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Second Annual Homeless Youth and Young Adult Summit
by Jessica Martin

On October 29th and 30th 2007, eight youth peer leaders and thirty-five homeless youth from King County came together to celebrate Homeless Youth Awareness Month in a specialty. Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness (SKCCH) held the Second Annual Homeless Youth and Young Adult Summit. This was a chance for youth and young adults in King County who have been or are currently experiencing homelessness to discuss the unique needs of their community and present their issues to Seattle’s City Council.

I was a peer leader at the Summit. We helped organize and plan the two days. Before the actual Summit began, we had a meeting to discuss the format of the Summit. On the first day of the Summit, we met at the Orion Center and then all went to a meeting room at REI.

We explained to the other participants how last year’s summit went and what issues were presented to the City Council. Topics included bus passes, employment, and housing. We then broke into ten groups, each with a peer leader, to brainstorm what every idea we could come up with for issues to bring to the City Council this year. After about twenty minutes, each group presented their ideas to the whole group with people writing each of them down to create a huge list of 100-200 ideas. We were able to combine many of the smaller issues into broader topics.

Once the brainstorming was done, we voted. Each person got to pick their top five topics, and the five topics with the most votes were the ones we would present to the City Council the next day. The top five topics we came up with were: expanded shelter services for youth and young adults, affordable housing, expanded employment training opportunities for homeless youth and young adults, city supplied bus passes for homeless youth and young adults, and LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer) issues.

We then broke into groups for each of these topics. Each youth got to choose the topic they wanted to represent and were most passionate about. My group was on expanded employment training opportunities for homeless youth and young adults. Each group came up with a few main points under their topic that they wanted to present.

One main point that my group wanted to present was the concern that the barista training program had been cut. This is despite the fact that the program has more than proven its worth. I told my group that I felt like youth getting off the streets by giving them the skills, experience, and references to become a barista in the real world.

Along with this, we want to create more employment opportunities and encourage hopefulness, optimism and the balance of everyday life by creating “political hip hop.” On the tape, the song “Walls Close In” addresses inequality, corporate destruction and educational disproportionality. In “Out” addresses inequality, corporate destruction and educational disproportionality. In “Out” addresses inequality, corporate destruction and educational disproportionality.

Each group came up with ideas like these for their topic and then presented them to the whole group so that everybody would be on the same page. The first day concluded after a humorous skit on what not to do when presenting to City Council members. We also went over what to do, including body language, speaking clearly, etc.

We all met at City Hall in downtown Seattle on the morning of the second day. Things were kind of hectic and confusing as to who was supposed to be where and when, but we were able to work things out. We got back into our groups to refresh our memories on what we wanted to present, then, we got our lists of which council members we were going to see and at what times. Participating council members included Sally Clark, Richard Conlin, Jean Godden, Nick Licata, Richard McIver, Tom Rasmussen, and Peter Steinbrueck. Meetings were also held with Patricia McIn- tuff (Human Services Department, on behalf of the Mayor’s office) and Bill Block (King County Committee to End Homelessness).

My group first talked to Tom Rasmussen. We didn’t have the best experience talking with him as he seemed uninterested in talking and listening to us. He blamed the barista training program’s funding cut on Farestart, when in reality it gets its funding from the city. After talking to him, we got a bit discouraged. But then we realized that the next City Council member we were going to talk with was Nick Licata and that he is the man in charge when our mayor is out of town.

Nick Licata knows that the barista training program’s funding had been cut and seemed to be very familiar with many of the other youth services our city has to offer us. He expressed his disappointment with having incentives for business owners to take a chance and hire youth with criminal histories with a strict probationary period to prove themselves. He expressed that he was interested in what we had to say, which was very uplifting to our spirits. It made us feel as if we did, do, and can have a voice. It was empowering!

Each of the groups got to talk and present to a couple of City Council members as we did. The day ended with our whole group sharing with everyone how their group’s meetings went. Each of us wrote our comments on a same page. Many of the youth had a positive experience and are excited to do it all over again next year.

