

Mockingbird Times,



Recipient of 2005 Congressional Angels in Adoption Award
Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth.

May 2006

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation

Volume VI, Issue 5

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-KIDS (5437)

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National Foster Care Month

GUEST ARTICLE:
**REPRESENTATIVE
JIM McDERMOTT**
7TH CONGRESSIONAL
DISTRICT



May is Foster Care Appreciation Month. It is a time to recognize and thank the countless unsung American heroes among you who advocate and sacrifice every day on behalf of children. It is also a time to rededicate ourselves to improving what we can do as a nation. Recently, I was honored to deliver the keynote address at the Child Welfare League of America meeting in Washington, D.C. Let me share some of that address because it touches what we are trying to achieve together.

"Good morning and welcome to Washington, D.C.

"As I look around the room I see a small army of advocates, and let me just say that I'm here to enlist!

"The sound of silence is the toughest challenge we face in improving the child welfare system.

"A few weeks ago, the President delivered his State of the Union address, but vulnerable children and vulnerable families didn't warrant a mention. The sound of silence.

Mainstream media will spend more time on a wardrobe malfunction than on the rise in child poverty. The sound of silence.

"Another half-a-million American kids have fallen into poverty, but you'd be hard pressed to find that in the daily newspaper, and it would be harder still to find the outrage

on an editorial page.

"Congress, quite frankly, doesn't fare any better.

"What Congress has done, does not measure up to its rousing claims of self-congratulatory success.

"But this is not about assigning blame. Children don't need to hear what's not being done.

"They do need to know that someone cares about them.

"So here you are, a small army of caring, dedicated Americans, hopelessly outnumbered, without enough money, time and resources.

"What are the odds that you can make a difference? Better than you might think.

"As Margaret Mead, one of my heroes, said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

"Adversity, setbacks and uncertainty are what we make of them. I choose to make them instruments of change.

"If we had listened to all the people who said we shouldn't protect one another, we wouldn't have Social Security protecting our distinguished citizens.

"And today, if we listen to all the people who will say that the problems of welfare families, foster children, neglected children, the poor, disadvantaged and disabled are the unfortunate by-products of bad personal choices, we must fall silent.

"We must choose either to follow the path of least resistance- or to change the course of history.

"One way is easy; the other way is ours to inspire.

"Together, we've got to break through the sound of silence if we are to rescue millions of

American children living in poverty, living in foster homes, living in broken homes, living in the richest nation in history.

"We can make a difference. You already have.

"Over the past several years, the rate of child victimization has declined significantly from its peak in the early and mid 1990s.

"But we know that you are stretched way too thin. There are not enough hours in the day, not enough people in the field, and not nearly enough resources in the agencies.

"Despite heroic efforts, reality catches up.

"Congress can — and should — do something about it.

"I strongly oppose the President's proposed budget cuts to the Social Services Block Grant.

"States should not be punished for making progress in containing our foster care rolls.

"We know that too many foster children are bouncing from one foster home to another.

"We know that many child welfare agencies can't provide sufficient services to prevent foster placement disruptions.

"And we also know that most communities do not have a pool of foster parents large enough to meet the demand.

"Besides more families, we need more opportunities for older youth.

"Now is a time to acknowledge the needs, to learn from our success and move forward, together.

"I think we need to make subsidized guardianship an option in all states for relatives who are willing and able to make

McDERMOTT CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

New Clinic for Youth in Foster Care Now Open

**JAMICA
HENDERSON**



May is National Foster Care Month and around this time of year we at Mockingbird Society would like to acknowledge this month by updating you on happenings with foster care. I had an interview with a woman named Miryah Hibbard who is the program coordinator for a clinic specifically for foster youth. The name of the clinic is **Care for Foster Children**. I wanted to interview her so more people in our community can know what they have offered to them especially foster care youth.

Jamica Henderson: How long has this clinic been open?

