It’s Back to School Time by JAMICA HENDERSON

It’s that time again. Yes, school. I know those of you who are seniors are wondering if this is the end of the summer already? Well it is, but that does not mean fun time is over. It does mean that it is time for homework again. But what about the fun stuff that happens while you’re in school, like the sports, spirit weeks, dances, and seeing your friends that you did not get to see while you were on your summer vacation? For some people, school might not be their best friend and for some it is. I was one of the ones that loved going back to school after summer. It was time to get back to work.

School is work for those who are in school. You get up at six and have to be there by seven forty-five and be there until two. The difference is you’re not getting paid by the hour. You get paid by quarter, semester or should I say when your grades come; that is your pay. Good grades show that you put hard work into your work and if it’s the other way around than that means you need to pick up your slacking. School is a very important part of our lives nowadays. You can’t get a good job with out having a high school diploma or showing that you completed some type of education in your life. This year, let’s all look at school differently than we used to think of it.

How is it funded? SAC. The table took three months to complete. How does SAC work? The program staff hopes to give the kids an atmosphere where they can start a project or goal and finish it. That is what we are here for. SAC creates a warm safe calm environment for [homeless] youth to build success and creativity through the use of various artistic media, says Annie Cotton, current program manager. SAC is an arts program open a few days a week where homeless youth can go to get away from their everyday monotony of the street life. Three days a week, they can go and make a variety of different art projects from ceramics to stained glass to painting and so on. On Saturdays, youth can go and either do any one of many art projects or learn to practice music on the drum set, electric and acoustic guitars, bass guitars, piano, etc. “I love SAC,” says Jason.”This place is wonderful to come and be creative and relax for a while. I come here a lot. I like to come here and do things I would never get to do otherwise. I get to be creative and relax for a while. The staff here are super. I make jewelry, sew, and play the drums,” says Jason, one of the many youth that come to SAC on a regular basis.

“Sixth grade is wonderfull to come and relax, cool off, get my mind off of things and take a break. It makes books. It helps me to take time off, get things together and to recuperate and freshen up for life. I do my hobby: making books [sewing torn out magazine pages together like a journal] that I otherwise don’t have the time,
Dear Jim Theofelis,

Thank you for your letter.

Sincerely,
[Signature]

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

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Letter From The Editor

I must say, the older I get the more I seem to greet the month of September with very mixed feelings. Everyone is enjoying the sunlight and the longer days. Fruit trees and wild berries grow on nearly every block in the neighborhood. I especially love the very early mornings during the summer and the warm, quiet air that feels like a special invitation to this new day. It’s as if September was in a meeting with the other months—all twelve of them—and it became clear that one of them had to be the “bad guy” and bring everyone back to reality. Imagine that conversation: “Why should I be the one to tell children it’s time to go back to school? Let April do it!” Well, we all know how that one turned out, so here again is September calling us to account.

Returning to school, especially if they are attending a new school, can be very exciting to kids but also very anxiety provoking. For children and youth in foster care, it can be especially difficult. The past several years have seen a marked increase in awareness and support regarding the critical importance of education for kids in foster care. I want to send a special thank you to the thousands of foster parents, kinship caregivers and state case workers who will go the extra mile to ensure they provide the support, resources and advocacy necessary for the child(ren) in their care to be successful in school.

In Washington State and across the nation, opportunities are increasing for youth from foster care to attend college. Let’s make sure that all kids in foster care know that if they do work hard in school they have future opportunities for their academic success. But school success is more than academics. It involves participating in the enrichment activities sponsored by the school and community, which also supports the social development and quality of life of all kids. I believe one of the best things we can do for kids is to help them identify and develop their own interests and passions. Of all the homework we will be doing with our kids, I tell you—being a cheerleader for them is one of the most rewarding and long lasting. Here’s to September!

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

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Good-bye, Misty!

Youth LEAD Alumna Janisca Henderson, Youth Representatives Andrea Roblan and Jessica Martin, and Youth LEAD Coordinator Najja Morris bid a fond farewell to Senior Youth Representative Misty Lou Cook.

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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 below so we can update our records.

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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 his mockingbirds? Join The Mockingbird Society today and help us give young people a safe place to nest, to sing, to fly.

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

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For more information, please visit www.mockingbirdsociety.org.
How to Save a Life By Being a Friend by Melissa Stringer

Do you ever feel like you’re all alone and the world has given up on you? Well if that’s the case, then you need to hear what I have to say, I have been there before so I can relate. There are times when you just feel like you don’t want to fight or want to just give up, because you just feel like nobody cares anymore. But then you feel like there’s possibly one person who can make it better, so you think about it and you realize that there is one friend that has always been there no matter what. So you turn to them and they try everything in their power to make you feel better.

