The Mockingbird Society 2007 Annual Luncheon by Jessica Martin

The Mockingbird Society’s first annual friend-raising and fund-raising benefit luncheon was held on October 2, 2007 at Qwest Field. The day was about good news instead of all the bad news and sad stories we think of when we think of the foster care system. Lines of support from those of the luncheon and people’s help, every day we’re

kins were folded in with orange Mockingbird papers with pictures of children to remind people that the children were why they were there.

People began filing in and, next thing I knew, nearly every seat was filled up! Community leaders and members were there who are interested, involved and invested in The Mockingbird Society’s work and mission in building a world class foster system in Washington State. Everybody seemed very friendly. Even though I knew almost no one, many smile faces were flying all over.

People quieted down and began eating as Jim Theofelis began speaking, thanking everyone for coming and explaining the importance of the luncheon. Next, Jamica Henderson went up to the podium to tell a story of her life and dealing with the foster care system from within as well as from the outside. She continued her speech telling everyone how Mockingbird has helped her and made a difference in her life.

This event would not have been made possible without the help and support from our co-chairs: Connie Ballmer and Sheri Schultz.

The 2007 Foster Parent and Relative Caregiver’s Conference by Jamie Henderson

The 2007 Foster Parent and Relative Caregiver’s Conference was a very powerful three day event and a great chance for foster parents, private agency staff and social workers to meet one another. This year’s conference was held in Ocean Shores, Washington. It was the time of year for foster parents to get together and talk about the support and resources that are available to foster parents and how to know what to look for. It was exciting to see foster parents who really cared about their kids and wanted to see a better life for them.

One thing that was different about this conference was there were a lot of resources available to youth who will soon be aging out of the system. A lot of the parents came just for that cause. Many of them had teenage youth who would soon be aging out and they didn’t want to see them homeless.

There were workshops on many different levels including one for youth who may be about to age out of the system but do not have enough credits to graduate. This workshop was called Transitioning Youth into Adulthood: Collaborating for Success. This was a very good resource for those who have foster kids in that situation. The program has been a great success and has increased the number of youth who age out with a GED or high school completion certificate.

Wrap-Around Services and Your Child, led by the Washington Association of Family-based Treatment Services (WAFTS), was a workshop focused on helping foster parents to understand the meaning of wrap-around services. Wrap-around services are provided to children with serious emotional and mental issues to help them stay in their foster homes (e.g., treatment and personal support services). This workshop taught foster parents what these services look like and how to get them. This program is fairly new and has been a good support to the parents with children who need these types of services.

The next day I went to a workshop for foster parents who needed help with foster children with behavioral problems called Engaging Adolescents. This workshop was led by Jim Theofelis, Executive Director of The Mockingbird Society and covered relationship building, verbal de-escalation and behavioral modification skills development. These parents wanted to see a change in their foster children and to become the best parents they can be.

On the third day, I presented with The Mockingbird Society’s Youth LEAD program. Our session was called Foster Youth Speak-Out, Advocate and Change Lives. This session was very powerful. Every time I present with my job it’s powerful but this experience was a little different. This year we had a lot of social workers and only a few parents. It was exciting to see social workers in our workshop. You could tell that they were interested and ready to learn how to be supportive of youth in the foster care system.

The most powerful part of the workshop was when we did a group exercise called Step Forward or Step Back; the outcome was amazing! During this exercise, people moved forwards or backwards in the room depending on how they answered the question the presenter gave.

At the end, there were a lot of people in the front and a lot of people in the back. It was powerful to me because a lot of the people who were in our workshop grew up with both parents and had never experienced foster care. They learned that the foster care system is real. A lot of the people learned where we are coming from and felt what it’s like to be in our shoes.
Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS

We had hoped for 250 people and a fund raising goal of $350,000 at our first ever Luncheon held on October 2nd at Qwest Field in Seattle. Both the number of attendees and the financial goal would have made our fund raising activity we had ever conducted. Lo and behold, 500 of our very best friends joined us for a remarkable afternoon and raised nearly $300,000 to continue our work of building a world class foster care system.