Miryah Hibbard: The clinic has been open since April 2005, so it's been a little over a year.

Jamica: How is the clinic funded?

Myriah: The funding for our clinic comes from **Mckinlay Trust** which is a part of

Seattle Foundation and Northwest Children's Fund.

Jamica: What encouraged you to become the program coordinator of a clinic for foster care youth?

Miryah: I have worked in the medical field for twelve years. I decided I wanted a change and in that change I wanted it to be challenging, rewarding, and exciting.

Jamica: Had you worked with foster youth before working at this clinic?

Miryah: I worked at a pediatric care center that had some foster care youth involved but not to this degree.

Jamica: What have you learned about youth in foster care since working at this clinic?

Miryah: I have learned a lot. The main thing I've learned is how to look for resources out there in our community for the foster youth and sometimes it can be hard to find them but when I find them I know it's a way to help our youth and that's what I am here for.

Jamica: How many youth come to receive health care and do they and their caretakers seem to appreciate having a special clinic that meets their needs?

Myriah: Yes the caretakers appreciate them a lot. All together we serve 40 kids. Our

biggest compliment is the time we spend with the youth.

Jamica: What are some of the clinic's differences when compared to others?

Myriah: The difference is the time we spend with the patients. We have been able to make connections with resources in our community that deal with foster youth.

Jamica: While working at this clinic have you learned anything new that you didn't know about foster care youth?

Myriah: Oh Yeah; the biggest thing that I have learned is that once a foster child is put in a stable and loving home their behavior and development reflects that.

Jamica: What do you love most about working at the clinic?

Myriah: I love the families and the kids. I like to see the children when they are reunited with their family or when a new family is being created.

If you want to learn more about this clinic or if you want to join, you can visit them at Harborview Medical 325 9th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104. Their new director is Naomi Sugar and you can reach them at 206-744-9514.

Letter from the Editor

JIM THEOFELIS



May is National Foster Care Month and the Mockingbird Society is proud to be working with the thousands of organizations and individuals committed to improving the foster care system in Washington and across the USA. Each and every day, a state case worker goes beyond the call of duty to ensure a child gets the services s/he needs, every evening a Grandparent helps their Grandchild with homework and the bedtime routine, and every night a foster parent answers the phone and opens their home to a child or teen needing an "emergency placement". Everyday and every night children and adolescents cope with the reality that, for whatever reason, they are unable to live with their biological parents. National Foster Care month is an opportunity to remind each of us that we all have something to contribute toward strengthening foster care, whether that is being a foster parent, volunteering at an organization that provides foster care services, mentoring or any number of other ideas and activities. National Foster Care

month is also a great opportunity to give appreciation to those foster parents that opened their hearts and their homes to the half-a-million children and adolescents in foster care across the United States. While most Americans clearly see the benefit of having a quality educational and health care system, too few recognize how vital it is for this nation to have a foster care system that has the capacity, competency and resources to ensure that children and adolescents in need are able to thrive and not just survive. The current situation is one that will certainly go down in modern history as the shame of our time, allowed to continue only because of the politics of class and race. For example, although there is no evidence that demonstrates that race is a factor in the prevalence of abuse or neglect, there is a great deal of evidence that children of color are more likely to be placed into foster care, experience a higher number of placements and remain in foster care longer than their Caucasian peers. National Foster Care Month is not about forgetting about the shortcomings of the current child welfare system; rather, each of us should invest in ways to strengthen that system as if one of our own children's lives depended on it.

 Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

McDERMOTT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

a permanent commitment to children in foster care.

"We need to recognize that our support for vulnerable children doesn't end when they leave foster care. We need to ensure that children thrive in a permanent arrangement.

"That means we need strong, effective child welfare agencies, and we need the very best people on the front lines.

"You prove the best can be attracted; we've got to make sure we keep you.

"I want to see manageable caseloads, professional development opportunities, and family wages as your base, not your dream.

