

# Mockingbird Times



Recipient of 2005 Congressional Angels in Adoption Award  
Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth.

April 2007

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation

Volume VII, Issue 4

Visit us online at [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org) or call 206-323-KIDS (5437)

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MISTY LOU COOK

We've been doing a lot of legislative, political and social justice work here at Mockingbird lately. First and foremost, we'd like to extend our support to House Bills (HB) 1472 and 1716. HB 1472 is a bill that seeks to address the overwhelming and unjust amount of children of color currently struggling in the child welfare system by "analyzing and remedying racial disproportionality and racial disparity in child welfare."<sup>1</sup> The bill was born out of the Racial Disproportionality Taskforce that The Mockingbird Society has proudly served on, worked with, and advocated for during its developmental stages, as well as due to the social and political need for this kind of accountability.

The main focus and concept for HB 1716, is to establish sustainable, lasting support for young people caught in the midst of state systems and institutions; particularly in regards to educational support for foster care youth. Treehouse is the main sponsor of this bill, and the primary goal is "supporting educational achievement for children in foster care."<sup>2</sup> Many of you readers out there already know



ANDREA ROLDAN

April is National Sexual Assault Awareness month. For that reason, I find it necessary to write a piece about methods of prevention and what steps to take if you do experience sexual assault. It is important to understand what sexual assault is in case you experience it and also what steps to take toward safety and security.

Sexual assault can occur in many different ways, but in all ways one thing remains the same: the victim does not want it to happen. Any touching of inappropriate areas; vaginal, oral or anal penetration; rape; unwanted sexual remarks; attempted rape; and molestation are all forms of sexual assault; including, incest, date rape and non-consensual voyeurism or exhibitionism. Understanding the difference between these things is important.

There are arguments regarding the definition of rape. Some consider rape to be any forced sexual action between either sex, assault only involving the penis and the vagina, or any forced sexual activity.<sup>1</sup> Molestation is considered the forcing of any undesired sexual act from one person to another; it is often used interchangeably with the term sexual abuse.<sup>2</sup> Voyeurism is when a person witnesses a private or sexual act. An exhibitionist is someone who exposes their private parts in public areas. Incest is having sexual relationships with family members; when children are involved, more than likely they were forced by an older adult in their family or household. Date rape most likely happens in social circumstances with close friends, associates or new friends.

In 2006, a study by the University of Illinois in Chicago found that drugs were present with 62% of sexual assaults.<sup>3</sup> When the victim has taken drugs or been drugged, the drug reduces the victims ability to distinguish a dangerous situation and they may experi-

## Mockingbird Society Legislative Update

the work and dedication of Treehouse towards foster care improvement, perhaps through word-of-mouth or with their involvement with previous bills that the Mockingbird Society has supported and with their immense foster care tutoring programs.

HB 1922 is a bill that would increase the housing options for youth exiting foster care by "creating an independent youth housing program."<sup>3</sup> Essentially, this bill would create excellent opportunities that allow youth to access housing vouchers through a local non-profit that also provides case management and other important forms of system support for the youth as they leave care. The House budget has one million dollars for this initiative and we need to encourage the Washington State Senate to move this along, so your letters, calls and e-mails to your senators is crucial at this time. According to **Jim Theofelis**, founder of The Mockingbird Society, "The most significant action item at this point is to contact members of the Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee and encourage them to pass ... HB 1922." The letter or voicemail could or should go something like, "Dear Senator 'X', I want to thank you for your interest in foster youth, and specifically want to ask you to pass HB 1922, the Foster Youth Independent Housing

Program out of committee and into a sustainable and competent law/service/program)." Reasons to pass this bill into law include, but aren't limited to, providing "critical support to youth aging out of foster care" and ensuring that they "have options for safe housing." Use your own words, be creative, and remember that personal experiences always have a deep impact on legislators, because it takes cold, logical statistics and puts human life and a face, a voice on the obvious.

