinic (OBCC)** come to talk to families about the many programs and services that the clinic provides. In addition, Ms. Anne provides resources to help Constellation families become culturally competent. She arranges trips that connect to cultural institutions such as the Northwest African Museum and Wing Luke Asian Museum.

Connecting to resources in the community is very important for foster parents and caregivers. Knowing and being familiar with resources and then sharing them with other caregivers not only relieves caregivers from the added stress, but also gives youth a chance to develop just like any other normal kid. By caregivers having a strong, consistent relationship with resources, youth are able to participate in clubs, sports teams, sporting events and also get the necessary care that they need for their mental and physical health. Without these resources, youth may be missing out on things that help them develop into dynamic individuals. The Mockingbird Family Model is one example of how support to caregivers is provided. To learn more about MFM, visit [The Mockingbird Family Model](#).

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Letter From the Editor by Jim Theofelis

First, I want to thank all of the youth and alumni who participated in this year's **Foster Youth Leadership Summit**. It was an amazing weekend of leadership development, hard work, and lots of fun! On Sunday afternoon, the youth presented their priority issues to the **Washington Commission on Children in Foster Care**. I would also like to send a major **THANK YOU** to Commission members who took the time on a beautiful Sunday afternoon to attend and listen to the youth.

>Once again, the issue of Adequate Legal Representation in Dependency Court was identified as a priority for youth in foster care. One young man from Region 4 began his presentation by asking the Commission members, "How many of you have children?" As expected, most of the Commission members' hands sprang into the air with great pride. Then the young man asked: "How many of you would allow your child to go into a courtroom without an attorney?" Every hand vanished!

Other issues raised by youth included the request for unannounced visits by social workers to foster homes; allowing youth to have the opportunity to meet and interview potential foster families before being placed there; ensuring that paperwork and jurisdiction is transferred with the youth within two months when a youth is transferred across regions into a new foster home; and increased mentoring and access to programs like Foster Care to College. It was a great event and I want to give a special thank you to all of The Mockingbird Society staff who worked so hard to ensure it was a great success.

I also want to thank **Carla Lewis and the staff and members of the Washington Women's Foundation (WWF)** for honoring The Mockingbird Society as the 2009 winner of their \$100,000 human services grant award. The WWF is an outstanding organization that has been a leader in philanthropy and

community building and The Mockingbird Society is proud to have received this distinguished award from such a stellar organization.

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Tribal Court Resources by Leona Bill

When I think about the fact that my siblings are in foster care but their case is handled through our tribe, I feel lost because, as members of a tribe, the state laws do not apply to us. There is a lot that seems unfair in my eyes. Being in foster care and being a Native belonging to a tribe turns everything around. When it comes to my rights as a youth in care, I feel that switching my case from the state to my tribe made things harder on my family and me. I am unfamiliar with my rights with my tribe and when I want to discuss an issue with the tribal case worker, I feel like I am talking to a person who's really not hearing me. It's like the case worker is not there.

I talked to an attorney who works for the Tulalip Tribe named **Chori Folkman**. She was able to give me some general information about tribal courts. Not all tribal courts work the same—it varies depending on the tribe itself. In a dependency hearing with the tribe, the parents will have to find a way to get an attorney to represent them in tribal court. Like I mentioned before, all tribal courts are different and have their own laws and rules. The only ones that the tribes share in common are federal laws like the **Indian Civil Rights Act**.

It is difficult to describe a youth's rights in tribal court because it depends on the tribe itself. Some tribes only hold court on certain days, others hold court every day. Tribes don't have enough money to provide as many resources as the state does. If a tribe wants to, they can change their own rules and laws. This makes it difficult for both the clients and attorneys when dealing with tribal court.

I attended the Foster Youth and Alumni Summit last year with a lot of questions swarming my mind. How could I fight to see my siblings if I have to go to tribal court? Who do I talk to if both the case worker and the supervisor don't return my calls? Who can I trust? Who's deciding what in the case? In my case, I can talk to the tribe's court clerk to go through the process. I must fill out a form then the clerk will help file a motion. Next I ask the clerk to file a Note to Set a Court Hearing. With my tribe, **Sauk-sui-attle**, if a tribal member is facing criminal issues in tribal court and can't afford an attorney, then the tribe will appoint an attorney to represent him or her. However, if that member is facing tribal court with a dependency case, no attorney will be appointed from the tribe. The member would have to pay for his or her own attorney.

