Fifth Annual Fundraiser a Success!

MALIKA TAYLOR & JAMICA HENDERSON

This year Mockingbird Society celebrated their 5th annual fundraiser at the Broadway Performance Hall on Thursday March 30, 2006. It was an exciting experience for all of us. At our fundraiser, we had a silent auction and ate delicious appetizers for the first 90 minutes. During the silent auction, we stood at the Youth LEAD (Leadership Education/Employment and Advocacy Development) booth and greeted people. This was our time to shine and talk about all the exciting activities we do here at Mockingbird Society as Youth Representatives. At first we were nervous and didn’t know what to expect, but once people began to come in we were focused. All the people we met were great! They were friendly, elegant and sophisticated. There were some people that didn’t know much about who we are, but were anxious to learn more.

We had so many wonderful items to auction off, people couldn’t believe it. It began in the foyer and ran all the way to the stage. There were things like wine, jewelry, trips, different cultural art work and more. All the items we had were donated from generous businesses and individuals in the community.

After the auction closed, we called everyone into the theater for the program portion. Once everyone was settled, we viewed the film called A Place to Sing that Mockingbird and Wild Goose Productions put together. The Representatives were then able to come on stage with Jim (Executive Director) to introduce ourselves and thank everyone for coming and especially those who have been there since the beginning. Our speaker for the night was Adam Cornell, a prosecutor and advocate for foster youth, spoke about his life in foster care and why it is important that we keep our organization going.

The outcome of the fundraiser was great. We raised almost 43,000 which is more than doubled what we made last year. We would like to thank everyone who came out to support us and especially those who made donations to our program. We had a really wonderful experience and are looking to see you all, and many more, again next year.

March 28, 2006 marked the end of a long intense saga. HB 2002 awaited Governor Christine Gregoire’s simple pen strokes, which would allow foster kids at the age of eighteen the choice to exit the foster care system or stay in their placements and receive benefits and support until the age of 21. If he or she decides to stay, they have to enroll in college or an educational program, after completing their High School diploma or GED We made the trip to the capitol to witness this monumental event that will change foster care as we know it in Washington state.

The Governor’s office was filled with photographers and reporters such as, Austin Jenkins from KPLU, Rachel Bell from KIRO News Radio and more. Last but not least the office was filled with a lot of emotions and mainly a feeling of excitement and relief. We all listened closely as Gov. Gregoire read the bill and made her comments on how important it was and why she was choosing to support it. Then the moment we had all been waiting for was in front of us. She pulled out her black pen (with her name on it) and proceeded to sign the bill that would change many lives. We then took pictures with the group and all received a pen as a memory of this occasion. It was definitely a very proud moment for all and especially for all the young people that attended.

Mockingbird Society and some others left the Governor’s office and went to celebrate a new chapter in foster care history in Representative Mary Lou Dickerson’s office with cake. On the way to her office, some of the Mockingbird Youth Representatives were stopped and interviewed by several people from the media. One of the questions that were asked was “How important was the bill being passed?” Jamica Henderson replied, “Because I aged out at the age of 18, I didn’t receive any health care or any personal support. I have younger brothers and sisters who are still in the system and I want them to have the opportunity of a good life.” Misty Cook’s response was, “This bill being passed is essential to foster care youth’s development. Without the bill more and more youth will end up on the streets and become homeless. Teary-eyed Cassandra Davis stated, “I just really know how far I’ve come and I know I didn’t do it by myself, it’s been with supporters and so I just know it is going to mean so much to them...it’s going to change lives”. We at Mockingbird Society couldn’t agree more and are looking forward to all the new opportunities that will open up for youth in foster care. Thank you again to everyone who supported this effort because without you this would never have been possible.

Governor Signs HB 2002

ANTHONY GUESS

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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.”

Thank you to the extraordinary people who were dedicated to making the event a success:

Siri Throm-Saxe, event coordinator; Mockingbird Society’s Board of Directors Alan Rothblatt, M.D., Joan Stewart, Leslie Richardson, Larry Crim, Davidson Dodd and Sheila Scates; Event Co-chairs John Friedman and Sylvia Black; Adam Cornell; Robert Shackelford of Wild Geese Productions; Degale Cooper and Lisa Cascadden; Mockingbird Times Youth Reporters Misty Cook, Jamie Henderson, Maleka Taylor and Cassandra Davis; and the Staff of Mockingbird Society.

We would like to thank our wonderful volunteers:


Thank you’s

Music by: Rob Carroll and Mike Padilla of the band WILDLIFE

Get Your Work Published!

We are looking for articles, poetry, art, photography from our young readers who have experience in foster care 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.

Mockingbird Staff Celebrating Good Times

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 $8.20 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. through a private distribution list as well as an insert in Real Change, a Seattle-based community newspaper. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values and of 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 ______________________ PHONE ______________________

ADDRESS ______________________ 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.

