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The Outcome of Hard Work and Dedication by Ashlie Lanier

Advocacy is the strongest way to implement change for youth in today's society. It is the best way for youth to get their voices heard. **The Mockingbird Society** (MBS) is dedicated to "building a world class foster care system through collaboration, innovation and advocacy." The **Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit** and **Youth Advocacy Day** are two annual events MBS hosts where Foster and Alumni all across the State of Washington have the opportunity to advocate for what they would like to see changed in the child welfare system.

During the 2008 Washington State Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit last fall, youth had the opportunity to speak with Legislators and other professionals about the changes that they would like to see in the child welfare system. Each region picked one topic of interest it decided to present to **The Commission for Children in Foster Care**. The topics included more benefits for kinship youth, sibling visitation, notification of rights, federal and state foster care having equal benefits and post adoption visitation. After speaking and providing our opinion about these issues, we went back to our communities and formed chapters to create The Mockingbird Network. Two chapter leaders in each region went to the State Advisory Meeting to vote on the 2009 Legislative Agenda.



Representatives from The Mockingbird Society and other supporters look on as Washington State Governor Christine Gregoire signs key legislation supporting rights for foster youth.

In February, the MBS and the **ASK-Y coalition** held the 2009 Youth Advocacy Day. Over 200 foster youth, alumni and supporters made their way to our state's beautiful capital that shivering cold morning. The MBS legislative agenda consisted of HB 1492 Independent Youth Housing Program, HB 1961 Fostering Connections (formerly known as Foster Care to 21), HB 1183 and SB 5609 Legal Representation, HB 1938 Post-adoption Connections, and SB 5811 Notification of Rights.

We marched around the capital shouting for our rights and our needs. We sat in hearings for our bills and some youth got the opportunity to testify. After hearing heartfelt stories, meaningful statements and unanswered questions from youth impacted by these bills, legislators were left with a decision. All we could do was continue to call our local legislators for support and wait for results.

On April 21st 2009, **Governor Gregoire** signed HB 1492 the Independent Youth Housing Program providing safe housing for youth in care. I had the privilege to witness the signing of this bill. When I arrived, I was extremely nervous. I had been to Olympia before, but meeting Governor Gregoire and watching her sign what I had been up there advocating and chanting for, was completely different and the feeling was different as well. Everyone was relaxed and had smiling faces. I saw representatives from the MBS, **Community Youth Services**, **Pierce County Alliance**, and others waiting for our bill number to get called. When we finally walked in, I saw Governor Gregoire smiling and shaking hands. She read the bill description then said, "Let's make this a law now," and signed the bill. We gathered around her and had our pictures taken. She then shook all of our hands and gave us an awesome pen with her signature on it. I couldn't help but smile walking out of the room thinking about all the work we put in to make this possible and how many young lives will be affected.

However, it did not stop there. On April 25th, two more bills were signed: HB 1938 Sibling Visitation, asking adoptive parents to consider keeping sibling connections and HB1961 Fostering Connections (Foster Care to 21) which allows foster youth to have the opportunity to continue in the foster care system until the age of 21 and receive their high school diploma, GED, or some other form of education. On May 11th, HB 5811 Notification of Rights was signed which says that, at the age of 12, youth in care are to be informed of their rights in the foster care system.

We went to Youth Advocacy Day and advocated for five bills of which four were passed and signed. That is amazing considering the economic crisis our country is facing. I am proud that our state officials see that the youth are the future and you can't put a dollar amount on their lives. Even though Legal Representation did not go through, we were able to inform new legislators about the issue. I think everyone can say that we had an awesome session and are extremely thankful for our results. Special thanks are owed to all the Representatives for their support and work on all the bills that were signed.

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ACEs in Spades by Ian Grant

It's no secret that the experiences we have as children impact our adult lives profoundly. And it's not much of a leap of logic to say that negative childhood experiences can negatively impact one's adult life. The research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) goes much further: it links ACEs (including physical, psychological and sexual abuse, parental drug use and criminal activity) to specific health outcomes including heart disease, HIV and other STDs, obesity and other serious health problems which plague a significant portion of the American population.