The terms 'tribal court', 'tribal court system' and 'tribal justice system' refer to the entire judicial branch and employees of an Indian tribe, or people who the tribe contracts with who serve a certain role in their court system, like a prosecuting attorney or a judge. In other words, in tribal court it's the board and chair members that decide what happens and what doesn't. You can look online and search for your tribe and find out about your tribe's court, although not all tribes are listed (see below).

If going to tribal court doesn't work, or you feel that the decision was not right and you disagree with the tribe, you can try taking the tribe to federal court. I haven't seen this done. This would actually be difficult to do because a tribe is like its own country. In a tribe, favoritism can happen. A young woman in my tribe feels like giving up her rights because she has jumped through the hoops that the tribe asked her to and now the tribe won't budge to even give her unsupervised visits with her daughter. This is how difficult tribal court can be. For more information visit www.tribalresourcecenter.org, www.washingtonlawhelp.org, www.nwjustice.org, and www.narf.org.

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Mental Health and Foster Youth by Christina Koshney

Being in the foster care system comes with a variety of experiences including much frustration and trauma. To be taken from home and thrown into a system that is supposed to make up for the love and support of your family is quite traumatic. Even the best possible foster care system would still be dealing with broken families and vulnerable children. Thus, it makes sense that the youth and adults in this system are enduring experiences that may lead to the need of mental health services.

How mental health care is actually implemented and used in the child welfare system is complex. "One in every two children in foster care has chronic medical problems unrelated to behavioral concerns...up to 80% of [foster children] exhibit a serious behavior or mental health problem requiring intervention."¹ These are only a few of the alarming statistics. A variety of states from across the nation were used in compiling this information and the numbers that represent the need for better mental health care for foster youth are abundant.

Another study found that 63.3% of foster youth are likely to have a lifetime mental health diagnosis compared to 45.9% of the general population.² The most common diagnoses include conduct disorder, major depressive disorder, major depressive episode, panic attack, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

(ADHD).³ It's clear that the majority of those experiencing the child welfare system will also experience mental health problems, but how exactly are these disorders treated?

Once a person is diagnosed, they are often prescribed drugs, sometimes without proper counseling to coincide.⁴ A lot of the drugs that are used in treating these disorders are made for adults and have major side effects that interfere with physical and mental adolescent development.⁵ I recently spoke with a young woman who is an 18 year old former foster youth, that has had a very colorful experience with mental health care while in foster care. She shared with me how she entered the system at a very young age and along with foster care came a stream of diagnoses and experimental medications. These various medications had dramatic side effects from major weight changes to numbing her emotions, making her feel as though she were a zombie. It came to a point where she was on so many medications that she needed to maintain a certain weight because if she were to lose even five pounds she could risk death. She was being given pills to counterbalance other pills.

Eventually, this woman found people who started to ask questions and wonder why she was being given so many medications. When finally given the opportunity to evaluate herself at the age of 16 years old, she told her psychologist that she felt she was dealing with a number of issues that come along with being a teenager in the foster care system. She is currently not on any medications after counsel with medical professionals. She says of her current mental health state that we all need improvement and go through our ups and downs but for the most part she is happy. Not only that but she is also an active participant in The Mockingbird Society Network that advocates for change in the child welfare system.

It is important to note that, while it is very likely that a youth in the child welfare system will experience mental health problems, not every single youth will. Those that do experience trauma won't all necessarily need major intervention, but the love and support of a stable family of sorts will undoubtedly be needed. Another study that looked at families found that homes where the caregivers were warm, involved, set limits, held appropriate expectations of the youth, encouraged values and beliefs, listened and were respectful to the youth had youth that achieved better in school, were less depressed and anxious, were more self-reliant, had greater self-esteem, and were less likely to be involved with drug abuse, delinquent activities, and early sexual intercourse.⁶

