**Mockingbird Youth Seek to Protect Safe Housing Programs**

On February 10th, 2012, Youth Advocacy Day will take place in Olympia. Youth Advocacy Day is an annual event that takes place at the state capitol that gives youth a chance to speak out in a professional manner. This year’s advocacy agenda is safe housing for youth transitioning out of care. Because of the struggling economy, it’s going to be a fight to keep the services that the state already provides. Consequently, the Mockingbird Youth Network will be fighting to protect and maintain the programs currently funded and caring for youth. Washington’s safe housing programs can be split into two categories: entitlements supported by the federal Fostering Connections to Adult Independence and Self-Sufficiency (FCAB), which includes the Extended Foster Care Program, and the state only funded programs which include the Independent Living Program (ILP) and Foster Care to 21 programs. The difference between these categories is that entitlements require the state to serve any youth that qualifies for the program, while programs funded only by the state can be limited to a specific number of spots. These programs help ensure youth transitioning out of care have access to the housing necessary to thrive. Passed in 2008, FCAB is one of the most significant child welfare reforms in the last decade. Among these reforms is the ability for states to receive a 50% funding match for extending foster care to age 18. Washington state’s first buy-in to FCAB is allowing youth over the age of 18 pursuing a high school diploma or GED the opportunity to continue to remain in care until age 21. The Foster Care to 21 Program allows those exiting foster care to remain in care to attend college, vocational or other post-secondary institutions. ILP provides housing assistance for alumni of care ages 18 to 23 who are looking to live on their own while they pursue employment or educational opportunities. Both of these programs are funded only by the state and are limited to a specific number of spots. The Mockingbird Youth Network will be fighting for safe housing because it is necessary in order to eliminate youth homelessness. Keeping these programs will in the long run be cost effective, decreasing the number of youth who age out into homelessness and encouraging youth to pursue their education. On February 10th the youth who need the state’s help the most will be at Youth Advocacy Day to have their voices heard. Please come join us!

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**More Cuts On Horizon for Washington Youth**

On January 9th the legislature will meet in Olympia for the 2012 legislative session. This will be following the three week special session last month where they were only able to address one-quarter of the $2 billion budget deficit. Because Washington State is required by law to have a balanced budget every year, a deficit is not acceptable. The Governor’s proposed budget, if approved, would cause dramatic changes in state services. Over $53 million in cuts would apply to Children’s Administration (CA) alone. These cuts would affect programs that have a direct impact on the lives of vulnerable youth.

Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) is one of the programs slated to be eliminated. FRS is a program aimed at keeping families intact and ultimately preventing out-of-home placement by providing family counseling, conflict resolution methods, and other services to prevent further conflict. This service is accessed by approximately 525 families each year. If this program is eliminated, a large percentage of those families will be at risk of ending up with out-of-home placements.

Another cut would attempt to reduce the length of stay in foster care for the 200 most difficult to place foster children. This safe reduction to length of stay will be achieved through permanency roundtables and other approaches. According to Casey Family Programs, “A permanency roundtable (PRT) is an intervention designed to facilitate the permanency planning process by identifying realistic solutions to permanency obstacles for youth.”

The Foster Care Assessment Program (FCAP), also could be eliminated in favor of potentially less effective methods.

FCAP is a comprehensive assessment to find and address barriers impacting permanency for children who do not have a permanent placement identified.

Street youth programs are again proposed to be cut, threatening outreach programs and drop-in centers that run on state dollars alone, including Rosie’s Place in Olympia. If this cut goes through, Rosie’s Place and other drop-in centers that provide services to street youth such as laundry, showers, case management, food, and a safe environment to find community may have to shut down. There will be fewer places for many of these youth to turn to in order to access services and survive on the streets. According to the Mockingbird Youth Network's System Reform, Samantha McDonald & Mandy Urwiler contribute two articles highlighting Youth Advocacy Day and the Mockingbird Youth Network’s agenda for the upcoming session.

