I care, you care, we all care for foster youth.
That’s the power of the Mockingbird Family Model.

BEING ALLOWED INTO THE lives of young people is an amazing gift. We cherish watching children and youth grow and succeed and being able to be a source of love and compassion when things go wrong. Late night conversations on our couch, cooking together, going on hikes, and tucking children into bed are all parts of building long-term relationships that are steeped in a true connection that you get from spending time together, being vulnerable, and celebrating joyous occasions. Our goal is to build the kind of relationships with youth that we want our kids to have with other adults.

MFM STATS IN WASHINGTON STATE:

74% foster parent retention rate within the Model compared to state average of about 50%

25,079 hours of respite care provided by Hub Homes giving foster parents the opportunity to recharge

2/3 disruptions were avoided due to Constellation support keeping kids in their current foster homes

Mockingbird Programs

James’ Story

I WAS 18 YEARS OLD WHEN I JOINED Mockingbird in early 2014. From Chapter Member to Leadership Team to Chapter Leader, Mockingbird has given me growth and leadership opportunities which make me the strong advocate I am today. Advocating for Extended Foster Care with Mockingbird has been a huge deal for me, because I was in Extended Foster Care myself after experiencing both foster care and homelessness.

As a Mockingbird youth, I’ve met so many people I never thought I’d meet, from other foster youth and future foster parents to legislators. All of the bills we get passed are big achievements. I’m proud to be a part of these positive changes for all foster and homeless youth. Not only have I developed professional skills like public speaking, networking, and leadership, being a part of Mockingbird made me realize what I want to do long-term professionally: to become a social worker. Having a social worker who has experienced foster care and homelessness themselves – now that creates a real connection with youth.

401 young people engaged as youth advocates

16,971 audience members educated by youth advocates on issues affecting youth experiencing foster care and homelessness

63 policymaker meetings attended by Mockingbird youth

As a Mockingbird youth, I’ve met so many people I never thought I’d meet.
LEAD PRIORITIES

IMPROVED OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCESS TO INDEPENDENCE (HB 1808): Under this new program, foster youth ages 15–21 will be able to obtain a driver’s permit, license, and insurance.

PRESERVED FUNDING FOR THE MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY MODEL: The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) budget proviso renewal was included in the final budget at $506,000 for the biennium.

PUBLIC POLICY & ADVOCACY WINS

SUPPORTING PRIORITIES

PROVIDED LEGAL REPRESENTATION TO ALL CHILDREN & YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE: A $1.3M budget proviso will fund a demonstration and evaluation of the impact of appointing attorneys to youth in care.

IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR FOSTER YOUTH (SB 5241): Requires school districts to provide supports to facilitate on-time graduation for homeless and foster youth.

CONTINUED FUNDING TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS IN SCHOOLS: The budget includes continued funding for the Homelessness Student Stability Program.

MONITORING PRIORITIES

NEW DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES (HB 1661): This bill creates a new Department of Children, Youth, and Families, emphasizing services for adolescent and prioritizing prevention for all young people ages 0–21.

MY HIGHLIGHTS OF 2017:

1. Traveling with five of our youth leaders to San Francisco to collaborate with partners on systems thinking.
2. Watching the pride on our advocates’ faces as they witnessed the Governor signing the driver’s license bill that they helped craft.
3. Hearing our youth discuss with Secretary Ross Hunter the importance of youth representation on the oversight board for the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families.
4. Expanding community based foster care internationally through the Mockingbird Family Model.
5. Drawing up plans to expand our youth development program and to codify our method of elevating youth voice — thanks to a $450,000 grant from Best Starts for Kids!
I SPENT ALMOST MY ENTIRE CHILDHOOD and teenage years in foster care. I had some pretty terrible experiences while in care. I want others in care to know that what I experienced isn’t a life sentence. We all are more than what we were born into. One thing that helped me was joining The Mockingbird Society and finding my voice. Being a part of Mockingbird has helped me get through tough times. Mockingbird has given me a larger community, one that stretches from my home community in Yakima to all around the state of WA. In addition, I have been able to come alongside youth and help them become leaders – the same youth who have similar experiences that I had. I want them to know that there is a life, a great life, even after traumatic events. It may take some time but things get better. I want them to know that just because we have gone through tough times doesn’t mean that this is our future. We are so much more than what life throws at us. Being a part of Mockingbird has helped me realize this over and over again.

“Mockingbird has given me a larger community...”

Our Mission is to improve foster care and end youth homelessness.

Our Vision is for all young people to reach adulthood healthy, supported, and with full opportunity to thrive in life.
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