

Mockingbird Times,



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

October 2006

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation

Volume VI, Issue 10

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

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Foster-Parent Conference Was Full of Hope

JAMICA
HENDERSON



Have you recently stopped to think about how loving foster-parents are? For those of you who can't answer this question, I can. There are really foster-parents who truly care about your life. Mockingbird Society was invited to this year's Annual Foster Parent and Caregiver's Conference which was held in Spokane, WA. It was an amazing conference! The foster-parents were so sweet, loving and caring. The parents that attended the conference reminded me that there are people who really care about the lives of the youth in care. They also want to see a change for the families that are in the system too. It was a three day conference that was filled with lots of information to help encourage the foster parents and support the important work that they do.

At the conference, I had the chance to attend different workshops. My favorites were "Keeping Siblings Together" and the "Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment"

"When the parents came and asked us for advice, I felt like a motivational speaker encouraging the foster-parents to keep up the good work."

workshops. I enjoyed the sibling workshop because it was more of a group discussion. The presenter invited us to share our stories (if we felt comfortable) to help us understand why it was an important issue. We discussed the statistics of why siblings should, or should not, be together. She shared false statistics with us and it showed me how the system feels justified separating siblings rather than keeping them together.

The second day I went to a session that was four hours all together but they split it into two sessions. This session was the Ansell Casey and it talked about how it can help teens learn how to become an independent young adults, so when they age-out, they will be more prepared. The assessment asks question from many areas of your life like budgeting, career planning and life skills (to name a few). Once it's finished, you can look and see what areas you are strong in and those you need to work on. You can then work with your case manager (or other support person) to gain the skills that you need. After a few months, you retake the assessment to see how you have grown. The foster-parents found this tool really helpful.

The Mockingbird Society Speakers Panel was invited to share what we do as an organization and our personal stories in foster-care. Three of us sat as a panel on the second

night of the conference. Once we finished, we got to interact with the foster-parents one on one. They all were really happy to hear our stories. It was a good opportunity for us as well; allowing us to share what we have experienced and helping us to be positive leaders for those who still reside in foster-care. We had such a great time and had some thoughts to share. **Raquel:** "This was a great event for me. I enjoyed telling my story about my history in the foster-care system and how I have changed into the beautiful young lady that I am. I feel that the conference was an enlightening experience and that it will change the foster-care system for the better in the future." **Jessica:** "I was excited to speak in front of the parents and have the chance to share my story about being in care. When the parents came and asked us for advice, I felt like a motivational speaker encouraging the foster-parents to keep up the good work. They even asked for our autographs with a quote of wisdom for their youth at home. I loved it! We all thanked each of the foster-parents for opening their hearts and homes to kids who need a safe and loving place."

In all, it was an excellent conference. We were all touched in a special ways. Each time I share what I have been through, it's like a part of me gets stronger. I had an awesome time and hope they keep having these conferences to support the foster-parents, because I saw what a big difference it will make.

Almost 18

JESSICA
GARCIA



I'm Jessica Garcia and I am turning 18 this month. I will be aging-out of foster-care and wanted to tell you a little bit about my life. First of all, nobody's life is perfect and my life is far from perfect! I wish that I could go back and change some things I have been through.

I have been in foster homes all over eastern Washington and Seattle. I didn't have the best childhood and was in schools where I was made fun of and hurt. The way the kids treated me in school hurt me till this day. I felt insecure and unstable and have had trouble with my beauty and liking who I am. Today, I have to make things perfect, otherwise I beat myself up, telling myself that I'm ugly, that I don't add up to much and that I'm worthless. A lot of the way I treat myself comes from being an orphan with no parents and losing my brothers and sisters and having a lost childhood. While the other kids were playing outside, I was left watching newborns. I was only 9-years-old. I would be left home unattended, which then lead me back in to foster-care and split up from my siblings.

I ended up in Spokane for 2 years and I didn't see any of my family for 2 years I was in an abusive foster home (not uncommon for

me). Then I was removed. I went to another person's house and yet another school where I was treated decent. For the 1st time I felt like somebody. Before that placement, I had never cried. To me, it was a sign of weakness. I just got angry and threw things. Then, the lady told me that it was okay to cry. When I cried, I felt a part of me come back to life from being so numb. It's a tolerance I had to build up from being hurt so much.