The SKCCH Homeless Youth and Young Adult Summit 2007 was sponsored by the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness, YMCA-The Center, and the City of Seattle- Human Services Department. Other contributors include the 45th Street Clinic, Friends of Youth, Heroes Subs, The Mockingbird Society, New Horizons Ministries, Street Youth Ministries, University District Service Providers Alliance, University District Youth Center, and Youth Care’s Orion Center.

Everyone here at The Mockingbird Society would like to wish you all happy holidays and a wonderful season!
Meet The Staff by Kenneth Larson-Rettinger

Hi my name is Kenneth Larson-Rettinger. I am fifteen years old and I am one of the newest members of The Mockingbird Society family. I am an intern from Harry S. Truman High School in Federal Way. I am also a part of a Mockingbird Family Model Constellation. The Hub Home in my Constellation is run by Joe Cotton who is a really great guy who helps me out with all my problems. I think that as helping me have fun with the other people in the Constellation.

In my spare time I like to read, (the Pendragon series) by D. J. MacFalle is my favorite right now), play sports (water polo, wrestling, and soccer), video games (all games), and going to the Mockingbird Society office to write. My foster care experience was.. iffy. In my first few foster homes I was physically and mentally abused. I was young and naive so I didn’t understand that what was happening to me was wrong. I grew up under the impression that physical abuse was an okay form of punishment.

I was adopted when I was 10 years old and have lived with my family for almost 8 years. I have made mistakes but I live like a normal teenager now. Since I was about 7-8 years old I have thought that homeless people deserve better than they get. I always dreamed of helping the homeless with all that I had and money. I think that the homeless deserve second chances just like anyone else. There are too many people living on the streets right now and most people go through life without even caring about them. I feel bad because I would have been in the same situation as people that live on the streets if I had not been adopted.

If I could change one thing about foster care I would change the way that they put a child into a home. When they put a child into a new home they don’t get a packet about the child. I think the child should also get something about the people that they are going to stay with. It would be nice if children could choose from a list of people to pick who they would be most compatible with.

I would also like to change the fact that there are so many children on the streets. I think that children should be the priority of people that help the homeless because they are young and have done nothing to cause their homelessness in most cases. It really isn’t fair that they are on the streets because they don’t have parents that can support them. The state should take care of them at that point.

I wanted to be a part of the Youth LEAD program because I am really into public speaking about foster care. I want to give back because of the things that foster care has done for me.

Thank You!

WILLIE AUSTING; THEODORE BEAUCHINE; LINDA AND JOHN BOGGS; WILL CALHOUN; MICHAEL CAMPBELL; JENNIFER CARDWELL; VALERIE DOUGLAS; ELIZABETH A. LYNN FOUNDER/FAIMS AND ROXANNE FLAHERTY; JUDY GREENSTEIN; SANDY HOWARD; MARGARET ANN; AND MARC LEROY; CHRIS MARSIL; ATTORNEY; DORNA MATHUS; DAN AND AMY NORDSTROM; KERSTEN AND DIANE PETERSON; JACOB RUSSELL; NABERE ROZOSA

Mockingbird’s Youth LEAD program presents

LIFE ADVOCACY 101
Tuesday January 15th, 3-5 PM
2100 24th Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98144 (Treehouse Building)

Come learn about how to be your OWN best advocate in all areas of your life. Participate in activities that will give you the skills you need to “make things happen” for your personal success!

Receive your own personal ADVOCACY 101 TOOL!
All youth/young adults ages 14 to 23 welcome
Food and beverages provided
Free for everyone!

Letter From the Editor

This is the time of year when it is dark when I go to work and dark when I return home in the evening. In fact, even during the day, the light is often so faint that there is always the reminder that darkness is close by. This darkness can be depressing and increase our sense of anxiety and even hopelessness. Add to this the holiday season and whatever memories that conjures up for us and this can be a truly difficult time of year for many.

