The Mockingbird Society Wins Grant

The Mockingbird Society Youth Advocacy 101 is a comprehensive life skills program designed to provide youth and young adults with the knowledge and tools they need to advocate for themselves and others. The program focuses on building advocacy skills year round and helps to improve the foster care system.

The Mockingbird Society, a non-profit organization, was awarded a grant from The Seattle Foundation to support the development and implementation of the Youth Advocacy 101 program. The grant will fund the program for the 2006-07 academic year, allowing the Mockingbird Society to continue its important work.

The grant will be used to fund the staff, materials, and resources needed to support the Youth Advocacy 101 program. The Mockingbird Society will also use the funds to help youth and young adults develop the skills they need to advocate for themselves and others.

The Mockingbird Society is committed to building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth. We believe that every young person deserves the opportunity to succeed professionally and positively in life. The Mockingbird Society is dedicated to providing youth with the tools and support they need to reach their full potential.

The Mockingbird Society Youth Advocacy 101 program is one of the many initiatives that the Mockingbird Society offers to support youth and young adults. The Mockingbird Society is a non-profit organization that works to improve the foster care system and help youth and young adults reach their full potential.

To learn more about the Mockingbird Society and its programs, visit our website at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-KIDS (5437).

NSBE Conference

The National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) is a non-profit organization that promotes the education and professional development of African American engineers. The 2007 NSBE Conference was held in Columbus, Ohio, and provided an opportunity for NSBE members to network, learn, and share knowledge.

The conference included a variety of workshops, panel discussions, and keynote speeches. The keynote speaker was Dr. Lonnie Johnson, the inventor of the Johnson Space Station. Dr. Johnson spoke about his career and the importance of diversity in the engineering field.

The conference also included a number of workshops, including one on the impact of technology on society. The workshop explored the ways in which technology is changing the world and the ethical implications of these changes.

The NSBE Conference provided a valuable opportunity for NSBE members to network, learn, and share knowledge. The conference was a great success, and we look forward to the next one in 2008.
Happy Summer to all of you! What a glorious time of year for children of all ages to enjoy. Parties celebrating the achievements of those graduating from high school and college seem to dominate the early weeks of June. We at The Mockingbird Society want to express our congratulations to all graduates but especially those who have navigated the foster care system and still managed to secure such a wonderful achievement.

I want to express a special note of congratulations to Marie Goines who is our newest staff member at The Mockingbird Society. Marie will be assisting Dr. Wanda Hackett and me in the replication of the Mockingbird Family Model and I am so pleased that she has joined us as the eighth staff member of The Mockingbird Society. Marie graduates this month from the University of Washington with her Masters in Social Work. Marie is an alumna of the foster care system and she comes to us with lots of smarts and passion about our work.

It is clear that her life mission is aligned with our organizational mission: build a world class child welfare system to serve our most vulnerable children and youth.

On another note, I want to send a major “Thank You” to the Seattle Foundation grant and the youth from both the Seattle Foundation and The Mockingbird Society for bill signing.

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

$1,000 + Protector $85
$500 - $990 Champion $75
$250 - $500 Advocate $55
$50 - $250 Supporter $25
$25 Contributor $25

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.

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 $8 and $11 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 is distributed and read by more than 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.

Dear Jim,

I worked for Children’s Administration in Grays Harbor County and I have recently had some contact with your agency’s youth panel experts. We have had two different events where some of your kids have come down to speak about their experiences in foster care and it was amazing and inspiring both times.

We have heard lots about your foster care model and are very interested in bringing that down to our little town. We are working on some serious recruitment and retention efforts and did not know where to start on this model. If you have any contacts, ideas for direction, etc, your insight would be so beneficial. One of our foster parents may be contacting you regarding bringing this model to our area.

You are doing wonderful things.

Thank you,

Trisha Woodward
Youth Services: Wacky Age Limits by Jessica Martin

Youth Services: I would change age limits. I see too many young kids ages 13 - 17 running away from home, claiming “this is way more fun than being home.” But it isn’t fun. Fun is laughter, and living on the streets, sleeping on cold cement in the freezing rain, is by no means a laugh- ing matter. These kids have homes to get to, many with parents that worry sick about them. In fact, there have been a few times I have seen parents come out to ask random kids to come home, either their son or daughter, to tell them that they are not mad, just worried.

