

Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



October 2010

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In This Issue

Letter From the Editor
Jim Theofelis
Page 2

From Behind: Foster Youth, Education, and the Economy
Ian Grant (Reporting from Olympia)
Page 2

Meeting Secretary
Susan Dreyfus
Sam Evans
Page 2

Sealing Juvenile Records
Amanda Bevington
Page 3

Rural Homeless Youth Go Without
David Buck
Page 3

Thanks to Our Sponsors
Page 3

Creative Corner:
With the Words I Love
You
Miranda Green
Page 4

I Came to You
Rochelle Koon
Page 4

Life in Foster Care
Nickole
Page 4

Calendar of Events
Page 4

News From The Mockingbird Network
Page 4



October 6, 2010 marked The Mockingbird Society's 4th Annual Luncheon - and it was an event like no other. Our speakers definitely uplifted, empowered and impacted all who were present on that day. We had more than 400 people in attendance this year. Many of our legislative champions were there in support of Mockingbird and all of their youth, including Congressman Jim McDermott, Congressman Jay Inslee, Representative Ruth Kagi, Representative Eric Pettigrew, and Representative Reuven Carlyle all who have been a part of the changes Mockingbird has been making in the child welfare system. With all of our generous donations we surpassed our goal of \$150,000 and we ended up raising more than \$173,000 to change the world for youth in foster care.

This year we had a variety of speakers share their experiences in care and testify as to how Mockingbird has impacted their life. Some of our speakers included Noah Stiles from The Mockingbird Network's Spokane area chapter; David Buck a Network Representative at MBS, and more. Melody Esteves told a very touching story that really hit home to me. She, like me, is a young mother faced with struggles of not only taking care of herself, but caring and providing for a child. Her story was evidence to the fact that the Independent Youth Housing Program (IYHP) is truly necessary for youth aging out of care. We also had the pleasure of hearing from Snohomish County Prosecuting Attorney Adam Cornell, a distinguished alumnus of foster care bring us home with his story about being told "HECK YES!" by at least one caring adult, that he proclaimed was the reason that he got where he is today. He told us that the resiliency of his foster mom is why he is a prosecutor today and not on the wrong side of the courtroom. As our speakers shared their stories, I looked around. I saw some eyes watering and others gleaming. The courage that each person took to get on stage and share was powerful and im-

mense. It was exciting for me knowing that they had touched the hearts of so many, just by giving a peek into their lives. "There is no greater gift than helping someone find their voice and place in this world. The Mockingbird Society gives foster care youth that gift..." said Representative Tina Orwall (D-33rd District). Many youth, including myself would vouch that being a part of this organization helps us find our voice which is something that no one can take away from us.



David Buck, Representative Ruth Kagi, and Jim Theofelis

Mockingbird's luncheons are not only about raising money to support our organization, but also to show that we really do what we say - we "walk the walk." October 6th was not the first time these youth have spoken out about their experiences to make a difference. Mockingbird gives youth the platform to do so on a legislative level as well. Representative Reuven Carlyle, who has supported foster youth in the legislature says, "Mockingbird is a force in the Legislature because real kids, living real lives, engage with Legislators on a human level and make all the policy issues come alive. And that's why we respond with more than rhetoric - we work with Mockingbird to change lives." I think that many other state legislators would agree with Representative Carlyle. I was able to

catch Representative Ruth Kagi at the luncheon as well. "Mockingbird has brought the voice of foster and homeless youth to the Legislature. Having articulate, informed youth testify on their experience has had a powerful impact on legislators and has made a real difference," said Kagi. On more than one occasion, MBS's youth have told unforgettable eye-watering, mouth-dropping, and heart felt stories that change the perspective of some lawmakers that can really make a difference.

Congressman Jim McDermott who is a big support to the Mockingbird Society and to foster care reform on a national level shared his thoughts.

"The Mockingbird Society is undertaking some of the most important work in our country, and I'm happy to see that the Society's model is being examined and implemented by foster care providers throughout the country. There is often a lot of talk in government and among non profits about improving systems and outcomes, yet behind that technical language is the simple underlying goal to provide each child in foster care a loving home and a strong support network that sets each child on a path to success and happiness. The Mockingbird Society is meeting that goal, and I congratulate them on their accomplishments and for the great service they are providing to foster care parents and children throughout Washington."



Congressman Jim McDermott and Melody Esteves

I'd like to give a big thanks to all of our donors, staff, and volunteers who made this event possible and that let us RAISE OUR VOICE!

