

# Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION

September 2009

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## Center for Children & Youth Justice—Supporting Justice BY CHRISTINA KOSHNEY



Partnerships are the stepping stones in building any strong organization. If your goal is to implement change, a single individual may spark the thought but it takes the arms and work of many in a variety of ways to bring about widespread change. As we are striving for a "world class foster care system" here at The Mockingbird Society (MBS), we need to ensure that we build quality relationships with all the community agencies that may impact us, from city council or other government organizations to other nonprofit or community organizations. By doing this, we have developed a team that supports us and that can be just as passionate and useful in achieving our own organizational goals of changing the child welfare system.

**Justice Bobbe Bridge** is a community leader who shares a passion and commitment to changing the juvenile court and child welfare systems so that they best benefit youth. Justice Bridge served as a judge for 18 years and, through her experience, she has built an extraordinary network of friends, colleagues, and others. She is a tremendous gain to our community and to The MBS as she now dedicates all of her work towards her own organization as well as several other community partners.

It is through these partnerships that she has been able to develop **The Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ)**, a nonprofit organization she started in 2006. Helping run CCYJ, Justice Bridge is fully committed to fulfilling CCYJ's mission, "to advance justice for and enhance the lives of children and youth through juvenile justice, child welfare, and related systems reform."<sup>1</sup> CCYJ serves as

a central base for all of the work that is being done in child welfare and juvenile justice and is designed to be a place that works to ensure that everyone's goals of implementing change in these systems can actually happen.

The major projects that CCYJ has currently taken on include **Models for Change** (a juvenile systems reform initiative that is working on how to better the system on three fronts), **Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network** (incorporating mental health profes-



Justice Bobbe Bridge holds a thank you poster from youth CCYJ has helped.

sionals and services into schools instead of police officers and jail sentences), **Child Welfare Resources Bank** (creating and updating a central database for all the recommendations to change the child welfare systems so they can be followed up on), **Supporting Early Connections** (focusing on how to best benefit infants and toddlers and their families early

on so they can heal quicker and exit the foster care system), **Highly Vulnerable Youth: Promoting Positive Outcomes** (introducing community programs that have been proven to benefit high risk youth), and **Lawyers Fostering Independence** (a program that encourages lawyers to provide free legal services to youth ages 17 to 23 in the system so that legal matters or other road blocks are no longer barriers to their success).

Justice Bridge recognizes her community partnerships as a necessary part of CCYJ's functioning. She says CCYJ's partnership with The MBS serves many purposes, one of which is being a sounding board for CCYJ, making sure that the youth voice is heard. Here at The MBS we are an organization that strives to not only include the youth voice but to also be driven by the youth voice and to be a partly youth-run organization. We, too, are very committed to changing the child welfare system so that it may be "world class" and we do this through "innovation, collaboration and advocacy."

CCYJ and The MBS collaborating is like magic. I am proud to be a voice at The MBS. Justice Bridge wants to remind youth that CCYJ has an open door for our voice and serves as a strong bridge to change. As parting words on ways to use advocacy every day, Justice Bridge says to ask a lot of questions, don't just assume what is happening to you is supposed to, know your rights, and to be a "smart patient" in researching and asking the right questions, not just taking what you're told by the doctor. She also says CCYJ is here to take suggestions, comments and even complaints. Visit [www.ccyj.org](http://www.ccyj.org) to leave an e-mail or contact their offices. Thank you Justice Bridge for your time and commitment.

## The Mockingbird Family Model Supports Sibling Connections BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



Siblings are often separated when put into the child welfare system. If siblings are separated, it is usually mandated that they have visits frequently, the standard being twice a month.<sup>1</sup>

However, this is not a perfect system and that does not always happen. When youth do get to have visits with their siblings, it's often in an uncomfortable and even unfamiliar setting that can make sibling interaction awkward.

When my siblings and I were removed from our home, I would have liked to have seen them even if it was in an unfamiliar place with people I didn't know watching us interact. I may have felt uncomfortable but I wouldn't have let that stop me from enjoying the time we were allotted to spend together. However, despite the countless times that I asked to see my siblings, my social worker ignored my requests. I still have not seen my little brothers since we were put into care but I have at least been able to talk to them on the phone occasionally.

