The legislative session is over. When the Mockingbird Society and the State Advisory Council (SAC) came up with very many legislative agendas, they were informed early on of the budget crisis. It was explained to us that the Governor is required by law to instate a balanced budget. In other words, the Governor and the Legislature needed to find a way to pay for all the state’s needs off of a small check. That being said, the only way this could happen was if the Governor and Legislature raised taxes, or cut programs. So our primary goal was just to be able to hold on to what we had if we could.

After much debate, the Mockingbird Society and The Mockingbird Network’s State Advisory Council decided upon the legislative agenda that protected basic needs and civil rights. In terms of priority there were two tiers: Tier 1 included those issues that the Mockingbird Society directly would be advocating for; and Tier 2 were those issues that our community partners would lead, with the Mockingbird Society in a supporting role.

Our Tier 1 priority was “Safe Housing and Support for Youth in Care: Save the HOPE in the HOPE Act” The Hope Act provides safe living placement for homeless youth from care and transitional services. In addition, Tier 1 priorities included HB2735. This law requires notification of the right to request counsel in dependency proceedings. And, HB6832 which added youth or an alumni of foster care to the Transformation Design Committee. They passed this law including full voting rights for the youth on this important reform committee. With respect to Tier 2, there were three important bills that were ultimately signed into law. These included subsidized guardianships, expanding the sealing of juvenile records in certain circumstances, and an expansion of the 8 Hour Notification in certain circumstances to ensure stability and safety of youth.

2010 Legislative Successes by David Buck

The campaign not only promotes foster care awareness, but it also raises interest in adoption and gaining and retaining foster parents.

Currently, there is an estimated 463,000 youth in out of home care nationwide. As of 2008, in Washington State, an estimated 10,323 children were in the foster care system. National estimates indicate that our country is home to 12-million foster care alumni. And, each year 20,000 youth age out of care nationwide.

Over the past 20 years the numbers of youth and alumni of care has grown, and NFCM has grown too. The campaign now supports youth exiting care as well as youth in care. National Foster Care Month has become the “frame work” for broader awareness of the need for reforming the system. The leadership of Casey Family Programs and the National Foster Care Coalition (NFCC) helped to pass the Chaffee Foster Care Independence Act. Along with Casey and NFCC, there are many other nationwide organizations that support NFCM and foster care altogether.

National Foster Care Month campaign not only promotes foster care awareness, but it also raises interest in adoption and gaining and retaining foster parents.

With a very successful Youth Advocacy Day – attended by more than 200 youth from all corners of the state -- and the support of many state representatives, everything in our legislative agenda passed.

“Let’s all give thanks to the kinship caregivers in our communities!”

“The legislative agenda was passed during a 2.6 billion dollar deficit, which means it’s safe to say those on Capitol Hill really do care about youth. And, there are a few people who should be thanked for their efforts: Representative Roger Goodman for championing HB2735 which encouraged the need for representation of children in dependency matters; Representative Mary Lou Dickerson for championing HB2752 a bill which modifies provisions relating to providing shelter to a minor (8-hour notification reform); Senator James Hargrove for championing SB6561 which restricts access to juvenile offender records. Senator Hargrove and Representative Ruth Kagi deserve special thanks for championing HB6832 which added youth to child welfare reform committee - with full voting rights; And, Representative Mary Helen Roberts for sponsorship of the HB860 which allows for the use of federal funds to provide subsidy payments to relatives serving as guardians for children exiting the system. We, the youth at the Mockingbird Society, youth and alumni of care and kinship care want to express our deepest thanks for your continued support.”

May Marks National Foster Care Month by Diamonique Walker

Every May since 1988, National Foster Care Month (NFCM) has been celebrated and acknowledged. It began when the National Foster Parents Association gained support from Senator Strom Thurmond to proclaim May National Foster Care Month. When this campaign first began, it was dedicated to showing thanks to all of the foster parents who have had huge contributions and improved the lives of youth. NFCM now promotes foster care awareness, bringing attention to the issues in the foster care system, and encouraging individuals and organizations to support the lives of youth and families.