It really was an amazing event and I am so appreciative to all those who attended, volunteered and donated. A very special “Thank-You” goes to our event co-chairs Connie Ballmer and Sheri Schultz for all their hard work and for presentating at the event. I also want to thank Jamica Henderson, Stephanie Swallow and Dr. Wanda Hackett for their wonderful presentations as well. Of course, The Mockingbird Society staff and volunteers were fantastic and the room was absolutely beautiful.

Movie Review: The Kingdom by Andrea Roldan

The opening scenes of the Kingdom, a film directed by Peter Bur, are fast-paced and rich with content about the history between the United States and Saudi Arabia (and other Middle-Eastern countries), focusing primarily on the importance of oil distribution between the two nations and its effects on both country’s economies. Included are facts such as data from American oil discoveries, previous oil embargos, trade laws, and significant events that affect the relationship between the two countries, such as terrorist attacks.

The first scene is the setting of a brutal massacre. In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on a sunny afternoon the city is alive. Children and adults both are engaged in a baseball game and others are moving about in the nearby streets. Then the explosions are ignited. While drawing attention to the ballpark where the bomb exploded, and causing mass confusion as people scramble toward safety and separated families search for each other, two men who are involved with the conspiracy begin a rampage of murder with machine guns down the streets. This scene is really intense and may be too much for the very fund raising activity.

In the movie, Americans are stationed in Saudi Arabia, building business relations with the prince of Riyadh, protecting oil trade, and assisting the security forces of Saudi Arabia to find the group of terrorists, led by Abu Ramza, who disagree with the American oil trade. After learning about the explosion, FBI Special Agent Ronald Fleury (Jamie Foxx), recruits a deployment team to enter the grounds of Saudi Arabia immediately to investigate the bombing. Forensic Examiner, Janet Mayes (Jennifer Garner) is very sad because Francis Manner, head of FBI, died in Riyadh. Fleury tries to calm her and thens whips something into her ear that seems to relieve her loss. Other members of the deployment team speculate about what he told her.

Meet the Staff: Shayna M. Harris

My name is Shayna Marie Harris. I am twenty-three years old and I am a resident of Seattle, Washington. I like to read, write, watch movies, dance, and hang out with the few friends I have. I grew up in the foster care system and, in a way, I am still part of it. At the age of three, I was taken away from my biological mother who was suffering from bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. I was placed with a family member who abused me in any way a kid could be abused. I was placed in six more foster homes until I finally placed in a permanent foster home at the age of three. From three to eight I was in the home as a foster child. When I adopted at eight. There I was abused some more for eight years.

I started running away at age ten and, after several failed attempts, I was placed back into the foster care system at age twelve. I ended up going to several foster homes and group homes, my grades started slipping, and I began to run away from all of my problems, big and small. I got put in jail for a year after having a fight in a group home. In that year, I learned how to control some of my aggression.

I obtained a GED while at Echo Glen when I was sixteen. I was released in 2000 and placed in a foster home that was pretty cool, but I didn’t want to get close to my foster mom, I bolted. It was hard for me when I started to get close to foster parents because sometimes I would come home and my stuff would be cooked up and I never knew when that would happen. So, each time I did get close or started to, I would run away so I wouldn’t get hurt again.

I got pregnant with my daughter Nyasha on the run. She became a foster kid also, due to the fact that I was still a foster kid on the run from the police and case-workers. I had another daughter when I was twenty-two and I am proud to say, she has not entered the system. I’ve been on and off the streets for a number of years and still haven’t been able to live in a stable situation. These days, I am a single mom who is still fighting the system. How am I fighting it? I lost my first daughter to the system after not having the proper resources to take care of her. I have not seen her in three years but I am fighting for my right to do so.

I settled a lawsuit in 2006 against the state of Washington about multiple placements. I have also talked to other foster kids who have suffered in the system about what they can do for justice. I want to make all aware of how the system can be good as well as bad and how to change how the system works. I believe that all foster parents should have psychiatric evaluations once a year. Among other things, the state should ensure that all foster kids receive proper counseling. They should also require 100% participation in parenting and independent living classes for foster kids, so that when they age out they know how to live responsibly.

I want to be part of the Mockingbird Society because I believe that their program provides a voice for people like me and also provides knowledge and opportunity for a positive life. I give up to my goals of making some changes to the foster care system. I am very thankful to the Youth LEAD program for giving me a chance, even at this age. I want to help them and give them the opportunity to change my life and the lives of others as well.