In a way, this is obvious: a person who grows up in adversity will naturally seek ways to alleviate it; a person who grows up with stress and trauma will develop behaviors that relieve that pressure. Unfortunately, many of the ways that young people find to help relieve that stress aren't very healthy, but the small, incremental health risks of (for example) smoking cigarettes don't seem all that important when compared to the very immediate, very intense struggles that youth in traumatic situations go through every day.

The ACE study is based on a ten question survey which asks if the respondent was exposed as a child to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; emotional or physical neglect; domestic violence; substance abuse; mental illness or suicidal behavior; parental relationship issues; or criminal activity. Each of these issues is assigned one point for a possible total of ten points.

Filling out the ACE questionnaire was an enlightening experience for me. I was in foster care but, compared to a lot of the other people in the system, my story is fairly mild. I was astonished upon completing the survey to find that I had scored seven out of a possible ten points. I know plenty of people that would have gotten all ten. The frightening part is that people who scored more than four (which has to include most, if not all, foster children) are 4-12 times more likely to become alcoholics, abuse drugs, become clinically depressed, or attempt suicide. These people are also significantly more likely to smoke cigarettes, be severely obese, develop heart disease, get cancer, and so forth. In short, the reality is that foster youth are in serious danger, not only from the obvious specters of poverty and homelessness, but from severe health problems that appear further down the road.

Researchers at the Centers for Disease Control have outlined a biochemical process that may explain some of these issues. When you are under stress, your adrenal gland releases cortisol. Cortisol is a hormone that has a lot of effects. Doctors prescribe medication containing it to cure rashes. The hormone inhibits your immune and allergic reactions, increases your blood pressure, and effects the way your kidneys work. In short doses, Cortisol poses no significant health risk; it's something your body produces naturally as a way to regulate your body, like adrenaline or melatonin. However, when it is constantly present—when the person in question is constantly stressed or afraid—it has significant negative effects on the hippocampus, the part of the brain that deals with emotions and memory.

In addition, as chronic stress results in constantly high levels of cortisol, the brain loses the ability to regulate the amount of cortisol present in the bloodstream. So people who had to deal with chronic stressors early in life not only have to deal with the psychological baggage that comes with a traumatic childhood, they are physically underdeveloped in terms of their ability to deal with their emotions and learn new things. They are also unable to regulate their internal cortisol level and are thus constantly in a biochemical state of stress.

The reason this research is so important is not because it's necessarily telling us things we didn't know; the concept that an unhealthy childhood leads to unhealthy adult behaviors is a fairly intuitive one. However, this research tells us how and why these difficulties manifest, and that makes all the difference in terms of coming up with effective ways to address these issues.

Our challenge now is to find ways to alleviate the problem of childhood trauma. It's impossible to eliminate it completely—part of childhood and, indeed, human existence is dealing with traumatic events. The difference is that foster youth come from backgrounds of fear and stress which defined their early life. We can fix that. Next issue, I will be writing about how the **Mockingbird Family Model** helps to address some of these problems and gives foster youth the support network they need to deal with traumatic pasts so that they don't have to define themselves in terms of the horrible things that happened to them. In the meantime, I would encourage every reader to think about how their childhood shaped who they became as an adult. It is possible to beat the statistics if you get help and you are persistent. Keep trying.

Sources used in this article: www.acestudy.org/files/ACE_Score_Calculator.pdf; www.scaany.org/documents/felitti_ace_study_article.pdf; www.aapweb.com/files/ReviewofACEStudywithreferencessummarytable.pdf; www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16311898

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Ryther Shows Success of The MFM by Diamonique Walker

The **Mockingbird Society** (MBS) is working to create a world class foster care system. With the services that one of the MBS's programs the **Mockingbird Family Model** (MFM) provides to the parents in the constellations, foster care is changing. By getting together monthly to network, foster parents are getting to know each other and are able to share information and resources. Over time, they become an extended family which they call a constellation. This is a big change compared with many foster parents that feel isolated and alone.

I have written over the past few months about other ways that the MFM is changing the foster care system including connecting siblings by either keeping them together in the same placement if possible or having them in the same constellation so that they are close and able to see each other. Placement disruptions are often prevented by having the Hub Home provide respite care when family members need a break or, if a disruption occurs, by having youth stay with a foster family in the same constellation, attending the same school and staying connected with peers and people they know and trust.