"I have sponsored legislation that would provide grants to states to implement loan forgiveness programs for child welfare workers.

"We can have innovation and accountability.

"When the Congress passes a budget bill that takes federal dollars for

kinship care, Medicaid and child support enforcement in order to give a tax holiday for the affluent, it means our attitudes and our values are upside down.

"Vulnerable children need the American dream, and that's neither Democrat nor Republican. Party labels won't solve this, but party leaders can.

"There are at least 12 and a half million vulnerable children in America.

"If we could hear the children who don't have enough to eat, who don't have a bed or even a home, who need love and protection, we'd know the sound of silence is the sound of children who need our help, but don't have a voice.

"We're that voice. This is no time to be timid or quiet.

"Never doubt that a small group of committed individuals can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.

"It's your Capitol Hill Day. Don't take No for an answer. The children are counting on us.

"Thank you."

Look Who's Flying



Jim Theofelis, Executive Director and Founder of the Mockingbird Society, has recently received recognition for his dedication and commitment to improving the lives of children, youth and families involved in the child welfare system through advocacy and system reform. The **Children's Alliance** will present him with the *2006 Voices for Children Award* at their Annual Luncheon on June 1 at 11 a.m., at Qwest Field. Jim is also the recent recipient of the *Lee Ann Miller Award* by the **Children's Justice Interdisciplinary Task Force** for making a profound impact in promoting the safety, protection and well being of children.

Jim has organized, led and allied with Washington State's strongest supporters of children's issues as well as provided the forum and training for

youth and families to become involved in policy reform. "Through our advocacy efforts, training and partnerships with other organizations, Mockingbird Society has become a source for individuals and communities from across Washington State to connect and share resources to improve the programs and policies that affect our most vulnerable children and families. I am proud of the accomplishments we have made together, and am convinced that our efforts, commitment and concern for policy reform will help give those involved in the child welfare system an opportunity to thrive," said Jim Theofelis.

To register to attend the Voices for Children Luncheon, please visit www.childrensalliance.org.

Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, 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 us give young people a safe place to nest and sing.

Thank You's

Thomas and Gina Rembiesa; Paola Maranan and Paul Wirsing; Dr. Eric Trupin; Justice Bobbe Bridge and Jon Bridge; Michael Oliver and Janet Osborn; Brenda and Bob Oliver; James and Mary Theofelis; Denise Toal; Mark Marshall; Judy and Joseph Conforti; Virginia Blayney; Christine Stoll and Adam Jundt; Jean Roberts; Kathryn Brooks; Stella L. Pitts and Associates; Anne Fortun; Kim Ambrose; Steve and Judi Finney; Dorothy Armstrong; Chris Marsh, Attorney; Mark Wittow at Preston, Gates, & Ellis; Christine Jackson; Jana Heyd and the Children's Justice Interdisciplinary Task Force; and Spectrum Dance Theatre.

A special thanks to: Linda Breneman and Casey Family Programs

All incoming Letters to the Editor should be addressed to Mockingbird Editorial Staff and will be opened by Editorial Staff. All incoming correspondence to reporting staff under 18 years of age will be opened first by Mockingbird Editorial Staff.

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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 involved in homelessness and foster care. 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 Mockingbird Society are paid between \$7.63 and \$8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 50,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the U.S.A, 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 2006 The Mockingbird Society.

A Mockingbird Inside Your Mailbox

Make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable youth and support the Mockingbird Society!

Donations may be tax deductible and all donors receive the *Mockingbird Times*. Enclosed, please find my check made payable to Mockingbird Society in the amount of: \$ _____

Suggested Donations:

\$ 1,000+.....Protector \$500-999.....Caretaker \$250-500.....Organizations \$50+.....Supporter \$25.....Foster Parent

NAME _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to: The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South Suite 240, Seattle WA 98144, or donate online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

Please bill me for the amount indicated.

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.