HB 1201, Mockingbird Society's own legislative bill, is focused on automatically extending health care (Medicaid) for youth exiting foster care. The bill passed the House of Representatives 95-1 and would extend Medicaid health care coverage to youth exiting foster care until age 21 as soon as they turned 18. This would decrease emergency room visits, prolonged sicknesses and diseases and prevent a myriad of youth from ever feeling the emotions of despair, isolation and hopelessness that arise from being sick without health insurance or a way to pay the high costs of medical bills. This would be for all youth exiting at age 18 and includes mental health and prescription coverage.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Sexual Assault Awareness

ence some form of sexual assault.<sup>4</sup> Date rape is the most common form of rape: 78% of girls are expected to experience date rape by the age of 25.<sup>5</sup>

Sexual assault is likely to happen in a situation when drugs and alcohol are present, but a person can be assaulted in many other instances: in an isolated area, on a planned date, and, sadly, in places where people are supposed to be safe, such as schools and community centers. In all cases and places, it is not the victims fault. Sometimes the attacker might intentionally make them believe it is by using psychological, misleading phrases such as, "you wanted it." A victim should never believe that they wanted it when they didn't. Even if the victim was engaging in sexual acts, when they decide they no longer want to, "No" means "No." Speaking your mind as soon as possible is a good way to make it clear to a person that you don't want to engage in sex with them. That is always a better option than just thinking it and keeping silent.

If you find yourself in any situation that sounds similar to these, try to get out of it safely. If you cannot and you are sexually assaulted, you need to know how to get help for yourself and information that is important for your health. The first thing to do is get away to a safe place and call the police, go to a hospital or go into a police station and tell them what happened. Ultimately, you will need to go to a hospital for them to check your health and gather evidence for a criminal report. If you decide you want to press charges, having an accurate report will be very beneficial to you. To obtain the best evidence it is best not to wash up, comb your hair, change your clothes, or change your physical condition, no matter how much you want to. It may make you feel uncomfortable but evidence is one of the most important things the doctors and police will need.

Soon after the assault, getting a sexual health screening is also important; depending on the situation you may want to check for pregnancy, diseases and other issues that the experience may have caused. Even though sexual assault is a difficult thing to deal with emotionally, mentally and physically, a victim should always report the situation to prevent the attacker from doing it again and also for personal closure; the sooner the better. There are a number of national organizations that specialize in aiding and preventing these situations. Resources include the National Sexual Violence Resource hotline at (877) 739-3895<sup>6</sup> and the National Sexual Assault Hotline at (800) 656-HOPE (4673).<sup>7</sup>

Ideally, we all want to strive to gain the knowledge we need to prevent ourselves from being sexually assaulted and have the ability to offer good advice for our loved ones if they experience it. One thing you can do to prevent sexual assault is, prior to hanging out with new friends or people you are not very familiar with, call someone and let them know where you are and have them call and check up on you in intervals such as every hour or half-hour. When you are out with a group of friends, one person or alone, pay attention to your surroundings. Especially in an area you are not familiar with, pay attention to street signs, land marks and even people around you. Be assertive by communicating with people; protect your personal space and let people know when you feel uncomfortable. Exerting confidence is one of the best methods to prevention because you will seem harder to take advantage of. Trusting your instinct is another good way to stay out of unsafe situations instead of reflecting with, "I knew I should've done that."

SEXUAL ASSAULT, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



JIM THEOFELIS

## Letter From the Editor

This issue of the Mockingbird Times is full of the realities that children and youth in foster care deal with every day. Topics such as child abuse, rape, parental neglect and abandonment converge on this issue like an echo in a dark, scary cave. Imagine being a child in a dark, scary, cave without the benefit of a loving, protective parent. For most of us the true image of child abuse is one that we cannot allow ourselves to experience. Consider for a moment the ten-year-old child that has been removed from mommy and daddy long ago and is now a veteran of changing homes and schools like most kids change notebooks. The articles in this issue of the Mockingbird Times relate the echoes of trauma and abuse on children's lives and the emotional pain and unending questions that endure. I want to thank our youth staff for presenting to this issue of the Mockingbird Times with its pain, truthfulness and hopefully healing and hope. Part of that hope lies in the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) which has just received its evaluation for 2006. Many of you are aware of the MFM