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**Inside**

Mockingbird Times

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation

INTRODUCING THE NEW MOCKINGBIRD TIMES!

Look inside for the same powerful youth voice in an exciting new layout!

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**System Reform**

Samantha McDonald

Mandy Urwiler

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**Special Contribution**

Courtney Canova writes about hip-hop group Level Ground and their powerful song about foster care.

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**Place to Place**

Courtney Canova writes about hip-hop group Level Ground and their powerful song about foster care.

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**Power of One**

Diamonique Walker interviews foster care alumnus and motivational speaker Dashawn Patrick.

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**Chapter Voice**

Spokane's Mockingbird Youth Network Chapter members continue to make an impact in their community.

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**More Cuts on page 4**

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**More Cuts on page 4**

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**Call to Action!**

Call the legislative hotline: 1.800.562.6000

Urge your legislators to help Washington's children, youth and families by supporting these priorities!

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For more information, visit www.mockingbirdsociety.org/advocacy
A young father and husband I had to relapse my views of family. Overcoming the concept of "tangy rearing" was one of the most difficult hurdles of my life. Darkham story

Dashawn Patrick’s (on the left at a Seattle Mariners game) one of many of his events supporting youth in foster care.

Dashawn Patrick
Dashawn Patrick was the first foster youth to achieve an Associate degree from a four-year university. He was also the first foster youth to serve as a director on the board of an organization. Since then, he has been a leader in the foster care community, advocating for the rights of foster youth and raising awareness about the challenges they face. He shares his story in the hope of inspiring others who have faced similar struggles to find their own paths to success.

Dashawn hopes that his story can encourage others to prioritize the well-being of young people in care and in the foster care system. His commitment to this cause is driven by his own experiences as a foster youth, and he is dedicated to helping others who have had similar experiences to find the support and resources they need to thrive.

Dashawn’s story is one of perseverance and resilience. He overcame the challenges of foster care and the systemic barriers that often prevent young people from achieving their goals. His story is a testament to the power of education and the importance of access to opportunities that can help young people reach their full potential.

Thank you

Community Representative Dawson Vanderschel rests his arm on chair at Dawson Patrick’s recent event with the American Catholic Company.
Every day you got to see your but as a leader. not as a failure. Every day you got to see yourself in order for life to go on. Sometimes you got to lose in order to move on in life. Sometimes you got to make the difficult decisions in order for life to go on. Every day you got to see yourself not as a failure, but as a leader. Every day you got to see your mistakes as steps closer to success.

We Welcome Your Work

We welcome submissions of 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, or have been, published in the Mockingbird Times visit www.mockingbirdsociety.org, call us at (206) 407-2134 or email us at mbt@mockingbirdsociety.org.

Note: Incoming letters to the editor and correspondence to youth under 18 years old should be addressed to the Mockingbird Times and will be opened first by adult editorial staff.

More Cuts, page 1

National Alliance to End Homelessness, there are approximately 50,000 street youth in the United States each year, and those are just the ones that are there for the counts. There are many more cuts proposed, and they will keep being proposed until the economy improves. Although here at Mockingbird we recognize that this is a challenging environment, and that the legislature must find solutions, we believe strongly that the budget should not be balanced on the backs of vulnerable adolescents. Please contact your legislators and tell them that, if passed as proposed, these cuts will have a devastating effect on the youth of Washington.

SEA, page 3

how to navigate the world of academic financial aid is challenging. Moreover, securing financial aid is a high stakes fight for survival for homeless youth. Completing the constant paper work, and having the information necessary to ensure you are up to date with all the other complex steps related to remaining eligible for aid can be daunting. Most youth from intact homes have families that help them through these situations and tasks. Thankfully, homeless youth have SEA. In 2010, SEA supported over 450 students, and 116 students received $62,140.49 in scholarships. Approximately 90% of students in SEA programs eventually complete their program of study or degree.