As a part of this national awareness effort, kinship caregivers are recognized as well. In Washington State, May 19th marks Kinship Caregiver Day. On this day we will celebrate and thank the grandparents, aunts, uncles and even close friends that take care of young people close to them. There are many youth in relative/kinship care that are living with someone they know, rather than living with strangers, or moving from home to home. Kinship caregivers save the state thousands of dollars every year by taking on the responsibility of parents. But more important, we know that when children are able to remain with a relative that it leads to better outcomes for youth. Often kinship care increases stability and allows children and youth to remain in their school, and be with their siblings (if applicable).

Let’s all give thanks to the kinship caregivers in our communities!

“My Foster Care Month campaign not only promotes foster care awareness, but it also raises interest in adoption and gaining and retaining foster parents.”

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdtimes.org or call 206-577-KIDS (5437)
Dear Friends,

As we celebrate National Foster Care Month (NFCM), it is a great time reflect on where we are and how far we have come to improve the lives of children and youth in foster care; and those touched by and in the child welfare system. Our heartfelt thanks go out to foster parents, kinship caregivers, CASAs, social workers, service providers and all those who see the potential in our youth.

At The Mockingbird Society, we continue to be guided by the principle that children in the system deserve the same resources, love and support that your children and my children do. It is that fundamental belief that has allowed the work of NFCM and organizations like ours to create system change.

In fact, the 2010 Washington State Legislature session marks another reason to celebrate and be energized in our work. Despite the continuing budget challenges, we protected basic needs from Safe Housing and Independent Living Skills programs to sibling relationships.

This work is possible because of a growing coalition of mobilized advocates from across our state led by The Mockingbird Network — both youth and alumni of foster care and kinship care, homeless youth, ASK-Y, The Child Welfare Advocacy Coalition, Children’s Home Society, many philanthropic partners, and each and every one of you.

Thank you. Together we can build a world-class foster care system.

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Thank You!

Heather Riley from Casey family programs and Alex Okernan from the YMCA, Virginia Miller House, American Baptist Churches across the Pacific Northwest, Rose and Brian for all of their support.

The Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, The Mockingbird Society. Atticus, the widowed father of Jem and Scout, joins Miss Maudie in teaching his kids that “it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird because...” “...Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don’t do one thing but sing their hearts out for us.”

What if we created an organization, a community, indeed a world, in which our most vulnerable children and youth were protected and valued with the same commitment that Atticus had for mockingbirds?

Join The Mockingbird Society today and help us give young people a safe place to nest and sing.

Support The Mockingbird Society!

We invite you to join us in building a world-class foster care system. In gratitude for your support, we would like to send you a monthly e-version of the Mockingbird Times.

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY/STATE/ZIP
PHONE
Email

So that we may recognize you for your gift, please write how you would like to be listed:

☐ Please do not include my name on published donor lists (check box).
☐ Yes! I would like to receive a monthly issue of the Mockingbird Times (email address required above)

My gift will help children, youth and families in foster care (check box):

☐ $1,000 – Protector
☐ $500 - $999 Champion
☐ $250 - $499 Advocate
☐ $50 - $249 Supporter
☐ $25 - $49 Contributor
☐ Other

Payment Options:

☐ Check (made payable to The Mockingbird Society)
☐ Credit card: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX

Account Number:
Expiration Date:

Credit card billing address (if different than mailing address):

Signature:

☐ Please charge my credit card: ☐ One time Monthly Quarterly
☐ My employer will match my gift. (Please enclose your matching gift form.) Company Name:

Send this completed form and your check to The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Avenue S, Suite 240, Seattle, WA 98144. For more information, call (206) 323-KIDS (5437) or visit www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

I’m happy to report that efforts are being made to change the picture of foster care in the media. For example, there’s Daniel Heimpel’s Fostering Media Connections (1) project. Fostering Media Connections is a “media-driven, grass roots initiative to speed the implementation of sweeping federal foster care reform and increase general awareness of the foster care system.” (2) Heimpel, as well as Eytan Eliner, who handles media and public affairs for the project (3), are traveling the country to find as many stories, positive and negative, as possible about foster youth, the systems around foster youth, and the efforts to change them.