and its early promise in demonstrating the ability to stabilize children in care and reduce multiple placements, siblings able to have regular contact and even live together, quality care available for both crisis and planned respite. The evaluation conducted by the University of Washington's Northwest Institute for Children and Families is very positive and promising and is on our website for your review ([www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org)). Additionally, we are in different stages of the planning process to replicate the Mockingbird Family Model in potentially three other regions across Washington. The Mockingbird Society is also very interested in utilizing the MFM to prevent children and adolescents from entering the foster care system in the first place. If we listen to their voices and experiences, the children and youth are telling us straight up: Parents and adults-get your act together, because when you don't children get hurt and pay the price. It's the only way to change the echo of pain and trauma into an echo of hope and laughter.

Jim Theofelis

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

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

We have a companion bill in the Senate, SB 5305, which has passed thorough the Policy and Fiscal committees and is ready to leave Rules for a full vote of the Senate. Support still remains critical, so sending emails, phone calls and lending the use of your and your organizations' names would be a great way to improve the chances of the passing of this essential piece of legislation. Take action. Jim also wanted to send a "special Thank you" to **Representative Mary Helen Roberts** who has been a very steady champion for HB 1201 and a number of others bills as well. Also, **Senator Rosa Franklin** has been so amazing in the Senate and she is so well-respected and admired that I had great confidence from the moment she agreed to sponsor the Senate version. I also want to thank **Representative Ruth Kagi** for her great work and for taking on so much leadership for child welfare reform in this state."

Jim Theofelis wanted me to emphasize that "these bills represent meaningful system improvement by genuinely providing more and better services for youth." He also said, "I am confident and hopeful that

the governor recognizes the need to ensure health care coverage for *all* of Washington State's children, and that these legislative bills are essential to the youth ... who are dependent on the State of Washington for their support in these matters." These words echo the sounds of the Children's Alliance bill, Senate Bill (SB) 5093, which just passed on March 6th, effectively extending health care coverage to all of Washington state's youth. For more information about these and other bills that aren't mentioned in this article, please visit [www.leg.wa.gov/legislature](http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature). Remember to get involved and advocate for the changes you want to see become reality for Washington State's most marginalized and vulnerable young people.

In the words of Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

- 1 [apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1472](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1472)
- 2 [apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1716](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1716) &year=2007
- 3 [apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1922](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1922) &year=2007

## Become a Member of The Mockingbird Society

We welcome you to join us in making a difference in the lives of our nation's most vulnerable children, youth, and families. As a supporter, you'll receive a monthly edition of *The Mockingbird Times*. Thank you for your contribution.

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



## Meet the Staff: Vanessa Hutt

My name is Vanessa Rochelle Hutt and I am 21 years old. I was born January 9th, 1986, at 11:38 pm in Port Angeles, WA at the Olympic Memorial Hospital. I graduated from Port Angeles High School in 2004. I lived in Port Angeles until I was 19 years old. In my spare time, I love to listen to music, read, draw, and hang out with my friends.

I have been homeless since I was 18 years old. Most of my homelessness was caused by my own faults and drug abuse. Only two months after I moved out into my own place with a co-worker, I relapsed after having 22 months clean and sober. I lost my job and moved to Idaho and Moses Lake, but I ended up coming back to Port Angeles. I stayed clean maybe a month at a time but not much longer than that. After that, I was left in Seattle, WA at the downtown Greyhound station. My ex-boyfriend and I have been here ever since, making ourselves a life in this huge city. I steadily fought to survive by dealing drugs and trying to fight in a city that would've eaten me alive if I would have let it.