I was taken away when I was 12 and back in the ugly town of Yakima. I went back to the school where I was made fun of and felt so sick to my stomach. What I knew would happen did, people made fun of me for being in foster-care and being Native-American. I was torn and angry. Why would these kids hurt someone who had nothing? It just shows how cruel kids can be. Someone once told me that words don't hurt. Well, I'm here to tell you, words do hurt and they have a lot of effect on any person because we are human.

As I got older, I was angry and rebellious and wanted to self destruct and hurt people in any way that I could. I would steal and I was then one of the kids who said mean things to other kids to hurt them. I also started to be rude towards the teachers and was very self-defensive. I would yell and cuss which got me suspended. I started to skip school and started to use drugs. At that time it was no big deal. "It was weed, it couldn't hurt." I then got on probation for trespassing, and then was moved

to the Tri-cities and on probation. I had a violent temper then and was put in anger management. I would run away because the foster homes I was in didn't treat me that well. It's all that I could do. So what I did when I ran was, I stayed with people I didn't know (or did). I was introduced to a drug that changed me and hurt me more than ever. This drug was crystal meth.

The things I would do to get this drug were selling my things and stealing from houses. I would be paranoid and would do things like talk to myself because I was so strung out. I would get angry for no reason, but would act like I had knives on me just in case someone tried to hurt me. One day I looked in the mirror and realized what damage I was doing to myself.

I had to get clean and do better for myself, otherwise I could end up in prison or worse, dead. I spent some time in juvenile detention and detox. I was scared because of what I was doing to myself. I was skinnier than ever. I looked older than my grandma and had nowhere to go because of the way I led my life. Foster parents didn't want me because of the way I was and they didn't want me around younger children. My mother didn't want me. I had no where to go. I couldn't explain the hopelessness that went on in my head or the heartache and loneliness. What I

"I'm glad that I can now be a role model to my brothers and sister as well as other kids in foster-care through my work here at Mockingbird Society."

JESSICA CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Letter from the Editor

**JIM
THEOFELIS**



First, I want to express my appreciation to those of you who have donated to support our work and mission at The Mockingbird Society. As a small non-profit, we are dependent upon the donations of individuals and businesses that share our concern, compassion and investment in our most marginalized children, youth and families. Over the past month, Youth Representatives from our Youth LEAD (Leadership, Education/Employment and Advocacy Development) program have participated in several public speaking activities. Young people from Mockingbird Society spoke at the Foster Parent and Caregiver's Conference sharing their perspectives and experiences with foster parents, kinship caregivers and other conference attendees. Additionally, three Youth Representatives presented before the esteemed Braam Panel, which is charged with the responsibility of monitoring the foster care settlement agreement between the state of Washington and the attorneys for the plaintiffs. The Mockingbird Society is proud to have the

capacity to provide young people with the training, support and technical assistance to develop their leadership, literacy and public speaking skills so that they are able to directly advocate for positive public policy. Another exciting update from Mockingbird Society is the replication of the Mockingbird Family Model. The MFM is being replicated in four community organizations within King County (Casey Family Programs, Division of Child and Family Services, Ryther Child Center and Youth Advocates) and is being evaluated by the University of Washington Northwest Institute for Children and Families. As you may recall, the MFM is a model of delivering foster/kinship care services that we propose will reduce multiple placements in foster homes, allow siblings to remain together instead of being split up, provide healthy and safe respite care nearly 24/7, and increase permanency options for kids in care. I am pleased to report that the District of Columbia has contracted with The Mockingbird Society to replicate the MFM within their system. This is a very exciting opportunity for The Mockingbird Society, the D.C. Child Welfare System and the children, youth and families we serve.

 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.



Congratulations to Juan Ramirez and Wendy Carrillo
Nicolas Samuel Carrillo Ramirez
09/28/06 4:45 AM PST
7 lbs 15oz 19 inches
AKA: Scrunchy Turtle Face.

Remember Us!