Two-Spirit History: Building Cultural Bridges

**MISTY
Lou Cook**



I sat in a Seattle café with **Raven HeavyRunner**, the founder and leader of the Northwest Two-Spirit Society. As we sat and drank our overpriced urban Morning Glory Chais, we began to speak about ancient traditions, legends, myths that weren't myths after all. Raven described a spiritual world to me, and explained to me what it meant to be Two-Spirited, in his personal experience. In the most basic European terminology, to be "Two-Spirited" is to be both indigenous to North America and LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Queer). Raven said that to be Two-Spirited is also "A responsibility to people and the community, and to understand that we are a part of them as a whole."

Raven began to unfold the hidden history and traditions of the misunderstood Two-Spirited people, and I began taking notes.

Raven, a Blackfoot Two-Spirit who is highly regarded for his academic articles about Two-Spirit issues, told me that, historically, Two-Spirits were respected healers, peace-keepers, story-tellers, leaders and prophets. Depending on the tribe, female-bodied Two-Spirits regularly took on traditionally "male" or "masculine" roles, such as being a hunter, vision quest guide, trader, council member, prophet, medicine person or chief. They were also known to lead peace missions. According to Raven (and many other sources), "Two-Spirit" is the English translation for the Ojibwa words "niizh manitoag", meaning "two-spirits." Nearly every tribe in North America had a name for the members of their community that were Two-Spirited. There were thousands of terms used to describe the LGBTQ Native American, or "Two-

spirit." Raven is A'kiihka'si /Aki Skassi, Blackfeet for "woman-like." Male-bodied Two-Spirits, along with their roles as healers, medicine people and prophets, were also known for being orators and keepers of sacred songs, and tribal historians. They were commonly sought out to arrange marriages and give sacred names to newborns, something particularly interesting, since in present-day colonial America, same-sex marriage and adoption is illegal.

Most Two-Spirit history has been lost, overlooked or forgotten, even in tribes that used to revere Two-Spirits as holy people with a sacred spirituality. It seems that most people have forgotten who Two-Spirits are and how important, even vital, their roles are in society. "There was a young Lakota Two-Spirit", Raven began, "and he was sad and embarrassed because his peers kept teasing him". The young Two-Spirit told this to an elder, "They tease me and call me 'Winkte, winkte, winkte!!!'. I am sick of it...". They were calling him "winkte" in a mean way, as if being winkte were a bad thing, something to be ashamed of and hidden. The elder asked the young Two-Spirit, "Do you know what winkte means?". "No," replied the frustrated young man. "Winkte means, 'They who connect us to the spiritual world'. It is a sacred word, and a sacred life, and it is not something to be laughed at about". Raven HeavyRunner went on, and told me that after the young Two-Spirit learned what it meant to be a "winkte", he was proud and happy to be a winkte. "That was now 4 or 5 years ago ...", recalled Raven.

The word Two-Spirit is meant to describe individuals who are "often viewed as having two spirits occupying one body." (1) Two-Spirits historically had the gift and the ability to see life objectively, with no gender bias or prejudice. In other words, they were able to see the world through the eyes of both a male and a female spirit, simultaneously! Raven told me that "To be Two-Spirited is having and knowing your place in society." Nearly

every tribe in pre-colonial North America had distinct gender and social roles in their tribes for Two-Spirited people. Tribes that were indigenous to North America often viewed a Two-Spirit person as a leader, a spiritual being who could heal, see the future and connect with the Great Spirit/Universe.