Heimpel believes that “constricting newsrooms” have contributed to a “dearth of real enterprise journalism,” a world in which journalism is not as lucrative a career as it once was. Heimpel hopes that “when [journalists] aren’t making huge fiscal profit, they will want to make a profit in principle.” Thanks to a shrinking audience, the New York Times has decided to shorten their newspapers. Heimpel believes that media is now “hungry for content,” and the idea behind Fostering Media Connections is basically to package positive content around foster youth, with all the media coverage they need to make the picture of foster care more positive.

I’m happy to report that efforts are being made to change the picture of foster care in the media. For example, there’s Daniel Heimpel’s Fostering Media Connections (1) project. Fostering Media Connections is a “media-driven, grass roots initiative to speed the implementation of sweeping federal foster care reform and increase general awareness of the foster care system.” (2) Heimpel, as well as Eytan Eliner, who handles media and public affairs for the project (3), are traveling the country to find as many stories, positive and negative, as possible about foster youth, the systems around foster youth, and the efforts to change them.

Heimpel believes that “constricting newsrooms” have contributed to a “dearth of real enterprise journalism,” a world in which journalism is not as lucrative a career as it once was. Heimpel hopes that “when [journalists] aren’t making huge fiscal profit, they will want to make a profit in principle.” Thanks to a shrinking audience, the New York Times has decided to shorten their newspapers. Heimpel believes that media is now “hungry for content,” and the idea behind Fostering Media Connections is basically to package positive content around foster youth, with all the media coverage they need to make the picture of foster care more positive.

I’m happy to report that efforts are being made to change the picture of foster care in the media. For example, there’s Daniel Heimpel’s Fostering Media Connections (1) project. Fostering Media Connections is a “media-driven, grass roots initiative to speed the implementation of sweeping federal foster care reform and increase general awareness of the foster care system.” (2) Heimpel, as well as Eytan Eliner, who handles media and public affairs for the project (3), are traveling the country to find as many stories, positive and negative, as possible about foster youth, the systems around foster youth, and the efforts to change them.

Heimpel believes that “constricting newsrooms” have contributed to a “dearth of real enterprise journalism,” a world in which journalism is not as lucrative a career as it once was. Heimpel hopes that “when [journalists] aren’t making huge fiscal profit, they will want to make a profit in principle.” Thanks to a shrinking audience, the New York Times has decided to shorten their newspapers. Heimpel believes that media is now “hungry for content,” and the idea behind Fostering Media Connections is basically to package positive content around foster youth, with all the media coverage they need to make the picture of foster care more positive.

I’m happy to report that efforts are being made to change the picture of foster care in the media. For example, there’s Daniel Heimpel’s Fostering Media Connections (1) project. Fostering Media Connections is a “media-driven, grass roots initiative to speed the implementation of sweeping federal foster care reform and increase general awareness of the foster care system.” (2) Heimpel, as well as Eytan Eliner, who handles media and public affairs for the project (3), are traveling the country to find as many stories, positive and negative, as possible about foster youth, the systems around foster youth, and the efforts to change them.

Heimpel believes that “constricting newsrooms” have contributed to a “dearth of real enterprise journalism,” a world in which journalism is not as lucrative a career as it once was. Heimpel hopes that “when [journalists] aren’t making huge fiscal profit, they will want to make a profit in principle.” Thanks to a shrinking audience, the New York Times has decided to shorten their newspapers. Heimpel believes that media is now “hungry for content,” and the idea behind Fostering Media Connections is basically to package positive content around foster youth, with all the media coverage they need to make the picture of foster care more positive.

I’m happy to report that efforts are being made to change the picture of foster care in the media. For example, there’s Daniel Heimpel’s Fostering Media Connections (1) project. Fostering Media Connections is a “media-driven, grass roots initiative to speed the implementation of sweeping federal foster care reform and increase general awareness of the foster care system.” (2) Heimpel, as well as Eytan Eliner, who handles media and public affairs for the project (3), are traveling the country to find as many stories, positive and negative, as possible about foster youth, the systems around foster youth, and the efforts to change them.

