

the

VOICE

of the future

Issue 07 of the Youth In Care Newsletter Project | May 2007



Where we've been | Where we are | Where we're going

*Cover photo by Ted Power
Graphic design by Lisa Neilly*



Angela, Lucas & Ammy



Ashley, Tina & Tony



Jessica, Candace & Sabrina



Ammy, Tina, Lawrence & Jessica



Jessica, Michael, Samantha,
Ammy, John, AJ & James

Treat us like people!

by Jessica Blaikie

Through my life I have seen a lot of stereotypes and discrimination. One of the worst ones is the way people treat youth. Many people think youth are bad and treat them unfairly, but it's even worse when they live in a group home or foster home. People think that because they live in a home they must have done something really bad. I just want people to understand that we're not all bad. Don't judge us by where we live. We didn't ask to be treated like this. A lot of times the youth in these places are there because of family or mental health issues. A lot of us have never been in trouble with the law. *Please don't stereotype or discriminate against us! We just want to be treated like people.*

not ready at 21

by Theresa Huntley

I think that when youth in care turn 21 they should have more options than to just have their care terminated. They should have an after care or next step program to assist youth in care who have turned 21 and are expected to leave care and do it all on their own. Taking youth out of care when they are 21 and are not ready is not appreciated by the youth who are having to just start off all on their own. You know, you were all youth once too and you needed help when you first left home, and

Give us a chance!

by James Riley

Us youth need to be treated fairly. I feel that at school, teachers and staff come up with ways to try to help us but sometimes I feel that I'm not given a chance. We're put on behaviour programs before they even get a chance to see what our behaviour is like. When we have projects to do, they don't always give us the support we need. They rely on what they know about us in the community and what they hear. I think they should try to get us off the streets and give us a chance to build our goals and dreams and make them come true.

(Give us a Chance continued on page 21)

we need lots of help too. My friend who was in care just turned 21 years old and on his birthday his social worker came to visit him and said, "Happy birthday! You're on your own now." I don't think that is very fair. I think more social workers need to help more youth beyond 21, and not necessarily terminate their care at 21 if they are trying to work and get the help they need. The age should be 24, so that all the youth can get the help that they necessarily need.



Illustration by Steven Ryan

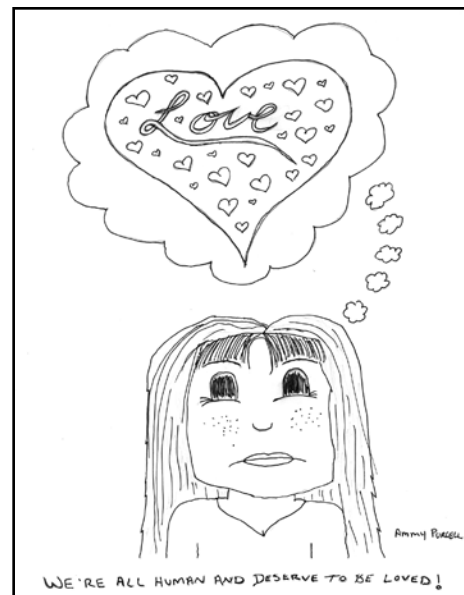


Illustration by Ammy Purcell

We're all humans. We deserve to be loved.

Welcome to the seventh issue of *The Voice* – the combined creation of 29 youths currently or formerly in the child welfare system ("youth in care") and three youths on Income Assistance – all receiving or having received services from the Department of Community Services, and living in the Halifax Regional Municipality. The participants are aged 14 to 19. There are also several older youths (mentors) who have been involved in the project for three to six years.

The Youth in Care Newsletter Project (www.youthnewsletter.net) is a seven-month program that fosters the development of social, communication, writing, Web, and employability skills while supporting the youths' education. We meet once a week for two hours, and progress through a 28-session curriculum. (See: Curriculum Outline: www.engageyouth.net/)

Many of the pieces in *The Voice* were written in response to assigned topics, such as: "What Would You Do If You Had \$1 Million?" (p. 26). The section: "Out in the World" (pp. 10-13) highlights some of the youths' extra-curricular achievements this year.