The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) is an innovative foster/birth/kinship caregiver service delivery model based on the extended family concept and designed to support prevention and permanency efforts that both increase child safety and strengthen families, which is being implemented nationally. The MFM supports comfortable sibling visits and connections in various ways. In Constellations, youth are given the opportunity to have visits in a safe and familiar environment. There are

monthly Constellation meetings that siblings, even those who are not placed in a Constellation, can participate in. There are also fun, engaging, and safe activities that youth can participate in with the Constellations. A significant portion of youth in the constellations benefit from sibling visits that are organized by Hub Home Parents.<sup>2</sup>

As Hub Home parents, we feel responsible to bring siblings together," says Hub Home parent **Degale Cooper**. In her Constellation, there have been a few different instances where she has facilitated siblings connecting in a positive way while they were in a comfortable setting. In one example, two siblings were in the same home until one got moved because of behavioral issues and wasn't getting along with the caregiver. The two siblings were able to maintain their relationship outside of the home in a more positive environment (the Hub Home), considering it as an

extended family member's home. There, the two youth (facilitated by the Hub Home parents) were able to engage without their foster family and were able to make and maintain a genuine connection.

Giving youth the opportunity to maintain healthy sibling connections and relationships is important to all youth whether in an out of home placement or not. "Without these sibling connections, youth forget how important their siblings are to them and what their relationships really mean," says Degale. My siblings and I have irreplaceable relationships. When we got removed from our home, we lost our connections because we weren't able to spend time together and interact as siblings anymore.

<sup>1</sup> [www.braampanel.org/MonRptOct08AppGuide.pdf](http://www.braampanel.org/MonRptOct08AppGuide.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *The Mockingbird Family Model Evaluation reports.*

**THE SAVE DATE** Join The Mockingbird Society for our Third Annual Benefit Luncheon. 

To be a table captain, reserve a seat or sponsor this event, please contact Alicia LeVezu, [alicia@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:alicia@mockingbirdsociety.org) or 206.323.KIDS (5437). There is no cost to attend. However, there will be an opportunity to donate. Suggested minimum donation is \$150.

**We believe we can fly**  
2009 BENEFIT LUNCHEON | THE MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY

## Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



Imagine under what circumstances you as a parent or we as a nation would tolerate a legal proceeding in which the state and a judge decide where children and adolescents live without an attorney to adequately protect their rights and advocate for their views. In fact, every year, judges make decisions in thousands of foster care hearings even though the youth has no attorney to protect their rights or advocate for their views. The Dependency hearing is a legal proceeding in which critical life altering decisions are made that determine where and with whom a youngster will live, whether familial visits will occur (including sibling visits), and what services will be provided by the child welfare system to facilitate family reunification or other permanency options. After significant consideration The Mockingbird Society has decided to support the foster children currently arguing in an appeal in Washington State that they and other children in foster care have a constitutional right to have adequate legal representation in their dependency hearings.

While we recognize and applaud the stellar efforts of the dedicated Court Appointed Special Advocates and the efforts of some local jurisdictions including King

County, we believe there is no substitute for a comprehensive policy supported by adequate resources that ensures every child in our foster care system receives the benefit of a trained attorney. Building a world-class foster care system requires nothing less and we parents would demand at least as much for our own children. For more information on this case please visit [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org)

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

## Thank You!

Anonymous; Apex Foundation; Senator Dale Brandland of the 42nd District; Karen Brandvick-Baker; Gerry Burnett; In Celebration of Chelsea and Candace's Marriage: Claire Nunneley Levy; Children's Administration; In honor of Jeff, Jenny, Jay and Nicole Cravens: The Sundby-Penticoffs; In honor of Jill Donnelly: Shari Behnke; Eastern Washington Women's Networking Group; Beth Emmons; Sandi Everlove; In memory of Thomas Gause: Jacqueline Gause; King County Councilmember Larry Gossett; Patricia Gray and Spencer Noland; Jillian Gross; Dr. Wanda Hackett; In memory of June Herbert: JoAnn Herbert; Bill Jarcho; Demarea Kirk; James Maki; Attorney Chris Marsh; Mary Meinig; Najja Morris; Brenda Nguyen; Pierce County Alliance; Karen Pillar; Sarah Rafton; Vanitha S. Raman; David Roberts; Debra Ronnholm; Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos; Steve Shafer and Kelly Nolan Shafer; Suzanne Shawger; Stephanie Solien and Franklin Greer; Captain John C. Spence USCG Ret and Mrs. Patricia Spence; Street Youth Legal Advocates of Washington; Timothy Tomlinson; Alicia Tonasket; In Celebration of Matt Tronsdal and Natasha Jankauskas' Marriage: Elizabeth Bamber, Four Points by Sheraton, Robert Isbell; Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund; Betty Wani; Maurice Ward; Erin and Mike Welch; Windermere Real Estate, Capitol Hill; Yakima Union Gospel Mission; Celeste Miller; Kate White; Emily Gause; Michael Cherry; Megan Campbell; Reyna Hayashi; Nathan Sugg; Sascha Sprinkle & Megan Giske

