

Mockingbird Times,



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

April 2006

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation

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

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Fifth Annual Fundraiser a Success!

MALEKA TAYLOR & JAMICA HENDERSON

This year Mockingbird Society celebrated their 5th annual fundraiser at the Broadway Performance Hall on Thursday March 30, 2006. It was an exciting experience for all of us. At our fundraiser, we had a silent auction and ate delicious appetizers for the first 90 minutes. During the silent auction, we stood at the Youth LEAD (Leadership Education/Employment and Advocacy Development) booth and greeted people. This was our time to shine and talk about all the exciting activities we do here at Mockingbird Society as Youth Representatives. At first we were nervous and didn't know what to expect, but once people began to come in we were focused. All the people we met were great! They were friendly, elegant and sophisticat-

ed. There were some people that didn't know much about who we are, but were anxious to learn more.

We had so many wonderful items to auction off, people couldn't believe it. It began in the fourier and ran all the way to the stage. There were things like wine, jewelry, trips, different cultural art work and more. All the items we had were donated from generous businesses and individuals in the community.

After the auction closed, we called everyone into the theater for the program portion. Once everyone was settled, we viewed the film called *A Place to Sing* that Mockingbird and Wild Geese Productions put together. The Representatives were then able to come on stage with Jim (Executive Director) to introduce our-

selves and thank everyone for coming and especially those who have been there since the beginning. Our speaker for the night was Adam Cornell, a prosecutor and advocate for foster youth, spoke about his life in foster care and why it is important that we keep our organization going.

The outcome of the fundraiser was great. We raised almost 43,000 which more than doubled what we made last year. We would like to thank everyone who came out to support us and especially those who made donations to our program. We had a really wonderful experience and are looking to seeing you all, and many more, again next year.



Mockingbird Representatives Maleka Taylor and Jamica Henderson at annual fundraiser.



Adam Cornell with Jim Theofelis at annual fundraiser.

Governor Signs HB 2002

ANTHONY GUESS

March 28, 2006 marked the end of a long intense saga. HB 2002 awaited Governor Christine Gregoire's simple pen strokes, which would allow foster kids at the age of eighteen the choice to exit the foster care system or stay in their placements and receive benefits and support until the age of 21. If he or she decides to stay, they have to enroll in college or an educational program, after completing their High School diploma or GED. We made the trip to the capitol to witness this monumental event that will change foster care as we know it in Washington state.

The Governor's office was filled with photographers and reporters such as, Austin Jenkins from KPLU, Rachel Bell from KIRO News Radio and more. Last but not least the office was filled with a lot of emotions and mainly a feeling of excitement and relief. We all listened closely as Gov. Gregoire read the bill and made her comments on how important it was and why she was choosing to support it. Then the moment we had all been waiting for was in front of us. She pulled out her black pen (with her name on it) and proceeded to sign the bill that would change many lives. We then took pictures with the group and all received a pen as a memory of this occasion. It was definitely a very proud moment for all and especially for all the young people that attended.

The Mockingbird Society and some others left the Governor's office and went to celebrate a new chapter in foster care history in Representative Mary Lou Dickerson's office with cake. On the way to her office, some of the Mockingbird Youth Representatives were stopped and interviewed by several people from the media. One of the questions that were asked was "How important was the bill being passed?" Jamica Henderson replied, "Because I aged out at the age of 18, I didn't receive any health care or any personal support. I have younger brothers and sisters who are still in the system and I want them to have the opportunity of a good life." Misty Cook's response was, "This bill being passed is essential to foster care youth's development. Without the bill more and more youth will end up on the streets and become homeless. Teary-eyed Cassandra Davis stated, "I just really know how far I've come and I know I didn't do it by myself, it's been with supporters and so I just know it is going to mean so much to them...it's going to change lives". We at Mockingbird Society couldn't agree more and are looking forward to all the new opportunities that will open up for youth in foster-care. Thank you again to everyone who supported this effort because without you this would never have been possible.



Anthony Guess, Cassandra Davis, Jamica Henderson and Misty Lou Cook at HB 2002 signing.



Mockingbird Staff with Washington State Governor Gregoire and Representative Dickerson at HB 2002 signing.