They try everything to make you laugh, even try to get you to crack a smile, maybe even act a little crazy. But sometimes that doesn’t work and you still feel alone. Things start to run through your head like you’re not worth anything, like nobody cares about you and nobody cares if you are dead or alive. That is never the case. There is always somebody out there that cares about you, even if you feel like you are alone. A long time ago, I lost a friend to suicide because he felt like he didn’t belong in this world and that everyone gave up on him. His mom had died a few months before from breast cancer and his dad just died emotionally; he was never there and was always drunk. My friend just felt so hopeless and he blamed himself for his mom’s death. So he just gave up. What sucks the most about it is that he called me three days before school started and said “I love you, Melissa. Just know that.” I just replied, “I love you, too,” not knowing that was the last time I was going to talk to him. He killed himself the following Thursday.

After he killed himself, I was never the same. I was lost and not very talkative. I just went blank. I barely ate anything. I felt like killing myself too, because he was gone. But then, one of my friends pulled me aside and said, “Melissa, if anybody ever tells you that you are not worth the fight and are a waste of time they obviously don’t see what the rest of us that love you see in you. Because what we see is somebody that lights up a room when she smiles, a person that can make a person come right back up when they are feeling down. You are special, Melissa, not a waste of time. You are worth the fight. I would fight for you any day.”

Those simple words saved my life. They helped me see that life is full of so many things and there is so much to live for. I realized that somebody out there actually cared about me. Sometimes, just hearing that someone cares makes all the difference in how someone thinks about things. Just hearing the words “I love you” can save a life. I just wish that when I said, “I love you” to my friend, that it would have saved him.

So, this article has such deep meaning because so many people everyday feel all alone and just want to give up on everything. I don’t want to have to bury another friend. Here are four signs that someone may be wanting to commit suicide: 1. Change in eating pattern 2. Change in sleeping 3. Change in personality 4. Talking about dying.

If you know of anyone who is exhibiting these symptoms, have them call the suicide hotline at 1-800-suicide or call someone who thinks they should go to the hospital immediately. If you believe that they are in danger of killing themselves, have them call the local police.

“April is a friend who knows how to pick you up when you have forgotten the words.”

Anonymous

Being Separated From Your Siblings by Leona Bell

Can you imagine not being able to grow up with your own brothers and sisters? In foster care, most children get separated from their siblings. It doesn’t even matter if there are only two or three siblings, they can still get separated from one another. One of the most common reasons that siblings get separated is that the family group is large and there isn’t a home available that can take all of them. There are also times when a case worker may feel that the eldest brother or sister might be of a bad influence on their younger siblings or they have had to take care of the younger ones and hasn’t had a chance to be a kid.

Sometimes, foster parents will decide to change the ages of children they are licensed for or only take in certain genders. When foster parents change their minds like that, it makes it hard on children because it increases the likelihood for siblings to get separated from each other. Those simple words saved my life. They helped me see that life is full of so many things and there is so much to live for. I realized that somebody out there actually cared about me. Sometimes, just hearing that someone cares makes all the difference in how someone thinks about things. Just hearing the words “I love you” can save a life. I just wish that when I said, “I love you” to my friend, that it would have saved him.

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“April is a friend who knows how to pick you up when you have forgotten the words.”

Anonymous

“Here’s the song in your heart and can sing it back to you when you have forgotten the words.”

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Join the Mockingbird Society for our

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Tuesday, October 2, 2007 • West Club Lounge, Qwest Field

Registration at 11:30 AM • Program from 12:00 – 1:30 PM

We believe we can fly

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I Found Mother Nature
JONELLE ABD-RAHMAN
I found Mother Nature
(One day) by the road.
She smiles she laughs
She says to me over
You’ve got soul the
Villagers see you coming
Around the corner with
The neck of a lion.
With the shield of faith.
I stopped in Egypt drinking
With the camels consenting.
To drink after dark beautiful
As you are they say you
Are on your way to Damascus.
I was knocked off my horse
Got back with Edith’s words.
With brother wind turned
The other cheek even though
Fear had took me a hold.

The Little Girl Cries
ANNA GONZALES
Will the little girl cry because
She suffered so much pain
Will the little girl cry because
She was abandoned
Will the little girl cry because
No one loved her
Will the little girl cry because
She was threatened
Will the little girl cry because
She had no friends
Will the little girl cry if she
Gives up her secret
Will the little girl cry if she
Chooses the right path.

Untitled
ROBERT PARKER
There are many paths,
Which will you choose?
For only one
Is truly you,
Not the one you lead,
But it’s the path,
In which you craft,
Won’t be easy,
Will be hard,
However,
(True happiness,
Is in your heart,
Before it’s to late,
Start.