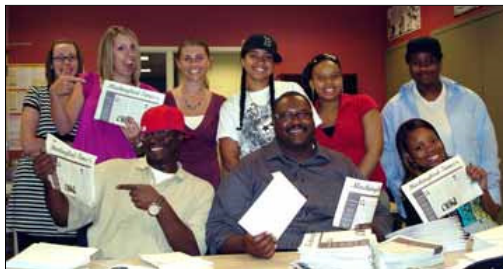
It may seem that these are fairly simple ways to provide support for youth, but they are unfortunately qualities that are missing from some foster homes. From the recent studies and statistics it is clear that the mental health services provided to youth are either not always being properly administered or are sometimes not available.⁷ However, even when there are services available, we need to be conscious of the fact that just because there is a diagnosis, the regular practice of prescribing adult medications to youth isn't necessarily appropriate. There needs to be a better way and this can be found through family or medical professionals that take the time to listen. The amazing young woman with personal experience in the system seconds this opinion. She rose from "a shell of what I used to be" to an amazing young woman with so much positive energy that it seems a crime to prescribe anything that would take this away from the world.

^{1-6, 7} Journal of The Child Welfare League of America, Special Issue: Mental Health Practice Guideline For Child Welfare: Context For Reform, 2009.

⁶ Howze, A. K. (2002). Health For Teens In Care, A Judge's Guide.

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Representative Eric Pettigrew Lends a Hand



Representative Eric Pettigrew from the 37th Washington State legislative district, came to visit us at The Mockingbird Society for a "turn your swag on" themed mailing day. As we prepared the Mockingbird Times for distribution, we had the opportunity to get to know Representative Pettigrew. He grew up in California, received his bachelor's degree from the University of Oregon, and his master's degree from the University of Washington. His dynamic presence and sense of humor created a great atmosphere for mailing day!

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Mockingbird Family Model Origins by Ian Grant

At its core, the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) is not a new idea. On the contrary; it has shown its effectiveness time and time again since the dawn of

human existence. The MFM is, at heart, an extended family, a community of interconnected families whose primary purpose is to make life better for every family member. This happens in many ways: the Hub Home takes the child for the weekend when the parents need to focus on other things, one of the families visits another Constellation home and shows their children how to bake cookies, even something as simple as bringing over a ball so that the kids can play together.

The brilliance of the MFM is that it targets exactly the populations who can benefit most from an effective system of community support: foster youth and kinship care youth. The Mockingbird Society (MBS) started in the basement of **Richard Hugo House** in Seattle in the late nineties. Jim Theofelis paid several youth out of pocket to write articles on the issues and stories surrounding foster care. It was extremely hard going: outside funding was minimal and the program was in serious danger of going under due to lack of money. It had reached the point where Jim was forced to tell the youth that soon he might not be able to pay their wages. Then Jim got a phone call. MBS had received a federal grant in the amount of \$325,000! Jim finally had the money to start implementing his vision on a grand scale.

The pilot MFM Constellation was started in collaboration with **UJIMA Community Services**. It was four Satellite foster families and a Hub Home. Each of the Satellite families cared for two siblings. Jim contracted with the **Northwest Institute for Children and Families** (a think tank at the **University of Washington School of Social Work**) to perform comprehensive evaluations of the Constellation over a period of three and a half years. This was critical: Jim knew that the program would not become widely implemented without hard data to back it up; it was hard enough to convince state governments to change their ways as it was.

All the time, MBS grew – from total assets of \$47,000 in 2001 to \$1.8 million in 2006, the year the final report on the MFM evaluation was published. The MFM had passed with flying colors; the data showed not only that foster families were getting access to respite care and other resources that they so desperately needed, but the foster children themselves were doing measurably better.

As word got out about this innovative new method, people started calling MBS and asking about setting up their own Constellations. MFM went national in 2006, with two Constellations founded in Washington, DC. Today, MBS is a major player in the fight to improve the foster care system. We are constantly working to launch new Constellations and support the current ones and we continue to grow. The MFM is, in Web lingo, going viral: more and more agencies from Saskatchewan to Kentucky to Washington State are inquiring about how to reform their foster care programs around a proven model that works. The future is bright, both for foster children and for the parents who support them in their journey toward adulthood.