Ryther Child Center is a great example of how the MFM has brought positive change. Beginning in December of 2008, all of their therapeutic foster families were part of two MFM constellations. Last October, Ryther's second constellation was launched. Foster parents went through training and learned about the MFM and how it works. Ryther believes that putting youth in foster care in constellations is important because it provides them with normalcy in their lives. Youth that would typically be isolated are in communities with youth that have similar struggles and are given the opportunity to play and have relationships like other kids.

Ryther's MFM experience is an example of how the system is changing for the better. If other agencies decide to adopt the model and implement it throughout their organization, it will bring kids in foster care another step closer to having a normal life.

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Letter From the Editor by Jim Theofelis

Happy June! I want to begin by giving a "shout out" to all the young people who have earned their G.E.D. and/or are graduating from high school or college. This is a special time of year for all families who proudly celebrate the accomplishment of graduation. However, those young people who are in foster care or homelessness have extra hurdles to overcome. I had the opportunity to attend this year's **Governor's Scholarship Ceremony sponsored by the College Success Foundation**. What a remarkable and inspiring event! It was great to see so many deserving and hard working youth receive the support they need to pursue their academic goals. Again, congratulations to all of the graduates this year!

I also want to thank the many legislators who attended our Legislative Review and Celebration on May 27th. **We were honored to be joined by House Speaker Frank Chopp, Representatives Ruth Kagi, Mary Helen Roberts, Mary Lou Dickerson, Reuven Carlyle, Eric Pettigrew, Roger Goodman, and Senators Fred Jarrett and Adam Kline.** We were especially appreciative that **Congressman Jim McDermott** was our guest of honor. I also want to thank **Justice Bobbe Bridge who is now the founder and President of the Center for Children and Youth Justice** for her ongoing contribution to the children, youth and families we serve. Finally, I do want to thank Governor Gregoire for her support during a very difficult budget year.

As we welcome the summer months I am asking you to take a moment and reflect upon the achievements and success of The Mockingbird Society. As you know this is a very difficult economic climate for families and non-profits. The Mockingbird Society accepts no government dollars and we do not benefit financially from any of the legislation we help get passed. We rely on private donations and grants which have seen a significant reduction during this economy. Please take a moment and determine if you can give a donation to The Mockingbird Society so we can continue to build a world class foster care system.

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When You Think You Are Safe by Amanda Spady, Region 6

We as foster youth overcome so many obstacles in our lives. We all come from different, but yet very similar backgrounds. From drug addicted parents, to neglect, to being molested and/or raped, our backgrounds are full of trauma. We get put into the system and are placed with relatives, friends of the family, or even complete strangers. Some of us are blessed with amazing foster parents; others are not so lucky. Some foster parents just take the classes and then take in the youth for money instead of to help them. Even model foster care programs, where caseloads are kept low and workers and foster parents get special training, are not immune.

There was a case in Oregon that involved twins that were abused to the point that they will need care for the rest of their lives. They were kept in a darkened room in cribs that were covered in chicken wire secured by duct tape. The floor of the dark room was covered in garbage and their sheets were saturated in dried excrement and urine. The twins had been living in this foster home for about three years. The twins were often without food, water, or human touch. One of the twins had a shunt put into his head at birth and was not given the medical attention that he needed. He would hit his head against the crib to relieve the pressure. When the police and child welfare workers rescued the twins, he was nearly comatose. The twins, now 6 ½, are both in the bottom 1 percent developmentally of children their age.¹

In Immokalee Florida, there was a case in which a youth that was mentally disabled was molested and raped six times by her foster dad. When she was removed from the home at 17, she was four months pregnant with his child. He pled guilty and was sent to prison in 2001 and was released last year. The young girl is now 27 and has the mental capacity of a first grader.²

It's cases like these that make me think really hard about the foster care system. Is it the fault of the social workers that things like this happen to youth? Should social workers have more face to face visits with youth? Should they have to do a walk through of the house every time they come to the house to have a face to face visit? I don't think that the social workers have control over what goes on behind closed doors. No one does. I do think, however, social

workers should do a lot better job than many do now.

