

Mockingbird Times

FOSTER CARE AND HOMELESS YOUTH SPEAK OUT ACROSS THE NATION



September 2010

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Raising Our Voice – Why we Do what we Do

BY IAN GRANT



The annual Mockingbird Society fundraising luncheon will take place on October 6th. And I'm really excited for it, because it's not your typical luncheon. Most non-profits inundate their donors with sob stories, saturate them with pathos, in the hope that they'll feel sad enough or guilty enough to donate. Fundraising luncheons often end with some people crying, while other people sit around them and look uncomfortable.

So I should tell you a few things we've done in the last year.

This year, we took six different legislative initiatives to Olympia. Among them were subsidies for guardians, notification of the right to request an attorney for foster youth in dependency proceedings, and more safe housing and support for youth in care. In a session where the Legislature was facing down a 2.8 billion dollar budget deficit, every single item on our legislative agenda was passed. Every issue we took to the capital was addressed.

Until now, there has never been a seat for alumni of care at the tables where these decisions are made. Mockingbird changed that this year. We have created a space for foster youth and we have the right to vote on Committee decisions, as all Committee members do. There is finally somebody representing youth interests directly, in what may be the biggest foster care reform effort ever undertaken in this state.



Youth Advocacy Day in Olympia.

We do things differently here. We don't want our funders to feel sorry for us. Indeed, our funders should be proud; proud of the things we have accomplished, proud of the changes we have made in our lives, and the lives of others, proud that they have helped to create an organization that is zealous in its pursuit of truth, fairness, and hope for youth in foster care.

I'll explain a little bit about what the Transformation Design Committee does. We were established by House Bill 2106 in 2009 to guide the process of changing the State over to a new, performance-based method of contracting for services. The upshot of which is that we are re-designing the foster system. We're creating a system that rewards service providers who take care of their youth.



Members of the Mockingbird Society and Governor Gregoire as HB2735 is signed.

Mockingbird is the only organization in the state working directly with state government to carve out a place for youth voice. We have youth in six different regions statewide that now have a voice in how they and their peers are treated. We are the experts on what is and isn't working in foster care, because we are the people who have experienced foster care.

I can't tell you how much it means to me that I have found a place where I can bring my skills and

RAISING OUR VOICE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Sealing "Juvie" Records

BY AMANDA BEVINGTON



Sealing juvenile records are very important to those who have a criminal background. What most people think is that once you turn 18 your juvenile convictions are off your record. It is not quite that easy.

Sarah Lysons, Coordinator of the Lawyers Fostering Independence program from The Center for Child and Youth Justice, explains that "Unless your records are sealed, your records are treated like any other criminal records, and are generally available to the public through the internet, courts, or the Washington State Patrol." According to Lysons, one in two foster youth exit care with a juvenile court record, so it is very important to seal your criminal records as soon as possible. Having a criminal record makes it a lot harder to apply for jobs, housing, and financial opportunity.

When I was younger I thought that when I turned 18 all my convictions as a juvenile would be gone. I thought I wouldn't have to worry about seeing any convictions on my background check when I would apply for jobs, housing, and loans. However, due to my criminal record I would always get denied. Having a criminal record was a major downfall. Since then I have seen many of my family

members and friends lose jobs or get evicted from their houses because their background checks came back with a criminal history.

Most people want their record to be sealed so they can have a fresh new start in life. Having a criminal history always haunts you. It feels like you can't succeed if you always have this



Members of the Mockingbird Society and Governor Gregoire as SB6561 is signed.

on your back. Let alone all the stress you go through with court dates, clearing warrants, court payments, and having poor public defenders that often don't really advocate for their clients. It's very frustrating to see many of my friends and family on the same page as me. It tells me that the court system needs to change to allow a second chance for people who truly are able to change their behavior.

Mockingbird has been helping create this change with the assistance from multiple other organizations. In 2004 the Legislature passed House Bill 3078 known as sealing juvenile records. The Mockingbird Society advocates said this ensures community protection and safety, while allowing youth with prior convictions to secure housing and employment. In 2010, the Legislature expanded the sealing of juvenile records through Senate Bill 6561. I'm proud to say we achieved this goal at The Mockingbird Society and it went into effect on June 20, 2010.