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Meet the Staff: Yolanda Kilgore

My name is Yolanda Kilgore and I am 18 years old. I was originally raised in Renton, Washington, but I have spent the earlier parts of my young adult life in the greater Seattle area. I am currently in the process of obtaining my GED so that I can start college as soon as possible. In my spare time I usually speak on panels about LGBTQ (Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual, Queer and Questioning) topics through American Friends Service Committee. I also love playing the piano, writing on my blog, figuring out new tricks on my Mac and writing/ composing songs.

At a very young age I was placed in the foster care system, separated from my siblings and placed in multiple homes. By the time I was in my early teens, I had become accustomed to words like ‘group home’, ‘troubled youth’, ‘anger management’, ‘depression’, ‘mental health’, ‘unstable,’ etc. The list goes on and on. I was lucky enough to be introduced to a wonderful woman who worked at the school that I went to. At the time I was unaware that this woman would become one of the people who gave me a chance to shine and transform from a quiet non-interactive youth into a loud, positive, strong young woman who is now able to advocate for herself as well as those around her who are unable to. When it comes to issues in society, I believe there are many things that should be addressed. I would say that safety and equality for youth in the LGBTQ community especially in the school system is important. I think many times bullying and harassment are strongly overlooked or dismissed as normal adolescent behavior when in actuality it is never okay to have your physical, emotional, and/or environmental well being threatened no matter how you appear, LGBTQ or not. Another issue I want to focus on when it comes to foster care and homelessness is the stigma of mental health issues that surrounds foster youth. It seems like a lot of foster youth are being diagnosed with one thing or another and I feel like this sets the youth at a disadvantage. Sometimes this will result in the youth failing because when you tell someone that they have been sick their whole life or that there is something wrong with them it is going to be hard for them to succeed if they have no one believing in them. I feel that the mental health community should find other avenues besides over-diagnosing and overmedicating youth especially youth in foster care.

I wanted to get involved with The Mockingbird Society (MBS) and The Mockingbird Network because I believe that I have a story that needs to be heard and a strong voice. I believe that The MBS can provide me with the opportunity as well as the support and motivation I need to have my story heard. I also feel that I was born to help others and advocating for the foster care system is a great way to do that. In the words of Jim Theofelis, working with The MBS gives me “a chance to help that young boy or girl who doesn’t even know that they are going to be in care.”

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Struggle Into Strength by Aric Nicholas

From major challenges such as foster care, poverty, and football to quotidian problems such as challenges faced amongst friends, family, and relationships, I would like to think I have not only a vast well of experiences to draw from but also ample wisdom and emotional growth gained from these situations. So I’d like to speak on the cumulative effects of how my life’s situations and adversities have shaped me into the person I am.

Oprah Winfrey once said “Where there is no struggle there is no strength.” Coupled with Marian Wright’s statement “Don’t feel entitled to anything you didn’t strive and sweat for,” the statement summarizes my maturation as a student, athlete and, most importantly, as a person. Through sacrifices made through teammates I have learned the importance of giving my all and selflessness to achieve the desired result of team conquest. Through my own problems

in life I wondered if I put the same effort into improving my life as I did into football what the outcome would be.

Not only was foster care a major battle for me evoking an enormous desire within me to be with my birth mother but my eventual “release” back to my mother was not without its trials. In fact, coming back home to my mother was worse. The presumptions I had made of what life would be like once I was not a ward of the state were quickly dispatched with the ruthless reality of what was. Since I was an only child and had been in foster care or in a different family member’s custody all of my life, my mom was still the seventeen year old mother who wasn’t quite ready for a child. If a person is still working on improving their quality of life and resolving issues within themselves it is often counter-productive to present them with a new challenge or problem.

The first week or so was the honeymoon so to speak but we were both at awkward stages in a parent/child relationship. I was seventeen and starting to seek my independence while everything inside of her was saying that I was her baby. When it was time to correct my behavior she did so and I felt slightly affronted that this woman who I barely knew would bring herself to discipline me and establish a point of dominance over me. Soon much of my stay with her was divided between me being outside or in the house shut off in my room with my Madden and Bowflex, giving me a reason to be alone without appearing rude.