Letter from the Editor

JIM THEOFELIS



This issue of the *Mockingbird Times* reflects the hard work of Mockingbird Society staff, youth, members of our Board of Directors and volunteers as well as the many blessings we have been fortunate to receive. We've included pictures of youth from Mockingbird's Youth LEAD program with **Washington's Governor Christine Gregoire** as she signs into law **HB 2002, the Foster Youth Achievement Act**. You'll also see great pictures of youth with the bill's prime sponsor, **Representative Mary Lou Dickerson**, as well as Mockingbird youth conducting a mini-press conference for local media on the steps of the state capitol. Before HB 2002 was enacted, youth who earned their high school diploma/GED and turned 18 were immediately ineligible for foster care. This shortsighted policy was a key factor in the dismal outcomes that far too many foster youth experienced after turning 18. How many 18-year-olds are ready to face life totally alone? Because of HB 2002, youth in foster care now have an option

to remain in foster care if they enroll in a college or voc-tech program. Governor Gregoire signed HB 2002 into law on March 28th, and on March 30th the Mockingbird Society held its 5th Anniversary Fundraiser, which was a major success due to the work and support of so many individuals and corporate sponsors. There were several highlights, including the food, venue, and the premiere of our video documentary, **A Place to Sing**. This was produced by **Wild Geese Productions** with the assistance and involvement of several Mockingbird youth. **Adam Cornell** was the keynote speaker and was inspirational as always. I express my appreciation to all of the volunteers, Corporate Sponsors and attendees who helped make this such a successful event. I also want to thank the youth, staff and members of the Board of Directors from the Mockingbird Society who put so much work and energy into both HB 2002 and our Anniversary Event. In particular, I want to thank **John Friedman** and **Syliva Black**, the **Honorary Co-Chairs** of the event, and especially **Siri Throm-Saxe** who was the Event Coordinator and worked so hard and smart to make this our best event ever. Thank you all and Happy Spring!

 Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, 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.

Thank You's

Mockingbird Society's 5th Annual Fundraiser *We Believe We Can Fly* was a tremendous success. We would like to take the time to thank all of those who attended, each of you made a significant contribution to improve the lives of children, youth and families in the child welfare system.

A special thanks to:

John Friedman and Marshal McReal; Jennifer and Justin Goin; Violet Franz; John and Michelle Hersman; Oak Kaarma; Stelman Keehnel; David Kipnis; Sue Kukuk; Anne McBride; Steve and Kelly Nolan Shafer; Susan Ross, Shelia and John Scates; Alan and Sima Rothblatt; Joan and Doug Stewart; Colleen and George Willoughby; Ann Wyman; Representative Mary Lou Dickerson; Senator Pat Thibaudeau; Representative Ruth Kagi; Judge Laura Inveen and Justice Bobbe Bridge.

Our Corporate Sponsors:

Casey Family Programs; Jacobson Jarvis & Co, PLLC; Laurel Harrison – Interior Designer; WDWillis Wealth Management; Virginia Mason Departments of Gynecology and Gynecologic Oncology; Moss Adams LLP

Catering by: The Upper Crust

Desserts by: The Rusty Pelican

Music by: Rob Carroll and Mike Padilla of the band WILDLIFE

Thank you to the extraordinary people who were dedicated to making the event a success:

Siri Throm-Saxe, event coordinator; Mockingbird Society's Board of Directors Alan Rothblatt, M.D., Joan Stewart, Leslie Richardson, Larry Crim, Davidson Dodd and Sheila Scates; Event Co-chairs John Friedman and Syliva Black; Adam Cornell; Robert Shackelford of Wild Geese Productions; Degale Cooper and Lisa Carscadden; Mockingbird Times Youth Reporters Misty Cook, Jamica Henderson, Maleka Taylor and Cassandra Davis; and the Staff of Mockingbird Society.

We would like to thank our wonderful volunteers:

Anna Trombley, Autumn Eyre, Patricia Gray Denise Martin, Derek Eisel, Jacquie Dodd, Joanna Gangi, Spencer Noland, Joe Kahn, Krystal Anderson, Quinton Kakaley, Linda McCarrell, Mary Ann Van Tassell, Patrick Fennessy, Shannon Sifferman, Tenley Ghan, Megan, Kristi Hartman, Joyce Schowalter, Jaci Edelen, Jen S., Elias Rothblatt, Yana Zhaglina, Marika Theofelis, Yan Yan Teague, Luke Theofelis, Linn Tran, Blaze Carney, Nancy Iannucci, Olivia Jones, and Martina McGraw.

Mockingbird Staff Celebrating Good Times



Jim eats cake at Rep. Dickerson's office after signing of HB 2002.



AmeriCorp Volunteer Dietra enjoying appetizers at successful annual fundraiser.