The state should also do a better job at finding good foster parents. There are a lot of bad people out there in the world and they shouldn't be given the opportunity to do bad things to good people. No one deserves to be molested, raped, or beaten. Foster youth should not feel unsafe after being removed from a horrible situation. They should not be placed into a home with the same problems or an even worse situation. It really makes you think, when are you really truly safe?

¹ www.oregonlive.com/news/index.ssf/2009/04/gresham_foster_kids_abused_des.html

² www.naplesnews.com/news/2009/mar/27/child-rape-now-9-yet-dcf-settlement-held

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Tribal Colleges by Leona Bill

As a Native American, my dream was always to graduate with a high school diploma. I am 23 years old and finishing my General Equivalency Diploma (GED). When I was in foster care, jumping around from one place to another and hearing the negative words that were being told to me by adults affected my willingness to go forward with my education. As I got older, I realized that I started liking school and I did not care what was said to me. I knew I could accomplish great things. My caseworkers did not tell me about college, thinking that I was not going to make it far. Being in foster care effected my education a lot. I was told by one school that they could not give me any credits because I had moved too many times, therefore I was stuck getting my GED.

I learned a lot about college when I started living on the streets of Seattle while I was still in the foster care system. After finishing my GED I plan to attend college. When I was looking for a college to attend I found out about Native American colleges. Very few Native Americans graduate from high school and those that do graduate don't attend college very often. Few apply and even fewer are accepted. Colleges provide great opportunities for our people, but many are not able to take advantage of them. I want to change that.

A major concern of our elders is the loss of our sacred and traditional beliefs. I think we are at the point where this loss is happening because we are used to a lifestyle that wouldn't normally be our way of living. I admit I love learning about my ancestral beliefs more than I like school but I know that you need an education to succeed in this world. Finding these colleges was a help to me because I no longer have to stress about choosing between going to school and learning about my culture. I can attend a Native college and be able to do both at once.

There are very few of our people that can speak Native languages. There are many Native American colleges across the United States, some of which offer courses to learn these languages. Some also offer a chance to practice Native art. Most offer Associate's Degrees, but a few offer Bachelor's and Master's Degrees. The colleges can also help you transfer to major universities. Not all the Tribes share the ability to have a college of their own, but there are opportunities out there.

There are also scholarships available for Native Americans. This relieves stress in trying to find money to pay for school. I am too old to receive most of the scholarships that are specifically for foster youth but these Native American scholarships cover those who are over the age of 21.

I am an eldest child and have nieces and nephews as well as younger siblings. I see my younger sisters struggle in life and I want to see them be productive. I also worry that my little brother will drop out of school. I have a vision and I want to make sure it comes true. That vision is to encourage my cousins, sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews and my daughter to complete high school. I want them to not only graduate but continue on to college. I know that there are families out there that want to see the cycle of middle and high school dropouts in their family be broken. I want to encourage all young children and youth to receive their education, graduate and be able to say "I broke the cycle; I was the first in my family to graduate." I feel that Native American colleges are a major help for Natives and that these colleges can help my vision become true.

To find a list of Native American Colleges please visit www.ed.gov/about/inits/list/whtc/edlite-tclist.html. To view a list of majors offered by different Native American Colleges visit www.aihec.org/colleges/TCUmajors.cfm. For more information about resources for Native Americans to pay for school visit www.fafsa.ed.gov and www.finaid.org/otheraid/natamind.phtml.

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Juvenile Felony Offenses by Christina Koshney

What do you do when you have been in the foster care system most of your life, without the support you might have received in a more traditional family and you are soon to "age out" of care, but you have a Class A felony? Once you have been convicted of a felony, the consequences can be great depending on the class of the felony and the specific crime.