One way to ease mental strain and relieve stress in a problematic situation where the circumstances are less than ideal is to imagine or create an alternative reality in which the person is in a different place in his or her life. As I imagined my own reality, I sought to implement my particular skill set. Madden and training gave way to evaluating my personal attributes. I imagined myself in college using my athleticism to become a three sport athlete and using my skills on the field to become a popular football player and icon on campus. Daytime visions of me speeding past special teams’ defenders blurred into me running track and coming off of the bench to score some points for the basketball team but mostly into providing support for the team which had then become my second family.

At some point these dreams became goals. My experiences and temperament lead me to believe that good can be drawn from the most exiguous of places. Likewise, I believe that positive experiences can be wasted and meaningless if one does not capitalize on opportunities and properly appreciate the situation. That being said, I strongly believe that any controversy, obstacle, or experience is something to learn and draw strength from. That, I think, is my triumph from my past. Not that I came through unscathed but smarter, stronger, and a better person not because of, but in spite of my past.

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Creative Corner

Freemont

Moses

There’s a door in an alley
that leads to a house with no energy
my room was on the bottom floor
it’s tiny but it fit three more
and if you go upstairs
you’ll see the beds of some friends
there’s graffiti everywhere you look
and trash under every step you took
over in the corner there’s a stench you cannot know
there’s a hole in the roof right there
and the mildew smell just fills the air
but underneath it all it’s what I call home.

Love At First Sight

Hannah Collado

Love at first sight...
Meet my moonlight.
I share my secrets fair and square.
And my beauty covers me,
Like the sun covers the darkness over the world.
But right now the darkness is overcoming me,
So please help me... help me to believe.

Forever Without You

LisaMarie Iocolano

The blood that runs
Through my veins
Forever without you
On my soul it rains
A heart that’s bound
By love’s cold chains
Blood that bleeds
Blood that stains
And leaves my empty remains

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Community Events

Region 1

July 26: Royal Fireworks Festival and Concert, 4 – 11 PM, Info: (509) 455 – 6865.

Region 2

July 9-Aug 16: Summer Sunset Concerts & Out-doors Summer Cinema. Info: (509) 575-6020.

July 31: Dancin' Around, MLK Park. Info: Al Brown (509) 453-8380.

Region 3

Now through July 20: Sleep Country USA's New Clothing Drive for Foster Kids. Info: www.sleepcountry.com.

Region 4

July 25: Seafair Torchlight Parade, 7:30 PM, Seattle Center.

July 17-19: Bite of Seattle, 11 AM – 8/9 PM, Seattle Center.

Region 6

July 23-25: Ho'ike and Hawaiian Festival, Esther Short Park.

Friday nights in July: Free movie in the park. Info: www.cityofvancouver.us/calendar.

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Quote of the Month

“There are no mistakes, no coincidences. All events are blessings given to us to learn from.”

~ Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

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News from the Mockingbird Network

Region 1: Chapter in Spokane County by Josephine Davis and Lauren Steed

Region 1 had our kick-off chapter meeting June 3rd! Twenty youth and alumni attended the Marti Gras themed meeting. The masks, candy, and new MBS information was a perfect lead-in to building a successful chapter. Everyone was involved and had a good time. Our next meeting will be a BBQ July 30th at 3:30 PM in Coeur d'Alene Park in Spokane. We will discuss a community action plan, a chapter name, and share the work and fun that was had at the Summit. A special thanks to The Mockingbird Society for such a wonderful event. Every time I go to the Summit it feels like we are part of a family and everyone stands up for each other. Hopefully, during our next chapter meeting we can share the same ideas and leadership skills that we did at the Summit with our own local legislators!



Region 2: A.C.T. F.I.R.S.T. Chapter in Yakima County by Sandra Hunt

This year's Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit went quite well. There was a welcome and a super fun team building activity, which involved a scavenger hunt that went on throughout the entire grounds of the hotel. There were some fun leadership workshops and funny karaoke that went on. As usual, the food was great, and there was a lot of it. I was sad when it was over but I have a feeling there will be more bills passed. This month our chapter held Life Advocacy 101 Training at the **Yakima Casey Family Programs** Field Office. It went fantastically and, as usual, I was training alongside **Tammy**.



