The Power in the Youth Vote

by Julian Barrington

How critical is the youth vote? That’s a question youth and adults must be thinking about right now. The youth vote is imperative in terms of its effects and the impact. Voting is more than casting a ballot: it’s letting your voice be heard. It lets lawmakers and those who guide and regulate your life know what your beliefs, morals and values. With that vote, you have a say so at the highest levels of the decision-making process, and impact issues that you face on an everyday basis.

Luncheon Thank Yous

Mykal “Haunted” Alonzo

Life in the System

Creative Corner:

Emma M. Cummings

Katiee Harmon

Samuel Martin

Alexa Hawkins

In This Issue

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Union Apprenticeship Program

Henry Shepard

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-KIDS (5437)
Letter From the Editor by Jim Theofelis

First and foremost, I want to thank all of you who attended our Annual Luncheon on October 1st. What a great event as we treated nearly 600 attendees to a wonderful presentation about The Mockingbird Society. I am so appreciative of the work from the staff and volunteers who produced this year’s event. We raised $180,000 to support our programs and for that we are very appreciative. It was very exciting to share all of the amazing work we have going on at Mockingbird including the expansion of the Mockingbird Family Model into newly developed applications of preventing more children and youth from entering the foster care system. For example, we expect to launch a model that serves unlicensed kinship caregivers (relatives raising relatives).

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We also shared the development of the Mockingbird Network, which is the statewide expansion of our Youth LEAD Program. As a result of this expansion, each region of Washington State will have a local Mockingbird Chapter that is linked to the Mockingbird Times, our Youth Speaker’s Panel, and our Advocacy Agenda.

At the beginning of this year, I want to thank all those who attended our luncheon and took the time to learn about and support our programs. Donations are still being accepted and can be sent to our main office.

Election Day is November 4th! I also want to take this opportunity to encourage each of you to vote in the upcoming election. How you vote is completely up to you but each of us must exercise our civic responsibility, first ensuring that we are registered and secondly taking the time to vote. I can’t think of a better way to role model civic engagement for the children and youth in your life than to have them watch you take the time to get educated on the issues and then make your voice heard by voting.

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdtimes.org

Meet the Staff: Joyce Camacho-Cruz

My name is Joyce Camacho-Cruz and I’m almost 18 years old. Currently, I live in Seattle in an independent living program and attend Orient Center to complete my GED (General Educational Development). In my spare time I like to go for walks, read books, and write poetry. It’s my passion to put my thoughts on paper and express myself freely. I’m glad to work with Mockingbird Times which published one of my very first poems. Working with them to expand my horizons as a writer is truly a blessing.

My experience with the foster care system started when I was 15 years old and I have been in and out of the system and lived in at least 12 homes ever since. A couple, who were one of my previous guardians, provide me with great support and they are still there for me: I can give them a call and talk about what’s going on and they know just what to say. They helped me comprehend who I am inside and out. During the short time I lived with them, they showed great persistence; they never gave up on me and told me I can be anything I want. Regardless of our differences and the struggles we have gone through, we still have a strong bond. They have impacted my life greatly.

With the experience being constantly on the move, I didn’t really spend much time in school. I’ve learned to adapt to what I know and expand my outlook and know that this is the route I want to take. I want to accomplish something in life, to reach out to those who don’t have a way to advocate for themselves and may not see many opportunities.

Music is another way to help me feel at ease. I like different genres depending on my mood including metal, soul, classical, and some rap artists. Some of my favorite artists are Social Distortion, Slipknot, Korn, Ray Wylie Hubbard, and Beethoven.

One thing I would like to see changed about the foster care system is reducing unstable placements with children being moved from home to home. It’s an emotional strain that causes unnecessary stress for the youth. There should be effective communication on the child’s development and people should seek what’s effecting the youth instead of just brushing them aside. I think we should at least get to know the foster parents before being placed in a home so they won’t feel like a total stranger.

The Mockingbird Society’s Youth LEAD Program Presents

LIFE ADVOCACY 101

Learn how to be your OWN best advocate in all areas of your life. Participate in activities that will give you the skills you need to “make things happen” for your personal success!

Receive your own personal Life Advocacy 101 TOOL!

Contact us to today to schedule your FREE Life Advocacy 101 Training for your group or organization! Open to all youth and young adult ages: 14 to 23.

Contact Georgina at georgina@mockingbirdtimes.org or Kara at kara@mockingbirdtimes.org for more information and details.

Thank You!