I currently stay at a Youth Care housing program called Passages. It is an amazing program that helps 18-22 year olds get the skills they need to move out into the real world and be successful members of society. I have been very blessed to be involved in this program. It was introduced to me through the Barista Training and Education Program. I graduated that program which gives eight weeks of intensive training to become skilled baristas. It's awesome. It gave me a passion I didn't know that I had. I have currently been sober almost 5 months. It has been easier than I thought it would be. Maybe that means that I don't have to have any chemicals in my body to make me amazing and talented like I am

now. I wouldn't change the way I feel now for the world. The Passages and Youth Care staff have supported me through all of this. I am so thankful for them and my family. I don't know where I would be without them.

When I was on the street I saw many, many people who needed help that they are not getting. It seems very wrong and discouraging to see people with such severe addictions and mental health issues out on the streets at all hours of the night and through all weather. It should be controlled better or the city should at least get a better grasp on how big of an issue this is. There are people who need serious help and it seems like nothing is getting done. I mean, those are people's children, brothers & sisters, moms & dads, and grandparents out there like that; looking so helpless. I just can't really grasp onto any reason people needing help like that should still be on the streets.

I wish I could change the way the homeless are taken care of and how the housing is done as well. People have been waiting for years to get appropriate housing. I haven't even applied for any because I feel it will take far too long to do any good for me. So, I want someone else to have it. Maybe someday, instead of building dozens of ridiculously priced condos and townhouses, the contractors and people who fund the buildings will see the importance of helping cut down the homelessness in Seattle.

The reason I want to work for Mockingbird Society is because I feel like I have a strong voice that should be heard. I like to fight for the things I believe in and also like to write and fight for rights. I feel like Mockingbird does a great job of showcasing skills that young writers have and helps each person on the staff here grow into an amazing person. I feel as though I have a lot to offer Mockingbird and the staff. I am happy to be a part of this team.

### Thank You!

Sam and Barbara Throm; Steven Gelb; Nesholm Family Foundation; Lynnea Manahan; Loise McIlraith; Trudy Sundberg; Karen Cowgill; Mary Bristow and Dr. Ron Cunningham; Silvana Bruxel and Kelly Montiero

**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 \$7.63 and \$8.50 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 50,000 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 ©2007, The Mockingbird Society.

## MEET OUR STAFF

**Executive Director**  
Jim Theofelis

**Operations Manager**  
Ros Ghan

**Public Relations/Fund Development**  
Darcie Gray

**Executive Assistant**  
Lauren Frederick

**Programs Manager**  
Dr. Wanda Hackett

**Youth LEAD Coordinator**  
Najja Morris

**Administrative Assistant**  
Juan Ramirez

**Youth Lead Alumna**  
Jamica Henderson

**Senior Youth Representative**  
Misty Lou Cook

**Youth Representatives**  
Zahra Abasheikh, Jessica Garcia, Raquel Granath, Anthony Guess, Vanessa Hutt, Samuel Martin, Andrea Roldan, Mellissa Stringer

**Contributing Writers**  
Renee Davis

**Volunteers**  
Chrissie Jackson

**Layout**  
Kelly Hawkins



## Child Abuse Prevention Month

**SAMUEL MARTIN**

I have experienced several forms of abuse throughout my life. I can start by saying that none of them were in any way, shape, or form pleasant. At a young age, my relative caregiver was physically and verbally abusive. This is because she was an alcoholic. This is one of the many causes of child abuse. I went through 11 years of physical beatings with things like vacuum cleaners, belts, and many other weapons. Unfortunately, child abuse is not too uncommon in households.

Nationally, CPS receives 50,000 reports of suspected child abuse each week.<sup>1</sup> In 2002, 2.6 million reports concerning the welfare of about 4.5

million children were made.<sup>2</sup> Two-thirds of these cases had enough evidence to be investigated.<sup>3</sup> Out of those investigated, 860,000 children were being abused.<sup>4</sup> Remember, abuse doesn't have to be just physical; there is emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect.