United Way is conducting their annual campaign during September-December. Please remember that you can designate that your donation to United Way be directed to the Mockingbird Society. Thanks for all your continued support.

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.

Daddy's Little Girl

**SHERREL
DORSEY**



My father is an extraordinary man who attempted to re-create the human race by reproducing at an extraordinary rate. A man of an astounding 16, excuse me, 17 children (another one recently discovered 3 weeks ago), he is a living truth to the old Temptations hit, "Papa was a rolling stone."

Shortly after reconnecting with my biological mother, she told me about a father that I never knew existed. Unfortunately she was only 90% sure of who my father was. Until DNA tests had proven her theory, I had to postpone celebrating finally acquiring a father. My immediate friends were raised in two parent households. Their fathers taught them how to ride a bike, change the oil in a car and the fundamentals of watching a great basketball game. I was taught what every girl raised by a single-parent woman was taught: A sense of independence and an "I can do anything better than you" attitude towards men. I was elated to see that it was my turn to have a father and experience the same things my friends were born with.

The relationship with my father never materialized and even though we spoke on the phone and sent pictures to each other, I waited in vain for him to rescue me from a fatherless world, re-teach me how to ride a bike and erase and rebuild what I had already learned about life, love and most importantly, boys. He was literally two states away and never made the trip. Excuses became his past-time and so I decided, the summer I left for college, that it was too late for me to have a father.

One particular day stood out for me as a reminder of how much not having that masculine balance affected me. I was 16

and over-zealous about getting my license. My two best friends and I signed up for driver's education and quickly wanted to put our permits to use. Well, unfortunately for me, my adoptive mother would not immediately teach me how to drive. The words death and destruction were synonyms for the sentence, "mom can I drive your car?". Meanwhile I sat sorrowfully and drowned in envy in the back seat of my best friend's car as her father yelled at her for speeding through a red light.

It is still extremely difficult for me to fathom how two people could pretend not to know that having unprotected sex did not have consequences for what was created out of their irresponsibility. I wanted a father to be there at prom, graduation and the other gazillion things that made memories; memories. I wanted to be daddy's little girl and hide under his sheath of protection.

The anger within me is slowly subsiding over the years and I pray for the day I can forgive both of my biological parents. Until then I am working on accepting the hand that I was dealt. Reshuffling the deck and dealing again is out of the question. I wasn't able to control the actions of my parents, but I do have control over my reactions and how I move forward. I figure that if God chose to skip out on me at the time he assigned fathers to everyone then it wasn't in my cards to have one.

As a word of wisdom to all of the fatherless girls out there, it is okay to be angry. But be both angry and productive. The fire in you should be recycled into a fuel that will allow you to work towards not making the same mistakes as your parents. We use our experiences as a platform, not a crutch. So stand on your flaws, sorrow, shame, anger and tears. They make our skin thick to endure the challenges life throws our way. We may not be daddy's little girl but we are young ladies with just as much to offer as the next girl. We are special, we are loved and we are here for a purpose.

MEET OUR STAFF

Executive Director
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Youth LEAD Coordinator
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Operations Manager
Ros Ghan

Public Relations
Darcie Gray

Executive Assistant
Lauren Frederick

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Misty Lou Cook, Dennis Fisher, Jamica Henderson

Youth Representatives
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Contributing Writers
Sherrel Dorsey, Emma Cummings, Margo McElroy-Johnson, Wilson LaMere

Volunteers
Chrissie Jackson

Breaking Up

**RAQUEL
GRANATH**



In the famous words of the Carpenters, breaking up is hard to do. I have recently discovered this for myself, and I wonder if in the long run I will still feel it was the right decision. Breaking up is never an easy task for the dumper or the one getting dumped. Everyone who is in a relationship will experience problems but when is it just too much?

In order to decide if it's time for a change you have to be honest and realistic with yourself. When you have feelings for someone this can be hard to do, but your wellbeing is important. First of all, is the relationship destructive? Is your significant other mentally, physically or emotionally abusive in anyway? If so that right there is enough of a reason to end what you have. There is no excuse for demeaning someone and if you are experiencing that, he doesn't love you or even remotely care for you. He's selfish and only considering his own thoughts and feelings.