In Washington State, crimes are classified as felonies or misdemeanors. Felonies are divided into three classes for adults¹ which are further broken down into additional categories for juveniles. Depending on the crime and prior offenses, varying sentences are applied which can range up to 180 weeks (3.5 years). Regardless of the sentencing or the age of the offender, once someone has been convicted of a Class A felony (such as murder, rape, first-degree assault, and first-degree child molesting) the consequences are the same.²

One major consequence is that “Juvenile criminal history does not ‘go away’ when a person turns 18. Washington is one of nine states which allows the public release of juvenile records without any restrictions.” This can be mitigated only after going through the legal process of sealing records (see article in the May 2009 *Mockingbird Times*), but there are restrictions. Having a Class A felony precludes you from sealing your records. Further, your juvenile record can be used against you when considering sentencing for an adult crime. Other consequences include not having the right to vote and being financially obligated to pay restitution or the other party’s attorney’s fees. Your case can be reported to your school which could possibly result in expulsion and some colleges will not accept students with a felony criminal record. You are also not eligible for federal financial aid if you are a convicted felon.³

You may lose your right to possess firearms which would also prohibit you from entering the military and you might lose your right to vote as well as your ability to serve on a jury. Your housing and employment opportunities may be severely limited through application screening process where a felony is seen as a disqualifier. With certain felony convictions, you cannot apply for food or other government benefits. Foster children specifically could be subject to further consequences in the family court system.⁴

Each of these listed consequences affects real lives, as in the case of 19 year old **Joe**, an alumni of foster care. Joe was convicted of a Class A felony at the age of 13 at a time when he was an adolescent and family circumstances were out of his control. Joe is currently attending community college and has not committed any other further criminal offenses. However, Joe is still dealing with the lifelong repercussions including not being able to pursue his dream of a career in the military. Even more important, he has not been able to find housing after a year of actively pursuing his options.

Joe has actively tried to better his situation. He has sought the advice of several lawyers but non are able to help because of Washington State law. Joe attended Advocacy Day in Olympia where he testified and shared his story with legislators who were impacted by his words. Part of Joe’s message was not only how he is currently struggling to pursue his chance at life but how his goal is to help better the system for others. Joe understands that it is likely that the legislation will not change any time soon to help his situation but he is making the best of his situation in spite of the lifelong sentence the criminal justice system has given him.

Recently Joe said, “What gets you down doesn’t mean it can’t help you up.” Sitting with Joe that afternoon I could see a young man who is striving to take a part in life, both his own and others, and to be a part of positive change. He would like juvenile cases reviewed when the youth turns 18 and, if the youth has few to no other offenses and is able to show how they are currently making an effort to better themselves, then have some of these restrictive consequences lifted. He is not asking anyone to eliminate the past offenses, only to lift the sentence that goes beyond the time served for the crime, and to allow all, (especially youth), to freely join the struggle to find happiness in this world and be positive participants in their own lives!

¹ www.societyofcounsel.org/crime_classifications.htm

² www.sgc.wa.gov/PUBS/Juvenile/Juvenile_Disposition_Manual_2006.pdf

^{3,4} www.defensenet.org/resources/publications-1/beyond-juvenile-court/Beyond%20Juvenile%20Court.pdf

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Community Help From Within by *Brenda Gonsales, Region 2*

Julie Cruz is a grandmother and parent to six boys who are between the ages of 12 and 20. One of the boys was hit by a train in 2007 and is in a wheelchair. Julie is a giving woman. She has set up a donation center in her home and helps local people in need. She doesn’t have much to offer, but a heart to give. She lives in a house that needs remodeling. The home has no insulation. They use space heaters to heat the bedrooms. The electrical and plumbing systems are frequent hassles.



The Cruz house is in desperate need of repair. Though the family is in need themselves, Julie Cruz helps others as much as she can.

The Cruz family was nominated twice for Extreme Home Makeover. They became finalists but then the show decided not to come to Washington State. The Cruz family was devastated when Julie broke the news to her grandchildren.

However, the Yakima community put their heads together to rebuild the Cruz’s home by putting together fundraisers and by donating money. While in the process of getting things together, Julie has had a van donated to her family.

Construction on the home begins Memorial Day weekend and will go on through Labor Day. What an incredible example of how a community can come together and make a difference in the lives of many.