Region 3: Hey Mac Chapter in Skagit County by Hunter Nelson

This year, the Summit was smaller, so we spoke louder and made sure that our issues were clearly put on the table for everyone to hear. The speeches could only be three minutes each, so we had to make our strong points quickly. Our region spoke in support of making more stable placements for foster youth. I can assure you that all the regions including ours made the issues clear. We definitely made our voices heard and the Commission Board was moved by what we had to say. After the speeches were done, there was time for questions and for pictures to be taken as well. At the end, there was a raffle during which many people won iPods, gift cards, flash drives, and many fun prizes. In conclusion, the Leadership Summit was wonderful. I would strongly encourage any eligible youth to attend next year. It could be your voice that makes the difference for other youth around the state of Washington.

**Region 4: For Change Chapter in King County by Yolanda Kilgore**

This month we decided what we wanted to focus on at the Summit this year. There were many important issues we wanted to see changed but we chose to focus on Legal Representation. The chapter was updated on what happened at the **State Advisory Council Meeting**. Chapter leader elections were also held and we also voted to not allow revolving chapter leaders have consecutive terms. We gained a new chapter member as well, **Kevin**, who was elected to be our new revolving chapter leader. Next month's meeting will be held on August 10th at the 2100 building from 3:30-5:30 PM. We will work on how we want to help out our community and plan some fun civic engagement activities. I hope to see some new faces in the chapter meetings. The Summit was amazing and gave youth a chance to network and make stronger connections. All the chapters' presentations were outstanding.

**Region 5: Chapter in Pierce County by Kiarra Brown**

This month we had Know Your Rights training and the Summit, which made me more interested in The Mockingbird Society (MBS). I was impressed because there were a lot of youth at the Summit who were interested in joining MBS because they wanted their voices to be heard. In our region, the Summit group met three times to decide what topic to present to the Commission. The topics that we decided on were problem solving and the Foster Care to College Mentoring Program. We presented how mentors impact the lives of youth in the foster care system and how we want the community to get involved in the lives of foster youth so they can better succeed. Being involved in the Summit was a great moment for me because I had the opportunity to meet extraordinary foster youth from across the state as well as members of the Commission.

**Region 6: SPEAK UP! Chapter in Clark County by Alexis Holland**

This month I had the opportunity to go to the Summit where I really enjoyed the atmosphere with all the youth. The foster youth were very welcoming and I got to know people who've experienced the same things I have. We first did a scavenger hunt with members of other regions. Then we worked on the six qualities of leadership with our own regions. Our region had "responsibility." We performed a skit and the highlight was Crystal dancing to "She Works Hard for the Money." The other regions had very creative ideas and were entertaining as well. The next day we spent most of the morning preparing our speeches which we gave in front of all the youth and received very helpful feedback. Then came our final presentations. All of the regions did very well and I believe the Commission was very interested in our ideas. In my opinion, our points were truly noticed. All in all, it was an informative and fun weekend. Great job youth and alumni!

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Thank You!

Steve Akerman; Tom Alberg and Judi Beck; Anonymous; Marijane Sutton Ashby; Annie Burns and John Monahan; Cedarbrook; Karen Cowgill; Julie Cruz; Jill Brandmarker Donnelly; Caroline Egan; Sandi Everlove; Tracy Flynn; Ruth and Libby Gegorski; Graffi T's; Dr. Wanda Hackett; JoAnn Herbert in memory of June Herbert; Jamie Hills; Terri Johnston and Daniel Evans; Ryan Kiely; Sarah Mahaffy of VOA; Najja Morris; Jamie Navarro on behalf of the guests of Brian and Jaime's Wedding; Pacific Continental Bank; Sarah Rafton; Vanitha S. Raman; Red Arrow Logistics; Molly Rhodes; Sara Rylaarsdam; Judith Ann Scott; Seattle Children's; The Seattle Foundation Youth Grantmaking Alumni Board; Cheryl Snyder; Spokane Safeway; Christine Stoll and Adam Jundt; Jim Street; Treehouse; Janet Walker; Wilkerson Family; Gregory and Ryan Witter; Mark Wittow and KL Gates; Josh Yandell, Pistol Skate Shop.

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