SB 6561 will allow young people, who have committed a crime, but fulfilled all of the court requirements, including no further infractions with the law, to have their record sealed. This will allow the youth to engage in gainful employment, secure college scholarships and continue to create a positive future by having their juvenile record sealed.

On August 18, 2010 I will be going to an event that will help youth seal their juvenile record. I will be writing part two to this article. Next month's article will explain how to properly seal your records. If any one is wondering what people see on your background check you can always go to www.washingtonstatepatrol.com.

Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS



Dear Friends,

As you are aware, The Mockingbird Society and its statewide network of youth and alumni of foster care, dedicate themselves to inspiring and educating our community and policymakers about the challenges of the system and how to fix them. The articles featured in our September 2010 issue of The Mockingbird Times highlight the struggles that vulnerable families face. But, these stories also demonstrate how building on strengths by teaching self-advocacy, basic life skills, and providing opportunities for safe housing can truly change lives.

I'd like to extend a special invitation for you to hear more of the personal stories of youth and alumni of care. Please join us on October 6th at the Seattle Sheraton for our 4th annual luncheon. The 2010 theme is Raise Your Voice and it honors the power of advocacy to ensure a more just system. Your contribution will ensure that youth and alumni of care are supported by policies that make sense, and that programs such as The Mockingbird Network continue to provide much needed youth development opportunities.

At The Mockingbird Society our job is to put a human face on the issues that children, youth and alumni of care face every day. And, despite the continued economic crisis we are not deterred. We will however, need your help in the coming year to ensure that we protect and retain essential programs, so that our children not only survive, but thrive.

I look forward to seeing you on October 6th! Together, we will continue to fight for what is right for all of our children.

Thank you for your unwavering support.

Sincerely,

Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Thank You!

Pierce County CASAs/GALs, Julie Lowery, Union Gospel Mission, Hazelruth Adams, Elizabeth Anderson, Holly Cofer, Loren D. Hostek, Susan Clifford Jamroski, Margaret-Ann Leroy, James Maki, Microsoft Matching Gifts, Sarah Morley, Valerie Ramisch, Tracy Robinson, David and Linda Rose, Washington Women's Foundation

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.

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.

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.

Raise Your Voice in Support of Our Youth!

RSVP Today for The Mockingbird Society's
4th Annual Benefit Luncheon

October 6, 2010 | The Sheraton Seattle

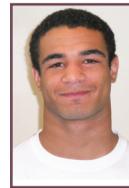
Support The Mockingbird Society and help keep the *Mockingbird Times* a free publication that expresses the voice of youth and alumni of foster care. Join us at the 4th Annual Benefit Luncheon as a table captain or individual guest. There is no cost to attend. Suggested donation of \$150. All gifts are appreciated!

Thank you for making a difference on October 6!

RSVP by contacting Brian Lawrence at
206.407.2136 or Brian@mockingbirdsociety.org.



Seattle University - Fostering Scholars BY GIOVANNI ENGLISH



The Fostering Scholars Program at Seattle University is one-of-a-kind. Not only does it provide youth in foster care in Washington state an opportunity for a free college education, but it also provides a place to live year round, even during the summer season. This combination of education and housing is what makes this program so unique and is making it a huge success for all the youth involved.

Already attending Seattle University, Hawaii native Paula Carvahlo was filing out an application when an unknown source from the admissions office told her to apply for the Fostering Scholars Program. What she did not know is that this unknown source sent her down a path to being the first graduate of the one-of-a-kind Fostering Scholars Program at Seattle University.

Paula Carvahlo is a history major with a psychology minor, and she completed 3 years at Seattle University before applying for the program. After interviewing Paula she turned me on to Colleen Montoya, Director of Fostering Scholars. Paula described Colleen as somewhat of a mother figure to the students and participants of the program. After an interview Colleen said for those who would like to view her as that she could agree, but she likes to look at herself as a more therapeutic friend or counselor. Colleen does agree that her relations with participants are very strong and she stays in touch with them as best she can and it shows.