## Supporting Those Who Support Youth BY ASHLIE LANIER



Everyone should have a solid foundation on which they can walk. If that ground cracks someone should be there to catch them. Everyone needs support. Foster parents often do not feel as appreciated as they should. The withdrawal rate of foster parents is becoming a huge problem in maintaining the system as it results in a decrease in the number of caregivers. Because the number of foster youth is increasing every year, we will have more youth and not enough foster parents. Statistics show that from 1983 to 1992 the number of children entering the system went up 74% and the number of foster homes declined by nearly 11%. In 2008 there was an 81% retention rate for foster parents in an MFM Constellation. The national average for foster parent retention is closer to 50%.<sup>1</sup>

A vital part of the MFM concept is support in the form of respite care. It has been proven by experts to be one of the top tactics in recruiting and retaining great foster parents. Planned respite care is when appointments or planned trips are placed on the constellation calendar in advance. About 64% of the youth in MFM constellations have benefited from planned respite care.<sup>2</sup>

"The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) is an innovative foster/birth/kinship caregiver service delivery model based on the extended family concept and designed to support prevention, out of home placement, foster parent retention and permanency efforts that both increase child safety and strengthen families, which is being implemented nationally."<sup>3</sup> Within each group of 6-10 families, called a Constellation, there is a Hub Home. The Hub Home provides breaks for both foster parents and youth. This reduces the amount of stress individuals might build up and normalizes everyone's experiences. Crisis respite care is when unplanned issues, appointments, or events happen. For example, if the caregiver became sick or a child/youth began having behavior issues, they would be able to use the Hub home for crisis respite care. 15% of The MFM youth have benefited from this particular type of respite care.<sup>4</sup>

The MFM also has other support services like monthly support meetings within the Constellation which increase peer support and decrease the isolation experienced

by foster parents and youth. There are also MFM trainings with topics like First Aid/CPR, life skills, aging out options, back-to-school support, stress management, self-care, and DSHS guidelines around birth family and sibling visits. These trainings help caregivers develop the skills to effectively address challenges.

Peer mentoring is an important aspect of Constellation support. The Mockingbird Family Model offers peer mentoring provided by the Hub Home to Constellation parents. Last year, peer mentoring was provided on topics such as educational advocacy, accessing mental health services, holiday stress, adoption and permanency, stressful encounters with birth families, and navigating the DSHS system.

I got the opportunity to interview the Clinical Supervisor for **Casey Family Programs Seattle Field Office, Emily Cator**. "We all need support and MFM is one way of getting it. Parents understand each other, and kids understand kids, so I think getting support from other parents is really valuable," she says. Each Hub Home parent is an experienced and licensed foster parent. They are one of the best available resources for caregivers.

"I think in order for caregivers to feel supported they need for us to be responsive; if they need help with trainings, behavior issues, etc., we need to help them individualize what their needs are. Foster parents should be partners in all decision making throughout the process, which is what the MFM inclusively covers," says Emily.

After many assessments, the Mockingbird Family Model continues to show that it is more a program that ameliorates the challenge of the lack of support for caregivers. For more information on the MFM, visit [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org).

<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup> Mockingbird Family Model Evaluation reports

## Letters to the Editor

Hi Jim,

I commend you and MBS for the courage to address issues such as these on behalf of my brothers and sisters in and from the foster care system. As a matter of fact, I depend on your work to move the foster care system towards "real" change at a political and policy level. Once again, thank you so much for your tireless efforts and for listening to us as alumni!

-D'Artagnan B. Caliman,  
Alumni- State of Oregon

Hi Kara,

I had a moment to read the Mockingbird Times today and was quite impressed by the quality writing. Please relay my compliments to the talented youth writers on staff!

