

the

VOICE

of youth in care



Issue 06 of the Youth In Care Newsletter Project | May 2006



Back L: Tony Beaumier, Nolan Drummond, Lynnette Drummond,
Andrew Safer, Tina Doucette, Andrew Nickerson
Middle L: Sabrina Penney, Jade Brooks, Elyse Saulnier
Front: Ammy Purcell, Lucas Kreft

Missing from photo:
Jessi Eisan, A. J. Smiley, Amanda Sprague, John Walker



**"now the people
in charge can
really see how we
feel."** — Ammy

**"Someone who
can fix the
problem may
read this and
fix it."** — Andrew



See "about our collages" on page 17



**"positive change
can definitely
result from
the newsletter
because it's a
great experience
to have a
voice."** — Jade

care 2006

If we had all the money, power and influence in the world, this is what we would do for kids in care...



peace

By Tony Beaumier

If there was one thing in the world that could help youth in care it would be peace. I feel that if there was peace between the youth and the social workers, AW's (alternative workers), cops, group home staff and foster parents things would be a lot different. They would stay out of trouble with their guardians and law enforcement. This would also change the number of times that youth would have to move because of things not going the way they should.

By peace I mean where everything in the world and the system goes right. Youth have good places to sleep, food on the table, clothes on their back, and a stable place to grow maturely. People who work for the system should take courses for everything. The courses should be available whenever they need it. That would be my definition of peace.

One thing youth have trouble with is their attitude, and I believe all that would change if there was a lot more peace between the youth and the parents or staff. So that's what I feel about peace in the system.

more money?

By Andrew Nickerson

If I could change a few things about care it all comes down to money. If there was more money there could be more social workers to get the job done efficiently, and they'd do a better job because their caseloads would be smaller and they would have more time for each youth. And the second thing to do with more money would be to keep the youth busy. If they are put in programs/sports or whatever they are interested in, it would help keep them off the street and out of trouble.



one case each

By Jade Brooks

You always hear one youth or another talking about a social worker — sometimes even about the same social worker. I don't think any two or more youths should have the same social worker. The social worker would have way too much to handle and the more stress he or she has, the less they are able to help the youth they are working with. No two cases are exactly the same, even if both youths' parents use drugs.

By Tina Doucette

If money wasn't an issue and I could change whatever I wanted, I could change a lot of stuff but I think it would be, instead of social workers having 25 youths on their caseloads, I would change it to only one.

In order to do this I would hire more social workers. This would benefit both the youths and the social workers. It would be easier to contact the worker, and more attention for the youths. I think it would be more of a personal relationship. For the social worker, it would be better because they would have less stress, and more time to figure out what to do with the youths instead of just sticking them somewhere and having to move them again.

If we did this, we would probably have to make more Children's Aid buildings to accommodate the workers.

I also would change a lot of little stuff with the social workers too. I would give them all cellphones or pagers so that it's easier to contact them and we would get their home phone number in case it's an emergency and there's no other way to contact them. Youths would meet with the social worker more than just once a month—maybe every two weeks or more often.

All this would be nice, but this is the real world and nothing comes all that easy.

Welcome to *The Voice*, the sixth annual Newsletter of the Youth in Care Newsletter Project. This is the straight goods from youth in care and former youth in care—their experiences, reflections, insights, emotional expressions and recommendations for change.

The youths range from age 14 to 22 and live in the Halifax Regional Municipality. They live in foster homes, group homes, with their biological parents/grandparents, in supervised apartments, or are trying to get settled on their own. They have had to deal with difficult circumstances — family breakdown and their parents' inability to look after them, the death of their parents, abuse, or neglect.

Some have stable placements; others have had to move a lot. While some are involved in sports, dance, and other activities, they all love music and MSN! Some are ace students; some are high school graduates. Some get suspended from school, are at risk of dropping out, have dropped out, have re-entered school, and are trying hard. Some work part-time or full-time. Among them are youths who have been incarcerated, gotten pregnant, been placed in a secure treatment facility, been terminated from care, completed a community college course, won a poetry competition, and brought their grades up from D's and F's, to A's and B's. One was selected to play Division One soccer in the US, another is developing a business plan to create his own magazine, and several have received Youth Achievement Awards.

Some are veterans with the Newsletter Project; others are here for the first time.

They are an amazing group of young people...all with something to say. They know how the system can be improved, and don't hesitate to share their insights. If the powers that be were to incorporate the suggestions in these pages, society would see tremendous change.

In some cases, pseudonyms have been used for the youth's protection.

It has been a delight working with these young people from November until the launch of this Newsletter in May, meeting for two hours every Tuesday night. May what they share here improve the lives of youth in care. And may they go forth and prosper!

— Andrew Safer, Project Director & Editor

in the news

in each other's shoes

By Jade Brooks

On Thursday, April 20, 2006, the Youth in Care Newsletter Project prepared and produced a night of role-playing with youth workers. We organized this with Danny McGuire of the Department of Community Services. It took place at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind on Almon Street in Halifax. There were about ten role plays with different scenarios. In each scenario, there was a good side and a bad side. The role plays featured four participants in the Newsletter (Ammy Purcell, Andrew Nickerson, Lucas Kreft and Tina Doucette) and it included people from the audience. There were a few skits in a group home, and a few from an actual foster home.

Amongst the audience were social workers, alternative workers, access supervisors, educators and students. Most of the audience consisted of adults but there were

a couple of youths also. The people who participated did a very good job in both the good and the bad scenarios.

Both of the youths in the audience got up and participated in a role play about a guy who was older who wanted to get back in school but there were some setbacks because he hadn't been a great student back when he went to school. A few promises had to be made to ensure that he would do his best.

The purpose of the role plays was for people to see a positive side and a negative side of common situations of youth in care. This night was for both educational purposes and for fun. The workers got a chance to see what the youths think because they (the youths) don't usually get to show people the way that they should be treated in different situations. On the other hand, the youth got a chance to work with the social workers so they can experience how it feels to also have power instead of the worker getting all the say in what happens with them.

Our thanks to the Halifax Youth Foundation for sponsoring this event.



Lucas Kreft (L) played the part of the social worker; Barrie MacFarlane, Supervisor, CAS of Halifax, was an 11-year-old being moved from his group home.

Invited by the Nova Scotia Ombudsman's Office, six youths from the Youth in Care Newsletter Project attended the Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates' Youth Engagement conference in Halifax in late September, 2005. Two of the youths summed up their impressions...

adults really do want to help!

By Ammy Purcell

On September 28th, 29th and 30th, 2005 I went to a conference at the Lord Nelson Hotel about youth engagement. There were people from all over Canada, but besides Tina, John, Tony, Sarah, Candace and myself, there was only one other youth and she was from Newfoundland. The first day we got to hear about all the different agencies for youth across Canada. It was interesting to hear what other provinces do for their youth.

The second day we sat in on a talk about youth engagement and ways to get youth more engaged. We got to host table talks in the afternoon. Tony and I were invited to a reception and dinner that evening and I talked with David Morse, Minister of Community Services, for about 10 minutes. The dinner was very fancy.

The last day, a Mountie was there in the morning and we did a native prayer and reflected on everything we did the other days. Altogether I think that it was a great

experience and it was fun too. I am very grateful to have participated in such an event.

By Tina Doucette

In September we went to a conference about adults engaging youth. There were people from different provinces and most of them were youth advocates; they help youth know their rights.

This conference went on for two and a half days. We did a lot of activities and had some discussions.

What I found very weird is that the conference was about adults engaging youth, but there were only about six of us from the Newsletter. Another thing that got my attention was the first day in the afternoon the whole group was discussing how adults could involve youth and it seemed like the adults were talking for us and we really didn't get a chance to talk. Later on they

did realize what had happened and apologized and it actually turned out to be a positive thing.