These are some big numbers; let's not forget that these are only the ones reported. I can speak from experience that some people do not report that their parent/guardian abuses them. It is one of the scariest things to tell when someone is abusing you. You never know how that person will react, or if you have to be sent back into a home with that person. When I was younger, I would call the police on my grandmother and she would act as if she was a "saint" and the cops would not believe what she was doing. So I had to continually stay where I was. As soon as the cops would leave I would get beat. No power. I had absolutely no power, the proverbial rock and hard place.

Some of the causes of child abuse are drugs and alcohol; this means any type of drug that affects your decision making abilities. Another is stress, such as when people are taking care of kids with disabilities, special needs, or difficult behaviors. People with anger-management issues are another cause.<sup>5</sup> One startling statistic is that 40% of people who are abused as a child go on to be abusers themselves.<sup>6</sup> A few beliefs that lead to child abuse are: "children are property" and "children need to be toughened up to face the hardships of life."<sup>7</sup>

At the time, most parents/guardians don't realize the lifelong affects child abuse has on children. Speaking from experience, I, to this day, suffer from low self-esteem. I was told that I am going to be worth nothing and I will be a failure. I also go in and out of depression and have relationship

difficulties. I think one thing that affected me the most was eating. When I was being abused I ate. There are many other consequences; almost all children who are abused show signs of their abuse. It's not the child's fault either. Unfortunately, millions of other children had or have had to go through this.

There are some people who are trying to help out the abused children: professionals like teachers, social workers, daycare providers, foster parents, and law enforcement. There are also non-professionals who help: for example, friends, neighbors, and relatives.<sup>8</sup> The most important thing to do is

to keep your eyes open. Some clues to watch for in the physical area are bruises, welts, cigarette burns, broken bones, and dental injuries.

~Herbert Ward

Some behavioral signs of these are inconsistent explanations for the injuries, parents not seeking medical assistance instantly, and children making up excuses for the injuries. Some signs of sexual abuse are venereal disease, trouble sitting down, and pain, itching or bruising in the genital area. Other signs are children who are constantly talking, attempting or hinting toward sexual behaviors.<sup>9</sup> A few signs of emotional abuse are the fact that the child may show signs of depression. Negatively speaking of themselves, and low-self-esteem, can be common characteristics. They may doubt themselves and act out in school or other areas of their life.<sup>10</sup>

Like I said before, I was physically and verbally abused as a child. My suggestion for people who have been and are being abused is to do that one thing that I was very afraid to do myself: speak up! Let your voice be heard. I know it can be the scariest thing to tell someone but you are risking yours and possibly others' lives. You can be assured that you will not be immediately placed back with the person who is abusing you. Think about you and your safety in situations like this. I probably wouldn't be where I am today if I didn't say anything. Keep your safety in mind. Be strong.

Some places to get help are the National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4-A-CHILD and the National Youth Crisis Hotline at 1-800-448-4663.<sup>11</sup> But the most efficient way to seek and get help is to call or go to the closest Child Protective Services.

<sup>1-4</sup> [pediatrics.about.com/od/childabuse/a/05\\_abuse\\_stats.htm](http://pediatrics.about.com/od/childabuse/a/05_abuse_stats.htm)

<sup>5, 8, 11</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child\\_abuse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_abuse)

<sup>6</sup> [www.answers.com/topic/child-abuse](http://www.answers.com/topic/child-abuse)

<sup>7</sup> [www.helpguide.org/mental/child\\_abuse\\_physical\\_emotional\\_sexual\\_neglect.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/child_abuse_physical_emotional_sexual_neglect.htm)

<sup>9, 10</sup> [www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/signs.cfm](http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/signs.cfm)



**ANTHONY GUESS**

On April 4, 2004, I was given the opportunity to express my history in the foster care system and being homeless on the streets. By doing so, I've helped change laws to improve the present and future of youths who will have to rely on the state, rather than their birth parents to raise them. When I started working for The Mockingbird Society, I soon realized that I didn't have to look at my past as if it was my fault but allow it to teach the unknown and comfort those that will soon be following in my footsteps.

