ILP Helps Young Face Challenge of Adulthood

"Destiny is not a matter of choice; it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved."

—William Jennings Bryan

"I'm not afraid of turning 18. I know what to expect. I'm not suddenly going into the situation blind."

—Christina Turlington

"I know that you're not ready to deal with the honesty. They're on the Down Low because nobody's talking to them. We..."
**Letter From the Editor**

The Mockingbird Society presents this issue of the *Mockingbird Times* with the same enthusiasm and hopefulness that we welcome this fresh spring season. Our youth reporters have been busy researching, interviewing and writing articles that reflect the range of interests you might find in any newspaper. Of special note in this issue is a letter from a reader expressing his views on an article written by Bridgett Siroshton in the February issue of the *Mockingbird Times*.

Interestingly, you will also find an accompanying letter from a professional who works with teens in Washington, D.C. All three letters reflect the discourse that is occurring on the national stage as well as in American homes and families across this nation. Also worthy of special note in this issue is an excellent article by new reporter Jennifer Eboh, who skillfully demonstrates her journalistic proficiency. Finally, I draw your attention to the cartoon below by Echo Speed, our newly hired cartoonist and reporter. The Mockingbird Society is proud to provide these and all of our youth reporters with a forum to present to you the evidence of their thoughtfulness and creativity. Happy Spring!

**Sincerely,**

J. Theofelis

Executive Director

Jim Theofelis

Meet Our Staff

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Thank-You’s

Seattle Post Intelligencer, Tara Fisher, Valerie Ramisch, Tom Hundley, Roberta Blayney, Virginia Blayney, Kathryn Brooks, Tom Rembiesa, Medina Foundation Visitors, Knowlton, Rocky Hill, Lisa Revelle, Graphica Solutions, University Baptist Church Youth Group, King County and City Council Members Bob Ferguson, Peter Steinbrueck, and members who took the time to respond to Courtney’s article on gay marriage.

The Mockingbird Times

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**MORE FEEDBACK AND BRIDGETT’S RESPONSE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

**Dear Mockingbird Times:**

I am a Christian male who buys a "Real Change" paper every week. I believe in the effort to help people help themselves and also help the poor, which I have been and still am to a large degree.

I am writing in response to an article entitled “Positive Power: Be Who You Are” which appeared in the February 2004 edition. As a Christian I believe in showing respect and love to all people, but I feel that I have to respond to this article that claimed gay people cannot change and it is an innate condition of their nature.

First of all there is no scientific proof of this statement. Secondly, many people who have lived a gay lifestyle for years have changed and live in long-term heterosexual relationships. I believe that it is an unhealthy and destructive lifestyle, and that people should be shown that they have alternatives, and I believe that God can and will help people who do want to change. I know that some people say that my views are either hateful or ignorant, but I am convinced that they are not, in fact the opposite, in any case they are my sincere views, I hope that you will print this.

Sincerely,

Aaron Martin

Seattle, WA

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**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

My article adressed how someone should not change who they are. However, if someone wants to change their sexual orientation because that’s not who they are then I highly recommend them making whatever decision makes them happy. Research suggests that homosexual orientation is in place very early in the life cycle, possibly even before birth. Laura Allen & Rodger Gorski offered a similar conclusion while studying brain tissue. A scientist named Simon Lavey discovered that sexual orientation is at least partly physiological. Even in the bible it says that God loves you for you!

According to The American Psychological Association, “Efforts to repair homosexuals are nothing more than social prejudice garbed in psychological accouterments.” My article was meant to be provocative, and that’s the kind of response I guess I received.

Sincerely,

Bridgett Siroshton
Positive Power: Are You a Registered Voter?

ARE YOU HAVING TROUBLE figuring out the voting process? You’re not the only one! Millions of people in America ignore their right to vote. With a little bit of information, the voting process isn’t too tough to figure out and is an extremely important aspect of being an American citizen because voting gives you, yes you, the right to have your say on what happens in your country and in your state.