After my interview with Colleen I was able to gather lots of details and it could

not sound any better. To start off, the program offers housing to students year round and is only available to foster care youth and alumni of foster care. Costs included in the program are housing and tuition, and any other student needs such as books and calculators. Donations come from about 20 different families and organizations. No donation is the same. The donations are large and small, but they all mean a lot to the scholars. People donate to a specific person or cause or they can donate to a community pot. When donating to a community pot individuals have money divided amongst them to help pay for there tuition and books.

The program encourages a strong connection with the families and the youth individuals involved in the program by hosting a barbeque at the beginning of the school year around September or October.

This barbeque gives everyone a chance to get to know the people that are already in the program and get to know the families.

This program has been available for four years now and will be having its

first freshmen graduates this year. Colleen says on a separate note from her job she does love to take her personal time to go and see graduation and special events for all students. All around, this program is a huge success and benefit for the community.

"I believe that the housing is a critical component. I recognize that not every campus has the option of providing housing, but in SU's case we do and for many students it has been the difference between a degree and no degree." -Colleen Montoya

"The program offers housing to students year round and is only available to foster care youth and alumni of foster care. Costs included in the program are housing and tuition, and any other student needs such as books and calculators."

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.

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 Graham Parrington, Georgina Ramirez, Tammy Soderberg, Lauren McCormick, Samantha Valle; Senior Network Representatives Jerry Bobo; Network Representatives Amanda Bevington, David Buck, Giovanni English, Ian Grant, Diamonique Walker; Contributing Writers & Artists Sam Evans, Daniel Gresty, Nick Holcombe, Tameka Siplin, Noah Stiles, Janessa Thomas, James W; 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.

Freeganism: A Different Perspective BY DAVID BUCK



There is a new trend going around the country called freeganism. Freeganism was brought to my attention via the Oprah Winfrey show. The trend consists in part of people digging through garbage in search of free food. While Oprah Winfrey talks about it in a positive light on how the movement is growing and may reduce waste throughout the country, there is a very complex problem about this trend that I wish to address.

Food waste in the country is indeed a very serious problem. Yearly some 30 billion dollars in food waste is thrown out by restaurants and grocery stores harming the environment and wasting money. The health code laws require grocery stores to throw food out if the food doesn't live up to health codes and has been on the shelf too long. This food definitely can be used for better purposes. The food that is thrown out annually could easily feed a very big handful of people; especially those in need of food.

While the benefits to freeganism is seen in pamphlets all over the country, in environmentally conscious communities, and Web sites throughout the internet, during my own scavenging on the subject, I have not seen a whole lot on what freeganism will do for the homeless community, and the long term effects of it.

Homeless people do not dig through dumpsters in search of food to save a couple of bucks. Homeless people did not choose their lifestyle in search of greener environmental and cost efficient pastures. They dig through the dumpsters in search of food because that is typically their only source of nutrition. And as someone who has dug through dumpsters in search of whatever there is to kill my hunger so I can live another day I find this trend to be a huge slap in the face.

The Road Ahead BY DIAMONIQUE WALKER



In foster care as most people know, when you reach the age of 18, as if it is a magical number, you are an adult and must live on your own and take care of yourself. Transitioning out of care is typically a struggle throughout the foster care community. Youth are expected to know life skills, such as cooking, managing money, paying bills et cetera, even though in foster care they don't get a ton of opportunities to learn these things aside from Independent Living Programs (ILP) and transitional living services.

Since I found that most youth are not prepared to transition out of care, I interviewed 2 alumni on their experience when aging out. **Rhonda Smith**, who is now 21 years old, spent 11 years in care, and she provided me with some insight on her experience aging out. "Since aging out I've had apartments on my own and without the support of any programs, but I was not ready to live on my own and I didn't have anyone that would help me out... There's just so much more that I need to know to live on my own. It's really hard when you have no support and that's what I needed."