I truly believe that youth that grow up in the Foster Care System need to under-

stand that just because you're in a situation that frightens you or makes you feel uncomfortable, it is not your fault. How you choose to handle and accept what's going on in your life will determine how successful you can be. Growing up people often asked me how is it that I'm so active in school or how it seems as if I'm the happiest child alive. I simply told them that I never thought of my placements as homes but as learning facilities. I never lived in the moment and I never blamed my parents nor the state for what was going on in my life. I always thought that

**Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome.**

~Booker T. Washington

this part of my life can't last forever, even though I had the feeling that total happiness is physically and emotionally impossible. I knew that I was not experiencing what I thought to be life crises for no reason, so I stayed focused and tried to participate in everything to educate myself.



**JAMICA HENDERSON**

On Wednesday, March 28, 2007, Mockingbird Society's Youth LEAD program had a wonderful opportunity to take a tour of Microsoft. We were sponsored by Kelly Montiero and Silvana Bruxel. This trip was very interesting and fun. I learned a lot about technology and how it affects our lives more today than it ever did and how much more it will be in the near future. It's crazy to think that not too long ago cell phones were expensive and not everyone could afford them. Now-a-days,



Mockingbird Society staff with hosts Kelly and Silvana at the Microsoft Visitor Center.

it seems that everyone can somehow afford a cell phone. The question is: in a few years, what will not only cell phones be like but other technology as well? Well, Microsoft showed us that there's going to be a day when technology gets much more advanced. I'm wondering, if when it does; is everyone going to be able to afford it?

Our first stop on the tour was the IHome. This was my favorite part. The IHome was so beautiful and high tech that I wanted that to be my home now. This IHome is a home that you control with the help of technology. The best part about the IHome was how you can enter any room in the house and see a different theme with the help of your technology. What I learned about the IHome is it involves a lot of technology to keep it going and what you don't set it won't do. I also learned that technology plays a big role now in our world and is only getting greater as the years pass. After

## SEXUAL ASSAULT, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Get in the habit of keeping your car and home windows and doors locked. Try to avoid isolated areas as much as possible.

Overall, it is important to know and understand the facts of sexual assault, just as it is to know when you are being sexually assaulted. Keeping Web addresses and hotline numbers will be useful for an unexpected situation and also if you want to inform yourself by independently studying the topic. Learn of local organizations and clinics in your community that can be helpful before you get into a bad situation

our tour of the lovely future, our next stop was dinner. We had a choice of whatever we wanted in the Microsoft cafeteria and the food was delicious.

After dinner, we went to the visitor center and store. Once we entered the visitor



Microsoft staff Lauren (left) and Najja (right) with hostess Silvana get handwriting analysis at the Microsoft Visitor Center.

center everyone went their own ways. We had the choice of making a movie, playing games, getting our handwriting analyzed or learning about Microsoft history. Once we finally finished playing, we went to the gift shop and were each given a gift card. All of us got to buy something in remembrance of our trip to Microsoft.

In all, it was an amazing trip! If I ever get the chance to visit Microsoft again, I would want to see and learn about how



Youth Representative Andrea plays an interactive game at the Microsoft Visitor Center.

technology will change our lives in the future. I can't help but wonder how much control we will have over new technology. As technology expands, is it going to be expensive or is it going to be affordable for all working class people to enjoy and benefit from?

or if a friend needs the information. Keep yourself safe, look out for others and be courageous when dealing with these situations.

