NewHolly Neighborhood Campus

On March 2nd, 2010, a few of the Mockingbird Network representatives, including myself, visited NewHolly Community Center. Our mission was to find resources available to youth immigrants and refugees and discover the characteristics of youth that can use these resources. When I first heard we were going to that area, I must admit I thought it was going to be, no offense meant at all, a ghetto. The NewHolly area has had a reputation of being a place where youth who do not attend school could go and hang out at neighborhood parks or just simply stand on street corners. But even said the area has a street gang reputation. However, in all actuality, once arriving there it looked more like a good neighborhood community instead of the ghetto I remember it as.

One of the groups on the campus is East African Community Services (EACS), a community-based organization located in the family services buildings. The purpose of EACS is “to provide youth and adult refugees the proper resources and support to have and maintain a successful life.” They serve up to 1000 different people from East Africa who are located in the NewHolly community and other areas of King County. The East African Community Services objective is to bridge the gap between successful refugee youth and refugee youth that aren’t doing so well. They accomplish this objective through three programs: individual case management, family and children support, and community education. At the center, refugees are able to receive individual face to face case management with a person who can help them with employment and housing. With help from the Seattle Housing Authority, refugees in the NewHolly community are able to have affordable and safe housing. Case managers make sure that their clients have the resources to meet their needs. As far as community education, East African Community Services works with Cleveland High School refugee students to help provide tutoring for younger students who might have to take E.S.L. (English as a second language) classes. This gives youth refugees the opportunity to learn from students who have something in common with. Being new to a country and trying to understand a different curriculum for education can be quite difficult for youth when they feel they aren’t able to get a foothold: “About eighty percent of the time, the response we would get is a referral to somebody else at some other agency. Which just lead us on a wild goose chase, and made it almost impossible for us to really get any kind of footing, or any kind of ability to develop our own identity. The frustration is that every organization that we’ve talked to has the ability to create some sort of relationship with us… where we work with them in some way just as far as advertising or maybe just collaboratively, or even better where we could internally set up a program with them because most agencies like to do activities, and we’re like an instant activity. We bring the coach, we bring the balls, we bring the shoes, we bring everything.”

Community Partners

There was a small trophy sitting on the mantelpiece in Passages, one of the many transitional programs in the University District in Seattle. It is more or less unremarkable. It’s small, and it’s got a scratch on it. Curtis Knopf, the program manager, picked it up at Goodwill for ninety-nine cents. It is important because it is a sign of changing times at YouthCare, and an example of what can be achieved when service providers partner on both large and small scale.

The other reason the trophy is important is, well, because it’s a trophy. Which means that there’s an opportunity for somebody to win it. The somebody, in this case, are participants in YouthCare’s Passages and Casa De Los Amigos. The trophy may have been paid for with YouthCare money, but the soccer games that determine the owner of it are provided by Street Soccer Seattle (SSS), a new program whose purpose is to bring homeless youth together through soccer. I spoke with David Nibley, one of the principals of SSS, about his program, and what it’s like to coordinate with big agencies when you’re both new and very small.

David says that established agencies typically have “little time to deal with a new agency, to pass the word along and develop that relationship.” Oftentimes David’s SSS program are doing it alone. EACS is important because the organization follows through with its mission statement and actually helps provide a success plan for refugee families.

Also located on the NewHolly campus is the Youth Tutoring Program, a “late afternoon and evening program for elementary, middle and high school students who receive help with homework, building language arts and math skills, as well as working with career staff and volunteer tutors.” Although the program is not precisely for East African immigrants, 80-90% of the youth participants are East African. Staffed tutors develop partnerships with the teachers of the youth to ensure an increase in educational accomplishment. The Youth Tutoring program is undoubtedly an effective way of improving the success rate of education for youth immigrants. There is currently an over two year waiting list full of students who are ready to take their education seriously. Some students come back after graduating from high school, to volunteer to help younger students accomplish whatever they need such as completing a high school diploma or even college as many of them are.