One of my favourite activities was when we had to sit from youngest to oldest; it was fun finding out everyone's age. Then we went in groups without anyone from our own age group, and the youths got to lead the conversations. It was like turning the tables around. I had a really fun experience meeting new people and now I can actually give credit to adults more when they want to help.

spreading the word

Several youths and the Project Director will have a poster display about the Newsletter Project at "Transformation: Charting Our Course"—a national social work conference at the Westin Hotel in Halifax from June 17 to June 20. If you're there, come by and say hello!

rights of youth in care



(L to R, Back) Sharon Avery, Tony Beaumier, Jane Gourley; (Front) Ammy Purcell, Tina Doucette

A few senior youths from the Youth in Care Newsletter Project have been meeting with Dalhousie University law students (through the law student organization, Pro Bono Students Canada) to learn more about the rights of youth in care so they can develop a presentation and share it with group home and foster home youth. Tina and Ammy wrote an article which appeared in The Networker, the quarterly newsletter of the National Youth in Care Network (Spring 2006 edition), and has been updated here.

By Tina Doucette and Ammy Purcell

This project that we are doing with the law students from Dalhousie University is very unique. A few of us from the Newsletter and a few law students get together every second Wednesday to work on a project about rights of youth in care. The law students help us research different things about youth in care's rights that youth don't really know, because sometimes social workers fail to explain what's going on in a helpful way.

A lot of the youth who get taken into the care of The Children's Aid Society don't fully understand what they are entitled to and what they should do to help their own situation, and they need some guidance. That's where we can help

We have created a PowerPoint presentation called "The Law and You! Survival Tips!" We're going to do the presentation to our own group first in May, at least one group home in June, and more group homes and hopefully foster youth in the fall. What we're trying to accomplish is to inform youth of their rights and give them true and in depth information

I wish someone would have thought of this a long time ago because it really helps when you can get some information, especially when you hear it from someone who has been there, and even more important, someone who is close to your own age

We will answer as many questions as possible and if there is something we don't have the answer to, I hope we can find out!

Note: You can read their presentation at: www.youth-newsletter.net/youth_rights.html

Our thanks to our sponsors, The Children's Aid Society of Halifax Foundation, and The Gordon Foundation for Children and Youth.

the ombudsman's office is listening!

By Tina Doucette

The Ombudsman's Office invited us from the Newsletter to join them and give input on a survey that would be given to youth in group homes across the province so that the survey would be youth-friendly.



(L to R) Tina Doucette, Lucas Kreft, Kay Rogers-Lidstone, Andrew Nickerson, Danny Patterson, Andrew Safer

Nine youths from the Newsletter Project and three Ombudsman staff all got together in early December 2005 at the Ombudsman's Office on Spring Garden Road.

It was fun. Most of us already knew each other from previous encounters so it was a relaxed setting.

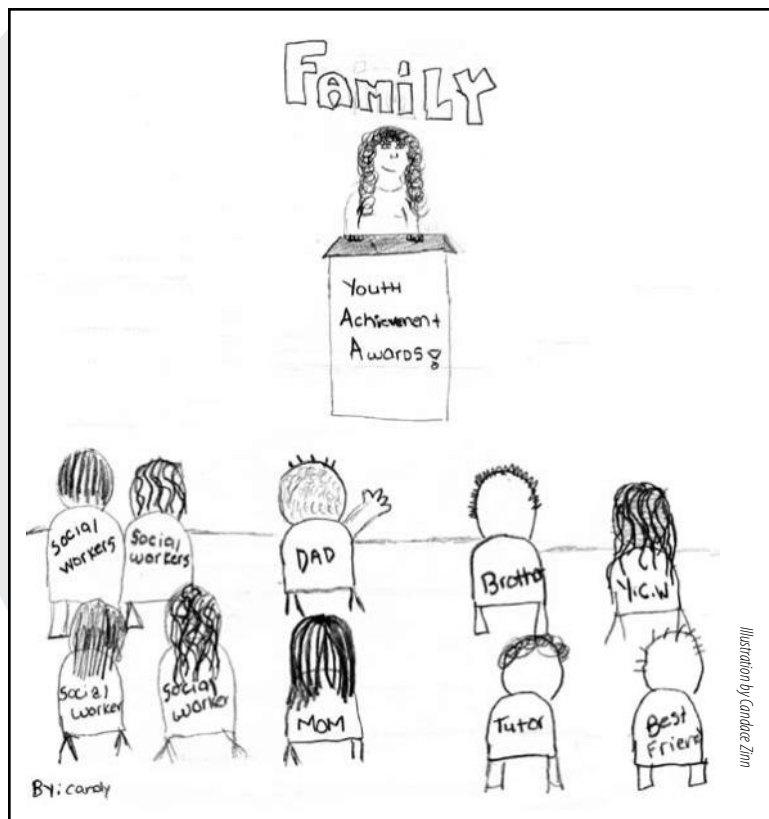
What we did was we talked about what the surveys were for, and why. Then we broke off into two groups so we could get more questions done. One group got half the questions; the other group got the rest. In my group, we had a couple of very opinionated people so it took us a little longer. The good thing about doing it like that was we had to agree on how we could improve the questions. When we were done we got back into the bigger group and shared our ideas.

The Ombudsman's Office got a lot of stuff out of this but so did we. We got pizza and pop and as youth, we were more than happy with that.

I got a lot out of this and I think so did the others. Because the Ombudsman's Office asked us to be there, it shows they value our opinions and that is a step forward. That's what we try to achieve at the Newsletter.

the youth achievement awards is all that!

By Jessi Eisan



Jessi wrote about her impressions of the Youth Achievement Awards. Excerpts of her article were quoted on the cover of the Nova Scotia Council for the Family newsletter Inter/Action, Fall/Winter 2005/06 edition.

The Youth Achievement Awards was a really nice ceremony they held at the Westin Hotel on November 24, 2005. Andrew, Tony, Nolan, Sarah and I were all there. There were a few kids from the Newsletter who had been nominated but in all, there were about 40 youths who received their awards that afternoon.

The Youth Achievement Awards is held for kids in foster care or group homes who have achieved their goals in the past couple of years. They proved to their social workers and to society, also to their foster parents or staff, that kids in care are as capable as kids who come from a natural home.

I strongly believe that to hold a ceremony for us kids in care is a really positive thing. It makes us feel good about ourselves, and it lets us know that the people around us are noticing what we have achieved in the years that we are in care. It also proves society wrong on what they think about us. I can honestly say that

most of the kids in foster care are there because of the home they came from, but on the other hand, some kids earned the right to be there through their bad behaviour. So that tells you some kids in foster care aren't the bad guys, that we didn't deserve to be put in a strange home and not know where we are or what's going on.

But to let kids in care prove that to their social workers, staff and foster parents, is a really positive thing. It shows that even though we've been through a lot and are still going through a lot of stress, we have a head on our shoulders and know right from wrong.

I want to send a special thanks out to all of the social workers, foster parents and staff of the Children's Aid Societies, for helping the kids in need and giving us a home that we never had, showing it's not our fault and we are wanted. Also, thanks to the Nova Scotia Council for the Family for putting the Youth Achievement Awards together the past six years. It lets kids in foster care know that we are making a difference and helps us have a different outlook on what has happened to us in the past, and it's helping us move forward to regain our strength.

write here — write now

By Jade Brooks

Over March break this year I went to a writing camp called *Write Here — Write Now* in Tatamagouche. At the camp there were several choices of classes that you could participate in. They were poetry, short story, comics and script writing. I took part in poetry two times because that is my favourite form of writing. I learned a new form of poetry called a "Villanelle". It was very complicated and I tried quite a few times. It's made up of rhyming and repeating lines. This poetry session was mostly about writing things other than visual things. Another poetry session you could take (you could take it in the morning and the afternoon) was very visual. The director of this session, Ken Ward, had us think of different props for different settings. People came up with some pretty crazy stuff.

On the last day, Sunday, we made this thing called a "Zine". What it was really was a magazine. It was made up of a lot of writing and pictures that people had done throughout the weekend. I put in a poem called "I Am" that I wrote last May. A lot of people commented on my poem and they really liked it. Making this project was my favourite part of the weekend because I got to read some of the other people's work and I realized that they were very talented even though I would never have thought so just by seeing them.