Best Regards,  
Megan Palchak, Ombudsman

## Become a Mockingbird Network Representative

The Mockingbird Society is hiring! We are looking for youth between the ages of 15 and 24 who have experience in the foster or kinship care system. Duties include public speaking and advocacy, writing articles for the *Mockingbird Times*, and other organizational and leadership opportunities. Pay starts at \$9.50 per hour. For more information, contact Kara at [kara@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:kara@mockingbirdsociety.org) or (206) 323-5437.

## Support The Mockingbird Society!

We invite you to join us in making a significant difference in the lives of our most vulnerable children, youth and families. In gratitude of your support, we will send you a monthly issue of the *Mockingbird Times*. Please join us today!

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

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

## MEET OUR STAFF

**Executive Director** Jim Theofelis; **Operations Director** Ros Ghan; **Mockingbird Family Programs Director** Dr. Wanda Hackett; **Youth Programs Director** Tiffany Washington; **Executive Assistant** Lauren Frederick; **Development/Communications** Darcie Gray; **Finance Manager** Catherine Lanham; **Mockingbird Network Coordinator**; Kara Sanders; **Mockingbird Family Model (The MFM) Coordinator** Amy Converse; **Administrative Coordinator** Diana Clark; **Administrative Assistant (AA)** Liliana Davies; **Mockingbird Network AA** Milissa Morgan; **The MFM AA** Stephanie (Stevie) Glaberson; **Development Assistant** Alicia LeVezu; **Resource Specialists** Eva Ervin, Georgina Ramirez, Tammy Soderberg, Lauren Steed, Samantha Valle; **Senior Network Representatives** Leona Bill, Ashlie Lanier, Jerry Bobo; **Network Representatives**, Ian Grant, Diamonique Walker; **Contributing Writers & Artists** Holly Allen, Annasia Ellis, Sasheena Ellsworth, Imara Johnson, DeMarea Kirk, Crystal Sharp, Onalee Stewart; **Volunteer** Chrissie Jackson; **Copy Editing and Layout** Kelly Hawkins

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

## The Qualities of a Good Man BY JERRY BOBO



What does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to be a good man? How do you know if you are a good man? Is it the views of others that make up what a good man is?

What are the qualities of a good man? As a young man that is maturing every minute of every day, these are questions that have run through my head time and time again throughout my life. Growing up, I was told to be the best man that I could be. At the age of 21, I do believe that I am the best man that I can be right now, but there is so much more to being a man than taking on more responsibilities, providing for myself, and respecting others even if I don't agree with the choices they make.

To find out what some of the qualities of a good man are, I asked men and women between the ages of twenty-two and forty what they thought. You might think there

is a drastic difference in opinion, but there really isn't. The question that I asked each person was, "What are the qualities of a good man?" One response that stuck out in my mind was by a very intelligent young woman who said, "I think a good man is someone who brings [his] whole self to the table. Someone willing to share his dreams, fears, joys, heart, past and future. Someone who is genuinely happy with who you are as a person, doesn't see imperfections because they like you as a person, including what others may see as flaws. He is patient, kind, smart, and responsible for his actions."

The Mockingbird Society Network Coordinator **Kara Sanders** listed some great qualities in a good man as well, "Passionate about Jesus Christ, able to submit to authority, and does not base his worth off of what he can accomplish, but who he is in the eyes of God." I believe God is defi-

**"... Even without tangible items, a man still will always have his word; so be honest with everyone! A man should always be moral and ethical, regardless of how others around him are living."**

nately watching over all of us and has everything planned out for each and every one of us.

An older man I spoke with said, "...It took me years to understand what a good man is. As a young man, I followed behind men that taught me things that were bad, but told me [that] in order to survive, good people do bad things. I'm older now and see that it is not true, everything you do is a choice. My mother taught me that. I can tell you this, if my mother and aunts [hadn't gotten] a hold of me before it was too late, I would have turned out to be a bad man, but they guided me in the right direction and I thank them for that."

As a young male that also grew up around women, these are words that I can live by and take to heart. **Elliott Flavors** had an inspiring answer to this question as well: "Some main qualities of a good man are honesty, integrity, chivalry, and to be God-fearing. My father has always said that even without tangible items, a man still will always have his word; so be honest with everyone! A man should always be moral and ethical, regardless of how others around him are living. Lastly, a good man should always be willing to give of himself and think of himself second."