My endless admiration for SEAs efforts to help marginalized youth get the access and support needed to thrive in education can be expressed by the words of a former client of SEA: “Seattle Education Access was not interested in sanitizing my life, choosing my friends, or assigning me their beliefs. They were only interested in one thing: giving me an opportunity for the hardships of being in care, as well as the resiliency of the youth who are put in challenging situations. Truly moving I’d say, not only speaking for myself but for all whom we involved.

Moving on, I know our chapter is excited to “take a break” and go ice-skating for our next meeting in January. All the hype and planning related to Advocacy Day is on our minds as we prepare to peacefully protest cuts to safe housing programs for youth in Olympia on February 10th. So in preparation we are taking a quick break to hit the ice and clear our heads to come up with more inspirational and powerful energy to bring to Advocacy Day.

Chapter Voice

It’s Really Different When You Grow Up

Knowing things as a child is one thing Growing up is however different. I remember friends I remember having dreams I remember having nightmares I remember wanting to be a kid forever. And times when I could not wait to grow up, because I did not want to have a bedtime anymore. There were days when I picked to be twenty-four, sixteen, thirteen, or twelve forever. I would watch others who were older than me and admire the perks of their age. It’s really different when you grow up. You just remember Remember wanting to be twelve, thirteen, sixteen, and twenty-one. I like those memories they’re things I hold dear to myself.

Sometimes You Got To…

Sometimes you got to be a leader; Sometimes you got to fail in order to succeed; Sometimes you got to make mistakes in order to move on in life. Sometimes you got to lose in order for life to go on. Every day you got to see yourself not as a failure, but as a leader. Every day you got to see your mistakes as steps closer to success.

Spokane Chapter Supports Youth Across the Country

Region 1 North (Spokane) — Region 1 North had the month of a lifetime in December! To kick off it, chapter leaders Kristina Thomason and I partnered with Sarah Mahaffy to present the Life Advocacy Training to our chapter at our last meeting. About 17 youth attended, and I believe that each and every one walked away with a new insight on how to speak for themselves in a mature way. As a group, youth in Region 1 are raising expectations for social workers and Child Welfare Administration to be effective, mature, and passionate advocacy.

The next event that occurred was the opportunity to have one of our members interviewed by Robyn Nance, KXLY’s local news anchor, as a result of the Level Ground video Place to Place (see Level Ground article in this issue). That experience was amazing because we got a grand tour of the studio. Speaking of media, Region 1 has taken the spotlight for regional press this month. Many youth and alumni including myself were interviewed by the Inlander Northwest, a local newspaper for the Spokane area. The article was an in-depth story about

Chapter Snapshots

On Thursday, December 15th, HEYMAC held a Life Advocacy 101 training. Ladyay, Garrett, and Valerie facilitated. Our new Resource Specialist, Kata Stores, attended and got to know everyone. As the night came to a close we raffled off Starbucks gift cards, gingerbread houses and laptop bag covers. We look forward to the New Year and getting ready to dominate Advocacy Youth Day!

The Mockingbird Society is excited to announce the hiring of Selona Willilt, who will serve as resource specialist for both the Olympia and Tacoma Chapters. Selona was born in Clarkston, WA, and raised in Portland, OR. For a while, she attended college in Berlin, Germany, and she later earned her BA in Psychology and a Master’s degree in Social Work. She comes to Mockingbird after seven and a half years working for the Native American Youth and Family Center in Portland, where she provided Independent Living Program services to Native American youth ages 14-24. Regarding this opportunity, Selona states, “As I have worked with foster youth over the years I have always enjoyed reading the Mockingbird Times, and I am very excited to be given the opportunity to continue to engage and support foster youth through the Mockingbird Youth Network.”

Regional A.C.T. F.I.R.S.T. celebrated Victor Gonzalez for being a great volunteer after aging out from Mockingbird Network. Victor was a member for two and a half years, when he turned 24 he decided to stay involved with Mockingbird by volunteering at our events.

Spokane chapter members enjoy same time an ice.