I also liked it because it gave me a chance to meet tons of people just like me, reading and writing things like I do. I would gladly go back again next year if I have the chance. A special thanks goes to The Gordon Foundation for Children and Youth for allowing me to go to this camp.

care

turned out all right

By Tina Doucette

There's the bad, but there's always the good things about being in care, too.

There's the security of knowing that you'll never go hungry. For some people, that's why they stay in the system.

There are also lasting relationships. You meet a lot of people. I might not always like them, but they did try to help me when I needed it.

I have met a lot of my very good friends in care, my sister being one of them. She has been my best friend for years and she still is. She's influenced my life for the best.

I have a lot of friends I've lived with and they're not bad at all. A lot of them I still talk to.

Living in care since I was six has made me who I am, so surely my experiences couldn't be that bad because I think I turned out all right.

not always a bad thing

By Amanda Sprague

Some people think that being in care is the worst thing that could happen. In my opinion I think that yeah, I missed my family but now I don't have to worry about how I'm going to get money to go on a school trip or get clothes for school.

Being in care, I'm entitled to lots of different things, like money for recreation. If I was living with my mother I wouldn't have that. Yeah, sometimes being in care can get annoying with staff or social workers always telling you what you can and cannot do, but it's true when they say they're doing it for our own good.

Looking back at my own experiences, they were only giving us "stupid" rules for our own good. Without staff or social workers there to help guide me, there were a lot of things I couldn't have done all by myself. I don't

know where I would be right now if it wasn't for all the staff in the group home or the social workers who came in and out of my life. There are always good things that happen to you, and bad things that happen, but what can you do? It's life.

branded as troublemakers

By Elyse Saulnier

An experience that I can really remember about being in care would have to be when we moved to Cape Breton last year. At first it was good, but after we were there for a while, people found out we were foster kids and they started making up rumours about us, saying we were bad and things like that. I think the funniest rumour was that we were "Drug Smokin' Gangsters".

When our foster mother told us that, we couldn't believe that people took time out of their day to make up things about us. We never did anything to those people, but after we moved there and people found out we were in care, we were branded as bad and troublemakers. It was like we walked around with signs on us, like a "kick me" sign, only it said "I'm in a foster home. Don't talk to me; I'm bad."

A friend of mine actually got in trouble because she came to our house after school. Her mother told her that she could hang out with me at school, but not where we lived because people would start to talk and then she'd be bad just like us. When my friend told me what her mom said, I honestly felt like dirt. No, lower than dirt. After I told our foster mom, she went down to my friend's mom's work and told her: "My girls have done nothing to you. There should be no reason why your daughter can't hang around with my girls." We didn't expect her to do that! After that, my friend was allowed to hang around with me where we lived.

People up there have to open their minds and not judge people on their living arrangements, but it will never happen because that's how they were brought up, and no one can change that.

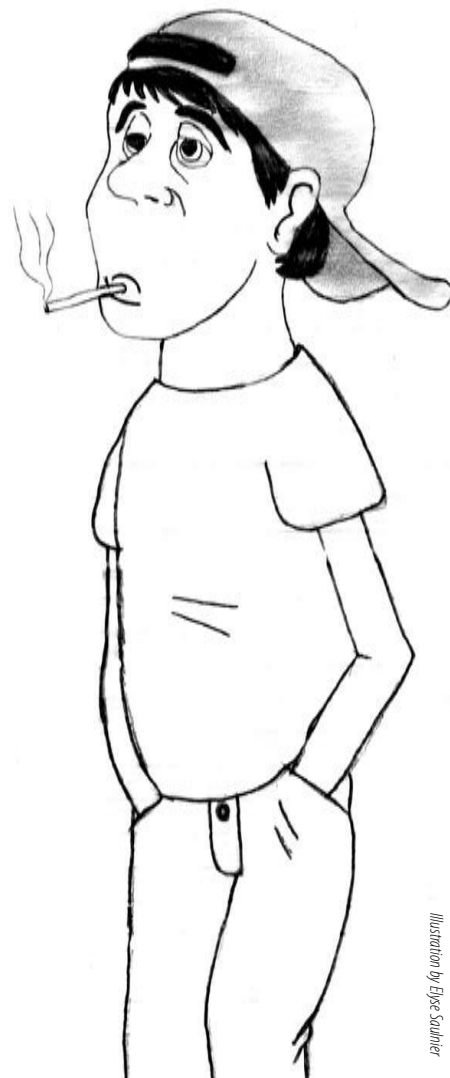


Illustration by Elyse Saulnier

stereotyping us

By Sarah West

Youth in care are just like any other youth in the world. We go to school, have jobs, friends, and go through rough times.

So why are we considered troubled youth?

Because we don't live with our biological parents! I'm so tired of teachers, employers, etc. stereotyping youth who live in group homes or shelters, even foster homes, as bad people. Some youth do act out and show people disrespect but so do youth who do not live in group homes... Open up your eyes, everyone, and realize we are still youth, struggling to get through this hard and disappointing world like everyone else.

you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone

By Elyse Saulnier

When I was in care I met four of the most amazing people in my life, my three foster sisters, and of course my foster mom. They all helped me out in so many different ways. It was the absolute best time of my life. Being there also gave me people to talk to who I knew I could trust: my sisters, foster mom and therapist. I felt I could talk to them about anything: school, me and my parents, boys, etc.

I also got to get involved in the Newsletter which was a great experience for me and still is. Andrew Safer was so helpful and kind and he makes you feel like your opinion and ideas matter, and if you didn't feel comfortable in doing something, you didn't have to. It was fine with him either way. He never pushed you. Everyone who was/is involved with the Newsletter was like that. It was great!

Now that I'm back with my parents I understand the saying "You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone"

more now, because I really miss my foster family. Now that I look back on it I was always the one who said "I hate living in Whycomagh, I want to go back to Halifax. At least there's more to do there!" Now I'd give anything to go back, even if it's just for a visit—a LONG visit. The funny thing is that I'm actually bored in Halifax! I've got no one to talk to, no one to hang out with, nothing. I actually had more fun living in Cape Breton, in the "sticks" with my sisters who I miss very much.

I guess if I could leave you with a piece of advice it would have to be this: If you think you would be "better off" or "happier" somewhere else, anywhere except where you are, look around and ask yourself: "If I moved here and lost all these people who do care, would I really be happier?" I can pretty much guarantee you that you wouldn't be. Think before you make any big decisions like that because it will affect you more than you know.

the good and the bad

By Sabrina Penney

For me the good things about being in care are that you get a clothing allowance every few months. Also what I like is that I have a family to go home to every day without having to worry about going home and seeing my social worker at the door saying this family doesn't want you any more.

The bad things about being in care is, for some people, once they go into care they end up not getting to see their family anymore 'til they're a certain age, like 18. Also people end up in group homes and some people I know get into all kinds of drugs and trouble they don't want to get into, but some people don't care what happens to the kids or they just don't pay attention to some kids.

I like being in care. There are just ups and downs about it that have to change or get better. I like my life except not knowing my birth parents. That used to bug me before but now it doesn't because I have a family that loves me.

what parents might think

By Jade Brooks

A lot of people wonder what it must be like for kids and youth to be in care. They may wonder if care is ruining a child's life, or if it's helping, but I have never heard of anyone thinking about how the parents may feel. No one asks how they are feeling or sets up programs so they can cope better with all the stress they have. It kind of seems like since they are adults no one cares about them because they can care for themselves. Sometimes this is very wrong.

Personally, I think it is really hard on the parents for their kids to be in care. Yeah, maybe it is the parents' fault that the kids are in care, but it would be hard on any parent to have their kid taken away. I know my mother is going through a lot and I can tell that she is stressed out.

Parents may feel offended and hurt for a long period of time if their child seems to like care and not be frustrated. They might take actions or make smart comments toward the child because they themselves feel hurt inside. It is always right to ask them (the child in question or parent) how they feel but you should never criticize them.

taken from home

By Ted Johnston



Illustration by Tony Beumier

It all started off with my mother and father. They were doing drugs, like crack and weed, every day. I really loved my parents, but I saw them doing it in front of me. Those days are over. I have not been seeing them, and they are not calling me just to stay in touch. But before I go any farther, let's go back to the part where my parents were doing drugs.