BRUCE CROSS, PERKINS COIE LLP; WILLIAM GLABERSON, THE NEW YORK TIMES; NAOMI ISHIKASA; CHRIS MARSH, ATTORNEY; SEATTLE PUBLIC UTILITIES; SEATTLE NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP; CASEY TULPIN, COLUMBIA LEGAL SERVICES

Meet Our Staff

Executive Director Jim Theofelis; Operations Director Ros Ghan; Mockingbird Family Programs Director Dr. Wanda Hackett; Youth Programs Director Tiffany Washington; Development Director Madelaine Thompson; Executive Assistant Lauren Fredericks; Development/Communications Darce Gray; Youth LEAD Coordinator Kara Sanders; Mockingbird Family Model (FMFM) Coordinator Any Converse; Administrative Coordinator Diana Clark; Youth LEAD Administrative Assistant Milissa Morgan; FMFM Administrative Assistant Stephanie (Stevie) Glaberson; Development Assistant Alicia LeVeux; Resource Specialists Eva Ervin, Heather Jones, Georgina Ramirez, Nicholas Ruff, Tammy Soderberg; Senior Youth Representatives Samuel Martin, Georgina Ramirez; Youth Representatives Julian Barrington, Leona Bill, Joyce Camacho-Cruz, Brenda Smith, Diamonique Walker; Contributing Writers & Artists Mykal Alonso, Emma M. Cummings, Thomas Darden, Kattie Harmon, Shayna Harris, Alexa Hawkins, Henry Sheppard, Tammy Soderberg; Volunteers Christie Jackson; Editing and Layout Kelly Hawkins

Support the Mockingbird Society!

We invite you to join us in making a significant difference in the lives of our most vulnerable children, youth and families. In gratitude of your support, we will send you a monthly issue of the Mockingbird Times. Please join us today!

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For appropriate recognition, please write in the space above how you like to be listed.

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Please charge my credit card: ☑ One time ☒ Quarterly
My employer will match my gift.

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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 gift. Please consider our LeGaL services

Mockingbird Times, October 2008

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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.

The Mockingbird Society
2100 24th Avenue S., Suite 240, Seattle, WA 98144

For more information, call (206) 323-KIDS (5437) or visit www.mockingbirdtimes.org
Misdiagnosis in Foster Children by Diamonique Walker

What is misdiagnosis? Youth in care experience a lot of different emotions that come from being separated from family and being placed in new and unfamiliar environments. When taken away from their normacy, it can make them very vulnerable and emotional. When youth transitioning into care receive a state mandated mental health assessment it can lead to misdiagnosis.

Misdiagnosis is incorrectly identifying or determining the nature and circumstances of a cause of a disease or injury through examination or review of laboratory data. The problem arises because there are legitimate mental health issues in the foster care community.

More than half the nation’s estimated half a million youth in foster care have mental health issues. Much of this high proportion is due to emotional support and counseling. Some are medicated when they really just need unnecessary treatments, overmedication and jumping to medicating them is inappropriate.

Over 70% of youth in foster care go through misdiagnosis and emotional support and counseling. Some youth are medicated when they really just need emotional support and counseling. Some youth in care go through misdiagnosis and experience bad reactions to medication, and genetic issues (being the child of a parent with mental illness).

“A lot of kids in care need extra support, but that doesn’t necessarily mean medication or the quantity of medication that is being prescribed is the answer.”

Leaving the Nest by Samuel Martin

“The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be only the beginning.” – Teo Tse

I decided to take it back, back to the very beginning. If you have read my articles for some time you know I generally start my articles with one quote. On this day I decided to go with three. These quotes explain my next life steps; I am leaving The Mockingbird Society. A day that I did not think would come for years.

There is a certain time when birds have to spread their wings and fly from the nest. As hard as this is, and as much as I didn’t expect this, I just knew it was time. I am in college now and my world has changed a lot. I have found a job on campus and my world revolves around the university. The Mockingbird Society has been an amazing experience. I decided myself to take a look back to when I first started. I was a 15 year old sophomore at Rainier Beach. A kid who had a little bit of potential and raw talent that needed to be groomed. I had a passion for politics and I wanted to be able to speak in front of a crowd. I did not know how to write an article nor did I know anything about the foster care system. I was just passionate about helping. I didn’t even have a mustache. As you can see things were different.

As time went on I learned several different things that I didn’t even know that I could. I learned how speak up and to advocate for myself and others. I learned how to research and write articles. And I learned about life and living my dreams.

I am sad to say goodbye but eager to move on to the next step in my life. I want to thank all of the people at The Mockingbird Society who have made this such a wonderful place to work and I want to thank you for reading my articles and supporting me all these years. I will miss you all.

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Thank You!
The Mockingbird Society would like to thank all of the extraordinary community members and donors who made our second annual benefit luncheon a huge success. Because of the compassion and commitment of nearly 600 guests in attendance, we raised $180,000 to support youth and families in the foster care system.

Thank you again for your time, resources and generosity!