Do your parents object? I've been in numerous relationships that my mother disapproved of, and I've found that most of them were dead ends that left me having to cut my losses. Yes I agree that sometimes parents don't understand and they're not always right but still you should listen and take into account their opinions. I hate to hand the trophy to the bad guy but they do have many years of experience under their belts and they may be able to tell you something you don't know. At the end of the day though, it's all about you and you may find yourself agreeing to disagree.

Perhaps you've grown apart. This seems to be very common amongst teen-

agers who, because of our lack of maturity, tend to lose interest. The summer has ended and free time to spend with your loved one is at an all time low. If you feel like this applies to you, don't feel bad it isn't over yet! Mediate with your partner and try to problem solve. If they seem unwilling to find a solution or if no solution can be found, it's okay! This could be a sign that you need some time for yourself. You can remain friends without all the obligations and pressures of a commitment.

Has your current lover lied, cheated or done something behind your back that you disapprove of? Firstly, don't feel bad about it; this is an everyday occurrence in the crazy world we reside in. Was it a major or a minor offense? That's up to you to decide. Players will be players and cheaters will be cheaters. Be honest with yourself, if he was out creeping around once, what's to say he won't do it again. How do you know it hasn't already happened on other occasions? He knew quite well before he even started the effect his actions would have on your heart as well as the relationship. But still you can't be judgmental. Question him. Is he sincerely remorseful or is he plotting his next sneaky move? Has he repented from his actions or is he a repeat offender? It's hard to think logically because despite his transgressions you still hope for a better future. Don't kid yourself, if he's worth it take that risk, otherwise kick him to the curb and maybe then he'll learn his lesson.

Whatever the circumstances may be, breaking up will never be an easy task. You have to love yourself throughout the whole process and continually proclaim the importance of your feelings before anyone else's. Don't be another statistic by allowing love to blind you. Overcome and hold true to your beliefs. It will be hard at first but everything will fall into place. Be strong and keep your head up. You'll make it through.

Meet the Staff: Jonelle Abd-Rahmaan

**JONELLE
ABD-RAHMAAN**



My name is Jonelle Monique Abd-Rahmaan and I recently turned 18. I was born in Houston, Texas to Robert Wayne Gordon and Nancy Provosts. I was born on September 23 @8:12 pm in Jefferson County Texas. I moved to Seattle in 1993 and have been here for 13 years (since the age of 4). I was put in the custody of my grandmother and aunt who are both from Galveston Texas.

I am currently in the Youth Education Program (Y.E.P) with Seattle Public schools and am working towards my High School completions in their GED program. In my spare time I enjoy meeting new people. I like starting conversations with people who look interesting by conversing about things like shoes, clothes or whatever comes to mind.

I have been in many kinship-care relationships. I have had to stay with many different relatives because my mom and dad weren't really around for most of my life. I grew up with mostly guy cousins and they rubbed off on me by fighting, teasing and rough-housing with me. It made me

kind of rough and helped me to protect myself. I spent a lot of times climbing trees and learning how to ride a bike by falling off and getting back on. If I could change one thing about the "system" it would be to let kids stay where they are achieving if they were somewhere that they couldn't before. It would be great if they could stay in that home or shelter as long as the parent agreed to have them so that they could get their life together and fulfill their dreams.

When I first found out about Mockingbird Society, I was mostly interested in just submitting poems and having some kind of little job until I could really get a job on my career path. Now that I am here I am hoping to make senior staff. Not just for more money but so that I can grow with the agency by learning more about the system. I am also a very outspoken person and like to talk in front of large and small crowds. I like the positive energy people give off when they are really interested in what I have to say. So, I am looking forward to that part of my position here as a Youth Representative too.

I am a young African-American woman who is pretty curious about life and eager to learn about my environment and culture just as well as others that are different from mine. I don't let anyone bring me down, because I know that I can make it through life's obstacles one day at a time.

HB 2002 is Accepting Applications: Act Now!

New legislation allows youth to remain in care and receive their medical benefits while pursuing higher education. Talk to your caseworker for details about taking advantage of this legislation or contact Rick Butt at (206) 923-4891 for more information.