ABOUT US: The Mockingbird Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation developing innovative models and improving the outcomes for 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 Society is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care, and/or homeless youth. All youth employees of The Mockingbird Society are paid between $8 and $11 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit their art, work, and poetry which 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 USA, through a private distribution list and “It’s Not 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.

Meet Our Staff

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Name
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ZIP
Phone
E-mail

$1,000 +  Protector $ $500 - $999 Champion $ $250 - $499 Advocate $ $50 - $250 Supporter $ $25 Contributor $ $250 - $500 $500 - $999 $900 - $1,200 $1,200 - $1,750 $1,750 - $2,500 $2,500 - $5,000 $5,000 - $10,000 $10,000 + $25

I. My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.

II. I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.

III. Please do not include my name on any published donor lists.

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.

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 sing, and they sing just for us.” What if we created an organization, a community, indeed a world, in which our most vulnerable children are 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.

Become a Member of The Mockingbird Society

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.

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My Senior Year by Samuel Martin

Recently, I began my senior year of high school. I thought about how I could continue to participate at The Mockingbird Society, during this very busy year. We thought it would be cool for me to monologue my senior year. I will hopefully be able to express what I am going through and, hopefully, I will help other seniors after myself in more ways than one. I am opening myself to all of you readers and it would be great if you went along for the ride with me.

In very early September, I had a lot of trouble with decisiveness. I knew that school was right around the corner but I didn’t know what I was going to do. I had the choice of either continuing Running Start, going back to Rainier Beach, or, quite possibly, both. The advantage of Running Start was that I would be able to take continue to take college classes and get my Associates Degree by the time I graduate from high school. That would be great because I could cut down college time while also gaining a bunch of college experience. At the same time, I wanted to be at my high school for my senior year. You only get one senior year. You can see why I was torn. At the same time, I was unmotivated; I didn’t really want to be at school at all. I had a hard time keeping up with football, too. I even wanted to stop working. I had lost all my energy and my spark.

Eventually, I got back to Rainier Beach, which was actually very fulfilling after a year of not being there at all while I was doing Running Start. I had a chance to see some familiar faces and be in a great environment. Also, on the first day, King 5 news came to do an interview on me summarizing my life. It was a good couple of first weeks except I couldn’t get myself to go to football practice at all. I was beginning to quit, knowing that this could potentially be the biggest season of my career. The biggest question was if I would ever find the motivation before it was too late.

Around the middle of September, I went to a retreat for the mentoring program I am in which is called Community for Youth. This was the exact spark of motivation that I needed to have. I learned a lot about how I act and how I needed to not quit what I start. It also taught me that if I quit today, I will quit tomorrow. I learned that quitting can nearly become second nature. If you let it become a habit, you turn around 20 years later and find that you have gone through three jobs a year. That is not a lifestyle that anybody should want to live. Right after that, I began to go to football practice again. Even though it has been a pain to come back after missing a lot of practice, I will stick with what I start.

Another thing that I haven’t decided to completely quit is Running Start. I also registered for classes and I am back at Seattle Central Community College. I just began the quarter and I am re-motivated and ready to do my absolute best. Now it is the end of the month and I am making a name for myself everywhere. Those who did not believe that I was a dependable student see now that I can make it. I am capable, but surely, I am showing my coaches that I have the commitment to play football. I, by no means, am the best player on the football team but as Daniel Carnegie said, “Most of the important things in the world are the things that cannot be done at all.”

Upon arriving in Saudi Arabia, each member of the deployment team utilizes their specialized skills and they begin to unravel class that lead them and the chaperoning security team closer to Ramza. Initially, the crew members face many obstacles; not only related to completing their mission but also it is a challenge to understand and respect each other. These are people of different races, cultures, religions and regions. But we see growth in each character; internally and externally, when relating with each other. Respect is built upon understanding and understanding grows upon communication. Members of the team must practice effective communication skills to complete the task.