Because of the standard social education/conditioning in America's public schools, we're taught to be more comfortable with time schedules, bottled water and money than with nature, our own lives and bodies. We're definitely not taught about Two-Spirits, working class struggle or International Cultural History. We're taught to ignore our innermost desires and spirituality, in order to "fit in" with (homogenized) social groups. So many important roots, ancestral histories and legacies have been forgotten, or not taught (about) in schools. As a Two-Spirit person, I feel it is essential that I provide some resources for any Two-Spirits out there that need them. Raven recommended the following books for re-connecting and learning about Two-Spirit people: "Spirit In the Flesh" by Walter Williams and "Two-Spirit People." Stories about houses created specifically for Two-Spirit activities, workshops and story-telling flooded out of Raven's mouth and into my eager ears and mind. Did you know that, in some indigenous tribes, there were

3, 8, 16 or even more different genders and gender identities? Neither did I, until I met Raven HeavyRunner.

May is foster care month, and I believe this article is very relevant because when you lose your culture, heritage and history, you lose your cultural identity and therefore may feel like a "cultural orphan" with no roots to ground you. The devastation of losing your cultural community can be confusing, painful and hard. While researching this article, I was re-connected to a spiritual and cultural identity that I never knew existed, or had perhaps temporarily forgotten about. Finding my cultural roots helped me grow and realize that anybody could be Two-Spirited, just like anybody could be Buddhist, Christian, Rastafarian or any other kind of spirituality. Spirituality and cultural identity are personal, you are what you are. Whether you are Black, White, Asian, Mexican or Tibetan, you could be Two-Spirited ... it doesn't matter how you look on the outside, it's how you feel within your heart and soul that matters the most. Being Two-Spirited is acknowledging the inherent spirituality that comes with being LGBTQ. Being Two-Spirited is realizing, through your gender neutral eyes, that love is the bridge to all relationships, partnerships and romances.

(1) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two-spirit>

Mental Health Promotion for Children

You can help prevent mental illness...

Although many kids in the foster care system have serious mental health problems, there are ways to promote their mental health to prevent those problems from occurring.

"**Bright Futures in Practice: Mental Health**" is a reference guide that we can all use to help kids in the child welfare system.

Training Location and Date

Seattle 2100 24th Ave S. Suite 240
Seattle, WA 98144

Friday July 7, 2006
9 a.m.—4 p.m.

For More Information

<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/ca/BFFC%20Flyer%20General.pdf>



Mockingbird staff excited for spring and longer, brighter days.



Jamica Henderson recites poetry at recent Seattle Public Library open-mic event.

Celebrate Family!

Free total experience day!

A special King County event for children living in foster/kinship care due to substance use by family members.

Hosted Brunch & Program For Youth & Their Families

Saturday, May 20, 2006
10 a.m.—12 p.m.

Science Fiction Museum & Hall of Fame
325 5th Avenue North (Level 3)
Seattle, WA 98109

Learn about the disease of alcoholism & other drug addiction.
Find out how adults can support children & youth to be healthy and drug-free.

SPACE IS LIMITED! R.S.V.P. for this event by May 10, 2006, call 206-296-5250!

National Foster Care Month Events

Saturday, May 6

Noon-5pm

At the base of the Space Needle

Join Casey Family Programs in celebrating 40 years of fostering families and fostering change.

Saturday, May 13

Noon-5pm

At the base of the Space Needle

For youth transitioning out of foster care: Come and learn how to fulfill your dreams. Find out about education and employment opportunities. Get pointers on preparing to age out of the system and hear from alumni of foster care.

Tuesday, May 15

10 AM - 12 PM

Columbia Room at the Capitol Building in Olympia

Official State Foster Care Celebration — Come join as we recognize and celebrate foster parents and foster care.

Saturday, May 20

Noon-5pm

At the base of the Space Needle

Learn what you can do to make a difference in the lives of children in foster care. There are many ways to help. Hear from motivational speakers and participate in fun activities for children.

For more information, visit www.fostercaremonth.org.

Savings Accounts for Foster Youth

Treehouse, the YMCA and United Way of King County will offer Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) for foster and former foster youth ages 15-20. Youth can save money for the purchase of a computer, car, health care, tuition or rent. The IDA program doubles what youth save (for example, a youth saving \$500 will receive an additional \$1,000!). Financial incentives will be provided for youth working toward independent living goals. Eligibility criteria and applications will be available May 15 and completed applications will be due June 16. For more information, contact Seán Walsh at the YMCA Independent Living Program at (206) 749-7540 or ilp@ts.seattleyymca.org.