I believe that the age limits of drop in centers just push these kids to stay on the unsafe streets. Drop in centers give kids a sense of security, often keeping the younger ones away from their safer homes. For the few cases where younger kids are homeless, they do have other options like under-age shelters. In fact, many of these shelters do not let the kids roam around on the streets. With the exception of important priorities like school or work, these shelter kids are not allowed out during the day. This eliminates their need for drop ins.

Yet, the street is the only thing left for some people, their only option. They are even too young for foster care and/or have been kicked out of their home, and have nowhere else to go. I, personally, am about to age out of most everything, and have been living legally in hous- ing, but if that had taken much longer, I would be screwed right now. I would be left sitting outside all day, hungry at times, for I cannot work once a week but cannot carry enough all week around with me.

Currently, many drop in centers allow ages 14-17 to 21-23, depending on the spe- cific drop in center. I would change the ages to 17-25 because many people feel stuck on the streets due to having aged out of drop-in centers.

I believe the most notable of those who are successful are the ones who give back to those who were in the same situation. I had the opportunity to see Victoria Row- ell speak at Treehouse. She is known for her role as Drusilla on The Young and the Restless. She is also an author. But the most important point of her lecture was that she is an alumnus of foster care.

Wikipedia states: “Rowell was born in Portland, Maine. Her biological mother, Doro- thy Rowell, was Caucasian...Her father was African-American. Rowell knew very little about her father. Dorothy Rowell, who suffered from schizophrenia, took a taxi to a hospital to be treated for her illness and left behind a two-year-old Rowell with two older siblings (ages eight and seven).”

“While living in Maine with foster mother Agatha Armstead, Rowell, then 8, began bal- let lessons...Rowell received scholarships to the School of American Ballet, the American Ballet Theatre and the Dance Theatre of Harlem...”

In May 2006, Rowell was awarded an hon- orary Doctorate of Humane Letters by the Uni- versity of Southern Maine in recognition of her work for the benefit of foster children.1

Rowell also has some very powerful programs she has done within the commu- nity. The Rowell’s Foster Children’s Positive Plan is a program that gets children in- volved with arts, sports, music, and other things to help these children prepare to age out of foster care. Rowell understands that there is not always going to be a home for these youth, so giving positive alternatives al- lows them to develop intangible skills and necessary traits to help them get along in this society and give back to the people.

Rowell came and gave us a powerful testimony about her life and she gave everyone in the room a little bit of hope through her smile, her quick wit, and her mes- sage. To see someone that you have seen on television several times is motivating. I had no idea that she had been in foster care. She even took the time to speak up and read some of their poetry and spoken word to give an example of the possibili- ties of what people can do with their life. It was an honor for her to tell me that she saw a beat behind my poetry.

After hearing her motivational words, I signed up for a program that will allow me to put some beats behind some of my work. Most people do not know how much influ- ence a single sentence can have. It honestly isn’t even the greatest of the ones I have ever heard yet it was a very beneficial and true message. It is a message of strength, courage, and determination. Because she made it and came back here and honestly and truly acted like she cared about us, I felt for a brief moment that I was part of the group because that she was talking to me. That is power- ful. Even better, she came and gave every- body signed copies of her book The Women Who Raised Me: A Memoir—William Morrow, 2007.

It has an inspirational quote that I would like to share about her experience with foster care: “Accepting that life was never perfect and rarely manifested according to my own or other people’s preconceptions, I felt happier than anyone could understand to finally be a part of a family, to be a Mrs. Somebody.”2

This means so much because this is the stage in so many people’s lives that is very hard to reach. So many people work their hard- est to get to this stage but it takes time. To really be a family will not be perfect and things don’t happen the way you want them to be perfect for me. I highly recommend her book, from this powerful, self-sufficient woman. Thank You Victoria Rowell.

Vanessa Hunt

About a week ago, I was hired to work at the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) based practice. The organization was with us in developing on- line technology. It has an inspirational quote that I am snowing right now, which is even crazier!!!

I got to have the day off that I came here so that I could sleep. The rooms are bunk beds, mismatched furniture and gary carpet. It is like a mile high for a camp. I am surprised by the recreation room even more because there is a big screen TV and a video game at the only one we have. We are all being dropped off the face of the world of ser-

Where the Wilderness Grows

Vanessa Hunt

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1. Mockingbird Times, June 2007
2. www.treasure.net/ASpine/13055821.html

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Why did you choose The Mockingbird Society as the place you wanted to continue your work with youth and families? I was drawn to The Mockingbird Soci-
ety because the vision was with my own. The organization is making rapid, tangible changes in the child wel-
fare system. It is a real honor to join The Mockingbird Society in building a world class foster care system. I am also excited about the opportunity to break new ground with this organization as it is an innovative, evidence based practice.