Through no fault of their own, youth in care face a number of challenges in addition to the ones that are common to adolescents. They have had to deal with difficult circumstances – family breakdown and their parents' inability to look after them. Adjusting to life in foster care or groups homes often results in behaviour issues, placement changes, the need to switch schools, and missed opportunities for learning. And then they have to deal with the stigma associated with being in foster care or living in a group home. They carry a lot of weight on their shoulders!

There's no question that they need social, emotional, education, and employability supports. Their needs are great and unrelenting. The system struggles to meet them. In addition to placement and care requirements, they may need to learn basic tasks that most of us take for granted – how to use a phone book, have a bank account, and keep track of information. In these pages, the Newsletter Project Team tells us the improvements that are needed, and also how much they appreciate what they have.

You may notice that some of the bylines don't match up with the names on the back cover. Four of the Newsletter Project youths are in temporary care so they have not been identified here, in keeping with the Family and Children's Services Act. Pseudonyms have also been used with certain articles to protect the privacy of the writers, their families, and other parties.

I would like to thank the Department of Community Services, Halifax District Office – Child Welfare for their vision as the Agency sponsor of this project, as well as the project's funders (see inside back cover), without whom there would be no *Voice of the future*. And a special thank you to the volunteers, social workers, youth workers, community partners, and guest presenters who have made this a wonderfully engaging and productive year. Finally, "Hats off!" to the youth for sharing their inspiration, experience, creativity, bravery, insight and humour.

– Andrew Safer, Project Director & Editor

Our Experiences → IN ← C.A.R.E

where
we've
been

It all works out

by Kaitlyn Hofstede

I have been in care for almost three years now, so I have had many different experiences. I have to say the best, most exciting and biggest event took place recently.

Up until two months ago I lived in Ontario in a foster home where I was really unhappy. I wanted out but nobody was listening to me or taking me seriously because of my age. The only person that was willing to take me into their home was my sister – who lived in a different province.

It took two years to finally work out. A week before I moved, I was told I was moving. I was already packed, so I spent the next week saying goodbye to my friends and the rest of my family.

Things here in Halifax are good so far. I am a lot happier in a home environment, because where I lived before did not feel like a home. School is a lot tougher socially, and I'm not fitting in, but I think it's worth it when I can go back home to my sister.

I also think that although I was unhappy where I lived before, it is a good thing it happened because if I wasn't unhappy, I wouldn't have ended up here, where I am today. It all works out in the end.

Staff who made a difference

by Angela Lloyd

SUE: The first staff I met, on my first night. My keyworker (someone you go to with your problems), you went to my parent-teacher interviews, etc. You were the staff I cooked for the most. I went to you with my questions on religion – I was intrigued and extremely interested in what you had to say. You're the one who eats ranch dressing on everything, and I mean everything! You have a high-pitched voice. You helped me with my spelling. The one who gets the meals cooked for them does the dishes. You love to eat almost as much as I love to cook, so I won both ways because I dislike doing dishes with a passion! Miss you and God bless.

TARA: Someone I looked up to. You made me want to do the best job on my chores. Strict yet fun, you were someone I could lean on, the one I could talk to openly about my life and problems – happy things too. You also gave me my toughest punishment, but I couldn't stay mad at you for

Taken from home

by Jenna-Lee Howe

When I was two years old I was apprehended from my home because my mother was a drug addict. She used to bring home different men almost every other night. They would hit her and treat her like she was a nobody. Sometimes she would leave me and my baby sister in the house alone while she went out with some guy, and that's why I got apprehended from my home.

Boston!

by Sabrina Penney

Last year, my foster family and I went to Boston. It was one of my biggest trips in care and I have a lot of memories from it. My foster mom and dad, foster brother, foster sister and I got to stay in a really nice hotel. It was really fancy inside and we got to use room service, which I loved! In Boston, we met my mom's parents. I think it made me feel more like a part of the family going away with them, and meeting their parents. My favourite part was the aquarium we went to see. I saw tons of sharks and tropical fish – mostly ones I hadn't seen before. I enjoyed my trip to Boston because I had a lot of fun and left with a lot of memories. I hope we can do something like that again.