Later on through the month, the police and my social worker got involved. First of all, I can remember that I

was living with my grandmother and kapow! Me and my siblings were removed from my parents in a quick second, and I didn't know what was going on.

Then I realized I could not go back to my real family when I got older.

When I got to my foster home, my foster parents were looking after me and my siblings. We stayed there for awhile. Later, my siblings and I went to another foster home. This time I wanted to stay forever. I really love my parents so much. I got in care when I was young.

education?

By Sarah West

Let's see! What's good about being in care? For me, the most beneficial thing would have to be education. There have been so many supports put in place for my education!

how we feel about care

By Jessi Eisan

Kids, or youth in care, aren't in care because of themselves. I can say that 95% of kids in care are in care because of the home environment they came from. The other 5% of kids in care are in care because of the way they act, or their behaviour. When you really think about it, a kid coming into care, especially when they're younger, really can't behave in a disciplined manner. When you're a kid, you learn from your parents. You do what they do. So, I honestly believe that kids who are in care are in care because of their parents. Also, when kids go into care, they are going to act out in a bad way because they're not home, they're with strangers and because of what people think and say about us. And it's hard because we don't fully understand why we're in care.

The way we feel about being in care is indescribable. We have lots of mixed emotions. We think a lot about all different things, like why we're in care, why we're not with our parents, who we're living with, and what's going to happen to us in the long run. But the good thing about being in care is that there are a lot of people who are by our side and trying to help us. So, there are disadvantages and advantages to being in care.

lots of support



By Ammy Purcell

For me, the best thing about being in care is the support system. They provide you with therapy, alternative workers and all kinds of good people so when you need someone to talk to there are a lot of people around you to help. Another good thing is the alternative workers are there to take you out even when you're just stressed a little bit.

treated like a baby

By Ammy Purcell

With my experience of being in care, the worst thing is not being able to do the things your other friends do, like go to sleepovers or have money to just go to the movies whenever you feel like it. There is way too much junk to go through just to do simple things. I was not allowed to spend the night at my best friend's house because my worker felt it wasn't a good place for me even though that's where the on-call worker sent me the three nights before they got me a placement.

They find one small thing with anyone in your life and they cut them out completely, not even thinking about how you feel about it or what those people mean to you. So that's what the worst thing about being in care is—being treated like you can't take care of yourself and like you're a little baby.

stuck with no options

By Tina Doucette

Not that long ago I left my group home for lots of reasons. I moved in with a friend and her stepfather. For whatever reasons, it didn't work out with the friend. So I got dropped off at Children's Aid and then it hit me and my social worker: I had no place to stay.

My social worker called around looking for a place. The first time she called around there was nothing available. My old group home wouldn't take me because I'm too old. A couple of other group homes wouldn't take me because they only take certain aged youth. So finally, in the second round of phone calls, she convinced one group home to take me just 'til she can find a place for me.

Finally, after a little while at that group home, a bed opened at another group home and I was able to move in. It also helped that I knew the people because this home is connected to my other one.

Just imagine: 17 years old, not really having anyone else in the world and stuck with no options, nowhere to sleep, eat, or bathe. Seventeen years old: aren't these the years when I should have no worries? Not in my life!

You might not have felt this but let me tell you, it's a lonely feeling. It's like being in a room full of people and still feeling like no one's there—like you're all alone.

worst things about care

By Jessi Eisan

The worst thing about being in care is when you are first coming into care because you're usually young. CAS and police come to your house and take you. They put you into a home where you don't know where you're going. You're at a strange home with strange people. I think the worst part about that is when you go to the house and you don't understand why you're there, and you just want to go back home with your mom or dad or both.

When I first came into care, I was really scared and mad but I didn't really understand why I wasn't with my mom but I know that it wasn't safe for me at home.

But I've been in care for five years now. I've moved from place to place to place but I love who I'm with now. My foster mom helps me when times are hard and when I'm in trouble. She's always there for me and by my side.

don't judge me

By Elyse Saulnier

Don't judge me for what I say or do.
Don't judge me if I act like a fool.
Don't judge me for my clothes.
Sooner or later yours will wear and tear also.
Don't judge me for not having brand name stuff.
Don't judge me if I sometimes act tough.
Don't judge me if I think of myself as ugly or fat.
You don't know how much self-esteem I lack.
Don't judge me if I say something mean from a bad mood,
Because you can also be crude.
Don't judge me for the things I like,
So what if I don't have a bike?
Don't judge me because I'm quiet,
I've just learned to keep my mouth shut.
Don't judge me because I'm not smart,
I make up for it with a very big heart.
Don't judge me by what I do or don't have,
It's really not that bad.
Don't judge me because I don't have any friends,
I've just been burned too many times.
Don't judge me because of my looks,
It's not my fault I never had what it took.
I know it's easier said than done,
But please don't judge me because you think I'm poor
or a slum.
Don't judge me because of the scars on my wrist,
You don't know how hard it is.
Don't judge me because you don't know me,
And until you know what I've gone through,
Then you'll know why I act the way I do.

who are we?



I am...

TONY BEAUMIER

- I believe anyone can change
- I like the sound of the bank machine
- I want to be a Pro Soccer Player



I am...

ANDREW NICKERSON

- I like money, party, dogs
- I believe in myself
- I want to be a Drilling Rig Operator



I am...

LYNNETTE DRUMMOND

- I believe people make their own paths
- I like the smell of wood burning
- I want to be a Crime Scene Investigator



I am...

AMMY PURCELL

- I believe I've been brought here for a reason
- I like the sound of leaves crunching under my feet
- I want to be an Elementary School Teacher



I am...

TINA DOUCETTE

- I believe what goes around comes around
- I like the sound of the school bell
- I want to be a Youth Worker or Social Worker



I am...

NOLAN DRUMMOND

- I am nice but rude
- I believe I should be treated better
- I want to be a Music Producer, Rap Star, or Basketball Player



I am...

JOHN WALKER

- I believe in ghosts
- I think too much
- Money, friends, family are important to me



I am...

GADE BROOKS

- I like the sound of rain drops on the window
- I think writing is important in life
- I want to be a Writer



I am...

AMANDA SPRAGUE

- I believe that I could do anything if I put my mind to it
- I like the sound of opening Pepsi
- I want to be a Youth Worker or Social Worker



I am...

SABRINA PENNEY

- I believe I can accomplish anything if I put my mind to it
- I like the sound of laughter
- I want to be a Singer or Dolphin Trainer



I am...

EDYSE SAULMIER

- I believe in honesty.
- Trust is important to me.
- I want to be a Carpenter



I am...

LUCAS KREET

- Dreams, equality and peace are important to me
- I believe anyone can change reality around them
- I want to be a Magazine Publisher/Editor



I am...

SARAH WEST

- I believe everything happens for a reason
- I am straight up but not rude!
- I want to be a Probation Officer



I am...

JESSI EISAN

- I believe that kids in care are innocent.
- I think it's unfair that society judges kids in care
- I want to be a Psychologist

By Sabrina Penney

I like science because it's interesting to learn, and because I love the cool and fun experiments we do in school. Another reason I like science is because you actually get to use different objects in science that you don't get to use in any other subjects. Plus the project we did for science (hydraulic machines) was so fun! You have to put your mind to things, and use your imagination in thinking about what to build.

opening doors

By Lucas Kreft

I see more to life than a 9 to 5 job: regular Joe drinking a coffee at Tim's. Everyone goes through life opening and closing doors. These doors can open a life of pleasure or a life of hell. You want to open as many doors in life as you can. I believe everything happens for a reason but having the option to open the door or keep it closed is the future...

For example, being involved in this Newsletter Project may be something that can change our lives and is a door to something bigger. There is a reason why maybe we didn't live with our parents and were put into care. In some way it happened for a reason; we didn't have control of it. This way, having to adapt and change makes us smarter than an average Joe. It leads to having more doors thrown at you.

laughing and dancing

By Jade Brooks

I love to laugh. Mostly anywhere I am, you can catch me laughing—whether I'm by myself, or with friends, family, or even at school. Sometimes I tend to goof off in class but I usually get back on track. I think laughing is one of the greatest things because when you're laughing about something, you can just forget about everything and have fun. People always tell me that they love my smile. A laugh and a smile are a great combination!