A friendship is founded between Fleury and Saudi Arabian Colonel Fars Al Ghazi, leader of the security unit ordered to protect the deployment team while in Riyadh. They discuss their lives beyond their mission; their families, dreams, and ambitions and they find that they share many similarities. The crew continues to unravel more information, even from a man who retired from flying bombs with Ramza. His reason for retiring: “You start killing [only when dead faces won’t let you sleep].” When one of the crew members is kidnapped by members of the terrorist group, the rest of the team follows on a high speed chase and the action really begins, eventually leading to the building where he is held captive, and the leader of the terrorists, Abu Ramza, resides.

Who would have thought that this could possibly be the biggest season of my career? The Mockingbird Society would like to thank all of the extraordinary community members and donors who made our first annual benefit luncheon a huge success. Because of the compassion and commitment of nearly 500 guests in attendance, we raised $282,850 to support youth and families in the foster care system.

Thank you again for your time, resources and generosity!
Cattywampus Fabulous Lashes 5

4 in the morning and its makeup time. Daddy long leg lashes, long but not full. “I see it all, bonfires of trust, flash floods of pain.” Now when I say I’ve seen it all, I mean, I’ve seen it all. I’ve been through it all from abuse to addiction, from nothing to something to fabulous homo that nobody got nothing on. But for now everything is just dandy. So I’ll just throw on 5 lashes and go on w/ life, but if life gets Cattywampus then whatever it ain’t nothing I haven’t seen before…

DrAmAFuLLnE5s

Crazy/Lost/Abandoned/Left behind/and/Dropped off

My life is a drama full ADVENTURE.

Oh My Goodness

Pretty Pretty Princess

$500 boots

And Fabulousness

Happy life

Too

No money/No Job/Lost the bar

Broken Home/No more happy family

No joke

No mommy

No do

Where’s brother???

DRAMAFULLNESS

Creative Corner

Was lost

RIHONDA SMITH

Crazy family addictions

Mom dad drugs jail prison

Abandoned and rejected

Now I am found

Juvenile state foster homes group homes

Scared abused worthless

Fighting anger and hate

Now I am found

Depression hurt pain tears

Lost and betrayed

Mostly afraid

Now I am found

Hatred deep inside

Hurt from past

Hidden tears cried

With pain deep inside

Now I am found

Real crazy unique female

Caring proud expressive learner

Special likable kind friend

NOW I AM FOUND!!!!!!

Untitled

JENETTE

I look out the world of my despair, born unremembered. I look at the angles in which the wind is bending me. Hearing the voices of my defeat, begging not to make me weep. Wishing it was silent, so I can have a clear thought. Reminiscing about my past. Stilettos heels to high top gear, to showing all my fears.

Born to remember, born to be told, but born not to be forgotten. I sit in a melody, in which my elbows and joints relax. Home at last, home at last, god save me, home at last. I look around me and only see me, why is that when there’s about ten other people around me. Born to turn out like my mother, a sister to another sister, a cousin to another cousin. Broken heart for a man.

I am a street girl, a black girl, a mixed girl, a fashion model in my own body. I hear giggles in the background, but they do not disturb me. Blocked in between 4 walls, 4 pages, 4 memories, wishing that car would have hit me. Memory of hate. New beginning, decomposing, scented rose to blistered feet. I came in this world alone; I guess I have to fight this bloody war on my own.

Showing my real color, wishing I was purple. Taking a petal from a flower. Remembering.

Remembering, what I learned, remembering what I have become. Remembering, what struck me hurt me. I swear I god! I really do! I guess now it’s time to just wake up. Wake up to reality. It were’s it’s not only me, it’s you.

There are two things to aim at in life, first to get what you want, and after that to enjoy it. Only the wisest of mankind has achieved the second.

Logan Pearsall Smith

Exclusive Interview: Chris “Kazi” Rolle by Sherrell Dorsey

Immediately his clothes give him away: slightly baggy jeans, fitted cap, and graphic t-shirt. He is a walking advertisement for hip hop or at least what we, as an audience, perceive hip hop to be. But underneath the surface of the clothes and Brooklyn accent, Chris “Kazi” Rolle is much more than your ordinary hip hop artist. He is an entrepreneur and mentor inspiring troubled youth aspiring to be rappers to change the content of their lyrics from drugs, money and women, into things that we, as an audience, perceive hip hop or at least the lyrics from drugs, money and women, into things that we, as an audience, perceive hip hop or at least...