It's hard to move

by Samantha Nickerson

One thing that has happened to me in care is I had to move from my first group home, where I had lived for a year and seven months, to another group home where I've been living for six and a half months. It was hard to move because I had lived at the other one for so long. I loved the staff there. They kept me going from day to day. I'm starting to like the one I'm in now, but not as much as the first. We had to move because they changed the mandate to a different program. It was hard on the girls, and it was even hard on the staff. I still miss my first group home every time I think of all the memories and things we used to do there, but I'm starting to like the one I'm in now.

Kicked out

by Jeff Ferris

I went to another group home for a time-out one day. Then I got sent to another group home because I kicked the window in that was on the door. When I got there the next day, I ran away to my Nan's house. The next day, I went to the group home where I got in trouble the first time. Then I got kicked out of there for threatening staff. Then I went to another group home and I've lived there for a year and a half now.

long. You helped me with my homework the most, and we had a great time doing it together. You're the one I was most excited to show my accomplishments to. I shared my books and magazines with you (you would get really excited when I bought a new magazine!). And you're the best meatloaf maker! You're the one who helped me with my problems without actually giving me a solution. You pushed me to be a better person. I cried with you many times. You were there when I left. That, and when a family member of yours passed away, were the hardest moments. You made a difference in my life, and I want you to know that! Thanks for everything.

MARY: Laid back and down to earth – I wouldn't change that for the world. You're the one I could talk to about my past the most because you were in somewhat similar shoes I guess you could say. I didn't feel guilty telling you about the darker side. You knew us the best, you're a good listener,



Illustration by Jessica Anderson

honest, understanding, spunky, and always up for a good laugh. I felt like I got the chance to get to know you, as you got to know us. You knew French fluently which was great because French was my worst subject back in junior high. You were the youngest of all the staff and I think that helped because you weren't that far off in age. You could relate the best. You had a lot of personality and it showed.

I wish you all the best, and good luck in the future.

Taken apart

by James Riley

One thing that happened to me in care was I was taken apart from my brother, and that was really hard for me because I was never taken apart from him before. I was young at the time this happened. I was seven and he was three. We were really close (as we are now). At that age I thought it was my job to look after him and be someone who he could look up to. We still don't live together but I get to see him once a month (which I find is not enough). We get supervised visits every month. We are close, and we always will be!

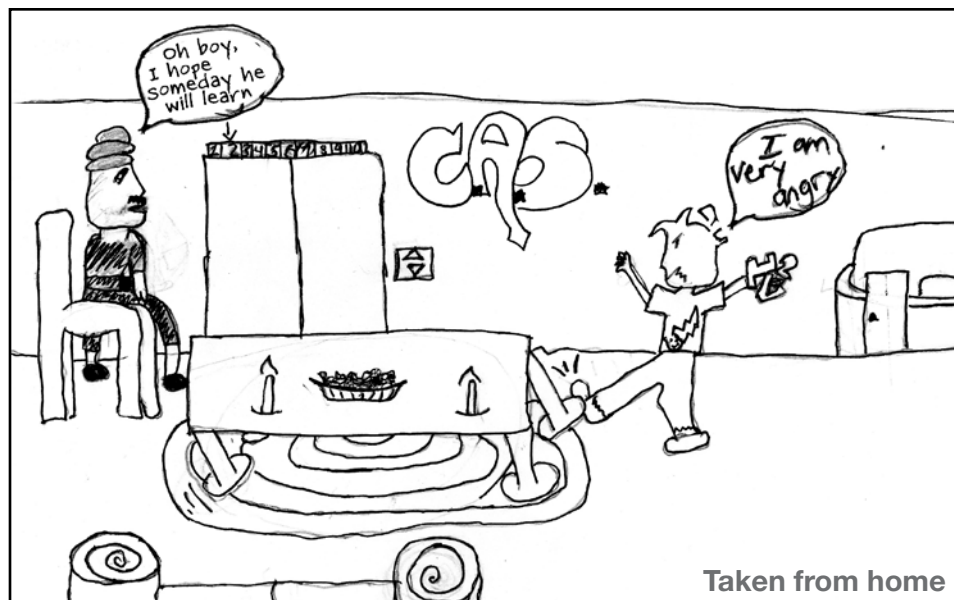


Illustration by Lady Dymes

Why I'm depressed today

by George West

Being in care so long kind of made me hostile towards my mom. We talked everyday and I told her I loved her before we let each other go. But then when I moved back with her it was like she wasn't my mom anymore. She was more of a friend than a mom, which kind of sucks. Lately I've been kind of depressed because I don't stay there. I'm her son and it's like she would rather

help out everyone else except me, but right now, at this point in my life, I'm having crazy struggles. I have no job and no house that's mine.