[>> back to top](#)**Creative Corner****These Wounds Won't Heal** *by Joyce*

These wounds won't heal
 Scars keep reopening
 Detachment from the world's surroundings
 Not my real outlook on my way of life
 I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired
 Don't like being ignored
 No one seems to hear what I have to say
 I still can't handle the pain
 Or maybe I'm just having a problem with living
 They say that I'm worthwhile but I don't believe it myself
 I don't trust those around me
 Hard to surrender, hard to give up
 When you feel completely unlovable
 Trying to build a better image
 Rearrange your focus
 Trapped behind locked doors
 Paralyzed with fears but
 YOU HOLD THE KEY.

I Could See the Light *by LisaMarie Iocolano*

I could see the light
 As it grew dim
 I felt the darkness
 Rise from within
 I watched my skin
 Drip with red
 I saw the world fade
 From inside my head
 It stole all my happiness
 Draining me dry
 Replaced it with pain
 Just to laugh at me cry
 I'm left with my tears
 This is how I wish to die
 All bloody and bruised
 My body shall lie

What If I Brought You Back to Life? *by Danielle*

What if I brought you back to life?
 Would you be the same?
 The same ol' G selling weed up until that fatal day
 Or
 Would you try to change time so you'd still be alive
 Or
 Would you say no to gangs and YES to peace?
 As I look at you, motionless in that casket,
 I ask myself, would I bring you back to life?

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June 19: KPBX Kids Concert, 12 – 1 PM, Clocktower Meadow.
 June 25-27: Hoopfest 8 AM – 8 PM, locations around Spokane. Info: www.spokanehoopfest.net.

Region 2

June 13: Life Advocacy 101, 2-5 PM, Casey Family Programs.
 June 15: GetSet begins, Info: Traci DeOchoa @ (509) 457-8197.

Region 3

First Thursdays: Teen Wii Night, 6 – 8 PM, Blaine Library.

Region 6

June 18: Clark County Fair Employment Session, 7 – 8:30 PM, Exhibition Hall B.

June 23: Clark County Fair National Anthem Auditions, 5:30 PM, Exhibition Hall B. All ages welcome.

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Quote of the Month

“Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

~ *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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News From the Mockingbird Network: Your Needs, Your Voice**Region 1: Chapter in Spokane County by Onalee M. Stewart**

Region 1 is excited to finally have a Resource Specialist and participate in their first Chapter Meeting, June 3rd at Volunteers of America. On the agenda is a discussion of the upcoming **Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit** on June 27th and 28th, as well as our plans for future Chapter involvement. On May 16th, two alumni, **Josephine** and **Onalee**, traveled with our Resource Specialist, **Lauren**, to attend a **State Advisory Council** meeting at **The Mockingbird Society** in Seattle. We are eager to get started and make a positive impact on our community and our region. Our plans for next month include meeting our local legislators (who we sent thank you notes to for their support on behalf of foster youth), have an awesome chapter meeting where we will brainstorm our message for the Summit, and make a plan to get actively involved with our community.

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

This month, ACT FIRST focused on what we want to discuss with the **Commission on Children in Foster Care**. We decided that we want to present them with our suggestions on county to county case transfers. What this would mean is that when a child moves to a new foster home in a different county, their case file (along with who has jurisdiction over the case) would follow soon after, thus eliminating hassles with county politics. Another activity that ACT FIRST is doing this month is that we will be helping with Gap to Gap, a race for young kids. For this activity, our job will be to make sure the kids are well hydrated and we might also be judging the costumes.

**Region 3: Hey Mac Chapter in Skagit County by Eva Ervin**

We had a fun and active month! We presented two different trainings. The first was **Voice Development Training** facilitated by group members **Sassi** and **Hunter**. With only minimal background support and guidance from the Resource Specialist, these two chapter members co-facilitated an engaging and educational training like pros. Then, **Mark** and **Eva** co-facilitated the **Life Advocacy 101** training for homeless youth at **Oasis Teen Shelter** in **Mount Vernon**. This was a challenging training because the material was all new to the youth in attendance, but Mark did an awesome job keeping everyone on task, and **Carlito** was there showing support and modeling appropriate behavior. After our training, they gave us great reviews saying, “It was fun and I learned a lot!” Additionally, we brainstormed about topics to bring to the Summit. There were many impassioned suggestions for change in the foster care system. Finally, we attended the **State Advisory Council** to share updates and connect with other chapters. What an exciting and eventful month!