One more thing about me is that I love to dance, hip hop mostly, but I have also tried salsa dancing. I think I can dance pretty well. But really, it doesn't matter how good you are at it; it's how much you enjoy doing it. I used to be too shy to dance in front of people but now I'm not. I try to get involved with a bunch of dancing activities like dance groups or talent shows and stuff like that. It's all so much fun!

By Ammy Purcell

My first semester at high school last year, I almost quit before the first month was over because I hated everything about it—the people, the teachers, the whole school itself. I was only taking two courses that semester so I had a lot of frees and none of my friends had the same frees as me so I had nothing to do so I would go home and just not come back for the rest of the classes that day. When that semester was over I started to get back on track. I didn't have any frees and I met some new friends and I hung around with them at lunch time and stuff so it was looking better for me. This year (grade 11) I am doing great. I have perfect attendance, I am getting really good grades and I have all kinds of friends in school. Right now I am off for a week because first semester is over and I can't wait until second semester starts. I can't wait to see who will be in my new classes. But one thing that I have learned for myself is that for the rest of my high school career I will keep a full course load.

not giving up

By Sarah West

Will my passion for becoming a probation officer keep me in school?

I'm a high school student, who, like most, don't like going to school but I have a dream and I don't want to ruin my chances. If I have this much love and passion for something at my age, I know I can't give up!

But as the months go by, school seems to get harder and harder.

I have a lot of people who are behind me. My social worker is ready to do whatever it takes to keep me in school. Not a lot of youth are blessed with good social workers.

Some have to do everything alone. It would be so hard if I didn't have someone who cared about my future.

But I'm stubborn and I don't want anyone's help. I guess I need to learn that everyone needs help to succeed sometimes.

when i grow up

By Nolan Drummond

When I grow up I want to be a rap star, music producer, basketball superstar or football player. I don't know what to choose out of these things. It is so hard for me to think about the future because I'm too young to think about what I want to do in the future.

Last week on Thursday Andrew was telling me I could do anything in my life, other than sitting around playing video games everyday after school. He said if you want to make a lot of money you have to finish high school, then go to college, and look for a job.

Right now, I think the main thing I should do is become a basketball player and rap star.

By Tinkerbell

I would probably like to be a therapist—partially because I enjoy helping people, mostly young adults my age or younger. I've always been like this and I enjoy doing it, and that's what a career is all about: doing something you enjoy. As soon as I get out of high school I plan on going on to post-secondary school to get my degree or certificate, and then from there onto my lifelong career.

C.S.I.

By Lynnette Drummond

I'm 17 years old and I'm in high school now. Everyone tells me I will never go anywhere in life because I live in care. Well, I hate to tell them I'm going to become a C.S.I worker (crime scene investigator) and there is no one who can take that dream from me. I found out I was going to become this when I grow up, through school, because I love science and math. Everyone says you need that to work at this job. I'd also like to have a job that's always different. In that way, I will always be solving different problems everyday. I like that because I wouldn't want my job to be some boring desk job.

"the newsletter made me push myself this year, so now i know if i push myself, i can do it." —Tina

group homes

leaving care

By Andrew Nickerson

When I was 16 I lived in a group home. I was sick and tired of living in a house where stuff was stolen all the time and everyone was being affected by someone else's actions. For example, the house's X Box was stolen so the house was put on shut down which means everyone in the house had privileges taken away from them. Also I did not like the fact that I wasn't allowed to upgrade my part-time job to a full-time job for the summer. So I decided to move out on my own.

What support did I get? The staff at the house tried to help me the best they could as I was making my decision. My final decision was to move out on my own. As soon as I moved out, my case was closed. I think someone should have at least helped me financially when the time came to go back to school. It is nearly impossible to live on your own at age 16 and go to school without financial help. I have just started back to school in February, a year behind because of my decisions. The only reason I am back in school is because of support from my grandparents.

day one

By A.J. Smiley



Something I will never forget about being in care was the first day I moved into a group home. I was so confused, angry, sad and frustrated when I first moved in. I thought I was in prison! All the other kids there were so bad I didn't understand why I was there.

The staff were so strict and seemed mean. I wasn't allowed out for more than an hour. I thought the rules were stupid. All the kids who lived there were such a bad influence. I mean, that's when and where I started smoking four years ago when I was twelve.

The second night I was there I went GWP (gone without permission). I ran away to a good friend of mine's house and slept there for two days. Then his mother told me that I should go back. She said everything would be better and, well, after a few weeks it ended up being a little bit better.

favouritism

By Sarah West

I have been in care for a few years now. I was one of the lucky ones because I didn't get moved around to a bunch of different homes.

At the very first group home I was in, I'm not going to lie, I was the favourite. I was there for a lot longer than anyone else, but then I moved out. When I went back, things were very different. They had a new favourite and I realized how much it sucked to be the one who was not favoured. I moved out because it was that bad. I hated it!

I moved to a group home in Halifax. It was awesome. My best friend lived with me and we were like twins. We had it good. The staff loved us but there was a lot of favouritism. I noticed it because I had already gone through it. It's not fair. I was jealous of other girls who came, and I didn't want the staff to like them!

Favouritism is one of the worst things to live with in a group home, so to all of the staff out there, just think about it because I'm letting you all know right now, it hurts.

trying to get jobs

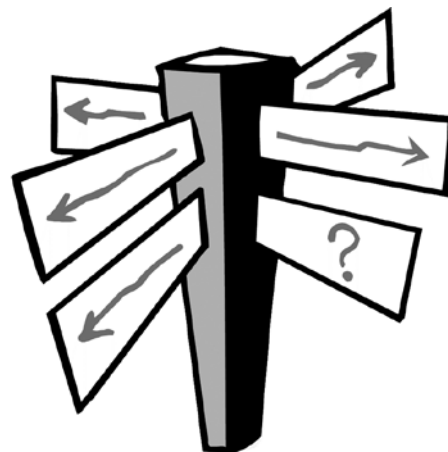
By Lynnette Drummond

Today, if you walk into a workplace to pass in your résumé and they say they are going to call you, if you used your group home address, more than likely you won't hear from them. It's only because you live in a home, but they will tell you some little lie so you cannot sue them. But you and I know the reason why!

And another thing too... All of the older youth who are moving out need money, but no one is helping them look for a job. All workers and homes have connections. Why are they not helping us with this problem by showing employers that group home kids are not so bad, and that we won't run their business into the ground? We need help with this issue and we need it fast if we are going to live.

too far away

By Sarah West



No one really knows or understands how hard it is to live with a bunch of youth and staff you don't know unless you have been in a group home.

When I first went in care, I was moved to Truro all alone. I didn't know anyone. I could only call home three days a week at first because of the long-distance fee! I felt so lonely and lost. I had nobody.

Now I live with my best friend and her family. At first, I was really shy but now it's like I'm part of the family. I was lucky I wasn't moved around a lot but some youth aren't as lucky as me!

group home kids

By Tony Beaumier

Group home kids get lots of negative feedback. "They steal, cheat, they're ignorant, rude, dysfunctional," etc. To me, they need positive people to help them stay on track. They're not all bad; they're just like every other youth stuck in the system.

the all-about story about staff

By Morningstar

Staff—now don't get me wrong, not all of them are bad. But most of them think they don't have to do anything except be there. Well, they are wrong. We need them to understand us and remember that we've got nobody but them in our lives.

Now, at my house, there is one staff I and all the girls like, and the rest of the staff hate it. They don't understand why we like her. The reason we like her is she is trying to be our friend, and a staff at the same time, and we can also relate to her. The other staff hate it and are trying to get her to lose her job. We don't think it's right.