Step 1: Register
Before you can vote you have to register. You can register online at Rockthevote.org or Getoutthevote.org. If you do not have access to the internet, you can pick up voter registration information at places like some grocery stores, community centers, some post offices, and libraries. You can sign up to vote if you are:

• A U.S. citizen
• A resident of the state you are signing up to vote in
• At least 18 years old by the next election
• Not serving time in prison or on parole for a felony

Step 2: Get Ready to Vote
Here in America, we vote on two types of things:

• People: Candidates who are running for elected office
• Plans: Ballot measures (propositions) that make or change state or local laws

You don’t have to vote on everything on the ballot, you can choose just the topics that interest you. After you sign up to vote, you will start receiving voter’s pamphlets in the mail that have information about candidates, measures, and initiatives that may be on the next voter’s ballots (you should always research who or what you’re voting on).

Step 3: Vote!
Once you sign up to vote, you will receive a voter’s card in the mail that tells you where your polling place is. This is a nearby location (usually a school or church) where you can go to vote on voting day. You can choose to vote either at your polling place or at home by mail. Any voter can choose to vote at home by mail. If you are going to be out of town or will have a problem getting to your polling place on election day between 8 am-8 pm*, then you should plan to vote by mail. This is called an absentee ballot. To get an absentee ballot just check the box on your voter registration card that asks if you would like to receive an absentee ballot.

*Opening time is set by the Election Commission, so it may vary from state to state

Did You Know?
Did you know that you do not have to have an address to vote? You can put down your local post office’s address or a place where you can safely receive mail. You also don’t need to be able to read or write English to vote. You can have someone get the form for you and help you fill it out, but REMEMBER that ONLY YOU can sign your form.

Now you know how to sign up and vote, so NO EXCUSES! Get out there and take advantage of your right to vote. It’s the best thing you could possibly do. Good luck!

Keep Kickin’ it Safe

ECHO SPEED

Unsupervised. Music is blaring, people are dancing, and most everyone has had a great deal to drink. Not to mention the group of young adults who are gathered in a small room somewhere, doing everything from passing around a Blunt (marijuana), to popping Ecstasy, to shooting up Heroin. More youth then you’d think are familiar with this party scene, but very unfamiliar with what to do when things start to get out of control.

Being a teenager or young adult comes with a lot of pressure and hard work. Any young person should be able to enjoy their youth, be curious, try new things, and make mistakes that are better learned now than much later in their lives.

Many high school and college students’ alike love to pull together for an excellent party where they can socialize and be themselves. There are plenty of perfectly safe situations where all these kids are doing is having a good time; hangin’ out, dancing and being generally safe with a total absence of illegal substances.

The problem is that there are many more of these parties where young people are drinking too much, and using illegal drugs. I’ve been to quite a few parties such as this in the past few years, and I know from personal experience how quickly things can go wrong. I have my own scars that mark how bad these situations can get, and I’ve seen with my own eyes how easily a person can lose their life.

So how can we solve the problem of a dangerously out-of-hand party? Well, the only way to do that is by not having one. However, in reality, we all know that as long we have young and curious minds looking for a good time, the idea of eliminating an unsafe teen party is really a very futile thought. But I do know that a big part of the problem these unsupervised parties have is that many young people (when it comes to the over consumption of drugs and alcohol) suffer from a massive lack of information. When no one is willing to call for help for fear of getting busted, and nobody knows the important steps they can take that might determine whether a life is saved or lost, bad situations easily turn worse. If more youth had the knowledge they would need to help their friends or even someone they don’t know (because besides maybe learning CPR, or the Heimlich Maneuver, we’ve generally only been taught to immediately call 911 in an emergency), things might not turn out as ruinous as they could.

First of all, a person needs be able to recognize the symptoms of someone who is overdosing. This isn’t always as easy to see as you might think.

According to www.urban75.com, here are a few signs of what you should be looking for:

Alcohol: A large dose of alcohol will cause overdose leading to loss of consciousness and possibly even death. Even if they don’t overdose, they could vomit while they are unconscious and choke - this is how Jimi Hendrix met his maker.