Luncheon Co-Chairs
We would like to extend our deepest thanks to our event co-chairs, Connie Ballmer and Peter Steinbrueck. Their commitment and involvement in The Mockingbird Society has helped us raise awareness and brought our community of supporters. Through their generous contributions of time and resources, building a world-class foster care system is possible.
Creative Corner

Once in Love
KATIE HARRON
I was once in love, with such an amazing boy. Our hands fit together like a glove, but he played with my heart like a toy. He’s apparently moved on, while I’m stuck in the past. I’m always thinking of the memories, wishing we could have made it last. He made me so happy, he was my reason to smile. I wish I could tell him the truth, how I’m still in love with him. I’ll never forget the good times we had, he’ll always be the one I love. So I was once in love, with such an amazing boy.

Choice, Establishment
THOMAS DUNN
In motion you find a constant:
Upon Establishment
The apparent can always
Be constant

If you can choose a
Content
Then success is a possibility;
In hard work if you
Hypothesize:
You can critically make the algebraic
expression
Of establishment

Life in the System
TAMPY SOODERG
“You must have done something wrong to be in foster care!”
My crime: I was not strong enough to mend my broken family to keep us from being ripped apart. Just as shredded paper gets tossed to and fro so did my family.
Too young to fully understand why
But old enough to feel the pain.
Not articulate enough to let out the suffering.

Years went by without a sound.
All the while something foul was brewing inside.
Flares of rage induced by alcohol would blaze.
Not wanting sympathy but not knowing how to ask for comfort
Was my demise for years.
Anger, fear, alcohol, and codependency was my life.

WAIT……
Who am I?
I am the statistic.
I AM MY FATHER.

“Give in” echoes inside me.
A still small voice: “I can do better, I AM BETTER”

Life went by and slowly I learned how to use my voice.
How to be honest with myself and others.
No longer ashamed for being human.
For stumbling occasionally.

I AM NOT A FAILURE
BUT A SUCCESS!
A working woman who is learning as she goes.

Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost.

~John Quincy Adams

Seafarers International Union (SIU) Apprenticeship Program by Henry Sheppard

As a former youth in the foster care system, I know firsthand that there are many challenges involved in transitioning from life in foster care to life on your own. I also know how quickly these challenges must be met so that you have a place to go and a means to support yourself once you are out of the foster care system. In my experience, as an apprentice of the Seafarers International Union (SIU), the apprenticeship program offered through the Paul Hall Center (PHC) can meet the immediate needs of training, employment, and housing, as well as providing a great opportunity to save money for future goals.

In a short time, I have visited ports in Africa, Madagascar, Asia, Hawaii, and Europe. With that said, I feel it is also important to mention that a career at sea may not be right for everyone. Both the training at PHC and life onboard a ship requires a strong personal work ethic. This is an industry, that will require you to spend months at a time away from home for training and while working in order to maintain benefits and seniority within the structure of the union.

If you feel that you have the motivation necessary to complete the apprenticeship program then you may find a career at sea to be greatly rewarding. The PHC offers a high school equivalency course for those who did not finish high school, as many foster youth unfortunately do not.

Upon successful completion of a standard GED (General Educational Development) testing regimen, you will be granted a high school diploma from the State of Maryland. While enrolled in the Apprentice Program at PHC, you are earning college credits towards a degree in Nautical Science or Marine Engineering while you obtain the required skills to work aboard an SIU contracted vessel.

There is also great potential for saving money for a future goal, be it going to school, investing or buying a home. Even though salaries at the entry level are comparable to entry level jobs you might find at home, the potential for saving is great due to the fact that room and board are free both while training at PHC and working on a ship. As you continue upgrading to higher level jobs on the ship, your potential for both earning and saving money can grow exponentially in just a few years. The only limitation you have is your own desires. For more information visit www.seafarers.org/phc.

Congratulations Claire!

Congratulations to Claire Baron, our summer intern from Teens in Public Service! Claire was awarded the Joe Henry Brotherhood Interdisciplinary Award in Law, Business, the Arts and Public Service. This award is given to an intern who demonstrates a strong interest in community and a passion for learning. Thank you Claire for your great work with us. The Mockingbird Society wishes you the best in your future endeavors.

Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit
ONE UNITED VOICE FOR CHANGE
October 25 & 26, 2008
Current and former foster youth ages 14 to 24 and their supporters will:

• Discuss the stigma related to growing up in foster care.
• Learn to use their voice effectively.
• Establish local youth and alumni action groups to address issues important to them.
• Identify pressing issues to discuss with state policy makers.

Apply on-line at www.mockingbirdtimes.org.

If you have any questions, email: leadershipsummit@mockingbirdtimes.org or call 206-838-6660.

Mockingbird Times, October 2008