My Prom

JAMICA HENDERSON

My experience in foster care has had its good times and its bad times. I went in foster-care at the age of 14 and I am now 19 years old. I ended up in foster-care because my mother had a nervous break down and could not care for us at the time. I lived with the same foster parents the whole time I was in care. The biggest hardship of being in state care for me was being separated from my family. Sometimes I would be ashamed because I never thought that I would be in foster-care. My family never faced a problem where CPS had to get involved, so when I was put in the system I didn't know what it was.

Once I entered the foster care system, it was not so bad at first. That was until I discovered that if I wanted to see my family, there would be rules and I did not like that. There would be times I would want to see my siblings and if I did not call and talk to my case worker to set an appointment there was no visit. We could not be alone with each other; we had to have someone there watching us and that made me feel uncomfortable.

After three years of being in foster-care, I knew that I was not going back home to my mother. So, my next focus was my prom. I realized that just because I was in foster-care, I could still have the prom of my dreams. For my prom, I wanted my mom to be there physically and emotionally.

I was a little scared as time came closer and closer to my prom and graduation. I felt that since I did not get a chance to go back home with my mother, that we could look forward and not back; starting with her coming to my prom and graduation. She took me to get my nails, toes and eyebrows done and to me that was the most important thing ever. This was a special occasion to my mother, so she wanted my nails to be different. I normally just get the tips done, but my mother wanted the whole nail filled. My dress was hunter

green with thin spaghetti straps to hold it up and the bottom came out in a puff. My nails were so pretty: they did a design with hunter green, gold and white. Once I finished getting my nails done, it was time to get my hair done. My sister went with me to get my hair done and she was taking pictures from every angle. When I finished, it was time to go home and get ready for my evening. When I went home and got dressed that put the icing on the cake. My dress made everything look so beautiful; from my nails to my hair. I felt like a pretty Barbie and everyone said I looked ready to walk the runway.

To have my mother be there most of my life and be taken away from her right as I was entering high-school, had me confused, scared and wondering "will she be there in the end". As time went on, my mother had always told me that she was going to be there for my prom and what do you know, she was. My mother didn't know how much it meant to me, but when I told her all I wanted was for her to be there for my prom and graduation, she did her part. To this day, she is still there and continues to be a really big part of my life.

When I graduated from high-school, I had three scholarships. One of my scholarships is the **Gates Achievers Foundation** and I have that for four years. Then I have the **Mt. Baker Scholarship** and the **African American Dollar for Scholars**. My goal in life is to become a registered trauma nurse. I have always had the passion to help others and this would give me the perfect opportunity to do that. Being in foster-care has helped to keep me focused on what I want in my life. It has shown me that I can do and be anything I want to be if I put my mind to it. It has also made me a stronger person both inside and out. Surviving the system has also shown me that no matter what you go through in life, you make it through any situation you face if you believe in yourself.

Get Published — Get Paid!

We are looking for 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 published in the Times, contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org. For more info and to check us out, go to www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

Truthfully Speaking: A Message to the Departing High School Senior

SHERRELL DORSEY

I traveled all the way to New York City to recreate myself. My plans to attend college outside of Seattle were part of a dream that I had since the beginning of my freshman year in high school. While the notion of independence, growth and experience were all very enticing, in truth, my desire to leave my home-town was a means to run away from a cloudy past, mundane and predictable community and the feeling of being torn between my adoptive and biological families. My thoughts were that in New York no one would know anything about the adopted, baggage-carrying, me. I would be a fresh face with no past and plenty of future. After graduating, configuring college tuition packages and planning travel arrangements, I would be on my way to the new me. Next stop: New York City to pursue the new and illustrious college-life of Sherrell 2005.