And another thing: they always say if we are mad we can come to staff and vent to them. So we do, and then after we do, they ground us for it or just tell us "I'm not listening to you any more. Go away!" I think that's showing us they don't give a damn about us and it also shows us that they are not here for us. They are only here for their pay. If you ask anybody, they will tell you, that's not right!

moving on

By Tina Doucette

I'm 18 years old and I'm starting to get a little too old to be living in these group homes because I live with 16 year olds. I'm an adult but I'm being treated like I'm 16 again because of the rules of the home.

The Supervised Apartment Program (SAP) is a good way to wean me from group homes and get me to live more independently. Supervised apartments are for people who want to live on their own but aren't quite ready or mature enough to be on their own, or they're not old enough.

A supervised apartment is a house with three residents and a live-in "staff". You get your own room. You pay your share of things. You go and buy your own groceries; you do everything you would normally do if you were on your own. The best thing I think is that there's no one there really to tell you what to do. There are rules and stuff but it's nothing like a group home. For example, I wouldn't have to do quiet hour (an hour every day in your room), there's no strict curfew, and no one to tell me to make my bed. Well, it's not as if I don't need some structure, but it's nice to know I can make my own choices.

I haven't moved in yet but I did meet with some people and it sounds like a really good program for me.

staying in school

By Sarah West

What's so hard about going to school?

Let's see... School is so important. Most teens drop out, get kicked out or whatever the case may be. We as teens know how important education really is, but being a teen we need to be social, and have friends. Some kids go to school on an empty stomach which makes it hard to concentrate. Some don't have money for lunches or even bus fare to get to school. It's hard going to school knowing all your friends have money for lunch and you don't. There are so many different groups of people! Some feel like they don't fit in with any of them, while others can chill with anyone.

When I started high school I was so nervous because I was the shy one—the odd ball. I lived in a group home, didn't have much, couldn't afford new clothes, lunches, etc. like all my friends. But I got by, and did anything I could, being a "troubled" teen. I just wanted to fit in, so I would go out and come home late and be too tired to go to school. Then I would go but I would be cranky and end up getting suspended and not even want to go back.

Teenagers have it hard. Sleep, friends, jobs, family, education. For most teens, they need to survive and going to school isn't keeping a roof over their heads, food in their bellies, or clothes on their backs. Getting a minimum-wage job is the easy way out at this particular time. Yeah, we will regret it in a year or two, but it's the easy way out.

staff assumes things

By Morningstar

This week something happened at my house and I wasn't too happy about it at all. One of the girls poured something into another girl's pop and I'm getting blamed for it. Sure, I was there and stuff but I didn't do it and the head staff is saying I did. I might end up getting kicked out for it and everything, and she is holding the cheques and everything. I don't know if the girl who did it is going to tell the staff so I might just have to take the blame. It's not fair and it's all because the girl this happened to has no respect for anyone at the house. If I have to tell the staff it was me, to get this over with, I will so it will stop and be done. I don't even know why staff is making such a big deal about it; it's just pop.

***"i felt so
lonely and
lost. i had
nobody. ...
now i live
with my best
friend and
her family.
at first, i
was really
shy but now
it's like i'm
part of the
family."***



Image by Lucas Kreft | Original image source: <http://students.washington.edu>

voices of experience

On March 18, six youth from the Newsletter Project (Ammy, Andrew, Elyse, Jade, Lucas and Sabrina) went to Heart-Wood's Destination UP program in Tatamagouche to interview youth in care for this Newsletter. Charmaine Amero, Tammy Dalton, Celena Evans, Justin MacPhee, Bethany Murphy, and former youth in care Amanda Murley were interviewed.



Q: What would you do for kids in care if you had all the money and power in the world? What would you change?

"I would get more clothing allowance money and do more activities and stuff." —Tammy

"Probably more clothing allowance." —Celena

"I would change the structure of group home settings. I would take the institutionalized feeling away from them. There wouldn't be so many staff meetings going on. You wouldn't feel like you can't go into certain rooms at certain times of the day." —Amanda

"I'd give money to the people in care, because they don't have much money and stuff." —Charmaine

"Let the youth have more choices and decisions." —Bethany

"I would let kids go to their real house and not live in foster homes. And I would give kids money so they can go buy clothes for themselves." —Justin

"There needs to be better assessment programs for group homes... I don't think it's appropriate to put someone who's not ready for an independent group home into one because it brings down the other youth who are doing productive things and some youth get sucked in extremely easily." —Amanda

"We need to review the process that social workers and group home staff are taking to let the youth know that they are there to help and not just control and confine them with rules and regulations." —Amanda

"I think foster parents need more training on how to raise a family. My foster parents have really bad anger problems." —Marie

Q: How do you feel about care?

"I don't really like anything because I lost my mom." —Tammy

"For me, it's about growing up. You have a lot more opportunities than other people would have." —Celena

"In care, you see things from so many different perspectives. You just kind of listen to what they're saying, take it in and learn from it." —Celena

"One thing I liked about foster care is it gives you a chance to become part of a family and work through trust issues. You have shelter, food in your belly and clothes on your back but some emotional needs are not met. When you call your social worker and it takes her three weeks to call you back, that's not meeting your needs." —Amanda

"I like being in a foster home because it's fun and stuff, and you get to see other kids you haven't seen before." —Charmaine

"Being in care helps make my life better, but what I don't like is that I have to go to a new school, and there are a lot of rules and stuff." —Tammy

"Most of the foster homes I've been in, they say they want to treat you the same as the other kids, but they really don't and I don't think that's fair." —Charmaine

"I like the foster home because you can get closer to your parents. You know you're safe." —Bethany

"I kinda like it, but I kinda don't." —Justin

"It feels a little good and a little awkward. It feels kind of good because they know a little bit of stuff about you, and it's awkward because you don't know anything about them." —Charmaine

"It's OK to talk to somebody. You're cared for no matter what if you're in care, and you'll get help if you ask for it." —Celena

"I have more of a positive attitude now, since I've been in care." —Tammy

Q: What are your goals?

"I want to finish high school, go to college and become a jazz dancer." —Tammy

"Finish high school, go to college and take Massage Therapy." —Celena

"I see myself finishing my education and becoming a child protection worker, and hopefully going into politics and changing some things." —Amanda

"I want to be a basketball player, a basketball coach and a gym teacher." —Charmaine

"To become a social worker." —Bethany

"My goal is to be a truck driver." —Justin

Q: Do you feel lonely sometimes?

"Extremely. I always feel that other youth and adolescents who are in university have the option of being able to call home and being able to vent and having that immediate family whereas when you're in care you kind of feel like you're standing alone and the rug is pulled out from under your feet. Sometimes it seems like you're just not reaching your goals quick enough because you don't have enough positive reinforcement. Sometimes there's just not enough incentive so you feel like, if I want to do this, nobody is giving me recognition, so what's the point?" —Amanda

Q: Will being in care stop you from having the career you want?

"... The resources that you are provided in care can limit you if you are not provided with the proper socialization skills and the proper life skills to proceed after care. I believe there needs to be a better transition program for moving outside of care because you go from having the structure and safety net to having nothing, and it's very easy for you to relapse into old behaviours and self-medicate and other negative reinforcements." —Amanda

"No. It might help." —Bethany

Foster homes

adoption vs. the system

By Lucas Kreft

When I was in foster care, I had to achieve trust with my foster parents, and vice versa. If I would picture being a foster parent and bringing a foster child into my home, I would do this to give them protection, a roof over their head and food on their plate. I would love them because of the situation they are in. When they grow I would grow with them, and try to make them a better person.

When things turn for the worse, many different situations can cause this: drugs, school, sex... The foster parent may feel "this is my house and they have to respect the rules. My house, my rules. I'm an adult: they are youth. What I say, goes!"

Things would then start to escalate out of control. "They've broken the rules. I've had enough. They have to be out. Time to call their social worker: I can't do this anymore; they have to go."

Foster parents have to realize we all make mistakes. They have not been here since day one. We go through more stress than a "regular youth". Maybe that's the reason we are harder to control. We have different situations from other kids. We are not pieces of garbage that can be thrown on the curb.

Adoption is nothing like this. If the youth does badly, they are not collected on garbage day. The parents have to work with the kid much more than the ones who are in care. But the parent still has the right to change the locks and keep them out until they change. They can always come back. They are still family.