How Do Foster Youth Succeed in College?

BY GIOVANNI ENGLISH



On September 10th, the University of Washington CSF Scholars Program held its Champions Invitational, an informational program for youth and alumni of foster care about how to get in to college and get scholarships to pay for your tuition. Interestingly, the event was not just about the University of Washington. It was about college itself and how to succeed.

The UW Champions Program is a huge network of resources available to all foster youth and foster youth alumni, designed to help make college life easier. It is like a V.I.P. pass giving you access to many key people at the university, as well as access to financial aid when you need it the most.

This network of resources is not just professional. A lot of these people you will come to know on a personal level. They help you mature throughout your college career and help make sure you don't fall behind. The connections that are made are lifelong personal connections. Going from scholarship to admissions, this program is set up to help you get in and stay in.

The invitational started as a relaxing tour of the university campus, with a visit to the planetarium and the greenhouse. After everyone congregated in one location, we all headed back to the dorms, where we would be staying for the night. That was probably one of the best parts of the event, being able to sleep in the dorms at UW.

During the event, we had a chance to talk with current Champion Program foster alumni. This was a great opportunity to ask a question I was dying to ask: "What is the difference between this program and the Fostering Scholars program?" I found out the Fostering Scholars program is a scholarship and the UW Champions Program is a network of resources. I could not agree with this description of the Champions Program more. The foster alumni involved seemed very caring about this program and supportive of the connections tied into it. You could tell by the way they talked about the people they worked with and the experiences they had, this program meant a lot to them.

Following this amazing experience, we were led off to dinner where members from the board of the Champions Program were pres-

ent, and people knowledgeable about financial aid, scholarships, and admissions review. It was a great opportunity to network. The keynote speaker, Susan Kemp, gave an awe-inspiring keynote about place and how the smallest of things can remind you of it and of where you come from. It was extremely inspirational and very moving, the idea that only a few things are necessary to remind you of where you are from.

The following day included workshops focused on scholarships and how to apply for them, as well as what services are available for youth and how to access them. It was an informational day spent learning how to successfully fill out applications and how important it is to meet application deadlines. But most importantly, we learned key pointers on how to access scholarships. We learned how important it is to apply to as many scholarships as possible because many scholarships go unclaimed when people think they won't be able to get it. If you apply and no one else does, you get the scholarship.

Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



Dear friends,

On October 6th, The Mockingbird Society celebrated its 4th Annual Luncheon and our 9th Anniversary. We started 9 years ago with three youth in foster care who were living on the streets, and me, and an anonymous \$50,000 gift to help us create The Mockingbird Society.

Today we're a statewide agency that's helping hundreds of youth develop essential employment readiness and leadership skills.

This year's luncheon was tremendously successful as we raised \$173,000 to ensure that The Mockingbird Society can sustain our important work on behalf of children, youth, and families. This work would not be possible without support from our generous supporters, and we were inspired by

a matching gift from **The Sessions Family Foundation** for all gifts over \$200.00 up to \$30,000. Thanks to each of you, our readers, our table captains, Hub Home and foster families, and everyone who raised their voice on behalf of system reform.

Finally, this year's success also was celebrated with our Legislative and Congressional champions without whom these issues would not move forward. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was right. "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that." Together, we continue to shine a bright light on the children, youth and families in our foster care system.

Thank you.

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Meeting Secretary Susan Dreyfus BY SAM EVANS



Recently, The Mockingbird Society held a Leadership Essay contest that culminated at the Annual Foster Youth and Alumni Leadership Summit. As soon as I found out that the winner would get to spend the day with **Susan Dreyfus**, Secretary of Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, I started writing my first draft.

When my name was announced at the Summit as the winner, it took me a second to recover from the shock. This was one of the most intense experiences of my life. To know that I had been chosen from among so many others to gain this opportunity made it even sweeter.

In preparing for my visit with Secretary Dreyfus, there were two things I wanted to impress upon her. I wanted her to know that foster youth are articulate and intelligent, and that I am going places and she could help me get there.

Spending the day with Secretary Dreyfus was the experience of a lifetime. Not only did I get to shadow Susan Dreyfus, but she asked for my opinion on every issue, in every meeting of her very busy day. Our schedule for the day was very full of interesting and relevant meetings. One thing that the Secretary said that really left an impact with me was when she told me, "The two most important things to remember are, one, to never burn bridges; and two, to do everything you do at 100%."