My point in all this is that I was told that my mom didn't want me. Because of that, I've built up a lot of anger towards her. I wish they would have told me that the reason I couldn't stay there was because I was bad, and they feared for my sister because I was a wild child. But instead they told me my mom didn't want me there when really, it

wasn't her decision. I had to have my therapist tell me this. Really, it was their decision. They'd let me go back, but they'd always take me away again. I swear, I've lived in at least 15 foster homes and 6 group homes. That's a lot of moving and getting to know new people, and it sucked. I also went to 11 different schools. I wish they would have been a bit more truthful. Maybe they were, and I just don't understand it.



Think of a time when you felt at least three different emotions...

My grandmother

by Samantha Nickerson

My grandmother and I always did everything together since she was like my mom, plus a best friend. We used to walk to the malls and go to the park and go on all kinds of trips like to Marine Land, Niagara Falls and to Prince Edward Island.

One day everything changed, I don't know how long she had been sick but she got really sick and it scared me. It's like I was losing everything I had, and my best friend. But she began to suffer a lot and it hurt to see her like that.

Then one day while I slept at my friend's house, that night she died. I was told in the morning that I tossed and turned all night and a few minutes later my grandfather came to my friend's house and told me that my grandmother had died. I was in total shock. My seven year old heart broke into a million pieces as if I lost my whole world. I cried a little, but I was shocked.

I stayed at my friend's for a couple of days, then went home and just stayed in my room. I felt if she wasn't there, I lost everything. There's nobody here that understands how much I loved her. It took me awhile to be able to sleep by myself but

I got used to not having her around. It really kills that I never got to say good-bye to the only person I trusted. Now it still hurts. I hoped from the time I was 14 that it was all just a bad dream. When I reached the age of nine I started hating everybody, even myself. I grew so cold, it was like I didn't care about anything or anyone. I started running away. I felt like everybody was beating on me. I took it so far that I just realized this is not someone she would be impressed with. I'll always remember that letter she wrote telling me to never forget her. She also told me that if I judge people, I have no time to love them. She told me she loved me and to be good and set an example for my little cousins and siblings. That's what I live by still, to this day. It still brings tears to my eyes every time I think about her and all our memories we have and how much I wish she was here so I can just tell her my good-bye – the one thing I never got to do.



Emotions...

heart attack

by Michael Rhyno

One thing that made me sad, scared and upset was when my Nan went to the hospital because she had a heart attack. It really scared me and it made me sad because I thought she was going to die. It made me upset because I thought it was my fault that it happened. But she is all right now. I am going to spend Christmas with her.

on my own

by Elise Saulnier

When I was 15, I decided to leave home for a number of reasons. I ran away to my boyfriend's house. He'd help me, I was sure of it. I was there for a week before they came and took me to a foster home.

Now, I was 15, living in someone else's home with other girls I didn't know and I was supposed to call this place "home", these people my "family", and to feel like I belonged somewhere. Those girls and my foster mother grew on me and I finally accepted this place and those who lived there as my "family." After a while I felt like I had my family back. Then she wanted to move away. I felt like I was losing what I wanted so bad in my heart – a family. Then came the greatest news ever; we were to go with her! She was taking us with her like we were her family. Now, I was 16 and in a whole new environment. Home, school everything was new. I was able to make friends easier than ever before and I felt even more at home like I had a family.

One year later I moved back to the old place I used to call home and to the people I once considered my family. Now I was 17 and back to feeling like I was in a strange home with people I didn't know. They didn't know who I was anymore and I didn't know them. I had to start at another new school, a new environment and I found it very hard to make even one friend at this time. Then a year later (10 months) I was out of there again, this time living with my new boyfriend.