Cocaine: For those rich enough to overdose, expect them to be confused and dizzy with a dry throat. Their breathing will be erratic with short gulps followed by deep gulps.

Speed*: People can collapse after overdosing on speed.

Ecstasy: Look out for hyperventilation, overheating and unconsciousness.

Heroin: The telltale signs are slow or erratic breathing, tiny pupils, semi-consciousness with little or no response. Lips and skin can turn a deathly shade of blue with blood pressure falling. Coma and death can follow.

Poppers*: Can cause collapse if overdose. Poisonous if swallowed.

GHB*: Look out for convulsions, inability to breathe and even coma.

Ketamine*: Temporary and sometimes near-total paralysis, nausea, vomiting and heavy slurring of speech.

Magic Mushrooms: The risk here is from people eating the wrong mushroom resulting in poisoning. This can cause diarrhea, vomiting, cramps, breathing difficulties, black outs and, very rarely, death.

Rohypnol and other ‘date-rape’ drugs: Slurring, sleepiness, near paralysis.

I can’t stress enough the importance of seeking immediate medical attention (such as 911) as soon as you start to notice the signs of an overdose in someone. To learn more about detecting symptoms and taking action with overdose, visit www.healthcentral.com/mhc/top/000016.cfm and www.urban75.com/Drugs/drugfirst.html

*Speed: whizz, billy, sulphate, gradey, tavek, dicyc, blues, base, etc.
*Poppers: amyl nitrate, butyl nitrate, isobutyl nitrate, TNT, liquid gold, rush, etc.
*GHb: Liquid ecstasy, GBL, BDO, GHb, Blue Nitro, Midnight Blue, Energi, TrenT, Revent, SomatoPro, Serenity, Enliven
*Ketamin: Ketamine Hydrochloride Special K, K

For more information on first aid steps to take in an emergency, and more bonus articles, visit our website online at www.mockingbirdsoociety.org!
LOVE DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE

COURTNEY KONIEZKO

“To me it’s a matter of fairness, equal rights, and equal protection.” – Bob Ferguson, King County Council Member, WA State

According to www.metrokc.gov/health/glbt, “Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered (and questioning) people are a diverse group of people who have struggled with issues of sexuality and gender identity, and may therefore feel a sense of kinship. GLBT people are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, age, education, political affiliation, income, and the degree to which they identify with other GLBT people.”

Same sex marriage is a HUGE topic. A topic that is in hot debate right now across the United States because of marriage licenses being issued to same sex couples in San Francisco, Portland, and New York City. According to www.words.com, there are currently two countries, the Netherlands and Belgium, where same sex marriages can be legally performed. Same sex marriages are also performed in the Canadian provinces of Ontario and British Columbia. Same sex marriage is illegal in the majority of the States because of the Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage as a union between one man and one woman. In 1974, the issue of same sex marriage was brought before a Washington State court and the ruling was not in favor but the issue has not been taken before the Supreme Court...yet. According to Bob Ferguson, King County Council member (district two), the issue of legalizing same sex marriages will end up in the Supreme Court no matter what approach is used, it is just a matter of who – gay and lesbian couples or their opposers – brings it to the court first. According to Ferguson, Ron Sims is being very careful for this reason.

Here in Seattle, marriage licenses are issued at the county level. Ron Sims is the King County Executive and holds the power to issue licenses to same sex couples. To do so, Sims would be going against the 1998 Defense of Marriage Act and therefore against the law. Even though Sims is in support of same sex marriages, he has made it clear that in order for him to issue licenses he must not break the DOMA law.

In order for same sex marriage to become law there are various approaches to creating change. One is civil disobedience, like the mayors of San Francisco and Portland issuing it not legal. Another approach is to challenge the law in court by claiming that it goes against the constitution and suing for equal rights as six same sex couples in Seattle are doing. There is also the legislative approach where an advocacy group proposes a bill, gets a legislator to sponsor the bill, and encourages the legislature to turn the bill turned into law. Bob Ferguson spoke about these approaches stating: “There are lawsuits now being filed on behalf of groups trying to get a declaration that same sex marriage is unconstitutional. I think what will help that effort is an equivalent movement in the gay community and folks who support the gay community to write to their elected officials, to protest, to apply for marriage licenses and be revoked and to be visible in that way. It raises the issue to the general public. A movement like that can be very powerful and sway public opinion.” It seems like there isn’t any one way to go about making this change happen but a combined approach of many efforts.