Looking back, I would not have had the honor to spend the day with such a powerful woman and help to build bridges between foster youth and alumni and DSHS if I had not given 100% in writing my essay. Looking forward, Secretary Dreyfus and I spoke about some of her ideas for building new bridges between DSHS and foster youth and alumni. Stay tuned for more details!

Submitting Letters

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

Update Your Subscription

If you have recently moved, need to change the number of issues you receive, or if the address we are mailing the *Mockingbird Times* to needs to be corrected, please complete and mail the subscription request form found on page 2 so we can update our records.

Conserving Resources and Honoring Your Preferences

In an effort to increase awareness of the *Mockingbird Times*, and the voice of its contributing writers – youth and alumni of care, we plan to begin publishing a more robust online edition in 2010. This also will allow us to conserve resources and reduce costs. So, watch for regular updates on our progress. We'll be checking in with you, our loyal readers, in the near future to learn more about your preferences.

Thank you for your support.

From Behind: Foster Youth, Education, and the Economy BY IAN GRANT (REPORTING FROM OLYMPIA)



I'm writing this from the kitchen in my new home - a sort of ramshackle-looking duplex on the campus of The Evergreen State College. I start classes tomorrow.

Like 34.2% of foster youth (Chapin Hall Midwest study), I didn't graduate from high school. I got my GED and started working as a bill collector at the call center a block down from my house. It was decent enough money, but all of the grand designs I'd had as to what I would do when they let me out into the real world just didn't seem relevant in light of needing to make rent, satisfy the staff at the transitional program I'd moved into when I turned eighteen, and deal with my own personal issues.

According to Chapin Hall's Midwest Study, which looks at what happens to foster youth after they age out of care, only 25.6% of foster youth make it through their first year of college by age 23. Only 3% end up getting their bachelor's degree by age 23, compared to 27.2% nationwide.

Why is it that foster youth are so much less likely to get a four year degree?

Cost is certainly one factor. Tuition and fees at state universities have risen by five percent, on average, every year since 1999. Four years of tuition at your average four-year, in-state public school currently runs about \$28,080 (NY Times). In 1999, that same education cost only \$13,396. Many foster youth don't know about programs like ETV, the Passport to College Promise Scholarship, the Governor's Scholarship, and others which make it a lot easier to pay for college - especially for those who were in care long enough to qualify, but left before their eighteenth birthday.

Of course, the economy is another big piece of the puzzle. Many young people

"Only 25.6% of foster youth make it through their first year of college by age 23. Only 3% end up getting their bachelor's degree by age 23."

can't find a place in the workforce after turning eighteen. In 2009, Americans aged 15-24 had an unemployment rate of 16.7%, nearly double the 8.6% unemployment rate for the general population. So at a time when states across the country are being forced to slash education budgets, more young people are looking to higher education as the only way that they can put themselves into a position to provide for themselves.

These are just two factors in the difficult realities facing recent alumni of care. It's harder than ever to get the things that most people associate with a successful life: a good job, a college education, or stable housing.

I made it this far because of a staggeringly large group of people who are personally invested in seeing me succeed. I have been incredibly lucky in the past few years to

have the support of people at Mockingbird, YouthCare, the YMCA, Street Youth Ministries, and other places. Most youth are not so lucky. Foster youth are just like all youth and indeed all people in general: they need a group of good people backing them up to make the most of themselves. I am indebted both to my readers and to the community at large for giving me the opportunity to succeed. I hope that we can work together to secure that opportunity for all foster youth, all homeless youth, and indeed every youth. Every one of you reading this probably knows a youth who is currently struggling to succeed, either educationally, professionally, or otherwise. I urge you to talk to that youth today. I urge you to let him or her know that you care whether he achieves his goals or not. I urge you to be part of making that youth's dream happen.

We are all in this together, and we will make it. With your help.

