Dirty Dental Deeds

 Courtney Konietzko

IT’S BEEN A LONG ROAD, paved with healthcare mistakes, that I’ve traveled since I decided to take care of my teeth. I am banned from the dental clinic where I get my medical care for something that happened years ago, when I was an angry adolescent and responded to stress by threatening people. People change. So do dentists. And mistakes follow people, sometimes for a long time.

An earlier article I wrote focused on the budget cuts affecting people on Medicaid (“Budget Cuts Teeth,” October 2003). I am one of these people and am angry because I don’t have decent dental care. Just because I am poor does not mean that I should receive inadequate work or a rough bedside manner. Yeah, I know that dentists who serve low-income people are often swamped with so many patients that they can’t cater to my every whim, but you shouldn’t be in healthcare if you have a nasty demeanor under stress. I want a dentist who is competent, whom I can trust, and who treats me with respect.

I have been to four dental providers since I decided to take care of my teeth. I am still searching for another one. The first dentist filled my cavity with a substance that resembled science experiment putty. The filling fell out and I ended up losing the tooth. I didn’t go to the second dentist. She was extremely high strung with absolutely no sense of empathy for patients with dental fear. She was responding “you be a big girl” when I expressed my dental fear and asked her to move slower around me. I don’t need to be patronized. I need a dentist who’s sensitive to my needs and is capable of listening. This dental session ended in tears and me accidentally spitting blood on the floor.

At this point I called a clinic that specialized in treating patients with dental fear and was promptly turned down.

How is somebody living below the poverty line supposed to get good dental work and still afford living expenses?

DENTAL CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Where Are the Youth?

 DARIUS REYNOLDS

I FIRST BECAME HOMELESS when I was 17 years old. There were a lot of youth under 18 living on University Ave in Seattle using the shelters. The youth over 18 who were using the shelters had to lie about their age to get in, and the shelters were full almost every night.

Now I hear that all the University District Shelter has changed its age range 18 to 25 years olds (from 13-20), because hardly any minors were coming. A letter to the community from the University Youth Shelter (now the University Young Adult Shelter) Board of Director’s states that only 12 percent of the youth using shelter were 16 to 17 years old and 2 percent were 13 to 15.

Are the youth finding other places to live like “squats” — usually an abandoned building homeless people move into — or are they all going back home? I personally think it is because of the Becca Bill, a law that states that anyone sheltering youth under 18 must notify the police within 8 hours. A lot of youth leave home because they are being abused and they don’t want to go to shelters because they are scared the staff will call the police and report them. So they are forced to find other places to sleep that can be dangerous for them.

A local Seattle study done by Street Children and Teens states that 44 percent of youth leave home for the first time at ages 12 thru 14, and 53 percent leave because of too much conflict and fighting at home. Twenty one percent leave home because of physical abuse. Five percent of the youth who live on the streets get beaten up on a daily basis, and 5 percent get raped monthly or weekly. So if the youth are not going to shelter, then where are they going? Are they sleeping out in the cold or selling themselves for a place to stay? Unfortunately, I was unable to find a youth willing to let me interview them, but in next month’s issue I hope to have an interview with a youth and a shelter coordinator, so some of the questions I’ve asked will be answered. Until then, thank you for reading, and if you have some info on the shelters’ age change, email me at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org.

We Want to Hear from You!

Dear Readers,

Hi! My name’s Courtney Konietzko. I’m the chick who’s shy to take off her sunglasses. I want to know who you guy’s are (the readers) and what issues are important to you. How old are you? Have you ever been in foster care? What do you want to read about? I want to know who reads Mockingbird Times: adults or kids or both? I want kids to read our paper, especially kids involved in foster care or kids living on the streets.

If you have some spare time, please e-mail me at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org or snail mail me at 2100 24th Ave. South, Suite 350 Seattle, WA 98144. I love snail mail!

Sincerely, Courtney

Alumni Corner

I AM 18 YEARS OLD and have been in and out of foster care and group homes since I was 13 years old.

I had an alcoholic father and mother. My dad used to neglect me when I was very young, because of his girlfriend. He spent most his time at work and with his girlfriend, and when he was at home he was abusive to us kids.

I ran away when I was 13 when my dad broke my ribs because I broke a window in his house. My sister was already on probation, so her probation officer found out about me through the Montana State Department of Housing and Family Services.

I was put through counseling first. I told my counselor about my dad and the night that I was put in a shelter. I was there for more then the expected amount of time (30 days) — I was there for 6 months.

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak out Across the Nation

VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.MOCKINGBIRDSOCIETY.ORG

Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth

January 2004
Letter from the Editor

ON BEHALF OF THE MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY staff and Board of Directors, I extend to each of you a very happy New Year. We at Mockingbird feel very fortunate to welcome the New Year with some amazing organizational developments. The Mockingbird Times continues to grow both in circulation and the number of young people interested in participating. Also, The Mockingbird Society begins the New Year in the new Treehouse building. We now enjoy twice as much office space in a state-of-the-art building with wonderful neighbors. Also, dare I say, for the first time since starting Mockingbird, I have an office and desk of my own! If you are in the Seattle area, please give us a call and drop by for a visit.