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.

JESSICA CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

did to myself wasn't good. I dug a 12 foot grave and I felt I couldn't get out.

Today, I have a lot to look forward to. I have been clean for one year. I'm so happy. What I had to do were drop people that I used with. I say hi to old friends when we run into each other, but I move my way (forward) and back on my path. I do this, because I don't have a chance to mess this up.

Now that I am turning 18, I have to think of a long-term plan. I want to have things situated out and have a place to stay. I don't want to have to hop from house to house. What I have in my life today that helps keep me motivated are good friends who are there for me and try the best they can to help me out. Also, I have a great job with Mockingbird Society. I also am going to school for my GED. I try to keep

myself busy with positive activities. I've made mistakes, but now I try my best at everything I do.

Turning 18 makes me impatient because I just want to do what I want to do, but I'm told I need to be patient. I'm glad that I can now be a role model to my brothers and sister as well as other kids in foster-care through my work here at Mockingbird Society. I have so much to offer this world and the people that I am around. I will do what it takes to help another person see what a special person they are. I'm glad I went through the things that I did and that now I have my feet in front of me. I can see them and every step I take is clear. Sometimes my past comes up, but I push forward because for me, I have no other option. I'm glad that I'm a different person and that I can change my world, because from where I stand; my life is great!

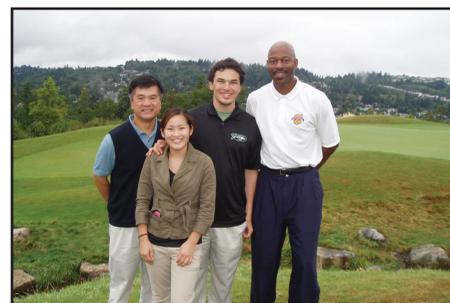
Mockingbird on the Move



Mockingbird Society Youth Representatives, left-to-right, Jessica Garcia, Raquel Granath, and Jamica Henderson, share their stories at this year's Washington State Foster Care Conference held in Spokane, WA.



Youth LEAD Representatives, left-to-right, Raquel Granath, Jamica Henderson, Najja Morris, Jessica Garcia enjoying dinner at the annual foster parent conference before the panel presentation.



The 6th Annual U.S. Bank Governors Cup Golf Tournament, held at The Golf Club at Newcastle on September 18, raised over \$500,000 for the Washington State Governors Scholarship for Foster Youth. Pictured left to right are former Governor Gary Locke, Governors Scholars Jenn Chung and Robert Chevara, and 1979 Seattle SuperSonics star Gus Williams. The Washington State Governors Scholarship for Foster Youth is administered by the Washington Education Foundation.



Youth LEAD Representatives, left-to-right, Raquel Granath, Jamica Henderson, and Jessica Garcia preparing to present their suggestions for system reform to the Braam Oversight Panel. The representatives were invited to sit on the youth panel in order to assist the state in its implementation of improvements to the foster-care system via the Braam Settlement. For more information please visit <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/braampanel/default.asp>

The King County Kinship Collaboration presents: 2006 Kinship Care Gathering

When: October 21, 2006, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Where: Brighton Elementary School – new location!
6725 45th Ave. S.
Seattle, WA 98118

Continental breakfast and lunch provided.
Childcare provided for ages 3 and above.
Please contact Kristie Lund at 206-709-2106.

Creative Corner



Angel With A Broken Wing

EMMA CUMMINGS

Somewhere out there is an angel,
With a broken wing.
A bleeding voice,
That can not sing.
His halo is a lil' bent,
And where he came from,
Is as unknown,
As to where he went.
He arrived one day,
Out of the blue.
And as to why he came,
No one knew.

Another Statistic In America

MARGO McELROY-JOHNSON

I don't want to be another statistic some suicidal teen
Who make a choice to kill herself when the world
Just seems too mean. She can't go on with life or
So to her it seems realities has fallen short and so have
Her many dreams.

I don't want to be another statistic some pregnant
Little girl who met this great guy and then gave sex
A whirl. She was only 15 and it didn't even feel right
But she was dumb and thought that they would be
Together for more than just one night.