Now I'm 18, had to start another school again, I was in a new environment, but still found it hard to even make one friend. Now, I'm on my own with no help from anyone. I'm encouraged by my boyfriend to finish school before I find a job, but, if I was working now we'd be able to eat good meals everyday like those who have the benefit of living at home till they are ready to leave home. I'm not ready for this!

Now, I'm 18, unemployed, out of school in one week and don't know how to survive in this world. No one will ever think of helping me until I turn 19 and then I may qualify for Social Assistance, if I still need it. I don't understand what their problem is. I mean, I'm still in school, go everyday and it's not like I'm going to spend the money they give me on drugs, alcohol and parties! But, I would like to have a good meal almost everyday like when I was in my homes. I can't keep stressing and worrying about not having enough money to eat or pay bills. It will and does take a toll on your body and mind. I can barely sleep at night because I'm so worried and scared that I'm not going to make it, that I'll end up living on the street or have to leave because I can't put any money towards the house or bills or anything.



Poor, in and out of care

Turning a new page

by Jessica Blaikie

One time that I can think of when I had different emotions going through me is, well, now. I am preparing to graduate from high school and go off to university or college. I have so many emotions going through me at the moment...I am extremely nervous because I am going to be done with high school but I'm also excited. I'm scared because if I get accepted to the community college in Truro, I will be leaving the city... moving away from everyone I know. This scares me but I also feel so excited because I am opening a new page of my life.

Jail: good & bad

by Emily Smith

A time when I felt different emotions is when I went to Waterville for two months. I was mad, sad and somewhat happy. I was mad because I had to leave my boyfriend and all of my friends (this made me sad, too). But, I was also somewhat happy because I got to get away from all the drama for a little while. But I guess when you try to get away from a problem, it is still going to be there when you get back.

a silver lining

by Harry Withers

The day my stepmom told me that I could no longer live at my house I went through many emotions and feelings. There were so many and I became confused because of all of them that were going through my head. If I could name a few they would be anger, worry, anxiety, frustration, apprehension, and bewilderment as to why she would do that to me. I didn't understand what I did that would make her say that and (what I believed to be) give up on me.

There were other times I felt this way but this was the one that stood out to me the most. It was also the one that changed my life the most I believe – for the better.

Now I realize that it was all for the better anyway. I never got the opportunity to live my life how I wanted it before. I really felt like I was living under a rock before I moved into my group home. This place has shown me so much more of the world and what it has to offer me. I almost feel like I was sleeping for that part of my life. No exaggeration. I think that everything happens for a reason and so did this. I'm actually glad it did because I've learned a lot, and made many new friends since then.

Living with my friend's family

by Colin Brennan

One time I felt three or more different feelings is when I first moved away from both my parents. I was living with a friend and his family. I was 11 years old when I moved in with them and I felt happy, mad, and nervous. Happy because I got to leave my mom and move in with my best friend. Mad because my dad wouldn't let me move back in with him. And nervous because I didn't know how it would work out living with my friend and his family. My friend is 17 and only 10 days younger than me so we were bucking heads a lot and sometimes got mad at each other but we always worked it out. I ended up living with them for almost two years so it was like we really were family, and I loved it there. And still to this day I talk to/hang out with my friend.

For a calendar of events, recreation, education, and other resources for youth in care in Nova Scotia visit:
www.nscouncilfamily.org/YIC.htm



NEGATIVE MEMORIES...



Lost little girl

by Tina Doucette

It's so easy to forget the good stuff, and easy to remember the bad.

The worst feeling I've had being in care is knowing you could be kicked out of your "home" and have no clue where you're going next. I went into care when I was six years old. Everyone was so up front about what was going on and how the system works. So I knew that my care givers could kick me out and what was worse, they would use it against me, saying "If you don't do ..., then your social worker will come and get you."