The idea of what makes a good man varies from person to person, from family to family, and the type of man or lack thereof that exists in each person's life. From this one question, I found out that good qualities are deeper than just what is seen on the outside. You can't get into the book and understand it if you're hung up on what the cover looks like. Everything takes time including becoming a good man. You are not just given that title or born into it, you have to earn it. I am learning that as I grow and experience life.

## Activism: A Beginner's Guide BY IAN GRANT



*"To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men."*

~Abraham Lincoln

We live in an unjust world and we see injustice every day: on the streets, on television, in courtrooms, even in our own homes. Many of us feel powerless to stop it; the problems seem too big, too intractable, for one person to solve alone. And they are. But we cannot allow that to deter us from making our homes, our communities, our nations and our planet better places both for us and for those who follow us. This series of articles will focus on general ways in which people can become politically in-

involved in their communities, make their voices heard, and work for change.

This article will focus on that most visible of community actions: the peaceful street protest. The first step in organizing a peaceful demonstration, as in almost any other community activism, is to either find or create a group of dedicated people for your cause. This is a lot easier said than done, but it is by no means impossible. Sometimes the group already exists: The Mockingbird Society, for example, runs a program called The Mockingbird Network in which foster youth and alumni meet monthly to discuss ways to improve the foster care system. Each region has a chapter, and each chapter meets monthly.

The ins and outs of community organization are beyond the scope of this article, but there are plenty of resources out there for those who would like to learn more. The **NFG (Neighborhood Funders Group)** has a comprehensive guide to community organization available on their website [www.nfg.org](http://www.nfg.org).

Once you have your group together, the next thing to do is to begin planning your event. Decide which type of public demonstration you would like to do: a rally, in which a group of people gather in a public place to listen to speakers or musicians; a march, in which protesters



## The Perils of Teen Drinking BY LEONA BILL

There are a lot of resources out there for teen drinking and alcohol abuse. The resources are well known and can easily be found but the most difficult part about teen drinking is breaking the cycle.

When I worked for **Northwest Area Foundation** we researched poverty in urban Indian communities. We discovered that there are enough resources for drinking and drug problems but the main concern was breaking the habit for good. A person can go to treatment but what about afterwards? How can we, as a community, approach this hard issue of stopping the cycle of alcoholism? Most teens start drinking before they turn 21.<sup>1</sup> From my experience, as well as from speaking with other youth, it seems that a large portion of foster youth get sent to treatment numerous times. Within the past two months, I personally have experienced the loss of two close friends from alcohol abuse. Too many people I know have similar experiences.

When I was younger, on the run, and still in care, I used to have a really bad drinking problem. I sometimes got in trouble with the law because I was simply around others doing illegal things. I had poor judgment when I was drinking, even though I didn't actually do anything myself. Getting in trouble for something you didn't do is not worth it and should be a wake-up call.

On the news and in newspapers we see deaths reported from car wrecks due to DUI's and sometimes suicides. Whenever I am in the University District I am two blocks away from the bar and always hear stories about a whole lot of drama and drunks getting into fights and running from cops because of drinking. The ambulance is there every week and the first thing that always comes to my mind is whether someone I know was involved or not.

It is hard to think about how many deaths are caused by drinking every day

out in the world and that because of this, a child might have to be without a parent. People overdose on alcohol and end up in the hospital. Others cannot be allowed to be left alone due to alcohol-related depression. There were times that young children may have seen me drinking and I saw them shake their heads. Back then, the only time I cared about anything was if I was on the clock working or at an event; if I was on my own time, I used to drink heavily and cause fights and scare people. Things got so bad that the cops in the University District found out about my drinking problem and began to know me from running away and constantly drinking.

This past year, I have lost friends and family due to them drinking and this has made me fearful because I still have family and friends that drink heavily. Although I have been doing my best to stay away from the drinking, these losses that I have experienced make it hard. I know that drinking is not the way to live. Being in foster care until I aged out at 18, I knew that once it came time to be a parent, I wouldn't put my children through what I had gone through. I now have a daughter and every time I want to drink I think of her and how much I love her and want to keep her, not lose her. I remind myself what would happen to her if I picked up that bottle. A lot of parents lose their children due to alcohol abuse and I am here to try and help people change, not encourage bad habits.