It is during these times that I so appreciate the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when he reminded us that “Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can drive out darkness.” I encourage all of you with children and teens in your life to be the light for them this holiday season. That is not to say, “buy them everything they want.” Quite the contrary: It is to say, “invest in your relationship with the children in your life.” Tell them how much they mean to you and add to your life. Spend time with them and share a special activity that will become a wonderful memory for you. Be intentional about recognizing and acknowledging the wonder, joy and hope in the world and your lives.

I would also encourage the caretakers to take time to care for yourselves. Kids have much more fun when the adults in their lives have the energy to participate and engage. My deepest blessings and season’s greetings to each of you and to all those you love.

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Mockingbird Society’s Youth LEAD program presents

Giving Trees by Kenneth Larson-Rettinger

Many say that giving is the meaning of Christmas, but it is also nice to receive on Christmas, especially when it’s something that you really want. Parents who live on a tight income and have children can’t always get what their children want. Often they just can’t spare much money when they have to pay the bills and such. In many places, giving trees are set up where a person can change a child’s holiday by giving that child something they really want.

How a giving tree works is a tree is set up in a public location and is decorated with ornaments/tags that have information about a child, youth or adult in need, such as his or her age, gender, and something that they look forward to getting this year. You take a tag from the tree and then buy a gift that matches that tag and return the unwrapped gift to the tree. The sponsors of the tree wrap the presents and give them to the needy adult or the parents of a needy child. In this way, the child believes the present came from their parent and doesn’t feel awkward about receiving charity.

There are many places doing giving trees this year: Toys R Us, Babies R Us, Fred Meyer, and the 2100 Building in Seattle also give giving trees. In Bellevue, at City Hall, there is a huge tree that generates about 25,000 dollars in donations for needy children all across King County. Most local malls also have giving trees. Other places that donate lots to families in need are The Salvation Army, Goodwill Industries, Union Gospel Mission, Desert Industries, and Value Village.

Thinking about the children that need a Christmas is hard as some are as young as infants. So, please take into consideration the idea of giving a tree and supporting a child. Also, you can also find more trees at a line at the locations below. Check your local listings for additional places to donate.

www.pikeplacemarket.org
www.salvationarmymc.org
www.uniongamewars.org
www.goodwill.org

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.

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY
STATE
ZIP
PHONE
EMAIL

Enclosed, please find my check made payable to The Mockingbird Society in the amount of (please note amount on appropriate line):

$1,000+  Protector
$500 - $999  Champion
$250 - $499  Advocate
$50 - $249  Supporter
$25  Contributor

☐ My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.
☐ I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.
☐ Please do not include my name on published donor lists.

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.mockingbirdscociety.org.

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Dear Mockingbird Times Subscribers,

This is the time of year when it is dark when I go to work and dark when I return home in the evening. In fact, even during the day, the light is often so faint that there is always the reminder that darkness is close by. This darkness can be depressing and increase our sense of anxiety and even hopelessness. Add to this the holiday season and whatever memories that conjures up for us and this can be a truly difficult time of year for many.

It is during these times that I so appreciate the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when he reminded us that “Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can drive out darkness.” I encourage all of you with children and teens in your life to be the light for them this holiday season. That is not to say, “buy them everything they want.” Quite the contrary: It is to say, “invest in your relationship with the children in your life.” Tell them how much they mean to you and add to your life. Spend time with them and share a special activity that will become a wonderful memory for you. Be intentional about recognizing and acknowledging the wonder, joy and hope in the world and your lives.

I would also encourage the caretakers to take time to care for yourselves. Kids have much more fun when the adults in their lives have the energy to participate and engage. My deepest blessings and season’s greetings to each of you and to all those you love.
The well known saying, “What doesn’t kill you only makes you stronger” is the theme for my story this month. I am missing the one thing that kept me going although I am still searching. I have been through huge ups, and big downs but the issue now that has been the issue forever is, “How will I keep the flame of my Christian faith burning inside of me ever since I know my mother let me go to a church service?”