As I got older and actually went through so many moves, it got easier but I still get the lost little girl feeling of not knowing, even when I'm 19 years old.

it's all about family

by James Riley

Moving from a foster into a group home was not a positive memory for me. It was hard to move from a family that I called my own into a place where I really can't say I have much of a family. I have to rely on all kinds of staff and social workers who I find don't always understand me or know what I'm going through. These people are there to back me up when I need them but it still does not feel the same because there are changes in the staff each day. In a family you only have to rely on two people – the mother and the father – so it's not all that hard. I do have a bond with some of the staff and I feel that they sometimes understand what my life is all about, but I still feel low about myself and feel that it's my fault why I'm in care. Families have hard times, and that's normal for everyone. Most people fight with their mother or father, but with me, I'm close with my mother. She is the best and will always be the best, and will be there to back me up.

changing schools

by Colin Brennan

A bad memory I have would be my childhood in general. I mean, it all started going downhill when I was seven years old. My parents split up and I had thought it was because of me. Then, I moved all over the place with my dad. I have been to 15 schools in the past 12 years. Because of all that school changing, I've missed a lot of learning. I will not be graduating because of all that, and I

hate it. But all in all, it's good that I only have one more year and not three more, and that I haven't dropped out of school.

abandoned

by Colin Brennan

One bad memory is when my dad moved me to Edmonton and then kicked me out into my first group home at age 12. Then he moved with his girlfriend and my little sister back to Halifax and left me without any family at all, and he didn't even call me once. That made me feel really left out and abandoned. I think that would be my worst memory of my childhood.



Illustration by Angela Black

pushing away grief

by Samantha Nickerson

One memory that's not so positive would have to be when I was seven. My grandmother died. I mean, she was like my mother. I found there was so much going on at the time: two weddings, a baby was born, and I moved. So we all kind of pushed away the grief. I find most of us got kind of cold, but we still had to feel the grief we didn't let ourselves feel. How do you expect a seven-year-old to watch her own mother die? It was painful at the time, but now I look back and say, at least she's in no more pain, and she's in a happier place.

an unforgettable christmas

by Jamie May

A negative memory that really sticks out for me would be one Christmas when I was about 10 years old. It was Christmas Eve and my dad was drinking as usual because "it's the holidays!" I was in my room watching a Christmas special on TV when I heard them start to fight. I kept saying to myself, "Please, not tonight, any other time but tonight." As usual, bad luck was on my side again and it escalated. He started to break and throw things at my mom, the wall, and the balcony door. When that didn't satisfy him, he knocked over the Christmas tree with one swing of his hand.

While all this was going on, I had climbed down from my bed and tried to hide behind my dresser because I didn't want him to get me. I don't know exactly how long I was there, but eventually my mom came in and told me to call the police, quickly, because he was "starting" to get out of hand. I climbed out from behind my dresser, called the police, and tried to tell them everything even though I was crying really bad. The guy kept me on the phone and tried to calm me down till the officers got there. He told me I was very cooperative considering what was going on. When the cops got there they tried to find out what happened and my mom kept saying, "Get him the hell out of here!" She told them what happened and they took him to the "drunk tank" till the next morning when they let him out. When he came home they both acted like nothing happened. I couldn't believe it! This is one Christmas I'll never forget.

stupid decisions

by Roy Spence

Back in high school I made a lot of stupid decisions. When people in my life tried to help I still continued to make them. Eventually, I got kicked out of school and had to relocate. When I got to the new school, I had to work very hard and I realized it would be very difficult to get all my credits and graduate that year.

Losing my best friend

by Natasha Clarke

When I think of a memory that's negative the thing that comes to mind is the day my sister ran away. I had just turned 11 and my sister was 17. The night before my mom had completely lost it with my sister. As I lay in my bed, all I could hear was my mom yelling at my sister and after each thing she yelled, she smacked my sister across the face. All I could do was lay in my bed and cry, knowing I could do nothing to help her, and thinking it was all my fault that this was happening.

The next morning, we all left for school as normal. The only thing is, it wasn't a normal day. My sister never came home after school. As the night went on, my mom got more worried and more angry. Finally around 11 o'clock that night the phone rang. It was my sister's boyfriend's mother calling to say that my sister wouldn't be coming back home, not that night. Not ever. When I found that out, I cried. I cried for days. Not only did I lose my sister, but I also lost my best friend.

stood up by dad

by Bonnie MacDonald

One of my worst memories was about a year ago when I was made a crown ward. Originally, my father wasn't going to let that happen. He was supposed to fight for me in court. Five months before the first court date he told me over the phone that he had changed his mind. The reason was my stepmother, and it didn't seem like he put a lot of thought into the decision that would affect the rest of my life.