<sup>1</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rape](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rape)

<sup>2</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molestation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molestation)

<sup>3</sup> [www.womenshealth.gov/news/english/532890.htm](http://www.womenshealth.gov/news/english/532890.htm)

<sup>4</sup> [hugesettlements.com/personal-injury/3080.html](http://hugesettlements.com/personal-injury/3080.html)

<sup>5</sup> [teenadvice.about.com/od/factsheetsforteens/a/10thingsdraped.htm](http://teenadvice.about.com/od/factsheetsforteens/a/10thingsdraped.htm)

<sup>6</sup> [www.nsvrc.org/resources/orgs/index.html](http://www.nsvrc.org/resources/orgs/index.html)

<sup>7</sup> [www.rainn.org/programs/national-sexual-assault-hotline.html](http://www.rainn.org/programs/national-sexual-assault-hotline.html)

us as young adults to understand that we have control over our future. Although I knew that I loved writing and making a difference in the world, I felt like I needed a change. So, in April of 2006, I left. I didn't find a job that suited my interests at all. An old teacher once told me that if you're not a part of the solution then you're a part of the problem. After a year or so, I realized that Mockingbird Society was more than a paycheck to me; it was an organization that takes great pride in youth. Furthermore, Mockingbird offers an effective way to express issues that are easily forgotten in the world today. Growing up in the foster care system led me to want change in how children are raised in the system. So here I am, as a Mockingbird returning back to the nest.

## Rocks

BY RENEE DAVIS

Rocks come in many shapes  
And sizes  
Some are smooth  
Some are bumpy  
Some are shiny or dull  
The rock I have is special  
It has many colors on it  
It is smooth  
And it is chipped  
It is a broken rock  
It came from something  
This rock is a mystery  
You could be guessing  
Where it came from  
But you wouldn't find out

### Get Published ~ Get Paid!

We are looking for 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 published in the Times, contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at [newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org](mailto:newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org). For more info and to check us out, go to [www.mockingbirdsociety.org](http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org).

## Creative Corner

### Torn

BY RENEE DAVIS

Torn up inside  
Torn up outside  
No one to love me  
I scream  
But no one hears  
When I cut  
No one sees  
It makes me feel good  
With the blood running down my wrist  
It hurts too  
But I don't notice anymore  
My life is so messed up right now  
I wear fake smiles  
So no one would know  
I'm drowning in a puddle of my own blood  
I feel invisible  
There is one way I can express myself  
And that is with paper and pen  
I want to tell someone  
But I don't know how  
I wish I would've never done this  
But I can't stop.



## Lovers or Friends

BY SAMUEL MARTIN

Tick, Tock time is slowly going by.  
Waiting, willing, wanting, and more.  
My heart is cold like the freezing poles.  
Waiting for the phone to ring  
So my ears can sing with the holy voice of angels.  
Everyday I can't help but daydream about you  
I sit here thinking will we ever be.  
I can never really hurt break my heart because  
I never had one a full one to begin wit to begin with  
Patience running thin all you want to be is friends  
Why can u be mine?  
Never give me the time  
You may not know but my small heart glows  
With the passion for your love.

### 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.

*Every day is a new beginning. Treat it that way. Stay away from what might have been, and look at what can be.*

~ Marsha Petrie Sue

### A Letter to My Mother by Anonymous

Dear Mom,

I know you won't ever get this, but somewhere deep down inside I am convinced you will. Ever since I can remember, all I have ever wanted was a mom, but I guess I was asking for too much. I am sorry you didn't get to watch me grow up but that was your choice. I just wish you wouldn't have chose drugs over me and you wouldn't have let me get raped.

All my life I have had to walk around trying to make my life work, worrying that somehow I am going to turn out like you. Always worrying I won't be loved. All because you didn't care about me. I was so afraid of turning out like you that I never got to enjoy life like I should have. Always being bounced around from home to home never knowing where home will be. Never having the time to love somebody, anybody at all. I used to blame you for not caring but then I couldn't anymore because it was hurting too much. All I have ever wanted was just for you too hug me and tell me everything will be okay. That I will love again and that one day some guy will just look at me and I will take his breath away.