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

At our last meeting, we discussed what ideas we wanted to present at this year's **Foster Youth/Alumni Leadership Summit**. We first watched a video featuring rapper Tupac Shakur addressing many social issues through rap, talking, news clips, and other methods. Not only did this set the tone for the rest of the meeting but it showed that there is more than one way to have your voice heard. Everyone shared their experiences going through the foster care system. Overall, it was a phenomenal experience that resulted in the identification of topics that need further discussion and possible change. This month we also hosted our first **Know Your Rights** training for foster youth. Five of the chapter member co-facilitated the training with the resource specialist. By the end, participants felt that they had received a better understanding of their rights while in care. If you are a foster youth and want to get involved with Region 4 For Change, our next chapter meeting will be June 8th at the 2100 building from 3:30-5:30 PM. Your voice might be the one that inspires change that is needed. Hope to see you there.



Region 5: Chapter in Pierce County by Kiarra Brown

Region 5 had our kick-off meeting with nine members present. The members present learned more about **The Mockingbird Society**. We also talked about what are some problems in our personal lives in regards to foster care. Together, we came up with solutions that were realistic for the state as well. We will be holding a **Know Your Rights** training on June 11th. We also have been planning our community service. We decided to read to little kids in the area. We also plan to get the youth together who are attending this year's summit in order to come up with ideas we can present at the Summit in order to enact change.

Region 6: SPEAK UP! Chapter in Clark County by Heather Jones

We held our SPEAK UP! chapter meeting this month while bowling. We briefly discussed some ongoing volunteer opportunities and the youth have expressed interest in two areas: reading to young foster youth and working with the **Community Gang Task Force** to help cover up graffiti. Next, the chapter members made a list of things they would like to see changed in the foster care system and what they want to advocate for next year. Finally, the youth brainstormed ideas on fun ways to teach responsibility at the **Foster Youth/Alumni Leadership Summit** this year. Our leaders facilitated **Know Your Rights** training to a group of youth at **Innovative Services** and received a good response from those who participated. We also want to give a "shout-out" to one of our chapter leaders who, on May 16th, attended a town hall meeting where she thanked our legislators from District 49 for their support during this last legislative session. (You can view this Town Hall meeting on www.cvtv.org).

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Thank You!

Anonymous; E.H. Baker; Corinne Bill; Casey Family Programs; Karen Cowgill; Beverly J. Deckelmann; KiKora Dorsey; John and Jennifer Dovey; Sandi Everlove; Steve and Judi Finney; Constance Gold; Jillian Gross; Dr. Wanda Hackett; JoAnn Herbert, in memory of June Herbert; Annie L. Huguley; William Jarcho; Lonnie Johns-Brown; Jada Jones-Savage; Kristin Lasher; Kelly McKnight; Marshal McReal; Najja Morris; Chuck Nordhoff; Mike Oliver; Karen Pillar; Sarah Rafton; Vanitha S. Raman; John Reinke; Debra C. Ronnholm; Kerry Schuller; Suzanne Shawger; Janet Stanton, in memory of Sharon Stanton; Celeste Tell and Jim Fair; Sara Thompson; Alicia Tonasket; Betty J. Williams; Ruth Williams; Mark Wittow of K&L Gates; Ray Wright and Hazel Dell Lanes

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Make It Happen!

Seattle University July 22-25, 2009

Make it Happen is an all expense paid, four day, three night college readiness program. Come connect with other foster youth from all across Washington State and learn about all the resources available for you! Make it Happen will help prepare you for your personal educational plan. Change your life: Make it Happen!

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Life After High School: Money to Make It Happen

Whatever you're planning to do after you finish high school, one option is going for more education-community college, technical college, or university. If you think chances are not good that you will be able to afford college, think again. You may be eligible for a full-tuition scholarship and books at any higher education program in Washington State when you graduate. The requirements? Sign a pledge with your foster parent or social worker in 7th, 8th or 9th grade, have at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA at graduation, and be a good citizen (no felony convictions). It's a great opportunity that happens sooner rather than later: you must apply by June 30th at www.hecb.wa.gov/collegebound.

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Get Published ~ Get Paid!

We are looking for 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*, contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at kara@mockingbirdsociety.org.

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