Bridge of Glory
ANDREA ROLDAN
It’s a bridge of beauty and unique scenery,
over glistening waters of wonder of what lies beneath.
Bringing joy and peace to the mind when anticipating my arrival to seconds of amalgamation.
Looking up to the heavens, a perfectly painted picture.
The sky resembles promise and truth during the sunset hours,
shadowing deep purples and pinks under crests of white clouds.
Over bright blue skies filled with colors of happiness.
Releasing any unwanted thoughts of waste into the dark water, reaching spiritual nirvana.
Only until I cross the bridge completely and nature’s trees shatter my view from the windows of the bus.
So I’ll hold imagery of poetry in my mind of the bridge of glory until I experience it another time.

Get Published ~ Get Paid!
We are looking for articles, poetry, artwork and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or homelessness. If you want to be published in the Times, contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at newpaper@mockingbirdociety.org. For more info and to check us out, go to www.mockingbirdociety.org.

La Vie en Rose
ANDREA ROLDAN
La Vie en Rose, the American title of the film “The Extraordinary life of Edith Piaf” means “life is rosy” in French. This English-subtitled film by Oliver Dahan and Picturehouse Entertainment takes the audience through a tour of the life of the French singer Edith Piaf. Though, her life was not always rosy, it was driven by compassion and love.
Edith grew up in extreme poverty, abandoned by her mother and raised in a brothel when she was young. Her father eventually took her away from there and raised her and her father. When she became old enough, she sang to support herself and her and her father. Eventually she made her way into performing on stages, in diners and working towards making the lives of her and her father. When she became famous, she seemed also to become well liked. Her attitude was more demanding and she was stubborn. She never wanted to hear what people had to tell her if she didn’t agree with the idea. You could see how she lost her best friend after falling in love: jealousy. These two women always looked out for each other on the streets and, when Edith became a star, she started to forget who was there for her when no one else was. The more successful she became, Edith got more interested in her own affairs and their friendship slowly faded. That seems like a natural thing for us to do; when we “rise” and find success as we move out of the dark past we were shadowed in, we tend to forget about people who protected and supported us.
I enjoy watching independent/foreign films because often times they portray the subject matter in a different perspective than “Hollywood.” I had a short discussion with an audience member who was older than I about what she thought of the film and how Piaf’s life was portrayed. Being that I had never heard of Edith Piaf before watching the movie, I had nothing to compare it too. She told me that comparing what she already knew about Edith Piaf’s story and the film, the film was definitely “realistic and harsh.” Marion Cotillard, who played Edith, won the “Hollywood Breakthrough Award” at the Hollywood Film Festival and the “Golden Space Need- dle Award” for best actress at the Seattle International Film Festival.

Passion To Action Anniversary
JAMILA BOOKER
You may have heard about the group Passion to Action and wondered what they are all about. Well, we are a statewide foster youth and alumni advisory board that was developed by Children’s Administration (CA) in partnership with Casey Family Programs and the College Success Foundation. We provide Children’s Administration with input and recommendations regarding their policy and practices. We do an array of things such as sit on advisory boards, workgroups, committees, etc. We do presentations to CA and other community partners on issues relating to foster care.
We also give feedback on brochures, Web sites, etc., pretty much making sure that the foster youth voice is incorporated into all aspects of foster care.
On Saturday, August 18, 2007, Passion to Action celebrated our two year anniversary as an advisory board (we were developed in April of 2005). To celebrate these two years, we invited Assistant Secretary of Children’s Administration Cheryl Stefani to join us. We had a lot of fun. At most meetings (and sometimes other month) we are mainly working. This time we mixed it up; we were able to ask Cheryl questions and go over our accomplishments as a group for the past two years. After we did that, we all got a surprise: Cheryl awarded each member with a plaque thanking us for our commitment and dedication to the group and working towards making the lives of our brothers and sisters in care better. Once each of us got our awards, we finished our celebrations with some cake and awarded our group’s coordinator Rick Butt with a small gift from all of us.
One of the things we did during the celebration was to go through each of our favorite memories and moments we’ve had as a group. My favorite moment was going back and presenting to Children’s Administration’s management team. Just two years ago I had presented to them and it was the first time I had ever spoken to a group of people. It was so nerve racking but in the end I loved it and it just empow- ered me to want to keep doing it more and more.
I was in the group the day it formed and it has been such a journey for me. All the members became not only my friends but parts of my ex- tended family. They have watched me grow as I have done the same for them. We all have a bond and connection that is indescribable and no matter what our stories are, we all have something in common about our experience. Although we have had members come and go, we bond just as strongly with the new members. There are no groups – we are just one big family. We all have a passion to use our expertise to make life better for us and our extend- ed family. Through Passion to Action, I have found a voice not only for myself but for those who cannot speak and I know that each member has had a similar if not the same experience.