The Atlantic Street Center, also located on the NewHolly campus, is a drop in center and a place for youth to hang out. “[The] teen center is so cool and it’s fun. I come to do homework and hang with my friends while being close to my house,” said one youth participant. The Atlantic Street Center accepts all NewHolly, continued on page 3

NEWHOLLY, continued on page 3

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Letter From the Editor

At the time of this writing, the Washington State Legislature is in day 25 of the 30 day Special Session called by Governor Gregoire. As most of you know, the 2010 session was scheduled to conclude March 1st but because there was no budget agreement between the House of Representatives and the Senate, Governor Gregoire called for a 30 day extension. As a result of the uncertainty regarding when the 2010 legislative session will actually end, we at The Mockingbird Society decided to cancel our Post-legislative Celebration.

However, the good news at this point in time is that all of the bills on our Advocacy Agenda were passed this session and have been signed into law by the governor. Given the economic and political climate, this is a remarkable achievement for the youth and alumni in The Mockingbird Network and for our many wonderful partners across Washington State. We wait anxious for lawmakers to finalize the budget because we have critical housing services that we have worked to ensure are funded in this budget: most specifically, the HOPE Beds program and the Responsible Living Skills Programs. For a complete list of our legislative achievements regarding the 2010 legislative session, please visit www.mockingbirdsociety.org. I would like to give a very special “Thank-You” to all of you who wrote letters, sent emails and/or made phone calls to legislators!

Additionally, I want to take a moment to introduce Mockingbird Times readers to our most employees. Rose Berg has joined our team as Director of Public Policy and Communications, and we have also hired Brian Lawrence as our Director of Development. Both come with outstanding professional experience and I want to welcome both Rose and Brian to The Mockingbird Society team!

Thank You!

Lura Harrison; Brian Hatcher; Ann Lokeb; Parent Map; Pierce County Alliance; Alex Tarasar

Support The Mockingbird Society!

We invite you to join us in building a world-class foster care system. In gratitude for your support, we would like to send you a monthly e-version of the Mockingbird Times.

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CONSERVING RESOURCES AND HONORING YOUR PREFERENCES

In an effort to increase awareness of the Mockingbird Times, and the voice of its contributing writers – youth and alumni of care, we plan to begin publishing a more robust online edition in 2010. This will also allow us to conserve resources and reduce costs. So, watch for regular updates on our progress. We hope to be “live” by mid-year. We’ll be checking in with you, our loyal readers, in the near future to learn more about your preferences.

Thank you for your support.

Thank You!

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 widower father of Jem and Scout, joins 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.

Thank You!

Lura Harrison; Brian Hatcher; Ann Lokeb; Parent Map; Pierce County Alliance; Alex Tarasar

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My gift to help children, youth and families in foste

On Thursday, March 4th, the Recovery Café put on an event at Town Hall in Seattle with Todd Sheff and his son, Nic Sheff, who spoke about addiction and their books Beautiful Boy and Tweak: Growing Up on Methamphetamine. They spoke about their personal journeys to recovery and the dangers of drugs, and how these nearly tore the two apart.

In the United States, drug addiction accounts for nearly 20,000 deaths related to overdose annually according to the National Center for Health Statistics. In the United States there is an estimated 201.1 million users of illicit drugs. Youth are hit hardest by addiction and drug abuse. 81% of street youth use alcohol regularly and 50% regularly use other drugs, including 26% who have been by choice, not force. They have homework of the acclaimed book with me despite that, because even though I had been missing my whole life.” I felt the said that it was “like I had found what I of choice. Nic Sheff's circle of friends or gone to jail due have overdosed from the streets one of my friends about another without hearing and it seems like I can't go a few months able to overcome his incredible addiction. “Recovery Café was founded on the belief that every human being is precious and beloved regardless of past trauma, mental and emotional anguish and addictive behaviors. Recovery Café seeks to embrace everyone who enters, to help each individual come to know himself/herself as one who is loved, with gifts and love to share with our community.”

Places like the Recovery Café have made an incredible impact on those who battle with addiction but don’t have the support they need and for that, the Recovery Café deserves our gratitude. Addiction is a powerful thing. Talk to anyone who is a recovering addict and you will be told a battle that was so far too long. Nic Sheff is a hero in the war against addiction just like anyone else in the world who has had the power to overcome his or her addiction. The hardest hit are those in need and those that are young. But places like the Recovery Café are giving them a fighting chance. Both Nic Sheff's and his father, David Sheff's books are remarkable testaments to overcoming addiction.