What are you most looking forward to about your new position as Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) Coordinator? This is a dream position for me. I never imagined that I would find a job that al- lowed me to use my experience as a social worker and my years of software experi-
ence. I am most looking forward to the op-
portunity to work with the wonderful staff here at The Mockingbird Society but also looking forward to working with the Hub Home families participating in the MFM as they partner with us in developing on-
line technology.

What do you think your first year as the MFM Coordina-
tor involves? My goals include con-
tinuing to learn about the MFM and its outcomes for both of our agencies and also reac-
ting to our vision. My Primary respon-
sibility this year is to lead the design team developing the Hub Home’s data management system as well as coordinat-
ing support for MFM families. I am looking for-
toward a year full of learning and growth.

Q&A With New Staff Member Maria Goines

Mockingbird Times, June 2007
Lonely Girl

Walking at night cold and alone with nobody besides you, because all your friends decided to get stoned and are drunk. The rain is pouring down and you feel the chill going through your body not knowing where to crash. Should you go to the abandoned house that you got lost in, or the cold bench in the park that you froze your little body at? Because you know that you don’t want to walk and wander around the city and get jumped or raped so your best choice is to go home where you are fairly sure you are not ignored and the love was never there for you and you got used to it. Since you were disliked because the one child that your parents really wanted was your little brother. So you ended being hated because you’re a girl! And never was accepted even though it was not always like that. It happened when your money had hid your little brother and you were just a girl not a boy. So walking alone at night thinking about where to go, the choice is up to you and nobody is going to choose it for you, but if it was your choice where would you go?

Away ‘n’ No Longer Missin’ You

Away n no longer missin you
Do you know the feeling so overpowering You don’t want it around but as bad As you want to let go you shake it Yeah it’s a true feeling we all known

Away n no longer missin you
What can I say at one time his was mine
Or so I thought, did he ever love me at all
Are we willing to pay the price for love
Was I ever ready for the price of love

Away n no longer missin you
I feel your absence each day and dayz
Turned to years and years I changed but
What did it matter I was your stranger
Funny, huh I thought the same thing

Away n no longer missin you
It’s funny how I never thought of you as a Stranger, but exactly what you were Cause even if I did, we’re the same people
We’re two people with different mindset

Away n no longer missin you
I say it, but know it’s not true cause
Even if I wanted to lie and fool you
I won’t fool myself I know I still
LOVE YOU even if I try denying it

Walking at night cold and alone with nobody besides you, because all your friends decided to get stoned and are drunk. The rain is pouring down and you feel the chill going through your body not knowing where to crash. Should you go to the abandoned house that you got lost in, or the cold bench in the park that you froze your little body at? Because you know that you don’t want to walk and wander around the city and get jumped or raped so your best choice is to go home where you are fairly sure you are not ignored and the love was never there for you and you got used to it. Since you were disliked because the one child that your parents really wanted was your little brother. So you ended being hated because you’re a girl! And never was accepted even though it was not always like that. It happened when your money had hid your little brother and you were just a girl not a boy. So walking alone at night thinking about where to go, the choice is up to you and nobody is going to choose it for you, but if it was your choice where would you go?

When I turned eighteen this past Oc- tober, I thought it was the start of everything I had in mind. I was starting over and no longer a street kid. I was going to school and my life quickly changed. I started living with my aunt and going to school, I had a stable home and I was able to focus on school. I was able to get my GED and start on my path to a better future.

Remember:
June is Gay Pride Month!
The anniversary of the Stonewall Riots is a time for celebrating Gay/Lesbian/ Bisexual/Transgendered life, community and achievement.
Seattle is host to a week-long calendar of events culminating in a parade through downtown and a festival at Seattle Center on Sunday, June 24th. For more information, visit seattlepride.org.
Check local listings for events in other communities.