Being in a big city has been great thus far. I am completely in charge of myself and enjoy the luxury of defining my own curfew, activities, meals and spending. Truly the city that never sleeps, I can

order food right to my door at any time of the night, and bargain with street vendors on handle bags and tax-free sunglasses. The city bows at my feet where college students are able to buy \$20 tickets to Broadway shows and get into museums for free with a flash of a campus ID.

Despite the glamour of it all college is really one huge bill that constantly reminds you of how broke you are going to be over the next four years. Dollar menu's (which are hard to find in ritzy mid-town Manhattan) become your new best friend and bargaining with street vendors will become your favorite past time. But there is a lonely side. You don't have the same friends, you don't know the city and your family is so far away. What I thought was going to be great turned out to be the start of a very lonely road.

There are also many other things that come hand in hand in going out of state for school. Independence comes with many responsibilities. Not only have my time management skills had to kick in but juggling a full-time school schedule, a part



Creative Corner

Secret Hideout

EMMA M. CUMMINGS

I found a place within my soul
Somewhere only I can go
Whenever I feel the need arise
I spread my wings
And Ill fly....
Sometimes I feel this is all a test
Pass or fail
Ill try my best
Ive always believed in tomorrow
Will be a brighter day
With the rising sun all that I fear
Will float away.....
Then I am brought back down to earth
With broken wings and thrown in the dirt...
All my dreams scattered
In the winds
Left to pick everything back up again

The last time i was me

ANTISTROPHE VERSE

The last time i was me was when i stared out the window and wishing with all my heart that dreams were real
the last ime i was me was when i watched the water trying to move my being flowing through and crashing like the waves
the last time i was me was when i imagined i saw large blue eyes reflecting the color of my heart
that last time i was me was when i danced and i danced and i didnt care what you or others thought
the last time i was me was yesterday today and tomorrow i will be..... me.

Inspiration

PHYLLIS DAVIS

I could be all the characteristics of a rainbow
Stand tall, no lean, with a frown
Instead, I'm skinned black; thick coily hair and eyebrows
I could lie constantly; looking to be unique but never looking inside me
Until I dwelled on it....
My hair showing strength like Samson when beauty Delilah was possessed demon mean
The only non-cultured pearl in the natural sea
Making sure people see: I'm rare, delicate and fragile
Why take advantage of me?
A talent I searched deep for
It took time but I found it in me!!!!!!



time job, a significant role in a school theatre group and keeping up with grades is exhausting. Getting 8 hours of sleep in a night is a luxury. As if New York weren't adventurous enough! But hey, who's complaining?

There are things that a college view book will not tell you about being away at school. College can be a stepping stone to a successful future but it is also a pathway to endless sex, drugs, alcohol, and depression. There are the never ending parties in "sketchy" neighborhoods and there is always an executive or producer wanting to put you in their latest "video." It's hard not to fall into the hype when your peers are just as naive as you.

Over a week ago a close friend text messaged me a suicide note explaining to me that she could no longer take the pressure of being in school, trying to finance out of state tuition and deal with the inner issues she had been running from back home. My feelings were and still are very similar. So what was it that kept me balanced instead of cracking? My desire to

live and prove to myself that I am ready to take care of myself. Truthfully, my first semester in college didn't go too well. I made some bad decisions and it cost me a grade in addition to a science class. By the beginning of the second semester I had to shape up. I'm still struggling now. Everyday is a battle to make right decisions and keep moving forward.

My advice to the high school seniors applying to school out of state is to not leave home if you are not emotionally ready. I tried to run from my insecurities and instead of dealing with them I allowed myself to be distracted. It is always easier to focus your attention on something other than the problem at hand. Your success in college will be based solely on your actions. You cannot allow your past or immaturity ruin the greatest experience you will have as a teenager in a new city. Truthfully speaking, you must be truthful with yourself.