Thank you for your support, Mockingbird Times Staff
Aging out of foster care can be as traumatic as entering. Once again, you are faced with the unknown. Once again, you are separated from any kind of permanency you may have become accustomed to. Your way of life is suddenly and completely changed.

One of these changes comes in the form of healthcare, or lack thereof. The age of eligibility varies from state to state since Medicaid is funded by both federal and state money. Here in Washington, former foster youth lose their Medicaid benefits the month after their 19th birthday. They then have to reapply for aid and hope that they meet the qualifications set forth in order to continue to receive aid. If they are doing fairly well, such as having a job and no children, then it is unlikely they will have to share any trauma we had, even though these possible changes for the better will not affect us, or negate the experience we had, at least the next generation will be able to benefit from it and will not have to share any trauma that we had to go through. However, things are not getting better in this area for alumni of foster care….instead they are getting much worse.

A recently passed House Bill, HB 2002, for Washington State, will increase the medical coupon coverage of those aging out of foster until age 21. Unfortunately, this will only be the case for the 50 participants per year (over the next three years) who decide to stay in care and pursue higher education. For more information go to http://wecwl.law.wa.gov/legislation and enter in the Bill number, 2002.

It is not just the states that we have to blame for this deficit in healthcare. As stated earlier, Medicaid is funded by both the federal budget and the state budget. However, states are having trouble picking up their portion of the bill, causing cut-backs everywhere. Instead of stepping in to give our states, our people, a helping hand, the President’s Administration has proposed more cutbacks, totaling $12 billion over the next five years and $45 billion over the next 10 years.

Today, it has been estimated that 30 percent of all young adults (ages 19-29) in the U.S. are uninsured and about 33 percent of former foster youth, ages 18-44, are not insured after leaving care, as reported by the Northwest Alumni Study. Those numbers will only increase in the coming years if the Administration’s proposals are passed. The National Coalition on Health Care stated that the U.S. government spends almost $100 billion per year providing health services for the uninsured. In most cases, this is emergency care that would not have been necessary had the patient had proper preventative care in the first place.

So why the budget cuts? Why not change the policy, increase the provisions being provided countrywide to those in need, and increase the amount of preventative care available to our most vulnerable children? Insurance companies do it, why can’t our government? Insurance companies want you to get regular health, dental, and vision check-ups. Ultimately, insurance companies know that it will cost them less money to provide preventative care, than to actually pay for the high cost of emergency care.

Even if we, as former foster youth of America, are practically invisible to our own government (as Casey Family Programs’ Medicaid report so eloquently puts it), shouldn’t the numbers speak for themselves? We need health insurance while we are in school, unable to work full time and receive medical benefits. If we are unable to receive this much needed additional care to help us live healthier lives and give us better opportunities for success, we should at least be able to keep what we already have! Why is the government trying to make life even more difficult for us?
Congratulations of AAWA (African American Writers' Alliance), and myself. I was proud to be a panelist, and one of the topics discussed was African American disproportionality.

Some of the questions were difficult but I managed. At one point, I got choked up on my words because it triggered some emotions that I didn’t know I still carried, but when I got comfortable I opened up and was able to speak from my heart. Some people might think that foster care is a stage of figuring out who I am and who I want to be. It can be a bit hard, because if this is the healing process then the more I talk about my experience the more I find it difficult. If this is the healing process then the more I talk about my experience the more I find it difficult.

The more I have the opportunity to talk about my experience the more I find it difficult. If this is the healing process then I’m definitely in the middle of it. I’m in a stage of figuring out who I am and who I want to be. It can be a bit hard, because for so long my life was in someone else’s hands, but now it’s mine. I have a niece in foster care and I want to ensure that she gets the best care possible and that she doesn’t have to go through what I went through or face the issues I am now. I’ll do whatever it takes to make sure that foster children get what they deserve.

Love,

Bernice

Mockingbird Society and more, followed by an open mike for teens ages 12-20.

Mockingbird Society will be there among other community members from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. If you are between the ages of 14-21 this is for you!

For information call: 206-386-1375

Sponsored by: City of Seattle, Human Services Department, Seattle Youth Employment Program, Upward Bound, & Seattle Parks and Recreation

Celebrate Poetry Month

Hip-Hop, Spoken Word and Slams!

Poet Patrice Vecchione will lead a free workshop on writing and performing poetry, followed by a slam. Open to teenagers ages 12-18. Pizza and prizes provided.

Beacon Hill Branch • 2821 Beacon Ave. S. • 206-684-4711

Teen Spoken Word Night

5 p.m. - 8 p.m., Thursday, April 27

Performances from groups like Power of Hope, Hugo House, PSKS, Arts Corps, The Mockingbird Society and more, followed by an open mike for teenagers ages 12-20. Pizza provided.

Capitol Hill Branch • 425 Harvard Ave. E. • 206-684-4715