Drop-in Centers Provide Critical Services to At-Risk Teenagers

Too often youth and young adults do not know who to trust or to turn to for advice. Many times youth and young adults feel alone because most of the time they do not know where to go to get their basic needs meet. This is especially true for youth that are homeless, recently released from jail, have mental health issues, or facing other struggles. These issues that youth face need to be addressed to help reduce homelessness and ensure these youth are successful in life. I believe more service providers need to put the word out about what they do to help youth and how one can get connected to resources, and what steps one need to take to accomplish the youth's goal.

In addition to my work at Mockingbird, I am also an outreach worker at the 45th Street Clinic. I usually walk through downtown and areas around King County to reach out to youth that look like they could use some assistance. As well as doing street outreach I also do site outreach, which means I visit community youth services and agencies and learn about what kind of services they offer to youth. Being involved in the community is great experience to help improve outcomes for those in need.

Many youth service providers are friendly and welcome each guest warmly. The staff or volunteers are always willing to help and listen to a youth concern and to address that concern. A lot of youth services work to develop interpretation and problem-solving tools. Some drop-in centers are different, but I can say that all drop-in centers are a place for youth to feel safe, develop skills, address issues, and help develop a plan for Drop-in, on page 4

Resources for Youth in Care with Disabilities

Passed into law in 1990 and renewed in 2006, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) gives those with disabilities the opportunity to live and function within society by creating an easier atmosphere for those who are disabled. The ADA allows those with mental or physical disabilities to request special accommodations in employment, public services, and telecommunication. Disability is defined as a condition or function judged to be significantly impaired relative to the usual standard of an individual or group. The term is used to refer to individual functioning, including physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, intellectual impairment, mental illness, and various types of chronic disease. Studies have shown that one-third of foster children have a disability.1

Parents of youth with disabilities are able to apply for the child to receive extra assistance from the government. It is recommended that they do so that the child and caregivers have the support necessary to live full and happy lives. The state of Washington provides those with disabilities with equipment and medication needed for these children. The federal government provides foster parents with the resources and money to make sure that these individuals receive appropriate care.2

These additional resources attempt to cover the additional financial and health Resources, on page 4
our team

Senior Management
Jim Theofelis, Executive Director
Ron Shan, Deputy Director
Frankie Kingdon, Youth Programs Director
Brian Lawrence, Development Director
Beth Vance, Finance Director

Staff
- Jen Bronbach, Public Policy & Communications Coordinator
  Bailey Buckingham, Mockingbird Network Program Assistant
- Diana Clark, Human Resources Manager
- Avis Cossen-Knust, Administrative Coordinator
- David Forte, Evaluations and Database Coordinator
- Lauren Frederick, Executive Assistant
- Amber Carrigan, Development Coordinator
- Virginia Philbrook, Receptionist
- Georgia Ramirez, Youth Development Specialist

Resource Specialists:
- Sarah Mahaffy, Spokane
- Tammy Soderberg, Yakima
- Kate Storms, Everett
- Selena Willert, Tacoma & Olympia

Senior Network Representatives:
- Diamonique Walker
- Sarah Mahaffy, Spokane
- Diana Clark, Human Resources Manager

Youth Development Specialist
- Resource Specialists:
  - Sarah Mahaffy, Spokane
  - Tammy Soderberg, Yakima
  - Kate Storms, Everett
  - Selena Willert, Tacoma & Olympia

Senior Network Representatives:
- Diamonique Walker
  - Georgia Ramirez, Youth Development Specialist

About Us

The Mockingbird Society is a leading advocate for foster care reform built on youth-inspired solutions, powerful coalitions and public support for every child’s right to a safe home and a bright future. The Mockingbird Times is a key component of our youth development program, the Mockingbird Youth Network. All youth reporters are paid employees, and contributors from across the country receive $25 for their work. The Times is distributed nationally to more than 20,000 through our mailing list and as an insert in Real Change, a Seattle-based community newspaper. As a nonprofit organization, we appreciate your private contributions to support our youth and family programs. Donate online, by phone or in person.

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The name

The 1962 American classic To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name. Atticus, the widowed father of Jem and Scout, teaches them 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.” We work to bring the same commitment to our most vulnerable children, youth and families. Join us!