Heimpel believes that “constricting newsrooms” have contributed to a “dearth of real enterprise journalism,” a world in which journalism is not as lucrative a career as it once was. Heimpel hopes that “when [journalists] aren’t making huge fiscal profit, they will want to make a profit in principle.” Thanks to a shrinking audience, the New York Times has decided to shorten their newspapers. Heimpel believes that media is now “hungry for content,” and the idea behind Fostering Media Connections is basically to package positive content around foster youth, with all the media coverage they need to make the picture of foster care more positive.

I’m happy to report that efforts are being made to change the picture of foster care in the media. For example, there’s Daniel Heimpel’s Fostering Media Connections (1) project. Fostering Media Connections is a “media-driven, grass roots initiative to speed the implementation of sweeping federal foster care reform and increase general awareness of the foster care system.” (2) Heimpel, as well as Eytan Eliner, who handles media and public affairs for the project (3), are traveling the country to find as many stories, positive and negative, as possible about foster youth, the systems around foster youth, and the efforts to change them.

Heimpel believes that “constricting newsrooms” have contributed to a “dearth of real enterprise journalism,” a world in which journalism is not as lucrative a career as it once was. Heimpel hopes that “when [journalists] aren’t making huge fiscal profit, they will want to make a profit in principle.” Thanks to a shrinking audience, the New York Times has decided to shorten their newspapers. Heimpel believes that media is now “hungry for content,” and the idea behind Fostering Media Connections is basically to package positive content around foster youth, with all the media coverage they need to make the picture of foster care more positive.
Youth of Incarcerated Parents by Jerry Boro

When people get incarcerated they leave behind many things—life, family, and friends, and children. Not only does being incarcerated have an effect on the person being locked up, but it has an effect on everyone that is apart of that person’s life. It is worse for those with children. They miss out on so many different aspects of their child’s life. On any given day, more than 1.5 million children in this country or approximately two percent of minor children have a parent serving a sentence in state or federal prison. These children are affected by this in many ways, not knowing where the relationship will go, the mental stress affecting concentration while in school and the impact it has on their general attitudes and social skills. The relationship between child and his or her parent will force hard decisions as time and life goes on.

In March 2010 MTV had an episode of True Life called, I Have a Parent in Prison. This episode followed around two young men of a different race, age, and city. Austin, a 16 year old white male who had to fend for himself being another parent let alone a father that was incarcerated. Austin was excited and nervous because other people who were incarcerated had the lead of your older siblings. I was 26 year old black male who had to fend for himself from his early teens into his adulthood because both of his parents were incarcerated. He and his mother have a growing relationship and has the opportunity to connect with his father the first time in 14 years.

Youth in the child welfare system have problems, and when your birth parents are incarcerated that adds to the list of problems. The average stay to foster care for a child with an incarcerated mother is 3.9 years. Few children see their incarcerated parents on a regular basis, and most not at all. Without contact, children begin to see the child welfare system weather they felt the same way about having parents that are or have been incarcerated. They had two different views; one had their life in prison for two years, and the other had a parent who was absent on and off, destroying their relationship.

The first young lady was between one and two months old when her mother and father got incarcerated. I asked her if she felt her parents let her down and how she felt about the situation she replied, “I didn’t know the situation and when we got call from them I simply replied yes and didn’t think about what my sister did.” When you don’t know certain things about relatives or parents you follow the lead of your older siblings.

To see if the relationship was affected by the incarceration, I asked her if she thought it was for better or worse? She said, “I don’t really know if it was for better or worse, but I think I missed out on that connection that baby’s develop with their parents, especially….me and my parents were never close in comparison to my older sister.”

The second lady, Jaden Harrison is 23 years old and has a father that has been in and out for over 10 years since she was born, not staying out for more than a few months. She was sheltered from the reasons he was incarcerated by her paternal grandparents, but learned why as she got older. I asked her if she felt her parent let her down and how she felt about the situation and this was her response, “I don’t talk to my father. I visited him in Juvenile REHABILITATION Administration. I thought he was a mark and I didn’t want to be associated with him.”