I am writing this because it happened to me and I've seen this happen to too many youth in care. I believe it is a problem. The solution is with the foster parents. They need to have a bond with the youth. It's more than just having a roof over your head and living with strangers.

Family

By Nolan Drummond

Mom/dad
Extended
Brother / cousin / sister
Foster parent/sibling
Friends
Stressful
Caring

Respect
Yelling
All over the world
Arguing / hating / crying
Vacations / fun / holidays
Splitting up
Shopping
Communication

my mom and dad

By Nolan Drummond

I don't want to split away from them. I love to communicate with them a lot. They always show me respect. They always make sure we have fun and take us on vacations.

the worst thing about being in care

By Nolan Drummond

The worst thing about being in care is that you cannot see your real parents at all which really makes me mad and unhappy.

But there is another thing that is bad in care. Say, if you do something bad when you are in a foster home, they will put you into a boy's home just like what happened to me. Sometimes your social worker will put you in a boot camp if you are really bad.



*Image by Lucas Kreft
Original image source:
<http://www.glenbrook.com>*

a better life

By Sabrina Penney

I don't really have any negative thoughts or positive thoughts, so it's kind of in between. But I think care is a good start for a kid going out into a new home and having a better life with their new foster parents. I like it because you can get a lot of things, being in care. You can meet new people and have a better life

worst/best things about care?

By Jade Brooks

Hmmm, what is the worst thing about being in care? For me there are not any reasons why I wouldn't like care. Sure I am not with my real mother and sometimes that is an upsetting fact but it doesn't bother me as much as it used to when I was first in care. Another bad thing about being in care is that I was taken into care against my will. Again, at first it really upset and bothered me but now it doesn't bother me as much.

The last thing I can think of that brings me to tears sometimes is all the miserable and painful memories from all of the other foster homes before I moved in here. Before now I couldn't do what I wanted to because I was so depressed that I was always mad at someone or something. But now all of that pain and misery is gone and done with because of my foster mother.

What can I say about the best thing about care? A lot! To me the best thing about being in care is that I've gotten over the obstacles of not letting anyone in my life because I thought care basically brought my life to an end. Now, look what I've become! I live in a beautiful house, with beautiful people--foster-brothers and sister and loving foster parents. I have become a published poet with the first poem I've ever written. I am doing great and my happiness is very welcome after so much misery. I love being in care and I owe it to the love and support of my foster mother.

good foster care

By Tony Beaumier

Being in foster care was good for me because I got along with all my parents and whoever else lived there. I did well in everything that I was involved in, and I always got their support. Even now that I am out of care I still visit my foster parents all the time, including staying with them for the holidays.

best things about care

By Nolan Drummond

You get support	Being taken out for lunch
Money	Fun
Shoes	Cool
Clothes	Trips
Games	Respect
TV	Shopping
Food	Get your money for school
Socks	You have someone to love

a nice peaceful home to go home to

By Sabrina Penney

A lot of kids who are taken into care think that it's horrible and stupid and these workers are just trying to harass them in some sort of way, but that's not true. When I was old enough to understand what was going on with my life, I thought it was horrible and bad too at first, but now I know it's not. Now that I'm in it I realize why I'm here, and what they are trying to do for my life. They put me into a home where they know that these people will take care of me in all the possible ways they can to keep me safe, and to have a nice peaceful home to go home to everyday.

Just think positive thoughts of why you're here, not the negative ones. Remember, no matter where you go or what happens, you will always have people who love you. That's what I realize.



Stephen Kimber, Professor, School of Journalism, University of King's College, and Jade Brooks, during the session on interviewing

r-e-s-p-e-c-t

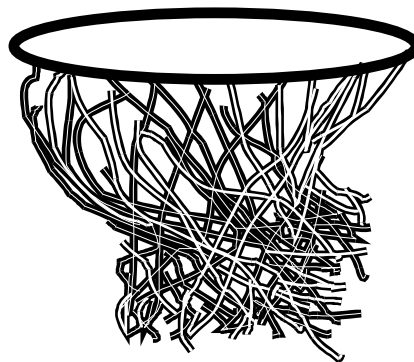
By Jade Brooks

I thought care was bad at the beginning until I got to know my foster family. At first it seemed like everyone was out to get me, telling me what to do and repeatedly saying "It's for your own good." Then I moved just one more time and forgot all about not listening and being disrespectful. I started to listen and then I realized that care is not that bad. When you respect your foster parents they respect you—well they should, anyway. The only thing that I think people in care need is respect. When you have respect for others they have respect for you, and that makes care not so bad. It's a win-win situation when you have respect. People think care is bad but when you think about it, it really isn't.

"you can say so much through writing. you can express how you're feeling and get all your emotions out and down on paper." — Elyse

plan b?

By Lucas Krefl



Safety net with a hole in the bottom

All the time, youth are being introduced to, and being taken from, foster care. Being in care for years changes a person's life, either for the very best or worst. It can make you a solid wall, able to take on anything, or mashed potatoes with butter pouring down.

At the age of 21 in Nova Scotia (25 in New Brunswick), CAS sees the youth as independent—free to be on their own in society. Suddenly, many options are gone. No support is to be given if the youth still needs a foot to stand on—unless they have family.

But what if they don't? Then what?

social workers

By Tony Beaumier

At the moment I do not have a social worker, and I haven't for a few years now, but when I did have one, she was very nice. She returned my calls and arranged meetings once a month or when I needed someone to talk to.

To me, social workers do a great job. Some have their own kids and 25 to 30 others on their caseload, so if they don't get back to the youth within 24 hours, then the youth should deal with it, and relax.

In this matter, the youth have their own opinions, because obviously some workers are better than others.

By Sabrina Penney

I'm going to talk about social workers and what I think about them. I like social workers. They can do a lot of things for you, but they always seem to not return your calls. For example, if you need to go to a friend's house for a sleepover, some kids have to get permission from their social worker. But if you call them the day you want to go to your friend's house, and the social worker doesn't return the call, then you can't go do what you want to do. It's annoying!

give them a break

By Jade Brooks

- When I first came into care I was saying it's all their (social workers') fault.
- My first picture of a social worker: I thought they were going to be rude.
- Social workers don't mind their business and sometimes they get a bit too involved.
- My social worker helps me to get through the problems with my family.
- They let me have my own voice because they gave me a "lawyer-like" person to speak on my behalf in court.
- Busy is not even the word to tell how much social workers have to deal with.
- Each social worker has over ten clients. They are tied down with them.
- The social workers are dealing with our problems but they have feelings too so they should be given a break.

By Elyse Saulnier

With one of my social workers, I'd be waiting forever for her to send me anything, or for her to do anything.

Another social worker was very helpful. She got me a tutor when I was failing math and helped me out anyway she could.

I hated arguing with my social worker, because I don't like arguing with anyone.

My social worker and I didn't disagree on many things. It was very rare when we did.

By Nolan Drummond

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| -money | -trips |
| -nice | -fun |
| -shopping/personals | -cool |
| -shoes | -neat |
| -support | -respect |
| -sometimes mean | -bus pass |
| -sometimes not fair | -sometimes waiting |
| -takes you out for lunch/supper | |

about our collages

Each year, we create collages on a certain theme, like our experience of care, or how we would like it to be. This year, one of our sponsors, the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), was interested in seeing us represent what CULTURE means to us, so we took that as the theme.

There are collages on the front and back inside covers, plus a couple more here. This year, with a one-time grant from HRM, Lucas Kreft built and painted frames for the collages. (It was a much bigger job than we thought!) The collages will first be shown at the Newsletter Launch, and then HRM plans to display them at municipal buildings in the city. (See a framed collage on page 2.)



Feelings

the beginning after the start

By Jade Brooks

It was June 24, 2005. I had moved back with my foster parents. I had been there for nine months so far and for the most part I was **miserable**! I didn't want to talk, listen, obey the rules, or be nice in any kind of way. We were finally getting out of school for the summer. It was hot out and everybody was **anxious** to leave. I hadn't had a good year at all. I had a very bad attitude towards almost all of the teachers. I especially hated one teacher. He had this voice that just got to me and made me even **madder** than I already was.