Georgina Ramirez, MBS's very own Region 3 and 4 Resource Specialist who spent 14 years in care also shared some of her experience with transitioning out of care and insight on what could be improved in care. To say the least, SUPPORT and GUIDANCE were what she says older youth in foster care could benefit from. "Older youth need real mentors. I find value in mentors who are very successful at what they do in a profession. I aspire to move

I am quite angry over this trend, and others are, too. It's not to say the principle of freeganism isn't a good thing. In other words, it can be a good thing to reject consumerism. But, it is the principle of making a trend out of something that others do out of pain and suffering that is the crux of my anger. If I was to have seen a man in designer clothes, like I did on the Oprah Winfrey show, who has a full time job with benefits and a house somewhere, digging through the garbage in search of free food, while I was digging through the garbage because I had not eaten in a few days, I can only imagine my reaction. I think that making a trend out of eating food out of garbage when you can easily pay for your own food, is like stealing from the poor and slapping them in the face and mocking them, while making it trendy.

There is more to it than that as well. Businesses are in it for the money and the second they find out perfectly good customers are skipping on the bill by digging through dumpsters, the dumpsters are going to get locked, being an annoying thorn on the side to freegans everywhere. But that would be more importantly, a life threatening problem to homeless who rely on those dumpsters.

Waste is a very big issue, but there has to be a better way to recycle than this. Freegans spout that not only is this cost efficient, it's helpful towards the environment, but there has to be a better way. Some have taken up the cause to help homeless by dumpster diving and donating to drop-in centers strapped for cash. And if freeganism is to mean anything I'd rather it mean something to others who really need help, then some rich punk trying to save a buck.

¹ <http://www.oprah.com/spirit/Trash-Tour>

² <http://www.oprah.com/world/How-Far-Would-You-Go/8#slide>

towards people like that who have a different experience and perspective on life that I can learn from, someone who can guide and support me in the professional world I want to walk in and help me conquer it."

Rhonda, who aged out 3 years ago, realizes some things that would have helped her then. "I know that there are a lot of programs that would have helped me stay in school, helped me with housing and helped me with employment. I also now know how to advocate for myself I never had to do that in care because there were always a handful of people advocating on my behalf." It seems that a lot of people realize things when they're too late. But even if your transition is rough and you don't know what's available to you until it's too late, you can always overcome it and make the best of the situation you're in.

To advise youth who have yet to age out, Georgina provides some words of wisdom and encouragement "Do not give up, it will be hard, tiresome, at times lonely and feel like just when one thing was taken care of another pops up... Just know the growing pains will slowly fade, find things to heal those wounds like, positive people, and a passion for something that gives you a little hope every day. Beware of illegal shortcuts because one mistake can change your life forever. Surround yourself with those who are wise, be willing to listen to others when they give you advice, and be patient with yourself. Take your life seriously, take your future seriously, and find out about what's available to you, use resources as they are intended, which is as a hand up and not a hand out."

Tony Shellman A New Friend BY JERRY BOBO



Mr. **Tony Shellman** is a man who knows the foster care system all too well. He was born into the child welfare system, yet he made a successful escape from it. Just like anybody else in care Tony knows what it is like to have a stronger relationship with his foster parents, than his biological parents. I feel the same way – I never had a strong relationship with my biological parents, and I understand what it is like to be befriended by someone who doesn't know anything about you, but is willing to take a chance and make you a part of their family. Tony was way into adulthood when he met his biological parents for the first time. His story meant a lot to me, because he is a successful black man who was in care, got out of care, and became successful, despite his experience in the child welfare system. It drove him to better himself, but he will never forget. He told me that "the past is the past", and to move on from it. He said being stuck in the past does nothing but hold you back, and I totally agree with Tony. Once I turned 18 years old, I always thought about my failures in the past, and that would bring my motivation down. I would be stuck in an awful place in my head, telling myself that I could never live up to the thoughts and impressions of everyone around me.