MEET OUR STAFF

Executive Director Jim Theofelis; **Deputy Director** Ros Ghan; **Mockingbird Family Programs Director** Dr. Wanda Hackett; **Youth Programs Director** Tiffany Washington; **Public Policy Director** Rose Berg; **Development Coordinator** Kylie Palzer; **Development Director** Brian Lawrence; **Executive Assistant** Lauren Frederick; **Finance Manager** Catherine Lanham; **Mockingbird Network Coordinator** Kara Sanders; **Administrative Coordinator** Aine Cowan-Kuist; **Administrative Assistant (AA)** Liliana Davies; **Mockingbird Network AA** Milissa Morgan; **Resource Specialists** Jerry Bobo, Sarah Mahaffy, Graham Parrington, Georgina Ramirez, Tammy Soderberg, Samantha Valle; **Senior Network Representatives** Ian Grant, Terrell Rosetti, Diamonique Walker; **Network Representatives** Amanda Bevington, David Buck, Giovanni English; **Contributing Writers & Artists** Brandy Baxley, Josie Davis, Sam Evans, Miranda Green, Rochelle Koon, Christina Koshney, Garrett Nadeau, Nickole, Tianna Oliver, Rosalee Warren; **Design & Layout** Highdive.com

ABOUT US: *The Mockingbird Society* is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation developing innovative models for improving the outcomes of foster care, while advocating with decision makers for system reform. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please consult your tax advisor regarding your specific tax situation. *The Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of *The Mockingbird Society* are paid between \$9.50 and \$12 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, and poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. *The Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of over 25,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the USA, through a private distribution list and as an insert in *Real Change*, a Seattle-based community newspaper. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of *The Mockingbird Society* and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. Donations to *The Mockingbird Society* may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of *The Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of *The Mockingbird Society*. All contents copyright ©2009, *The Mockingbird Society*.

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.

Sealing Juvenile Records BY AMANDA BEVINGTON



Getting your juvenile record sealed is very important for young adults with a history in the justice system. Many people think that once you turn 18 your juvenile record disappears. Not true at all.

Until you get your record sealed, your criminal background is open to the public. And getting your record sealed is an important step to successfully apply for housing, jobs, and financial aid.

Some time ago, my brother and I went to the Sealing Juvenile Court Records clinic, offered by the Street Youth Legal Advocates of Washington. Before they could help us seal our records, they told us about our unpaid court fines from juvenile court, which must be paid off before records can be sealed. It is very important to know this information before you try to get your record sealed. A lot of young adults want their record sealed because it is extremely hard to find jobs to support their family and themselves with a criminal record showing on their background check. But if you do not have a current job, how are you going to pay off your fines? That is another problem youth that are stuck in the system face.

At the time I went with my brother to the clinic, he was trying really hard to get his life on track. He applied to multiple jobs, but jobs kept turning him down left to right. My brother is 22 years old and had never been charged as an adult. He only had a juvenile record from five years ago. He was in foster care at the time he went to the juvenile detention center, so the state was his legal parent at the time. I don't understand why the state could not advocate on my brother's behalf. I think the state should waive his fees or work out some type of payment plan that could help him succeed. Instead they just threw him in the system, and now when he is ready to

make positive changes in his life, it is much harder for him to do so. It seems like the court system always looks at the negative side of the situation.

The first step to getting your record sealed is to find out what day Street Youth Legal Advocates of Washington (SYLAW) are sealing records. Remember to make sure there are no unpaid court fines. You will then need to schedule a hearing, usually to be held at the juvenile court, during which the judge or court commissioner will decide whether or not to grant your sealing request. To set a hearing date, talk in person to the juvenile court clerk about the next available hearing date and time.

Once you have a hearing date, you will need to complete a Notice of Respondent's Motion to Seal Records of Juvenile Offender for each case that you will want sealed. It is always a good idea to make copies of the complete motion and a copy of the notice for each case that you would like to have sealed. The court rules require that, after you file your motion for sealing, you deliver or mail the motion and notice to the juvenile court prosecutor, the juvenile court administrator, and the law enforcement agencies. You should take to your hearing all sets of copies of the motion and notice that you filed, your copy of the certificate of service, and the order that you filled out for each case. SYLAW's Web site also has more information on how to properly seal your record: www.sylaw.org.

After my brother got his record sealed, he said, "It is such a good feeling to start off fresh. It's like a new life, but in a positive way. I am now able to apply for jobs and not have to check the box on applications that says I have been convicted of a crime. I can now go to interviews feeling confident and not be automatically rejected for my past."

Rural Homeless Youth Go Without BY DAVID BUCK



When you first become homeless there is this moment where everything sinks in: where will I sleep? How will I get food? How can I get out of this? If you are lucky you will be in an urban city where there are usually resources. The luckiest of these places are Seattle, Washington, and Austin, Texas. During my traveling days, these were the only two places I found that not only had transitional services specifically for homeless youth, but a wide variety of services covering all of a youth's basic survival needs. Not to say these are the only two places with resources, but finding resources is a game of "find the needle in the haystack." Service providers aren't holding up billboards and sending out ads in the local paper.