All incoming Letters to the Editor should be addressed to Mockingbird Editorial Staff and will be opened by Editorial Staff. All incoming correspondence to reporting staff under 18 years of age will be opened first by Mockingbird Editorial Staff.

Get Your Work Published!

We are looking for articles, poetry, artwork and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or homelessness. If you want to be published in the Times, contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org. For more info and to check us out, go to www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

MEET OUR STAFF

Executive Director
Jim Theofelis

Youth LEAD Coordinator
Najja Morris

Operations Manager
Ros Ghan

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Darcie Gray

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Volunteers
Patricia Gray, Anna Trombley

ABOUT US: The Mockingbird Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to building a world class foster care system and improving the other systems that serve children and adolescents involved in homelessness and foster care. 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 Mockingbird Society are paid between \$7.63 and \$8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 50,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the U.S.A, 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 2006 The Mockingbird Society.

A Mockingbird Inside Your Mailbox

Make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable youth and support the Mockingbird Society!

Donations may be tax deductible and all donors receive the *Mockingbird Times*. Enclosed, please find my check made payable to Mockingbird Society in the amount of: \$ _____

Suggested Donations:

\$ 1,000+..... Protector \$500-999..... Caretaker \$250-500..... Organizations \$50+..... Supporter \$25..... Foster Parent

NAME _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to: The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South Suite 240, Seattle WA 98144, or donate online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

Please bill me for the amount indicated.

My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.

I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.

Please do not include my name on published donor lists.

Pictures from our Annual Fundraiser and HB 2002 Signing



Mockingbird Representatives Misty Lou Cook, Jamica Henderson, Cassandra Davis and Anthony Guess with Rep. Dickerson after HB 2002 signing.



Misty Lou Cook with Ken and Ramona Kirsch



Mockingbird representatives interviewed by media after HB 2002 signing.



Mockingbird Staff Darice Gray with Jim Theofelis Sr. at annual fundraiser.

May is National Foster Care Month!

We hope you will join us in making National Foster Care Month a success. Check out these websites for events in your area.

www.dfps.state.tx.us/Adoption_and_Foster_Care

www.casey.org/cnc/foster_care_month

www.fostercaremonth.org

Aging out of Foster and Health Care

CARMELLA MACABABAD

Aging out of foster care can be as traumatic as entering. Once again, you are faced with the unknown. Once again, you are separated from any kind of permanency you may have become accustomed to. Your way of life is suddenly and completely changed.

One of these changes comes in the form of healthcare, or lack thereof. The age of eligibility varies from state to state since Medicaid is funded by both federal and state money. Here in Washington, former foster youth lose their Medicaid benefits the month after their 19th birthday. They then have to reapply for aid and hope that they meet the qualifications set forth in order to continue to receive aid. If they are doing fairly well, such as having a job and no children, then it is unlikely they will continue to receive aid. Thus the encouragement *not* to be our best continues. As we go through our lives, the hope that things will get better, as seems to be the pattern in America, prevails. We think to ourselves, even though these possible changes for the better will not affect us, or negate the experience we had, *at least* the next generation will be able to benefit from it and will not have to share any trauma that we had to go through. However, things are not getting better in this area for alumni of foster care....instead they are getting much worse.

A recently passed House Bill, HB 2002, for Washington State, will increase the medical coupon coverage of those aging out of foster until age 21. Unfortunately, this will only be the case for the 50 participants per year (over the next three years) who decide to stay in care and pursue higher education. For more information go to <http://www1.leg.wa.gov/legislature> and enter in the Bill number, 2002.

It is not just the states that we have to blame for this deficit in healthcare. As stated earlier, Medicaid is funded by both the federal budget *and* the state budget. However, states are having trouble picking up their portion of the bill, causing cut-backs everywhere. Instead of stepping in to give our states, our people, a helping hand, the President's Administration has proposed more cutbacks, totaling \$12 billion over the next five years and \$45 billion over the next 10 years.

Today, it has been estimated that 30 percent of all young adults (ages 19-29) in the U.S. are uninsured and about 33 percent of former foster youth, ages 18-44, are not insured after leaving care, as reported by the Northwest Alumni Study. Those numbers will only increase in the coming years if the Administration's proposals are passed. The National Coalition on Health Care stated that the U.S. Government spends almost \$100 billion per year pro-

viding health services for the uninsured. In most cases, this is emergency care that would not have been necessary had the patient had proper preventative care in the first place.

So why the budget cuts? Why not change the policy, increase the provisions being provided countrywide to those in need, and increase the amount of preventative care available to our most vulnerable children? Insurance companies do it, why can't our government? Insurance companies *want* you to get regular health, dental, and vision check-ups. Ultimately, insurance companies know that it will cost them *less* money to provide preventative care, than to actually pay for the high cost of emergency care.