I was 6 years old when I moved to Ocean Shores. I will myself, which is why I have trouble working hard. I don’t want to make excuses and it does me no good anyway because I will not get anywhere blaming anyone or any- thing else.

Looking back and reflecting, I see now that I will have to make a completely different game plan for this new chapter. As the quarter ends, I suggest to other seniors that this is no exception. In actual fact, it takes to rise to the occasion. For myself, I don’t know. Under certain situations, I have risen to the occasion and done it. On top of the pressure of school is the pressure of college applications, and on top of that is the pressure of friends and wanting to actually be a senior. Sometimes it feels as if work, school, and extra-curricular activities get in the way of me actu- ally being a seventeen-year-old. Part of me wants to get more involved in the community. I have my own ideas and goals, and ways I can have an impact on my community.

The hardest thing for me now is that since my football was over, I would have to crack into a different game plan at school and college. As a senior, I have to make sure I get the work done. I don’t really have anything to keep me going anymore. If you remember reading two months before in the Mockingbird Times, this writing waiting for anything to get it roaring through is nothing but a fading memory. Those days are nothing but a fading memory.

I refuse to let my feelings show. Both me and my friends see my attitude and actions and would be more comfortable if I didn’t care. I don’t know. Under certain situations, I have risen to the occasion and done it. Of course, it takes years of practice to get it right. The people who have experi- enced homelessness or the foster care system need to speak out about what is going on—what is not going on—what is not happening. Without that, no changes will ever be made and the things that aren’t going so well will just continue because nobody will ever know about it.

Mockingbird Says Goodbye to a Shooting **“Star”**: Jessica Martin by MBS Staff

**MBS: What will you miss most about working as a Youth Representative at The Mockingbird Society?**

Star: I will miss all the advocacy work and feeling like I am actually making a differ- ence. I will miss the times I have gotten to talk with legislators and City Council members, being a peer leader for the Homeless Youth Summit, and helping to present a workshop at the Washington State Foster Care Conference in Ocean Shores. I will miss the family that The Mockingbird Society has formed for me, all the good times of laughter and tears, and the support I have here.

**MBS: What will be one of the best things you will remember most about your time here?**

Star: I will remember the agony of mailing days: folding and addressing and stuffing hundreds of envelopes. I will remember giving Naja headaches about deadlines for articles each month but always coming through at the last minute.

**MBS: Is there anything you would like to share with your readers in regards to the impor- tance of homeless/foster-youth awareness?**

Star: Advocacy is very impor- tant! Without it, who knows if we would have come as far in the foster-care/homeless youth world if it weren’t for us going to the Seattle City Council for Homeless Youth and Young Adults Summit reports. The training programs, some of the City Council members wouldn’t even know that the funding for the barista training and accounting had been cut. The people who have experi- enced homelessness or the foster care system need to speak out about what is going on—what is not going on—what is not happening. Without that, no changes will ever be made and the things that aren’t going so well will just continue because nobody will ever know about it.

**Daddy’s Little Girl**

By Whitney Allen

"Whitney, I love you"? I'm not trying to point a finger or place any blame. I'm just so happy that my mama allowed me to keep my daddy's last name. When my mother told me her plans to give me another man's last name, I was hurt and deeply pained. I couldn't believe my mother. My heart ached so bad. Didn't she know that my daddy's last name was the only thing of him I had? Words couldn't express my deep emotion so I just kept it all to myself and when Mama and I met some other man he could keep Daddy's name, the tears that fell from my eyes I quickly dried. That was so long ago, back when I was still with my mama and it was a lot younger. It seems like back then I was a whole lot stronger. That was so long ago, back when I could light up a whole room with my smile. I'm talking about setting a whole room aglow.