I don't want to be another statistic some kid strung
Out on crack, who started at a party and they can't turn back
First cigarettes and alcohol now meth, crack, and cocaine
She's been smoking it for so long that now she's going insane.

I don't want to be another statistic some girl left in the rain
Who was walking home from school then raped and left in
Pain. She can't tell her mom and it hurts to tell her friends,
She doesn't know what she will do to make this nightmare end.

I don't want to be another statistic some kid out of school
Who dropped out really early and was acting like a fool
She thought that it was boring; she thought that it was dumb
She doesn't have an education but lives on the street like a bum

I don't want to be another statistic some stereotypical teen
I'm going to make a difference I'll fulfill my dream
I won't end up pregnant on drugs or even dead
I won't drop out of school because I'll use my head

I don't want to be another statistic I want to be that teen
Those looks deep down inside and knows that she'll fulfill her dream!!

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 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.

Home

WILSON LAMERE

I feel like I'm dying from the lack of success, because of no rest.
No rest because I'm depressed with no love.
No love from family, just strangers at home.
They treat me the best and, yet, I'm still dying from the hole in my chest.

An empty spot with no feeling, just the thought of an endless rest, the
thought of death.

It hits me every day every time I get stressed.

I need a home, one place that's not like the rest, but the best.

The best one for me, where I won't be depressed.

I won't feel like dying, no hole in my chest.

But, a big heart full of love, a new family.

One that loves me more than my own, a foster home that blew away the rest.

One that could make me feel like the best.

I Am Like the Wind

EMMA CUMMINGS

I am like the wind.
Everywhere yet nowhere at the same time.
I make an impression on everything I touch.
People may not like me.
But I've forgotten how to care.
Whenever they voice their opinion.
It can't hurt me no more.
What can hurt the air?

I am like the wind.
You'll never capture me.
Nothing you do will ever rapture me.
Breathe me in.
Fill your lungs with life.
Because I am like the wind.
I'll never fade away.
Because I depend on me.
No one else.
I fight to live yet another day.

Pride

WILSON LAMERE

What's wrong with me?
I keep having this feeling like
I just want to die.
No tears, no expression,
just my life going by.
It's going by in flashes.

Why can't I cry?
It's all real sad,
my dad, my sister,
all the thoughts of suicide,
my messed up family.

Why can't we all just
swallow
our
pride?

*A bird does not sing because it has an answer.
It sings because it has a song.*

—Chinese Proverb

October is National Family History Month

Being disconnected from family can be really hard when you are in the "system" and/or homeless. This is a wonderful opportunity to begin searching for your family roots in hopes of one day making new connections to unknown family members or finding long-lost ones. Good Luck!

Here are some tips to get your started:

- Begin with a Family Tree (you can find this free on-line) and fill in as you go.
- Start with asking questions of family that you have contact with.
- If you have one; you might want to consider asking your social worker/case manager for help with additional information and/or beginning your search.
- Look on-line to search for surnames (last names), birth/death records, obituaries and military records.
- A great place to visit and get assistance is the National Archives in Seattle is: 6125 Sand Point Way NE 98115 (206) 336-5115 (check local listings in other cities)
- In Washington state, you can visit <http://www.wvc.edu/Library/Research/gen/States/RBStWA.html>
- If you are really determined to find your family history, don't give up. There are many resources out there, you just have to be your own private investigator.

Here are several on-line resources to help you get started with your research.
<http://www.familytreemagazine.com/>
http://genealogy.about.com/od/search_tips/
<http://www.genealogy.com/genehelp.html>

Calling All Foster Youth!

Washington State Wants to Hear From You!

When: Thursday, October 19th

Time: 4-6 PM

Location: 2100 24th Ave South (Treehouse Building)

Washington State Partnership for Youth (WSPY) is working on a statewide health and development plan for youth in foster-care.

We want to know, from YOU, what would be helpful in making sure your transition into adulthood is healthy and successful.

Don't be silent! Be heard!

A full dinner will be provided.

For more information, please contact Najja Morris @ 206-407-2134 and najja@mockingbirdsociety.org or Mickey Kander at 360-236-3523