When you're young, first impressions are everything, but long lasting impressions are things that stick to the memory, and help mold you into the person you are, and the person that you will become. Before I knew that Tony was a part of the foster care system, I knew of him, because I have worn his clothes – big brands such as Mecca, Enyce, Perish Clothing Inc. I have worn them for years, so to sit down and talk with Tony and learn that we had cer-

tain things in common was a bit of a surprise to me. He worked at Nordstrom, and so did I. Opening up about his life to certain individuals was a problem for him as it was for me and many others. There are these small things that connect people before they even know it. Even though I am older now and don't have a problem with it, sometimes people still hit a "door", and I have a problem letting people enter. Even though this interview was my second interaction with Tony, I felt like we have been friends for a long time, simply because he didn't sugar coat anything whatsoever. He kept it real, and that is a quality that I look for in people.

Youth in foster care can tell when someone is pulling their leg, so being genuine is a quality that youth in care look for as well.

Tony talked about how when he does certain speaking engagements, there is always talk about his accomplishments (Highlight reel), but he said never to forget that everything that glitters is not gold. Tony Shellman is just a regular guy that has lived through foster care, and is still living his life, influencing those to not carry the "Foster Care Child" label on their shoulders. Shellman said, "growth is ongoing, and know that you matter, so care for yourself." Tony made sure that I will remember that, and I will, because only I can live my life.

The day that I interviewed Tony Shellman is a day that I will always remember. I was able to speak with an entrepreneur from Seattle that I connected with on life issues, who is really no different from me, and is driving me to continue my dreams. Whether I fail or make it is all on me, and no one else. Tony Shellman is an inspiring man and a great person that anyone can learn a thing or two from.

everything that glitters is not gold. Tony Shellman is just a regular guy that has lived through foster care, and is still living his life, influencing those to not carry the "Foster Care Child" label on their shoulders. Shellman said, "growth is ongoing, and know that you matter, so care for yourself." Tony made sure that I will remember that, and I will, because only I can live my life.

RAISING OUR VOICE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

my experience to bear to create real change in people's lives. I can't tell you how much it means to me that I'm making change that will give youth like me a better shot.

What I can tell you is that we're not even close to done yet. Every month, our regional chapters meet and develop more ideas for foster

care reform. Every quarter we all get together and forge those ideas into a strong agenda for reform. Every year we go down to the State Legislature and make that agenda reality.

And next month, you can help us do it. I look forward to seeing you there.



Jim with Mockingbird Network youth at the Leadership Summit.

We Welcome Your Work!

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

Family

By James W

We all are family,
No matter what,
Come on be friendly,
Don't fight and fuss.

We may not know each other.
Even if we have different mothers,
We still should love one another,
'Cause under God we are sisters and brothers

Without God we wouldn't have feelings.
No love, no meaning.
You wouldn't be breathing.
So thank God you're living!

Grace Like Rain

By Daniel Gresty

It pours down
I always feel it
But cannot hear it
I try to explain it
But no solving it

Like grace from God.
But in my life there is no God.

I try to explain it
Grace like rain
Pours down on me.

Hallelujah

Community Events

Region 1 (Spokane)

September 1st-7th: *Pig out in the Park* - Riverfront Park
September 18th: *Downtown Library Celebration* - 1-3pm.
Serving free cream and cake!

Region 2 (Yakima)

September 4th: *Community Dance* - 6-8pm
Southeast Community Center
September 6th: *Labor Day:* No School

Region 3 (Everett)

September 25th-26th: all day, Lyons Fisheries, 573 Red Stripe Rd, Sandoval
Watch as prawns are uniquely harvested. Enjoy the cajun atmosphere,
cooking, music and more. Free admission.
For more information call (618) 247-8477.

Region 4 (Seattle)

September 18th-19th: *Fiestas Patrias* - Seattle Center House and Fisher
Pavilion. Patriotic celebration recognizes freedom from colonial rule in Latin
America and Latino culture in Western Washington with Hispanic foods,
dance, mariachi music, exhibits and children's activities; free
(206-684-7200 or www.seattlecenter.com).