The Mockingbird Foster Family Constellation Project is in full swing and we are working hard with One Church One Child/UJIMA, University of Washington/ NorthWest Institute for Children and Families to make this happen. You may recall that The Mockingbird Society was awarded a federal grant to implement an innovative model that is designed to reduce multiple placements, allow siblings to be together, ensure cultural relevancy, and provide respite care for foster/kinship parents. We have identified some of the family participants and are moving out of the “start-up” phase and into implementation of the model. Lots of work for everyone with lots of promise for kids and families.

Finally, a heartfelt goodbye to one of Mockingbird’s original staff members: Molly Rhodes. Molly has been invaluable to me and the organization, particularly the Mockingbird Times. She has been with us from the very beginning, when we were meeting in the basement of another non-profit organization. She possesses too many skills and talents to list, but what sticks out is her expertise in layout and editing combined with her patience and commitment to the young people we serve. Molly has been a true gift to Mockingbird. We will miss Molly and wish her the very best in her new endeavors.

— W. Clement Stone

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Mockingbird Times

Have a Heart for Kids Day

The Children’s Alliance’s annual Advocacy day at the State Capitol, will take place on Tuesday, February 10th in Olympia. Check out their website for more information at www.childrensalliance.org

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 in foster care. The Mockingbird Times is a monthly newspaper that is written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of Mockingbird Society are paid between $7.50 and $8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, poetry and are compensated up to $20 per published piece. The Mockingbird Times has a monthly circulation of 28,000 copies being distributed across Washington and the U.S.A. Youth involvement is 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. All 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.

LETTERS CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Mockingbird Times, January 2004
Positive Power: Going Back to School Again?

Bridgett Siroston

WHEN PEOPLE LEAVE HIGH SCHOOL, there are two options. They either never want to go to school ever again, or they like school and want to go back to get a degree or just to learn more in general.

It’s been four years since I was in school and I didn’t really have the best experience. Kids are mean, and I guess I was just afraid of history repeating itself. I’ve been wondering for a long time if school is right for me. I recently decided I would try something like photography or beauty/hair school. I have always liked styling and coloring my own hair, or even doing someone else’s hair coloring. But cosmetology school is a year-long commitment, and I think it is too soon for me to take that long of a program.

How to Turn Drab Eyes into Fab Eyes

Bridgett Siroston

WHETHER YOU’RE A PLAIN JANE or a dramatic Donatella Versace eye catcher, every girl needs help with their eye make-up. I am here to help you to not look like you applied your make-up in the car or had a tragic event with your eyeliner on the bus.

Today we are going to start Step 1: Pull eyelid horizontal and use eye pencil. (I recommend Almay pencils or Revlon click-on’s). Step 2: Apply thin or thick line starting from outer upper eyelid to inner like a straight line. You can also put eye-liner on the bottom lid. Step 3: In case you got way too much on and need to fix it, get a cotton swab, put a dot of lotion on it and take the excess off.

Part of me is very anxious and the other is exhilarated about going back to school. When people decide to go back they might have their parents’ support, but for many of us we have to sign up for grants, scholarships, and even loans. I recently found out that financial aid does not cover your dreams if you’re not taking credit classes.

However there are places and organizations that can help. In the Seattle area there is a non-profit organization called Seattle Education Access or S.E.A. for people aged 13-30. Their services are for people who don’t get support from their families. If you feel you are ready for school, I suggest going to S.E.A. They help you find the right school. For more information contact Polly Trout at www.seattleeducationaccess.org or 206-683-5536. Or you can snail mail her at S.E.A., Polly Trout, 4740 B University Way N.E., Seattle, WA, 98105.

Dental

because of lack of “normal” insurance, too many people on the waiting list, and I think because of what happened years ago at the first dental clinic I went to. I was getting pretty exasperated at this point and picked up a phone book and started randomly dialing numbers until I found somebody who accepted Medicaid. It’s amazing how many dentists do not accept Medicaid, and it’s incredible how expensive dental work is!

This third dental provider seemed nice. He had a good bedside manner and even made jokes. Little did I know I would wind up crying not laughing. He cut me with the drill twice and his fillings have noticeable lines where the composite material meets the tooth. He told me this was some type of “dental leak” that was easily fixed, though he denied working on the tooth he filled when I asked him about the lines. He ordered to fix the line so I let him.

I thought everything was peachy until I came home and looked in the mirror. That !!!@#$ I screamed. I never should have

LETTERS

projects. I’m interested in family living, rabbits, gardening, leadership and citizenship, and environment. But I’m willing to help kids pursue their passions.

The group is all boys, 6-11, and I would love to recruit some girls. If you’re interested, please contact me at 206-767-7334 or omac@eskimoc.com. If you don’t live in West Seattle, there’s sure to be a club in your area. In King County, you can contact Carey Roos at 206-205-3152 (ext 71) or Carey.Roos@metrokc.gov. You can find a listing of programs in other Washington state counties at http://4h.wsu.edu/staff/agents.html. You can find programs in the rest of the United States (including territories) at http://www.national4h-chiefsquarters.gov/4h_map.htm.