Letter from the Editor

In August of 2001, I started The Mockingbird Society to find upstream solutions inspired by the experiences of the children, youth and families who bear the burden of the child welfare system’s shortcomings. Eleven years later, we have advocated for over 19 system-wide reforms that are now law, developed innovative practices that improve outcomes for families, and introduced thousands of youth to the power and impact of civic engagement. This past year, The Mockingbird Society has seen tremendous progress towards achieving our vision of building a world-class foster care system. Our advocacy has increased safe housing for youth aging out of care, and our Mockingbird Youth Network continued to show the power of youth voice. Be it in a committee room, a board room, or a class room; when youth speak, decision-makers listen.

It gives me great pride to recap our achievements over the past eleven years, however our work is not yet finished and our biggest impacts lay ahead of us. We will continue to be a leading advocate for our legacy priority, to ensure that ALL youth aging out of care have access to safe housing; we will continue to make sure that youth have a seat at decision-making tables that impact children and youth; and we will continue to advocate for the expansion of the Mockingbird Family Model, an innovative and effective foster care delivery model developed by The Mockingbird Society.

Our past successes give us momentum for the future. I look forward to continuing our vital work with our partners, policy-makers, community supporters, and, most of all, our youth. By empowering youth and alumni of care through civic engagement, we help them realize their vast potential by advocating for the next generation of child welfare system reforms.

Thank you for your unwavering support of children, youth and families.

Sincerely,

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Join Us

The Mockingbird Youth Network is hosting the Transitions Training in Olympia, Seattle and Tacoma. We will be in Olympia on August 23rd, Seattle on August 29th and Tacoma on August 30th. Please contact Selena Willert, selena@mockingbirdsociety.org for information on the Olympia and Tacoma trainings and Georgia Ramirez, georgina@mockingbirdsociety.org, for information on the Seattle training.

Special Contribution

David Buck

Until Next Time...

David Buck speaking to assembled participants and allies at Youth Advocacy Day

After over three years with The Mockingbird Society as a Youth Network Representative and Senior Youth Network Representative, I will be moving on to pursue my college education at the Evergreen College this fall, I have never been good at goodbyes. Most of the times in my life where I have had to say goodbye to those that I’ve come to care about, I just leave silently before they, or I, get the chance to do so. To say goodbye is to admit that I might never see those that I care about again. This is something that has always been very hard to me. Even though I’m quite practiced at the leaving part in goodbyes, I still can’t say goodbye. So instead I will say “until next time.”

Until next time, Mockingbird. You hired me in a very difficult time of my life. I had just moved into a transitional living home fresh off the streets from being homeless. I still to this day don’t know how I was hired because at the time I was only a couple months clean off of a drug addiction that almost took my life. My clothes were the same clothes I had from when I was homeless, dirty and held together by bad sewing. But maybe you saw in me what took me so long to see myself. And now as I prepare to leave for the next great adventure in life. "I don't know where I'm going to end up but the lessons I've learned at The Mockingbird Society are going to be with me the whole way as I constantly move forward, preparing for the next great adventure in life.”

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Special Contribution

David Buck
Reflections on a Redemptive Journey

Growing up is definitely one of the most difficult things to do in life when absent purpose or a proper sense of direction. It is even more difficult if you feel alone, like nobody cares, or like nobody is listening, I felt the only two things that kept me going were having that little bit of hope and faith that there was someone out there to help me understand. Knowing me now, you never would have guessed that fifteen years ago was the most difficult time of my life. I have come a long way from what little I had growing up to where I am now.

Over the years, I’ve definitely felt my share of loneliness on multiple occasions, whether at school or at home. Apart from being alone, I’ve also felt rejected and put down on many different levels. Not only by my own family, but by those I thought were my friends and others. I felt like I truly loved. Coming from a biological family of ten siblings, I still felt like nobody cared even at a young age. I think that’s what ultimately distanced me from the rest of my family. At that point, nothing made any sense to me. Inevitably, the rest of my family ended up in different foster homes.