Even if we, as former foster youth of America, are practically invisible to our own government (as Casey Family Programs' Medicaid report so eloquently puts it), shouldn't the numbers speak for themselves? We need health insurance while we are in school, unable to work full time and receive medical benefits. If we are unable to receive this much needed additional care to help us live healthier lives and give us better opportunities for success, we should at least be able to keep what we already have! Why is the government trying to make life *even more* difficult for us?

Healthy Relationships

JAMICA HENDERSON

Sometimes in our life, we find ourselves in situations that we have no clue will hurt so badly. Everyone has an idea of what they want in a relationship, but what do you do when those things are not there anymore and you still have feelings for your mate? This part of life can be hard when you're in love. You don't want to walk away from something that can be worked out, nor do you want to keep getting hurt. How do you know when someone has hurt you to your limit?

While being in relationship you are supposed to have respect for the person you love no matter what. Once that respect is gone or when you feel that your mate has no respect for you, it's time to go. Sometimes this can be hard because you may still have respect and/or love for them, but once your respect is not given you can leave. It's good to stop yourself before you let it go on too long and it really hurts to leave.

When being in a relationship that you really enjoy, it can be hard to leave. Why is it so hard to leave? Maybe because you're still in love, you enjoy the company, it can be worked out, he or she only did it for the first time, so on and so on. When you begin to think like that you begin to make excuses and push the real reason on why you wanted to leave out of your mind. That's a NO NO!!! You can't let those thoughts of yours get in the way especially if you are tired of being hurt and in an unhealthy relationship. I located three important facts that are a major part in a healthy relationship and if you don't have these three things then you might want to think about whether it is worth it to stay:

1. Communication: To have a healthy relationship there must be or should be good communication between the two of you. The society we live in today is so busy that by the time you get home you are dead tired, but if you are in a relationship and you live with your mate you should be able to communicate. Sometimes communication can be hard when you're a busy person, but if you are willing to engage in a relationship you must communicate.

2. Unrealistic expectation: Now this step is a step that we all have tried. Have you ever tried to help someone and it becomes more of trying to change them? This is one way a relationship can be unhealthy because you're not accepting that person for who they are. So to have a healthy partnership both male and female should not have unrealistic expectations on each other or who they want that person to one day become.

3. Respect: If you want a healthy relationship respect is the main key. If there is no respect there is no love, relationship, friendship and so on.

Relationships can sometimes make you really sit back and think. While you sit back and think it allows you to notice what you want and what you don't want. Whatever decision you decide to make, remember that a healthy relationship must have at least Communication, Realistic Expectations and Respect.

Meet the Staff

**SURRI
EVANS**



My name is Surri Evans and I am 18 years old. I'm a very outgoing person, and I love to live life, and the most part of that is because I was blessed with my 8 month old daughter Sa'maiah. She is my sun and my moon and the reason that im still trying today. On one of my basic days I enjoy to read and write, usually when I write im just writing in my journal. I'm a jotter; I log all my events that I've been through. My Hobbies are dancing, I love to dance, hip hop/jazz, crunk and all. Besides my daughter, those three things keep my mind off of the drama that I have had and encounter now. I must say, im very blessed I've been through so much in my 18 years I shouldn't be this happy, but I am I know that end I will come out on top. When I found out about the mockingbird society, I thought that I would give it a shot I know for sure that im not a hard person to get along with, so why shouldn't they like me. Writing is a good stress reliever, it helps you wind down and put all your expressions down on a piece of paper.

BoulderZ

RAQUEL GRANATH

• My father is in me
• Everywhere I go
• I can never shake him
• He won't ever let go
• He's the weight on my chest
• And he wont go away
• He's the rain on my picnic
• And he's here to stay
• He's the monster under my bed
• He's the evil voice in my head
• He's the reason all my hope is gone and dead
• He's the poor soul I pray about every nite
• He's the stupid mean bully who always picks fights
• In all the world he's everything bad
• In my whole life he's mad me so sad
• Yet here is stays running thru my veins
• He causes so much pain
• The disdain in my membrane
• He sits on my shelf collecting dust
• I never want to meet him
• He'll never earn my trust
• Yet there he is sitting on my shoulders
• And blocking my way
• Like two big boulders.....