The juvenile system in Washington State is known as “JRA,” which stands for Juvenile REHABILITATION Administration. I have been successfully rehabilitated, partly by people who believed in me along the way, and partly because I believed in myself. But, all of this effort didn’t keep my conviction being a barrier to employment in the one area where I want to work—helping kids with my type of background succeed in life despite the poor choices they made in their youth. With the passage of Senate Bill 6561 this barrier has been at least partially lifted.

With the passage of this law, individuals with Class A felonies will be able, in some circumstances, to seal their records. This will occur five years after release if the individual has paid restitution and has committed no further offenses. Moreover, in circumstances that involve Class B felonies, the individual will only have to wait two years to seal their records, pay restitution and commit no further offenses (as opposed to five years, as was the case in the past). For Class B offenses the individual also has to have paid their restitution in full and committed no further offenses.

This new law has opened an important door and provided an incentive to continue to work on life skills and formal education as a way out of further trouble with the law. And, more important, work toward a brighter future. Hopefully other young offenders will see that the door is open. And, knowing that it is open for them; I hope they will choose to walk through it. I guess that is some kids, having previously seen the door as being shut tight, haven’t even tried. I hope they will try harder now. I am here to tell them that it is worth it. I am here to tell them that we can change our circumstances. And, that each of us can make a difference in the world, one person at a time.

Call for Entries

The ArtJustice Committee is a group of 8 young adults from all over Seattle who are passionate about art and social justice. The Committee has just received a grant from the City of Seattle Neighborhood Matching Fund to put on two separate youth-focused community arts events; one on May 15th and another scheduled in late June. These events will showcase the creative talent of young artists in Seattle who produce art with the purpose of lifting up their community and furthering social and environmental justice. The Committee is currently looking for youth artists! To apply to showcase your art or for more information about the events, please contact Anna Nguyen at: annavuyn@yahoo.com.

MEDIA STEREOTYPES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

The hope that mainstream and alternative media will use it. Another hope is that it will spark distinct enterprise reporting by journalists in the issue of system reform.

Some of you may have noticed the similarity of the name “Fostering Media Connections” to the 2008 federal Fostering Connections to Success Act. Heimpel believes that Fostering Connections to Success is “a blueprint embodied in federal law” to change the system for the better, and has written about many examples of other initiatives to improve foster care. Heimpel’s project is about showing the world that, while the foster system has a lot of problems and needs a lot of work, it is ultimately fixable if people are willing to invest in it rather than give up on it. Heimpel describes the general perception of foster care as “one of a system plagued by hopeless people, but of one by broken kids, and that’s not true.”

It’s refreshing to see foster youth presented in a hopeful light. So many people describe system youth as “broken,” as though they were beyond help, as though we were without hope. We are hopeful; we have no choice but to be. Hope is all we have.

1 Due disclosure: I was interviewed for Fostering Media Connections about my experience transitioning out of care.

2 Fostering Media Connections’ website at http://www.fosteringmediaconnections.org

Most quotes from recorded personal interview with Heimpel.
**Freedom is Calling**

By Jasmin Esters

Quick, hide, don’t stop running
Until you’re on the other side of freedom, peace and family
Don’t dare look back at all
When you cry your tear drops go blue
Don’t stop fighting for freedom in your life
It’s all about surviving
Now when you cross that line
Find your new self

We Need Your Work!

We are in great need of articles, poetry, artwork, and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or with homelessness. If you want to be published in the Mockingbird Times, visit mockingbirdsociety.org and select Mockingbird Times under The Mockingbird Network or contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at kara@mockingbirdsociety.org. Note: If you have submitted something before that hasn’t been published, we need your submission agreement in order to print it. Please submit again via the web location listed above. Because of space constraints, shorter poems have a higher chance of being published.

“Know thyself means this, that you get acquainted with what you know, and what you can do.”

~Menander

**The Beginning of the End**

Danielle Jones

It’s the ending of school the beginning of my life.
The easy part is over now the hardest part starts.
I’m giving up my middle school life and moving on to high school.
The familiar faces I once knew are disappearing quickly.
The memories I own are going to become a thing of the past.
My life begins during the beginning of the end.