And what if you are in a small rural town? Finding services in an urban area is hard enough, but imagine if you live in a small town.

The National Coalition for the Homeless released a study on their findings on homelessness. There are an estimated 1.6 million homeless persons in the United States, but due to a variety of reasons listed in the study, "none of the estimates can be the definitive representation of how many people are homeless." The number of homeless persons could be, and probably is, significantly higher than 1.6 million. The study also stated that only 35% of homeless youth are staying at shelters, but this is only taken from the youth they have been able to count. No matter what statistic we find on homeless youth, chances are high that the numbers are not accurate. We have absolutely no idea how many homeless youth there are, and more specifically, how many homeless youth are in rural areas without service providers.

If you live in a small town and you are homeless, you probably haven't had the privilege of

being a statistic. You also probably haven't received many, if any, services to help you meet your basic needs.

There is a severe disproportion in services across this nation for homeless youth. The best hope a homeless youth in a rural area has without services is to get in contact with the National Runaway Switchboard (1-800-RUNAWAY), which is one of only two organizations I found that are a nationwide resource for the homeless. The National Runaway Switchboard is an organization founded in 1971 whose goal is to help runaway youth find a way to get home. Hopefully with enough conviction you can get a ticket to an urban area where services are more easily available. Keep in mind, however, that the National Coalition for the Homeless found that in all 50 cities studied, city officials estimated the number of homeless youth significantly exceeded the number of shelters and transitional housing spaces.

The problem is there isn't enough money for services and service providers, enough attention for youth in rural areas, or enough people who care about the problem in our society. There are places all over this country where homeless youth have nowhere to get help. And more often than not, having no help means having no hope and no future.

There doesn't currently seem to be any real solution to this problem. And if there is, they aren't advertising.

¹<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/programs/rhy.htm>

²<http://www.vaut.org/Services/OutreachServices/HomelessYouthResourceCenter/tidb/2373/Default.aspx>

³<http://www.1800runaway.org/default.html>



THANK YOU

THE MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY would like to thank all of the extraordinary community members who made our 4th Annual Benefit Luncheon a tremendous success. **Together we raised more than \$173,000 to support our advocacy efforts and innovative programs.** We appreciate your passion, commitment and generosity towards building a world-class foster care system.

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ADDITIONAL SUPPORTERS

With the words I love you

By Miranda Green

Lingering between us unsaid
I wave farewell as you walk away
I shall not see you again
And for that my solemn heart aches
It is better this way my sister
I shall hurt you no longer
Fare thee well

Life in Foster Care

By Nickole

I have found myself once again
On a broken hearted balcony
Standing from with in
Reaching my hands out
Tasting the sweet air on my lips
Holding my breath
And trying to catch the wind

I Came to You

By Rochelle Koon

I came to you with my tears but you turned me away,
I came to you with my fears but you left me in the rain,
I came to you with my dreams you told me they were lame,
I came to you with everything and you just thought it was a game,
Now you come crying to me,
what if I do the same,
Will you feel what I did,
will you drown in pain,
But I won't leave you, let you cry or turn you away,
I hope next time I come to you, you can do the same.

Community Events

Region 1 (Spokane)

October 18th-January 1st: Redcross Health and Safety Classes
More info contact: Pat or Ryan. Phone: (509) 326-3330

Region 2 (Yakima)

October 30th: Harvest Party for ACT FIRST - at the Corn Maze

Region 3 (Everett)

October 30th: Pumpkin Parade - Downtown Marysville, 3rd & State
Contact: Mary Hilton - Hilton@pharmacy.com

October 31st: Mill Creek City Hall 15728 Main St Mill Creek, WA 98012

This FREE event provides a safe environment for children and their families who wish to trick or treat. Contact: Kristen Snyder, Phone: (425) 921-5779 kristens@cityofmillcreek.com

Region 4 (Seattle)

October 27th-29th: Halloween in the Park Woodland Park Zoo.
More info: (206) 684-4800 or <http://www.zoo.org/events>

October 30th: UW Touchdowns for Kids <http://www.uwtouchdownsforkids.com>.

Region 5 (Tacoma)

October 20th, November 10th: Mockingbird Chapter Meeting -3:30-5:00pm PCA

Region 6 (Olympia)

Every Wednesday: Planned Parenthood Teen Clinic - 3:30-5pm
402 Legion Way, Suite 201, Olympia, WA 98501

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that.”

~Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Region 1 (Spokane) UNITE! (Understanding Needs and Implementing Transformations for Everyone) by Josie Davis

Region One had an important change this month. For those of you who don't know, Lauren is no longer our Resource Specialist. To be honest with you, a lot of the youth were worried about Lauren's replacement. We worried about chapter meetings not being the same, the new Resource Specialist not being as nice and compassionate as Lauren is, and many more things. When the new Resource Specialist was hired and all of us found out who it was, all of our worries diminished.

I am happy to say Sarah Mahaffy is Region One's new Resource Specialist. I personally know Sarah from working with her in the past and she is a wonderful woman who has such compassion towards foster youth. Lauren will be sincerely missed, but all the youth from Region One are looking forward to Sarah coming on board.

Region 3 (Everett) H.E.Y.M.A.C. (Hearing Every Youth Make a Change) by Garrett Nadeau

At this month's chapter meeting, we discovered more about our chapter members and learned some job tips from Georgina Ramirez. Tameka and I also facilitated a recap of the last SAC meeting and informed the chapter of what is on the legislative agenda as well as what is on the policy agenda for all of the regions to work on. Lastly, we had a discussion on civic engagement opportunities for our region. Overall the meeting was a success! Next month we will be throwing a Halloween celebration for some awesome youth!

Region 4 (Seattle) Region 4 for Change by Christina Kosmey

This month Region 4 took initiative and action, engaging our community in the 2010 Clean the Block Party. This event was just before school, kicking off the volunteer and community efforts by local youth. We hit the streets of the central area in teams of 3-5 and set out with our yellow Seattle City bags and silver grabbers. We ended the day with trivia, games, prizes and an awesome BBQ!! The great folks at the Red Cross, YMCA, and Atlantic Street contributed to our 2010 Clean the Block Party. As for chapter business, Region 4 lost an amazing Resource Specialist, Georgina Ramirez, but gained an awesome one as well, adding Jerry Bobo as our new Resource Specialist. Region 4 has many changes in progress with the goal of becoming a well organized team of young leaders. Go Region 4 For Change!!!

Region 6 (Olympia)

T.A.F.F.Y. (Truth and Action For Foster Youth) by Rosalee Warren

Region 6 has new chapter leaders! Rosalee (Rosie) Warren (Thurston County), Chris Bauer (Lewis County), and Zach Portch (Mason County) are happy to get things rolling as we become acquainted with Ian Grant, Region 6's new (and first ever!) Network Representative. We are currently gearing up and getting ready to talk to FPAWS (Foster Parent Association of Washington) about making allowances for youth in family foster care standard practice, just like it is for youth in group care. Our chapter meetings are every third Thursday from 4-6pm at Community Youth Services in Olympia. If you are a foster youth or alumni, you are welcome to join us, or we would be happy to hear what you have to say about making the foster care system better. Contact Graham Parrington: g.parrington@mockingbirdsociety.org or call 360-943-0780 x169.



Region 2 (Yakima) A.C.T.F.I.R.S.T. (Around Community Two Fostering Individual Rights Safely Together) by Brandy Baxley

This month at our chapter meeting, we talked about ways to have employment learning. We brainstormed and came up with the idea of going to the library to write resumes, learn how to search for jobs, and get our library cards. Also we cooked breakfast for lunch! It was fun!

The next Saturday we all met at the library and I got my first library card! We took a tour of the library and read a little bit. But the really exciting thing happened just yesterday, Tammy and I bumped into Senator Curtis King and Dino Rossi! I was excited and a little nervous. Senator Curtis King said that he would like to come and visit our chapter during one of our chapter meetings!

The Mockingbird Network

Your Needs, Your Voice



Region 5 (Tacoma) Cour'ige (Changing Our Unique Responsibilities Individualities Gaining Empowerment) by Tianna Oliver

Region 5 just had our Back to School Party at Pierce County Alliance in collaboration with ILS. It was pretty awesome if I may say so myself! Lots of foster youth came and enjoyed the wide variety of food, and had fun playing a few "get to know" you games. We all learned some of the fun things everyone got to do over their summers, and other things such as their favorite artists and how many siblings they have. Our Resource Specialist also set up a friendly scavenger hunt throughout the building which everyone participated in and enjoyed.

We are looking forward to collaborating with Total Unity Family Services to host a training there to have more foster youth engage in our chapter. Back to school and back to business for our chapter. Be on the lookout our upcoming community service date. Please feel free to join us on October 13th for our first official MBS chapter meeting this school year.