Those days are nothing but a fading memory. I believe I have always done the work so I turned in a couple of assignments. I showed the smallest effort possible. Slowly but surely the efforts are diminishing. Now, at the end of the month, I see that it is crunch time. I stare failure right in the face. For some, this would be an extreme motivator. For others, it would be demotivating. It takes to rise to the occasion. For myself, I don't know. Under certain situations, I have risen to the occasion and done it. On top of the pressure of school is the pressure of college applications, and on top of that is the pressure of friends and wanting to actually be a senior. Sometimes it feels as if work, school, and extra-curricular activities get in the way of me actu- ally being a seventeen-year-old. Part of me wants to get more involved in the community. I have my own ideas and goals, and ways I can have an impact on my community.

The hardest thing for me now is that since my football was over, I would have to crack into a different game plan at school and college. As a senior, I have to make sure I get the work done. I don't really have anything to keep me going anymore. If you remember reading two months before in the Mockingbird Times, this writing waiting for anything to get it roaring through is nothing but a fading memory. Those days are nothing but a fading memory.

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**Update Your Subscription**

If you have recently moved, need to change the number of issues you receive, or if the address we are mailing to needs to be corrected, please complete and mail the subscription request form found on page 2 so we can update our records.
This Feeling
KATIE HARMON
When I see you, when I am with you. Talking to or about you, thinking about you.
I get this feeling, is it butterflies? is my heart skipping a beat? you’ve taken my breath away.
You’re always on my mind, and I’m not quite sure why.
Anything having to do with you, I get this feeling.
I am not sure what it is, is it butterflies?
is my heart skipping a beat? you’ve taken my breath away.
This feeling’s so good, but I only get it when I see you, when I am with you. Talking to or about you, or thinking of you.

Cherry Blossoms
EMMA CAMPBELL
The wind blows fades away, as tides wash upon the shore, shells once black with grit, now bleached white. My life fades away, new stories begin, once the night of leaves falling, scared me to death, reminding me, not only fall brings an end.
And yet, with springtime new life begins, now long forgotten sorrows, bloom into bright pink cherry blossoms, beautiful and slow and smile, instead of running at my steady pace, i believe ill sit down, and watch for a while.

Overtaken
LOUISIANA
I am naked
My stomach empty
My mind blank
My feet feel like I’ve been walking.

For days
And Days
My heart hurts
It’s hard to breathe
The blood is rushing through my veins
Spreading to my skin
But closed in
I bruise easily
My eyes are clouded
It’s tough to see
FEAR
Has started to overcome me
I can’t hear anything
My ears are all plugged up
From the days
I made my eyes see the lies
That the voices so calmly whispered
through my drum
With my mind struggling to understand
my soul cries out to be one

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 give young people a safe place to nest and sing.

This Christmas
BY ANDREA ROLDAN
When I decided to do a movie review for the holiday season, the first thing I needed to do was explore what new movies were being released and which movie I had the most excitement towards. I’d like to sit through, watch, and compose an article about. This Christmas (Sony Pictures) starring Loretta Devine, Idris Elba and Regina King, was one of the first to be suggested.
I decided to do it, but not with anticipation. I wasn’t very excited to see this movie because I had assumptions about its plot and outcome. I thought, “Another black family Christmas: backstabbing, arguing and drama,” not to forget Hollywood’s touch by filling the movie with young, limited experienced, fresh faced actors because they have a large teenage fan population due to their sex appeal (did I hear someone say cliché?) Did I forget to mention Chris Brown, Lauren London (ATL) and Columbus Short (Stomp the Yard)?

This Christmas is set in the Los Angeles suburban home of Ma’dere (Devine). It’s the Whitfield family tradition to come home for the holidays. Everyone trickles in to share the meals, games, and communion that is set to take place in the next few days. We see the status of the family members as they accept their welcomes and settle in. Optimistic Ma’dere is cheerful; popular Michael, “Baby” (Brown), still lives at home; the “girl next door” Melanie “Me” (London) invites her boyfriend, respectable Claude (Short), who is on military leave; a successful businesswoman Kellie (Sharone Lael) comes single. Family relationships are displayed; there is tension between sisters Koli and Lisa (King), indirectly because of Lisa’s controlling husband Malcom (Laz Alonso). The biggest surprise comes when Quentin (Elba), Ma’dere’s eldest son, shows up for the first time in four years.