On Thursday, March 4th, 2010, I asked him, “What are some of the tactics you will use to make EGH another success story like Roots?” He replied, “It is extremely important for lots of partnerships and collaboration with other agencies. Right now Roots has financial stability and will remain stable; right now is periods for a transition.”

I believe that Sinan Demirel will do an awesome job at the Elizabeth Gregory Home and I cannot wait to see the organization prosper into a great success.
Region 1: UNITE! Chapter in Spokane County by Onalee Stewart
We had a huge St. Patrick’s Day party for our Chapter meeting and we said our good-byes to our beloved Katrina (we will miss you) who will be moving across the state at the end of this month. We also worked on our Leadership Summit applications and nominated two new Chapter leaders. Noah and Jocely were both voted in for a six month term. Jocely will be facilitating a Life Advocacy Training for youth at Excelsior Youth Center with Lauren on March 26th, 2010.

Region 2: A.C.T.F.I.R.S.T. Chapter in Yakima County by Brandy Bailey
This month ACT FIRST went to Catholic Family Independent Skills to give the Your Rights, Your Life Training. It was very successful and 10 youth and alumni came. They really liked the health and safety section of the training, especially when they learned that after 18 they are able to apply for health care! At the end of the training, we had a raffle with prizes. ACT FIRST was able to add two new members! We also had a Chapter meeting where we all filled out the summit applications and we watched the inspiring Summit videos. Twelve of us also participated in a huge job fair where we filled out job applications, went through interviews, and went to a job readiness class. Two of us were able to get our food handlers permit there. Three of us went to a HUB meeting and we talked to the youth and alumni about the Summit and about our Chapter. We added four new people from that meeting, too!

Region 3: Cour’Ige Chapter in Pierce County by DeMarea Kirk
Love is like a careless tornado, it can tear up your house, life, and the way you progress in life. Then the debris left by its deadly attack is like a junkyard, Messy, stinky and hard to clean. The best way to get better results in this test is to just sit and let the mess cover up if you don’t want another deadly careless tornado attacking you again.

Region 4: For Change Chapter in King County by Rashunda Johnson
This month we shared our experiences on Youth Advocacy Day. Looking forward to next year’s event, we discussed ways we can improve. We looked at ways to find transportation which will help members to attend meetings over the year. We can achieve our full potential by strengthening our networking and leadership skills. Each member of our region was assigned a work role for our chapter. The minutes taker and newspaper article writer will take notes then our journalist will write a paragraph for the Mockingbird Times. We need your work! We are in great need of articles, poetry, artwork, and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or with homelessness. If you want to be published in the Mockingbird Times, visit mockingbirdsoacity.org and select Mockingbird Times under The Mockingbird Network or contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at kara@mockingbirdsoacity.org. Note: If you have submitted something before that hasn’t been published, we need your submission agreement in order to print it. Please submit again via the web location listed above. Because of space constraints, shorter poems have a higher chance of being published.

Region 5: Cour’Ige Chapter in Pierce County by DeMarea Kirk
This month we discussed events and activities to do this coming summer. We also discussed who will be going to the Leadership Summit and how we are going to meet and prepare for it. We also talked about how our chapter is going to give back more to the community to make it a better and safer place. We also filled out our applications for the summit. Lastly, we are now learning new trainings to facilitate for our peers in our region so they can have more info about their rights in care and to help them make their lives a better.

Region 6: VRAEC-TAFFY Chapter in Thurston County by Sam Evans
This month started with another Transformation Design Committee meeting. We also had Tiffany, The Mockingbird Network Director, down to Olympia for lunch. We started regular Chapter meetings down in Centralia and had a strong turnout. Our meetings are every 3rd Thursday from 4 to 5:30 PM at the Teen Building at Centralia College. We also named our chapter Voices Rising Amongst Each Other Creating Truth and Action for Foster Youth (VRAEC-TAFFY). We might end up revisiting that name at the next chapter meeting, though!