Kids ages 8-18 are eligible and some places have programs for kids as young as five. 4-H can give foster kids and home-schooled kids an instant network of kids and adults with common interests, lots of hands-on learning opportunities in just about any area a kid might be interested in, and a chance for lots of positive recognition for accomplishments. It’s open to everyone without regard to race, religion, ethnic background, economic status, or disability. I hope your readers consider it.

Yours truly,

Krista Goodman

ALUMNI

for about 6 months.

I was placed in a group home in Montana. I was there for more than a year. They treated me pretty well. But no matter how often the staff tried to contact my dad he [occasionally] came or just forgot. After my graduation (which they never told me about because they thought I might ruin it) I was put into foster care.

My first foster parents were very young and did not know how to raise a teenage girl with emotional problems. They tried really hard, though. I had to leave because they had an “add-on” to the family, and [the mom] had to put on maternity leave.

My second foster home (which was just respite) was with an old lady who did not really care that much for kids but just for the money. I was taken out of there because she bought me cigarettes.

My third foster home was a blast. The mom was very nice. The dad traveled for work so he was never there but she was cool and I came to love her as a parent. I was taken out of there because she moved to another city. My case worker really wanted me to go with her but my P.O. was a control freak and made me go to a different home. I cried for days.

[When I was 18] I moved in with my mom. She really cleaned up her act and is a really good mom to all kids.

I have learned from my past and I am now getting my G.E.D. By next fall I will be going to college. Thanks for listening to my life story.

Sincerely

Branna Lucas

Read more stories from foster care alumni online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org.
Eye-Popping City

COURTNEY KONIETZKO

THIS MOVIE IS ONE OF THE MORE BIZARRE films I’ve seen. I came upon it at the age of 20 after complaining to a room full of people, “I want to watch a film that will make me cry.” The City of Lost Children didn’t make me cry but it did make me clench the hand of the person next to me when I watched it for the first time. City is a fairy tale full of wonder and awe. The landscape the film is set in is a strange metal structure (I think it’s some sort of giant boat) in the middle of the ocean. It’s a big structure, big enough to be a city and close enough to reality to make you think it’s really somewhere in the world.

City is a French film directed by Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre Jeunet. It is the story of a dysfunctional family created by a mad inventor. The family consists of Krank, a “man” who cannot see or feel pleasure or sad, so he kidnaps children to steal their dreams, a brain that lives in a glass tank that is sort of a philosopher and gets migraines, Krank’s four brothers who look exactly alike and are all trying to figure out which one of them is the original, and a midget mother. The other main characters are One, the circus philosopher and gets migraines, Krank’s four brothers who look exactly alike and are all trying to figure out which one of them is the original, and a midget mother. The other main characters are One, the circus strong man, who goes on a quest with one of the stolen children Miet, to get his brother back from Krank; the creepy Siamese sisters who “teach” the children and sell the children; the mad inventor who has forgotten everything and lives in a humble abode under the sea that resembles an antique store; many stolen children; and a flea that makes people he injects violent.

There’s even a couple of (insane) Christmas scenes which make this movie a suitable holiday pick for this time of year.

I would definitely classify City as an art film. One that doesn’t leave you bitter like David Lynch can. Don’t get me wrong, I adore David Lynch films. You might enjoy City if you have a taste for Lynch, darkness, surreal art, science fiction, creepy holiday movies (think Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas), or fantasy. According to reel.com, City has been classified as action, cult, drama, and sci-fi/fantasy. I guess it is all those things rolled into one. What more could you ask for? It is rated R because of some violence and creepiness, but I think it’s safe for ages 12 and over.

City is dreamlike… and not for the weak of heart.

P.S. Bjork’s Dancer In The Dark did make me cry… twice.

Mockingbird Bids Goodbye to One of Its Own

“Goodbyes are forever. ‘See you later’s’ are not. Never say goodbye to somebody unless they’re dead because the body is gone forever. Molly on the journey to personal fulfillment physically leaves us, but she will live on in e-mail, her monthly subscription to Mockingbird Times, letters, and telepathy. I wish her happiness, serenity, and fulfillment physically leaves us, but she will live on in e-mail, her monthly subscription to Mockingbird Times, letters, and telepathy.

DENTAL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

— C OURTNEY KONIETZKO

WHEN YOU SHOW UP TO WORK

Goodbye Molly hopes to see you again.

Goodbye Molly I will miss your red pen.

Goodbye Molly I wish you all the luck in the world.

Goodbye Molly I hope I didn’t misspell any words.

Goodbye Molly, oh man I think I’m gonna cry; so goodbye Molly

Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye.

— DARIUS REYNOLDS

Poetry Corner

Life is insane twisted and flipping it’s like a holocaust in my brain. The pain from defeat knocking me off my feet sending me to my knees crawling and begging please lord give me some direction send me a blessing cur right now I’m living in agony the feelings I feel can’t be explained they’re sending me to an early grave. This life is a play and I’m just a puppet on a string being thrown into everything but I got to keep my head up and do what I got to do wake up every morning and see that the sky is blue, the sun is shining and be thankful that I have another day to fight through.

— THE LYRICAL POET