It was time to get my report card. My last name is Brooks so I was first. "Jade Brooks!" my teacher called out. I walked up and he handed me my report card. I had a feeling it wouldn't be good and I was right. After awhile, everyone was called and the bell rang-- the last bell of the year. I ran out smiling along with everyone else but I **wasn't happy**. You could even say I was **afraid** to see my marks. So I walked home with my foster sister, after we said good-bye to everyone.

My foster mother took us out for lunch. "Okay", she said excitedly. "Let's see everyone's report card." I showed her mine first. I was sitting there, hands folded, leaning against the window, waiting for the moment that she would holler, like my mother would have. I was really **afraid** that she was going to holler at me. I was afraid she was going to do something, anything. But she didn't. She **wasn't mad or angry**. She didn't even holler at me. She just said that she was **disappointed** but she understood because I've had lots of things to deal with, lots of **stress**.

I started crying then because she and my foster father started talking about how smart I was and how they know I will do better next year. They said how I was an amazing poet and I could go very far in life. I don't know why I cried. I guess I was also **upset** with myself because I also knew how smart I was and how great my working ability could be along with my attitude. Anyway, I was really **relieved** because if it would've been my own mother she would've hollered at me and been really **angry**. The reason why I will always remember this is because I didn't give my foster mother a

Image by Lucas Krefl | Original image source: <http://moythainstitute.org>



chance at first. I just assumed she would get **angry** at me because I was **angry** at my life, **angry** at myself. I found out that she wasn't rude at all. She listened to me, understood me, and really cares for me. I will remember this because even though I had lived there so far for nine months, this was really the beginning after the start.

happiness

By Sabrina Penney

Happiness is a great feeling. Different people have different opinions of the word "happiness". To me, it's a great feeling. When happiness does happen to me, I feel grateful and graceful because I'm really not that happy at all at home. I don't know why. It just happens to be that way with me.

Happiness is a great feeling, but some people have **miserable** lives so they don't get to experience this wonderful feeling. Hopefully, sometime in their lives, they will.

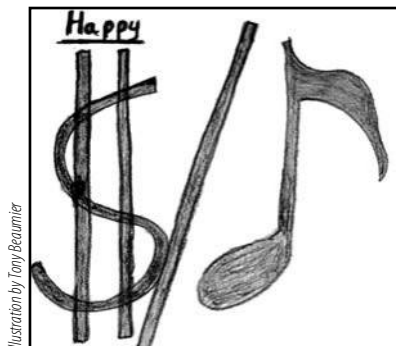


Illustration by Tony Beaumier

hopeful

By Ammy Purcell

When I am **hopeful** it feels like butterflies in my stomach. Hopeful can be a good feeling or a bad one. It can be good if you are hopeful about getting a gift maybe. And it can be bad if you're hoping someone doesn't find out something bad that you did.

Frustrated!!!!

By Nolan Drummond

When I'm **frustrated** I try to keep things in but I can't because it all comes out at once, word after word as my madness spreads in one loud yell. Sometimes it stays at the bottom of my heart but if I get more frustrated it starts to build more inside. It may hurt when I say bad things.

But just remember, when I say bad things about you or bad things about others I do not mean it. I do not mean for it to hurt you. I mean for it to shut you up.



Illustration by Ammy Purcell

By Elyse Saulnier

Something that really **frustrates** me is people who lie. I absolutely **HATE** liars!! I would honestly rather know the truth than have someone lie to me because when you do find out that they lied to you, it always ends up being worse than what it would have been. And then you end up getting in a **BIG** argument and say things you don't necessarily mean, and it's a **BIG** mess.

newsletter contributors:

Tony Beaumier, 22
Jade Brooks, 14
Tina Doucette, 18
Lynnette Drummond, 17
Nolan Drummond, 15
Jessi Eisan, 15
Lucas Kreft, 20
Andrew Nickerson, 17
Sabrina Penney, 14
Ammy Purcell, 18
Elyse Saulnier, 17
A. J. Smiley, 17
Amanda Sprague, 18
John Walker, 20

thank you!

Without the support of our sponsors, none of this would be possible!

THANK YOU,

- THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF HALIFAX FOUNDATION
- THE GORDON FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH
- HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
- HALIFAX YOUTH FOUNDATION
- NOVA SCOTIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
- YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY PROJECT



Halifax Youth Foundation



We would like to thank these individuals and organizations for their support:

Sharon Avery, Pro Bono Students Canada — Law student support: youth rights
Tanya Bath, Pro Bono Students of Canada — Law student support: youth rights
April Brousseau, Pro Bono Students of Canada — Legal research facilitator
Chandra Gosine, Nova Scotia Legal Aid — Lawyer support: youth rights
Jane Gourley, Pro Bono Students Canada — Law student support: youth rights
Brian Helpert — Computer Instructor
Mark Harrington, Solent Design — Web Designer
Bill Hart, CAS of Halifax Foundation
Shawna Hoyte, Dalhousie Legal Aid Services — Lawyer support, youth rights
Dianne Hussey — Volunteer (Launch Coordinator)
Stephen Kimber — Interviewing instruction
Barrie MacFarlane, CAS of Halifax — Primary CAS contact
Danny McGuire, Department of Community Services — Role play collaborator
Gil McMullin, CAS of Halifax — Youth Worker/Program Supporter

Heather Milne — Volunteer (Program Support)
Lisa Neily — Graphic Designer (Newsletter), Program Support
Martha Norris — Curriculum Consultant
Charles Perez, Wickwire Holm — Legal Advice
Ted Power — Photographer (Newsletter cover)
Glynis Ross — Curriculum Consultant
Jim Rossiter, Wickwire Holm — Legal Advice
John Rowan, CAS of Halifax
Hanaa Al Sharief, Pro Bono Students Canada — Law student support: youth rights
Peter Smith, Department of Education — Portfolio instruction
Mark Szpakowski, coachingplatform — Web instruction
Bill Turpin — Communications instruction
Alderney Gate Public Library — IT Learning Centre
Alderney Landing Theatre — Newsletter launch
Canadian National Institute for the Blind — Meeting space
The Children's Aid Society of Halifax Foundation — Sponsor
Fusion Printing & Imaging — Newsletter printing
The Gordon Foundation for Children and Youth — Sponsor

Halifax Regional Municipality — Sponsor
Halifax Youth Foundation — Sponsor
HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development/ Destination UP — Access to interviewees, and lunch
Liberated Networks — Web hosting
National Youth in Care Network — Article published in newsletter
Nova Scotia Council for the Family — Article published in newsletter
Nova Scotia Department of Community Services — Primary Sponsor
Nova Trophy — Certificate plaques
Office of the Ombudsman — Inclusion in conference and survey process
Phoenix Learning & Employment Centre — Meeting space; résumé & job interviewing instruction
Pro Bono Students Canada (Dalhousie University) — Presentation on youth rights
Sobey's (Windsor Street) — Meeting space
The Sobey's School of Business, Saint Mary's University — Meeting space
Youth Employability Project — Sponsor

To see past Newsletters, take a trip through our photo gallery, and more, check out our web site: www.youthnewsletter.net

"The Voice of Youth In Care" logo was designed by Trevor Dakins and the rest of the Youth in Care Newsletter Team

© 2006 The Children's Aid Society of Halifax Foundation. This Newsletter may be copied in its entirety for further distribution. All of the articles and drawings herein were created by youth who hold the copyright to their work. Individual pieces may not be republished in print or electronic format without permission. For further information about the Newsletter Project, contact Andrew Safer, Director: (902) 422-8476, asafer@eastlink.ca.



"better work comes from more ideas from different people" —Sarah

"there is no 'i' in teamwork." —Lucas

"i love that there is a magazine that we can put our writing into so people can know what you're feeling and your opinion about care." —Sabrina



"i'm finally going to be heard and people will know my story." —Lynnette



Do you think they liked the newsletter?

I hope so!
It's all we've got!