In the first foster home, I knew that there was going to be a long, bumpy road ahead. For the first time in a long time, I felt something good was finally happening, but was afraid of it at the same time. Even though my life took a turn for the better, I was still a little bit rebellious socially, academically, and at this foster home placement. I was constantly neglecting to pay attention in class and picking fights with other students at recess. This led to consequences that I feel made a huge difference in my life. My foster father believed in using vigorous exercise as a consequence for my poor choices. Having to deal with the discipline of vigorous exercise instead of physical abuse was also a great relief. What made the greatest impact on me over time, I lost contact with this foster family, but was able to hold onto the wisdom that was taught to me and continue to learn from it. I have been able to share my experiences by teaching and showing others that they are not alone; that there are others with similar backgrounds; that somebody cares, and others are listening and willing to help you make a positive change to better your future.

Eight years after our last contact this foster family sought me out through MySpace and we are now re-connected. I was surprised that they thought about me all this time and still wanted to be there for me to listen and encourage me to keep moving forward in my life. They are now my family and I am happy to have my siblings and parents back in my life.

Amazing Foster Parents Effect Profound Change for Teen Parent

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Chapter Voice

New Leaders Show Exciting Growth in Yakima

by Brandy Bailey

Youth who have experience in foster care are valued for their unique perspective, empathy, and leadership potential. They understand the challenges of leaving home, the impact of trauma, and the importance of resilience. Despite the obstacles, our youth have demonstrated remarkable strengths, resilience, and a commitment to helping others.

Drop-in, from page 1

region 1 south (yakima) — A.C.T. F.I.R.S.T. has great momentum after the Summit! We have many new members and our Chapter becomes more successful each month. Our leadership team is revamped and ready to lead. On July 21st, we welcomed our new team. Our leadership team consists of me, Deirda, Roxxy, Yasmin, Daniel and Brenda. Their participation makes a huge difference for our chapter. The planning meeting went well and we are excited for the BBQ in Ellensburg Lake. A follow up of this event will be in the next issue.

Our former chapter leader, Stevie Atkins, has left and we are on the lookout for another leader. As of now there are four youth applying. Applications are being filled out and the process has begun. Good luck to all of the participants! Being a leader is a big responsibility yet it is helpful to improve our social, planning, and many other skills. As a leader I have been introduced to many unique events and activities. Chapter leaders are given the opportunity to lead trainings, plan meetings, volunteer around the community, and many other things. In my experience as a Chapter Leader, I have met many legislators who inspire me to keep advocating to make foster care a better social service. Also, my public speaking skills have improved to the point where I can speak to a roomful of people without getting nervous. I would like to thank Catholic Family and Child Services for connecting new members to our Chapter. Sara Carlicchio, an Independent Living Trainer at CFCS, was our ally for the 2012 Annual Leadership Summit.

region 2 south (seattle) — by Samantha McDonald

The Seattle chapter has undergone many challenges in this last couple of months. We were sad to see our Resource Specialist Sam Rennebohm leave but his guidance has made us hopeful for the future. Thank you Sam! We are ready to take on the next challenge that comes our way!

region 3 north (tacoma) — by Tianna Oliver

This past month the Tacoma Chapter Cour’Ge has visited from the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation’s Youth Philanthropy Board, in which we discussed exactly what Mockingbird Society is and how we help youth in and out of care all across the state. We discovered that the youth on the board are much like the youth in Mockingbird, young leaders who want to make changes in their communities and give youth the tools they need to be successful in life.

Chapter Snapshots

region 1 north (spokane) — by Kristina Thomas

Later this month we’re excited about going to our local baseball team, the Spokane Indians to watch a game! We’ve also been participating in foster parent panels where two youth currently sit on a panel to give advice to people trying to become foster parents. We also have our annual BBQ with our local legislators this month. Finally, we also are going to take a road trip to Moses Lake to have a BBQ with Yakima chapter as well.

region 2 north (everett) — by Garrett Nadreau

This week at HEYMAC’s chapter meeting Kate facilitated the Educational Advocacy training. The youth engaged in different activities such as putting together a puzzle, explaining their academic goals, and working through scenarios where they had to advocate in an academic setting. It was a successful meeting with good feedback from our chapter.

region 2 south (olympia) — by Chris Bauer

The Olympia chapter is glad to have been invited to present the Culture of Foster Care Training to an audience of 150 state workers, DHS employees and other child welfare stakeholders at the Reasonable Efforts Symposium. We are excited to bring to life our side of the foster care experience and are looking forward to forging new relationships and recruit new allies as we educate, advocate and build a world class foster care system.

region 2 north (spokane) — by Paula Carvalho-Johnson

For the worst!