Region 5 (Tacoma)

September 15th: *Back to school bash* - 3-5pm PCA
Free Food and Prizes

Region 6 (Olympia)

September 28th: "Self Advocacy" Training for Mason County Youth - 3-5pm
Shelton Library Meeting Room

"How important it is for us to recognize and celebrate our heroes and she-roes!"
~Maya Angelou

Region 1 (Spokane) by Noah Stiles

"Summer has finally hit Spokane starting this month, with temperatures staying up in the 90's, and road construction on nearly every major street in the city. Region one will be having our monthly meet at Comstock pool on August 26th, the perfect place to cool down and discuss the big change in Region 1. Unfortunately, our beloved Resource Specialist **Lauren McCormick** will be resigning at the end of this month due to her change in career path. She will be missed by all but she plans to continue attending meetings and participating as much as her schedule allows her to. I have the pleasure to be part of the interview process for the candidate of Lauren's current Position as Resource Specialist and Housing specialist. This is a very big decision. Josie and I look forward to the last SAC meeting with Lauren on the 28th where we will be discussing what is going on the 2011 legislative agenda."

Region 2 (Yakima) by Brandy Baxley

On Saturday August 14th ACT FIRST went to Union Gospel Mission to serve lunch. We served about 55 youth and families. I didn't realize that there were that many homeless families here in Yakima. I am really thankful to have people and family around me that love and care about me. On August 28th, Taylor and I will be traveling to Seattle for the SAC Meeting and we are getting ready to discuss our Advocacy Day Agenda!

Region 4 (Seattle) by Nick Holcombe

July 29th marked the day when service providers from all over the State of Washington attended the homeless youth service provider conference hosted by Building Changes. Throughout the day there were abundance of workshops including housing options around Washington, post secondary education, coaching skills. Christina and I provided staff and event support for the event. I stopped to ask Corey Young, a YMCA employee, what he thought of the conference. He stated "I found the conference very beneficial because I was unaware of the possible funding services that may be available." I also asked Paula Carvalho- Johnson, a case manager at the YMCA. She stated "I found it beneficial because it informed us of numerous housing opportunities both within and out of King County."

Region 5 (Tacoma) by Janessa Thomas

COURIGE has been representing youth in care this month like no other. This month, COURIGE has been planning and preparing for a community training called The Culture of Foster Care. This training is done from the perspective of youth and how they felt about being in care. We speak for those who can't speak or are too scared to speak themselves. I guess you can say it takes COURIGE to be in front of people. Our training had a great turn out. We had 13 CASAs/GALs present. They were all very receptive of us and what we had to say.

Our region's next chapter meeting will be coming up soon in September. It will be our Back to School Bash!!



Region 3 (Everett) by Tameka Siplin

What is a better way to meet up with all the other regions than a BBQ? Nothing! On July 23, 2010 regions 3, 4, 5 and 6 met up at the beautiful Steel Lake to do exactly that. With the sun beaming down, basking us in its glorious glow, and the perfect temperature led

this day to be picture perfect. It was so amazing to be reunited with all of our friends from all the other regions, and an even better opportunity to meet some new faces. When you first reached Steel Lake you were greeted with smiles and laughter. Some kids were all ready chowing down on the food and talking with the others, while others basked in the sun to get a tan. As the day unfolded, entertainment ensued. There was a rather competitive game of volleyball at the sand court, and game of water balloon toss to test your stealth as well as a water balloon fight and a brain teasing trivia to win raffle tickets to win some gift cards later on in the day. The food was delicious thanks to the ever so talented Jerry Bobo and Graham Partridge made us burgers and hot dogs.

Region 6 (Olympia) by Sam Evans

This month we are preparing for many events including my visit with Secretary **Susan Dreyfus**, a "Your Rights, Your Life" training in Mason county (and a "Life Advocacy" training there in September!), a community service project, and our monthly chapter meeting. Graham and I have been working with two youth in care in Mason County and they will be facilitating the Your Rights training on August 24th at the Shelton Library. The two youth are in their community, one is a young mom who is interested in improving the rights of parents in care and the other is an advocate for homeless youth. I attended another Transformation Design Committee Legal and Practices Sub Committee where we discussed the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and issues around it. At our chapter meeting on the 26th at Community Youth Services we will be discussing chapter leader positions and getting ready for the SAC meeting.



News From

The Mockingbird Network

Your Needs, Your Voice