I really needed you to be around while I was growing up, but you didn't want me. Honestly, if you didn't want me then you just shouldn't have had me. I just hate knowing that you're not around to help me. You know what hurts the most about all of this? Knowing that I was put up for adoption and nobody wanted me. That my own dad didn't want me. That I was just a mistake: a one-night-stand. Something that was never meant to happen in the first place. I just want to know one thing: If you really truly didn't want me then why didn't you just kill me when you had the chance? Your life would have been so much easier.

Whenever I look in the mirror, I see somebody that has been hurt and alone, all because I thought I wasn't worthy

enough to be loved. That I didn't deserve it. I thought that every time somebody broke up with me it was because I was ugly (which I still think and I still believe). Damnit mom! Take a look around you and tell me what you see. You see yourself all alone with no kids all because you chose that asshole over me and my sister and it didn't even matter much to you, did it?

Well mom, you once told me I am just a mistake. That I have no place on this earth; that every, single person that I come into contact with will always run away. Well, in some weird way, you were right about that. People have run away and I have had my heart broken, but nobody has given up on me. Not like you did. Never that much pain. You once told me that "no guy will ever see your true beauty. They will always see fat, old, ugly, you." I believed you; I really did. I believed everything that you told me. You were my hero, but what you told me was wrong. Sometimes the most unexpected people enter our lives and can change it in a flash. Well somebody did and it wasn't you.

Mom, I will always love you no matter what, but honestly, I don't think I can forgive you; not this time. You break my heart every time you promise something. Just tell me something: was it worth it? The drugs, the pain, no kids, prostitution. Was it all worth it? Because you lost everything, including me. I guess some people make choices and you chose yours and stuck with it.

In the long run, your choice was the best choice ever. I am who I am because you gave me up. I wouldn't have graduated from high school. I wouldn't be making a difference in my life and in others. So really, all in all, it may have torn me up a lot of my childhood and part of my adulthood, but in actuality it made me a better person. I am me, not you, and that's all I can ask for.

Your daughter



ZAHRA ABASHEIKH

### New YMCA Teen Center

If you haven't heard, there is a new center that opened in the 2100 building, 24th Ave South, Suite 250, Seattle, WA 98144. This program was made for young teens that are in foster care or transitional housing and have a case manager. This program was built so you can not only get help with independent living skills and housing information but also just to hang out and chill. This program officially opened on March 28, 2007. It helps youth from ages 17 to 25. One of the activities that this program offers that teens enjoy going to is the new housing class that meets every Tuesday and Thursday. The most important reason for this program is to help young teens get prepared for adulthood.

"It's ok; it's not the typical teen drop in place. When I first saw it I thought it couldn't be true. It looked too cozy." That was one of the responses I got back from a youth that recently visited there. Another youth said, "It's comfortable and nice. It sort of feels like home." Most of the

youth go to this program to get some assistance on housing information or how to be successful at work and they attend this program for the fun workshops. To make the new center fun there is a TV room, a kitchen, computers, comfortable chairs, a foosball table, and books. If you, for some reason, wanted to just walk in to check it out, you would get a free tour and you don't even need an appointment.

Don't you hate it when you go to the bank and you want to write a check or make a deposit and you don't know how to? Well, that's one of the reasons the new center is here. Or what about when you're trying to get a job but every job you look into either does not have the position you want available due to school or because it's too far? Well, there you go: another reason why the center was built, just so you can get the help you want when you need it. Lets say you can't cook and you're tired of eating out every night; well, there's a workshop that not only teaches you how to cook but also how to measure and read labels so you know you put the right amount in there. I encourage everyone to visit the center. It's well worth the trip.

### Eliminating the Pipeline: From School to Prison

A conference hosted by

The Black Child Development Institute and the Praxis Institute

Saturday, May 19th: 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

African American Academy

8311 Beacon Avenue S., Seattle 98118

Workshops cover Education, Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare issues.

Keynote speakers:

- Larry Gossett, Metropolitan King County Council member
- Dr. Joy Degruy-Leary, author of *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*

For more information and to register contact:  
Kimberly Early (206) 328-9335 or Bea Butler (206) 772-3773