I want to remind all who still drink that there are people who care for you; all that you need to realize this is to sober up. Drinking takes away so many of the good things in life. It may seem fun while drinking but good memories that are built when sober are far better than the memories had when drinking. Stop telling yourself, "Oh nothing will happen to me," or, "That will never happen," because it can happen and does. I have seen it happen. Remember your loved ones are hurt when they see your life being wasted by alcohol.

<sup>1</sup> [alcoholnews.org/underage\\_drink.html](http://alcoholnews.org/underage_drink.html)



**Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos (D)** helped Network Representatives on mailing day in August. Santos is the Majority Whip for the Washington State House of Representatives. She is on the Education, Finance, Financial Institutions and Insurance, and Rules committees. She was elected to the House in 1998.



On July 30th, we had the privilege of having **Councilmember Larry Gossett** visit The Mockingbird Society and speak to the Network Representatives. He talked to us about how he became the man he is today, from a simple athlete to a college man, to becoming part of the historical Black Panther Party, to being one of the founders of the Black Student Union at the University of Washington. He explained the discipline and focus it takes to become a strong leader. From budgets to human services to the prevention of black on black violence, Councilmember Larry Gossett stays dedicated to change and shows support within the King County Region.

## Those Days

ANNASIA ELLIS

I am not just an ordinary person with a simple personality  
I got shot in my heart with a bullet and it was labeled reality  
Do you ever have those days when you realize?  
People you love could be your enemies, backstabbing you, telling lies  
About random things that have you wondering  
That also have your mind rumbling and stumbling  
Upon the beat of your heart slowly gliding across cold thin ice  
Despise boils through your insides  
This is why I am asking you, do you ever have those days?

This is that moment when you reach and grab the facts  
You find out the truth, bring it to the light, and watch them turn their backs  
This becomes a reason for giving season  
Though you may think that those lies are the last  
Think again my sister, my brother, another one has been passed

Now this time I hit you with a sweet rhyme  
It didn't cost me a nickel not even dime  
It may be priceless but I spent my time  
This is what I do when I have those days  
I just sit back, relax and switch negativity into positive ways

## I Want To Know

IMARA JOHNSON

It doesn't matter to me who you are in the world's harsh flow,  
what you are and how much you know,  
when you'll be there and how much compassion you'll show.  
Or why I don't just take a puff of weed & let my mind blow.

I want to know how you live in the hollows of that empty vessel you call home.  
Or when you will release the manifested anger that has turned into pure hunger.

It doesn't matter to me who lies & cheats.  
It doesn't matter to me.

I want to know what lies in the confines of your conceited mind  
trapped and caged, broken and filled with unadulterated Rage.

It doesn't matter to me that I don't pop pills like peanuts or drink  
like a fish because at times I wish I was like others, bask in pain  
only to be covered.

I want to know, am I good enough to be bad?  
I want to know.

## Community Events

## Region 1

Sept. 2-7: Pig Out in the Park food and music festival, 10 AM - 10 PM, Riverfront Park; Free.  
Sept. 20: El Katif Shrine Duck Race, 1 - 4 PM, Riverfront Park Floating Stage; Free.

## Region 2

Sundays: Yakima Farmers Market, 9 AM - 2 PM, Downtown Yakima.  
Sept. 26: Basketball Clinic, 9 AM - 12 PM, Yakima Valley Community College; (509) 574-3260.

## Region 3

Tuesdays: Classes in public speaking & improvised theater, 7 - 8 PM, RiverBelle Dinner Theater in Mt Vernon; [www.theunmistakables.com](http://www.theunmistakables.com), 425-328-0790; Free for foster and homeless youth.

## Region 4

Sept. 12-13: Aki Matsuri Japanese Cultural Arts Festival, 11 AM - 5/6 PM, Bellevue College Main Campus; Free; [www.enma.org](http://www.enma.org).  
Oct. 1-2: Northwest Children's Environmental Health Forum, Tukwila Community Center; [www.chenw.org](http://www.chenw.org).

## Region 5

Sept. 9: Back to School Kick-off Chapter Meeting, 3 - 5:30 PM, Pierce County Alliance. Free food and prizes.  
Sept. 10: Feed the Homeless, 8 AM - 12 PM, Catholic Community Services; Meet at Pierce County Alliance at 8 AM.