Creative Corner

I always lie and say I'm 12

I've never done this so....
Why would you choose 12?
Twelve is a good age if you choose to deceive
I say that deception is a matter of perception
Twelve is timid
Four square and wall ball and skating rinks from seven to seven
Man I miss twelve
Being an adult is a glorified version of twelve.
Twelve was a more care free time
Patience is a virtue but remembrance is a passion
That is deep
That was deep
Don't you hit puberty at 12?

Girl to Woman

COURTNEY KONIETZKO

Being a young attractive woman in society is a commodity
You get looked at like a meat market, flirted with nicely, or straight out harassed if you don't give the proper response

Wearing a skirt can be a source of pride, a source of prettiness
Or an object of unwanted stares and comments; an item of daintiness, of femininity, a signal that you're working, or business attire.

Whatever the cultural standard is; people piss away their dollars trying to attain because the message screamed is meet the standard and you might just fit in or even be beautiful and popular!

Barbie messed things up for the natural course of more children. Barbie's stats are out of wack, if she was real she wouldn't be able to stand on her own 2 feet, would qualify as having an eating disorder, and would have had to get plastic surgery done to look like a superstar.

Look Who's Flying

This section is dedicated to the young people at Mockingbird Society who continue to take flight towards healthy, happy and independent lives despite the numerous obstacles they have, and continue, to face.

Maleka Taylor- Congratulations on completing your GED! We are all very proud of your accomplishment and know there are many more good things to come as you move on to your higher education goals.

Thomas Harris- Congratulations on completing the CEO program! We look forward to seeing you take flight.



Thomas Harris proudly displays his certificate of completion from the CEO Program

Celebrate Poetry Month

Hip-Hop, Spoken Word and Slams!

Teen Poetry Workshop and Slam

6 p.m. - 8 p.m., Thursday, April 20

Poet Patrice Vecchione will lead a free workshop on writing and performing poetry, followed by a slam. Open to teens ages 12 - 18. Pizza and prizes provided.

Beacon Hill Branch • 2821 Beacon Ave. S. • 206-684-4711

Teen Spoken Word Night

5 p.m. - 8 p.m., Thursday, April 27

Performances from groups like Power of Hope, Hugo House, PSKS, Arts Corps, The Mockingbird Society and more, followed by an open mike for teens ages 12 - 20. Pizza provided.

Capitol Hill Branch • 425 Harvard Ave. E. • 206-684-4715

Speaking at the African-Americans and Foster Care Forum

**MALEKA
TAYLOR**



On Thursday, March 16, 2006 at 7pm in the Ethnic Cultural Theatre (University of Washington) the central District Form of Arts & Ideas presented Which Way Seattle? A series on African American and foster care. featuring **Zynovia Y Hetherington** Director of the Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program, **Bernice Morehead** a licensed foster parent and has worked in the Child Welfare community for 35 years, **Lyman Letgers**, Casey Family Program Director, **Randee Eddins** founder of AAWA (African American Writers'

Alliance, and myself. I was proud to be a panelist. and one of the topics discussed was African American disproportionality.

Some of the questions were difficult but I managed. At one point, I got choked up on my words because it triggered some emotions that I didn't know I still carried, but when I got comfortable I opened up and was able to speak from my heart. Some people might think that foster care is a way of keeping kids off the streets and into a safe home, but in many cases it is a process that is painful and scaring. Many children lose their identity, sense-of-self, and in the long run feel betrayed. Sometimes, kids can feel like they are being tossed around like dirty rags. The current system is one that agencies (such as the Mockingbird Society, Casey Family and many others) are pushing hard to change. The Mockingbird Society assisted in making it possible for

children to stay in foster care until they are 21 if they want to further their education by advocating to get HB2002 passed. This change will take place beginning July 1st of this year!

The more I have the opportunity to talk about my experience the more I find it difficult. If this is the healing process then I'm definitely in the middle of it. I'm in a stage of figuring out who I am and who I want to be. It can be a bit hard, because for so long my life was in someone else's hands, but now it's in mine. I have a niece in foster care and I want to ensure that she gets the best care possible and that she doesn't have to go through what I went through or face the issues I am now. I'll do what ever it takes to make sure that foster children get what they deserve. LOVE

SYEP Job Fair

Seattle 2006 Youth Education & Job Fair at the Rainier Community Center, 4600 38th Ave S., Seattle, WA 98118.

Mockingbird Society will be there among other community members from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

If you are between the ages of 14-21 this is for you!

For information call:

206-386-1375

Sponsored by: City of Seattle, Human Services Department, Seattle Youth Employment Program, Upward Bound, & Seattle Parks and Recreation