**Community Events**

**Region 1**

May 5th: Jr. Lilac Parade - Riverfront Park from 10am-1pm.
May 15th: Spokane Lilac Parade - Riverfront Park from 7:45pm-10:30pm.

**Region 2**

Mother’s Day: Yakima Farmers Market opens
May 26: Yakima Schools Foundation is Celebrating our Youth @ Yakima Convention Center; Starting at 6:30am. Contact: (509) 457-0898.

**Region 3**

May 17th: Eating For Energy Monday 6:30pm
Contact: Jodie Buller Email: csoproom@gmail.com
May 23: Fishing Day for Kids 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Location: Gissberg Twin Lakes County Park
Web URL: http://www.xnucoparks.org

**Region 4**

May 11-15: Seattle International Children’s Festival
Seattle Center - Downtown Seattle Washington
May 28-31: Northwest Folklife Festival 11:00AM- 11:00 PM
Seattle Center - Downtown Seattle Washington

**Region 5**

May 12: Chapter Meeting at PCA: Know Your Rights Training 3:30-5:00.
May 15: SafeStreet Graffiti Cleanup
Samantha Valle (253) 902-5494; s.valle@mockingbirdsociety.org

**Region 6**

Wednesdays: Free Health Clinic 9-1
Community Youth Services
711 State Ave NE, Olympia WA, 98506
360-943-0780 x151

**News From The Mockingbird Network**

**Region 1**

A very successful Spring into Summer Training was held in Spokane on May 1st. The Leadership Summit will be June 12-13th. More details will be on our website www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

**Region 2**

We started April with a leadership meeting where we assigned Chapter duties. On April 17th we met in Selah to discuss our topic to bring to the Summit; Youth Safety issues. Later we went to the park and watched a great Civil War re-enactment. On April 24th Saundra, Tammy, Rose, and Brian were invited to speak at the American Baptist Women’s Conference. Saundra presented her positive thoughts on Advocacy Day and The Mockingbird Family Model.

**Region 3**

We are in need of members to volunteer at Mockingbird Day on May 28th and 29th.

**Region 4**

“Region 4 for Change” is on the verge of many new ventures. We are leading our chapter in a new direction where the opportunity to impact our community and systems change is great. Outside of our monthly regional meetings the leaders of region 4 have been conducting trainings to empower our fellow foster youth.

Most recently our team conducted the Your Rights, Your Life Training where we were able to work with the awesome young ladies of the Virginia Miller home.

Upcoming events include networking and recruiting efforts to encourage new members to join! There are many opportunities to become a part of Region 4’s efforts. If interested contact our Region 4 Resource Specialist, Georgina Ramirez at (206)308-6646.

**Region 5**

This month we focused on the upcoming Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit. Within our chapter, twenty-three youth turned in applications to attend the Summit from which the 10 best applications were chosen. On May 15th, our chapter will be cleaning up gang graffiti in our county in an effort to keep our environment clean and healthy for the youth. By doing this we hope to help our youth avoid feeling peer pressure to join gangs.

Lastly, in the next month, our chapter will be meeting to decide on a topic for the summit so we can pass a law, be heard by the legislatve representatives in 2011, and pave the way for the future of foster care.

**Region 6**

This month we have shortened our Chapter name to “Truth & Action for Foster Youth” – T.A.F.F.Y.

We started to perfect our idea for the Leadership Summit. Several of us had the chance to go to the bill signings for HB 2680, which creates Subsidized Guardianships for kinship care providers, and SB 6832, which added a foster youth representative, with full voting rights, to the Child Welfare Transformation Design Committee. I attended another Legal and Practices sub-committee meeting where we worked on solidifying the roles of the master contractor versus the State. Our next chapter meeting is at Centralia College on May 20th from 4:00 to 5:30. In May, I will be co-facilitating a Culture of Foster Care training at the Passport to College Conference. We will be having a Voice Development training for the Region 6 youth who will attend the Leadership Summit, and we are working on having Life Advocacy and Rights trainings in Mason County and local group homes and shelters.