## The Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

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

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

## Region 1: CHAPTER IN SPOKANE COUNTY BY ONALEE STEWART

This month, two of our members, **Onalee Stewart** and **Katrina Dyer** attended a State Advisory Council meeting as well as the **Street Youth Legal Advocates of Washington (SYLAW)** training with **Seattle University** law students. We split into groups and discussed the responsibility of the **Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)** to youth, and the Youth Rights document from The Mockingbird Society. We had eight youth and alumni attend our chapter meeting where we played Independent Living Jeopardy; made nachos; had candy; discussed chapter names, a community action plan, and the difference between a **CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate)** and a lawyer; and decided on leadership terms of office. It was an extremely productive month!

## Region 3: Hey Mac CHAPTER IN SKAGIT COUNTY BY SASHEENA ELLSWORTH

Region 3, HEYMAC, has been hard at work to make a difference. In the last month, we have participated in many fun activities, such as hosting a Q&A session with **Senator Dale Brandland** from Washington State's 42<sup>nd</sup> District, and participating in a legal rights training. The meeting with the senator went fantastically, resulting in invitations to visit him at the capital and the senator feeling more inspired to make a difference for foster youth. We are currently a small group but we are growing each month and we have a strong passion about what we do!



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

This August has been filled with lots of cool events. We took a trip to the **Union Gospel Mission** in Yakima and served lunch to the homeless. It was nice to help out those who needed it. We had fun at Skateland where we skated the night away. We also drove 3 hours to attend a State Advisory Council meeting and the SYLAW training. It was nice to see youth from all over Washington meet and work together knowing that we are making a positive difference in the lives of foster youth. We also learned different laws regarding housing and contracts. On the way home we all enjoyed Crispy Cream Doughnuts, sightseeing at the Summit, splashing each other with river water, and encountering various campers. This month has been very productive for us!

## News From

## The Mockingbird Network

## Your Needs, Your Voice

## Region 4: For Change CHAPTER IN KING COUNTY BY GEORGINA RAMIREZ

This month we had an excellent turn out with a lot of new faces so we discussed what a chapter meeting is and what we are here as a group to accomplish. Next, we talked about adequate legal representation, our **Leadership Summit** topic. Since this is a controversial issue, we thought about how we are going to create a game plan to bring to **Advocacy Day**. We also discussed recruitment ideas as well as a sign-up for the **Inside Scoop** event that we hosted. **Karen Pillar, Beth Emmons, and Brenda Nguyen** came in to talk to us about various subjects of importance such as how to be our own best advocate with mental health providers, protect our identity, and how to become future millionaires. Next month we are going to talk about teambuilding activities and legal representation some more. Please join us September 14, 3:30 - 5:30 PM.



## Region 5: CHAPTER IN PIERCE COUNTY BY DEMAREA KIRK

Region 5 has been busy. This month we volunteered with **Catholic Community Services** in their **Help Kitchen** which we plan to do again in September. The panelists for **Culture of Foster Care** have been meeting to get their presentation ready. Recently, all the regions came together to discuss how and what we were going to do for making the **Your Rights** book more efficient and easier for everyone to understand as well as what to put into the new manual. There also was a training with SYLAW educating us on ways to clean up our criminal records, how to live in an apartment and manage our lives, among other topics. Thanks to those who put on the trainings!

## Region 6: SPEAK UP! CHAPTER IN CLARK COUNTY BY CRYSTAL SHARP

This month we say good-bye to our Resource Specialist, **Heather Jones**. Her biggest highlight here was, "watching the youth prepare for Advocacy Day and seeing them in action. Watching youth advocate for themselves and other foster youth is very rewarding." Heather joined The MBS and started the first Network Chapter, **SPEAK UP!**, in July 2008. She wanted to be a part of a team that helps foster youth become advocates and leaders. "The way The MBS empowers youth is very impactful." In her time with The MBS, she has seen great change in youth, like one young man from region 3. "[He] was sitting on the State Advisory Council for the first time and was very shy and had a soft voice. Seven months later he was at the **Youth Leadership Summit** and showed up with a great speech and an outgoing attitude and was a great advocate for himself." We are sad to see Heather leave and will miss her greatly!