From the start of the gathering, the movie is surprising, interesting and comical. One of my favorite scenes is dinner when everyone checks in about their career, education and personal goals. The family is discussing Melanie’s progress in college as an undergrad; seven years so far, without a completed college degree, beginning her 3rd major. Someone concludes that her majors change as often as her boyfriends because “her major is determined by whoever she is dating at the time.” She’s decided that her current major is pre-law; it’s humorous when her boyfriend is asked what his major is. Of course, while he’s stalling to avoid answering, it’s predictable, but the family is enjoying the teasing and everyone gets a laugh out of it. The confrontational attitude of Quentin towards Joe Black (Delroy Lindo), Ma’dere’s longtime boyfriend, means everyone must keep the fact that Joe lives there a secret. Although Joe has a very strong personality, he respects Ma’dere and her children.

Throughout the movie, I was assured of the actors’ strengths in their characters. The more “experienced” Devine, Elba, King and Mechel Faith had strong presence, but even the “fresh faces” delivered full performances. The personalities of the different characters were fulfilling in a variety of aspects; from the charming Baby, the fearless (in her mother’s house) Mel, the tough guy Quentin, the independent woman Kellie and so on. The characters and their different relationships with each other can definitely be related to the audience and our own families, along with the saying, “There’s one of those in every family.” The situations that transpire in the movie reflect situations that happen in families from all different races. The woman who first presents her sister finds the strength and courage to make her own life better after the two sisters confront each other and, in the end, have more respect toward one another. The stigma of intraracial dating and the challenge of other people’s accepting it as well as the step-father verses the biological father and his memory are themes that are universal.

The most cliché Hollywood decision for the film was having a professional singer “act” like an aspiring singer. This always ticks me off and Hollywood continues to do it because it brings in large numbers at the box office. The singer’s fans watch the movie just because that person is in it. We all know Chris Brown can sing, but in the movie we get to see what it would be like if he weren’t already famous and were afraid to let people know that his voice can give you goose bumps with the right song (and let his mom know that he had a passion for music). In the beginning I shook my head, but as I was watching, I was witnessing this, something about the scene really moved me. Not knowing that his brothers and sisters were in the audience for his first live performance, Baby sweeps the crowd off their feet. His vocal performance and the feel of the whole scene was finale worthy, to say the least.

One of my concluding thoughts after the film was how much it reminds me of Tyler Perry’s movies which are filled with morals taught through witnessing unpleasent situations, the characters finding themselves learning about a family’s history and working to change transpare in the characters or the situation. This Christmas is less dramatic than Perry’s films and more family-oriented. Still, the characters have individual struggles to overcome and some situations that challenge the whole family. This isn’t far from reality.

During the holiday season, people may experience a number of different emotions and challenges. Families might come together and it’s not always the best experience for some. Some family members find themselves in a frenzy, people get lonely and depressed; these things can really bring down the cheer of the season. Reality, unlike most movies, doesn’t always reflect what good guys always win.” But we might get closer to a win and a great holiday season if we think like the good guy. We aren’t all privileged to have our ideal Christmas, but the most pleasant family get-togethers or even a stress-free holiday but there are ways we can find the best out of what we do have and enjoy the season. Be grateful for what you have and what you may receive This Christmas (no pun intended). Think positively and appreciate the people around you, not just the things. The different elements of This Christmas contribute in total to a funny, enjoyable movie experience: perfect for the holidays.

Life is tough but when you don’t give up and take the punches, it gets better for real.

Youth Representative Jessica Garcia

"You cannot be grateful and unhappy at the same time.” ~Anonymous

Home Base
MAGICAL HAUNTED
A warm house
Mom coming home at the same time every day
The dog sees
Goes to talk
The house
Food gets cooked
The smell
Candles and soft carpet
Couches so comfortable
They double as beds
They’re
Where you sit is where
You sleep
If you want it’s
Home
Where the day takes you
The house

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