These approaches are similar to how African American people fought for equal rights during the civil rights movement, because both groups faced discrimination. Some religious leaders and people are offended at this comparison because they see homosexuality as a choice and unnatural. Others who see this similarity believe that the law is unconstitutional and should not discriminate against a group of people because of their sexual orientation. Ferguson is in support of same sex marriage stating “To me it’s a matter of fairness, equal rights, and equal protection. The arguments that I hear against same sex marriage…our societies not ready for it yet…to me it reminds me of arguments made against allowing interracial marriages in the 1950’s.”

Love does not discriminate and two consenting adults who want to make a commitment to each other to be together for a lifetime should be able to regardless of whether they’re a male and a female, two females, or two males. There are things in this world that are really wrong and worth making a big fuss over, like how many people across the United States are homeless or live in sub-standard housing. The millions of people who are addicted to drugs and the lack of community supports and treatment to serve this population.

Same sex marriage is a politically hot volcano that is going to erupt soon and we will see things change! Civil unions which are allowed in some of the fifty states are not the same thing as marriage and it is time that we are truly equal — not separate.

WHERE ARE THE YOUTH CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

One of the main youth groups that run away are foster kids, suggesting that there is a very close relationship between homeless youth and foster care. In my opinion, many youth are being placed in homes that they are really not comfortable in or where the parents neglect the youth and they eventually run away and are left without services and guidance. They usually end up in some sort of group home as a result. I recently conducted a survey on youth shelters in Seattle and talked with one youth who stated that the foster parents he was living with made him and his brother sleep on the floor.

Johnny Ohta, a Drug and Alcohol Counselor for Spruce St. Secure Crisis Residential Center (SCRC)—a secure facility where police take runaways—says that youth get older in foster care and realize that they have no real relationship with the family they are placed with so they leave. Ohta also mentioned that half the youth at Spruce Street are foster kids. Ohta stated that the most common answer he gets when he asks youth why they run away is “my house is messed up.” Ohta also stated that he can tell the reason why a youth ran away just from talking to them for a short period of time.

In October 2003, the University Youth Shelters in Seattle changed their age range from 13-20 to 18-25 because young people under the age of 17 were not accessing the shelter. Sinan Demirel, a shelter director from the University District, stated, “I am concerned about what the guests under the age of 16 are doing now, but I am supporting the age change for UYS (University Youth Shelter). There were very few guests under the age of 18 utilizing UYS, sometimes not even one per week.” Ohta claims that one of the reasons youth stopped going to the University Youth Shelter is because youth come to the University District and see all the older youth and they realize that they don’t want to be part of that lifestyle, so they find another shelter like Teen Hope or Youth Care. Ohta does not believe the government is doing a good job handling runaways. Ohta stated that the government is putting a lot of money into the Becca Bill (A law that allows police to arrest runaway youth) but not enough money into services for youth who are not breaking the law. Ohta also stated that there should be more youth shelters.

In closing, I would like to say that I agree with Ohta. There should be more youth shelters for runaways and I would love to see a better way of handling runaway youth rather than throwing them in Juvenile Detention or a SCRC. That’s not going to stop kids from running away. The only way to stop people from doing something is to understand why they do it in the first place.

“It is important to understand that runaways are not ‘bad kids’. They are not running to somewhere but away from something.” (The National Runaway Switchboard)

Governor Locke Signs Bill Into Law!

WA State Governor Gary Locke signed the sealing of juvenile records bill into law on March 22nd. (House Bill 3078, Senate Bill 6609.) For more information, visit our website at www.mockingbirdseociety.org!

Are you a young writer or artist? We want your poems, news articles, and artwork and will pay you between $15-$25 for each piece we publish in the Times! Visit us online at www.mockingbirdseociety.org!