It’s a Hard-Knock Life

I went to stay with my cousin for a few weeks whom I hadn’t really gotten along with before, but I felt I was in a different place and I thought she was, too. I was wrong. What I did was used meth for the couple of weeks that I was there. Everyone and everybody was the same except they all had kids, were locked up, or dead because they had overdosed. What was most frustrating was that a few of my family members started talking negatively towards me. This got on my nerves. Everyone around there was no miserable and I felt it. I even felt worse knowing I was falling backwards big time, and the longer I stayed there, the more I was feeling hope- less and disappointed in myself. Why I did what I did was because of all the things that were going on, in and out of my mind. I felt I was stuck.

I wasn’t stuck, though. I knew exactly what to do. So, I got all my things and left my cousin’s home. Back in Seattle, I had no immediate place to go, but by the grace of God, a good friend helped me and let me stay at her house for a few days. Then, I found an after school shelter to go to. I realized that the stresses that I thought I couldn’t deal with before became worse because I had run away from everything.

What I would like to say to those who have to make hard decisions every day, to those who have to deal with foster care, or are about to age out, is: before making a huge decision just think about what you are going to do before you make a choice that can change you for life, try to take full advantage of your case manager by asking questions about resources and housing. Also, I learned that you have a good support system, and in order to get that, just reach out to people. Even if it’s that caseworker you can’t stand, just bear it and get what you need for yourself because you’re important and deserve the best. Trust me—to live and deal with frustra- tions is the only way you get stronger and don’t end up in a rut like me. Mistakes are to be made but just be aware of the outcome of your decisions. Finally, have a back up plan because I feel that I had stayed and dealt with things I wouldn’t have to come back with ten times the problems.

Also, what I would like to address is while I grew up in the system, I was moved around a lot. I grew up in Eastern Washington. I was fifteen years old and was going through a lot. I joined a gang because it made me feel safe as if I was important. I came to Seattle where I experienced cultural shock. What I noticed was that a lot of young kids were doing things to get money like selling drugs, and young girls would sell their bodies just for anything they could get their hands on. The differ- ent thing about Seattle is that a lot of guys would talk to girls who acted like hoochies, and call the girls who respected them- selves squares. In Eastern Washington, the girls who treated themselves with respect got treated, and the ones who they treated themselves like whores got treated badly or were neglected. I wanted to go back to Eastern Washington because I missed my life, my respect, and love. I didn’t know Seattle that well. I was stuck. I was on the streets for a while, scared to ask anyone for help. I felt like an outsider and wanted to go back to my luxurious life. I thought that since I was aging out, no one could tell me what to do. So, I tried to go back and found out that the life I used to have in Eastern Washington was gone. Now that I have made my new life here, it’s hard because everyone seems to have nice things and live well. What I see gets me off track sometimes and makes me think about my past life. Some days it feels as if I’m stuck between two worlds.

What I realize, though, is that all my hard work in the last year has paid off, and I do have things. It’s not things that matter, it’s the good heart that I have, the smile that brightens up the room, the good friends that keep their promises, and the people that pop in and out of my life to tell me what a wonderful young lady I am. To me, nothing’s more luxurious than people who support me and lift me up. I am going to make it. Things aren’t perfect but, come on, what’s perfect? I am now at the YMCA’s Young Adults in Transition living program. It’s okay, but I just moved in so I’m still getting used to things.

What I’m proud of is that I have done so much from my experiences and the hard- ships I have gone through—the good and bad. I have learned I can achieve anything because I have come so far with my life!

Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee is the inspira- tion for our name, The Mockingbird Society. Atticus, the widowed father of Jem and Scout, is 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 eat your crops or anything; they 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, to sing, to fly.

The Mockingbird Society: First Annual Luncheon

is Tuesday October 2, 2007.

If you are interested in attending, be a table captain or an event sponsor, or would like to volunteer, please contact Darcie at (206) 523-5437 or by email at darcie@mockingbirdsociety.org.

We believe that building a world-class foster care system through collaboration, advocacy and innovation is possible! With the help of caring community members like you, we can make it happen.

The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but carved by the ones we are creating. The future is possible! With the help of caring community members like you, we can make it happen.

~ John Schaar

Creative Corner

Congratulations, Sam!

Mockingbird Society Senior Youth Representative Samuel Martin was recently published in the Sunday, May 13, 2007 issue of The Seattle Post-Intelligencer. His article, “Listening to children has powerful impact on them” provides a youth perspective on the necessity of providing legal representation for youth in the court system. The entire text of the piece can be found at seattlepi.nwsource.com/opinion/315380_focusgaultside13.html?useur=rs. Great job, Sam!