Prepared

So I find myself being scared and worried, anxious and a little afraid. I have been doing well, and my experience at a drop-in center has given them a place to belong. Youth who I have engaged report that an hour or two a week of being around other young people entering foster care, sharing their stories, and participating in discussion and training have made a significant difference. The youth feel better when they are connected with others. And they are learning new things about themselves and how to navigate the foster care system.

Chapter Welcome

We welcome submissions of 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, or have been, published in the Mockingbird Times, visit www.mockingbirdsociety.org, call us at (206) 407-2134 or email us at mbt@mockingbirdsociety.org.

Notes: Incoming letters to the editor and correspondence to youth under 18 years old should be addressed to the Mockingbird Times and will be opened first by adult editorial staff.

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Thank you

Suzanne Akerman; Steve Akerman; Anonymous; Dick and BJ Arnold; Rose Beng-Fosnaugh; Rhonda Berry; Robert and Cindy Blais; Gerald Burnett; Cindy Domingo; Lawrence Evans; David and Molly Ford; Roger Freeman; Elizabeth Gaskill; Sarah Hamilton; Lura Harrison; Jacqueline Ide; Gabriel Johnson; Natasha Jones; Leonard and Beth Kaiser; Kiwaps Club of Providence Point; Carol Lucas; Martin Powell; Georgina Ramirez; Marsha Reagan; Heather Spafford Robbins; Representative Mary Helen Roberts; Jessica Scott; Erin Shea McCann; Dave Shogren; Joe Clark; Lorin Timmons; Elizabeth Upton; Steven Wayne; Dustin Welch; Wells Fargo; Paul Wissing & Paula Marion; SafetyNet; Alane Alexander; Molly Patterson; Kim Sager; Genevieve Carington; Allison Land; Emily Dimonco; Marilyn Bona; Sara Rizyanadam; Thy Huehng; Reasonable Efforts Symposium; College Success Foundation; LUNTO Allyship; Easy Family Programs; Catholic Family and Child Services; Sara Carlicchio; Paula Carvalho-Johnson

Social Security Administration (SSA), Children can get Support under the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. According to the Social Security Administration, a child may be eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) if children have little or no income and resources. SSA also considers the family’s household income, resources and other personal information.1

Growing up in foster care with a disability myself I wondered what it took for my foster parents to care for me. I struggled with the thought and soon figured it out. They were doing it out of love and compassion with the assistance of the government and support from the community. Because my parents took the time to research and care to my needs to be successful, I am able to use the skills and ability to improve in my daily life today.


5. Applying for Disability: http://www.socialsecurity. gov/ssi/disability.htm

August 2012

Mockingbird Times

4

Art in Action Chevonna Parker

Have/Lost

Usually when people are on track and are doing well, They feel good and proud. Not me!

I feel worried, anxious and a little scared!

I feel like good things don’t happen to Me very long.

Anything is never mine

For long

So I find myself being scared and prepared

For the worst!

Drop-in, from page 1

youth to help them become successful young adults. The majority of drop-in centers provide clothing, basic first-aid and hygiene supplies, sleeping bags and blankets, bus coupons, snacks or a meal, showers, mental health and substance abuse counseling, employment opportunities, education opportunities, case managers, outing events such as field trips with the group, support groups, games and activities, and so much more.

Youth who have engaged have reported that an experience at a drop-in center has given them a new life. Youth who are experiencing times of crisis are getting their basic needs met while building strong positive relationships with staff and peers. I advise any youth or young adult in need to go out and make that connection with a service provider. They are out here willing to help, but you have to take the first step and reach out to spark a connection.

Resources, from page 1

care related needs that many disabilities present. By providing evidence from a doctor and participating in the disability interview, children may qualify to receive additional Medicaid support and/or the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). According to the Social Security Administration (SSA), Children can get Supplemental Security Income (SSI) if they meet their definition of disability for children and if they have little or no income and resources. SSA also considers the family’s household income, resources and other personal information.1

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