We ended up getting into a huge fight and didn't talk the entire five months until court, which is still the longest period of time we have gone without talking.

When the court date finally came, a week before my birthday, my dad arrived late looking like trash. That bothered me too because (as I told him later) he looked like he had rolled down the highway to get there, and everybody else was all dressed up.

My social worker started talking about my birthday plans of going to my uncle's and my dad knew nothing about that. Then he started asking questions. He wasn't supposed to know anything about that.

No decision was made, and a month later my dad didn't even bother to show up at court. As far as I knew, no decision was expected to be made that day, but the judge said something about "default" when he didn't show, and I was instantly made a crown ward.

The worst thing about court was when I heard the judge say something about my mother signing the papers giving up any custody of me. This upset me because two years before, I had met my mother for the first time in six years, gotten a huge surprise, and hadn't talked to her since.

After I heard that, I didn't hear anything else because I think I was in shock and deep in thought. When everybody started standing up I realized something must have happened, and then my lawyer shook my hand and said he was sorry. I had to ask somebody what had happened in the last five minutes even though I had been in the room.

My old foster mother had seen the look on my face and knew I had been deep in thought, or 'gone', as she would say. She was the one to break the news to me. I asked "Is it done?" and she nodded. "Am I a ward of the crown?", and again she just nodded. "There's no more? I don't have to come back?" She shook her head and waited to see my reaction.

I didn't say anything for a long time. My social workers, lawyer and foster family continued to stare at me, waiting for me to say something or cry, or anything. When my eyes met my foster mother's, I finally burst into tears.

Later I was told by everybody there that they were all worried I would go into shock. Although this is one of my hardest and worst memories, it happens to be one of my best with that foster mother because when I started crying, she started crying too. Later I moved out of that home because it didn't work and we didn't get along, but I've learned (and am still learning) to remember people through good memories instead of bad ones.

waterville

by Jeff Ferris

One bad thing that happened to me was getting charges and going to Waterville. I wish it never happened because now I have to go to court and now I am on house arrest. I've been on it for four months and I still have to go to court for sentencing so I might have to go back to Waterville. So those are some bad things I wish never happened.

15 Bacardis

by Karen Oliver

One negative memory I have that's vivid in my mind is...One time I was at a party with a bunch of friends and I drank way, way too much liquor. I drank 15 glasses of lemonade and Bacardi. Anyway, I got alcohol poisoning and I was throwing up and hyperventilating and stuff. My friends thought I was dying and had to call an ambulance and everything, it was so bad. I will never drink that much again.

from bad to worse

by Alan Moore

About 10 years ago I was with a foster family that said they loved me. I was always getting in trouble with the town I lived in, and then we had to move to Halifax because my foster dad had a brain tumour and almost died. When he got out of the hospital we moved to Dutch Village Road in Halifax and we ended up going to Disneyland in Orlando, Florida. When we got back from there, they called my social worker to come get me. And then I moved away, with the foster parents I have now.

I kept getting into trouble with people and the cops in the community so after five years they sent me to another town to a residential centre there. I got kicked out of there and got sent to a group home in Halifax, got kicked out of there and they sent me to a new foster home in the town where my last foster parents lived. I left there after seven months and got sent to my old house and then I got sent to a program in Halifax. Then I had appendicitis and went into a coma for seven days. I got out of the hospital with a tube in my stomach. That would have to be my most negative memory while I've been in care.

my first fishing trip

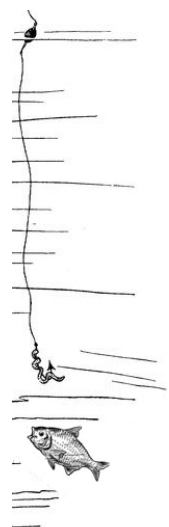
by Harry Withers

I remember when I was a small boy my dad wouldn't do very many things with us kids. My step-mom wanted him more involved in our lives and to actually start caring about what we do like any normal father would.

He did not like that idea. One day she suggested that he take the four of us on a fishing trip to a nearby lake. Since it was still a relatively short time since they were married, he was a little more eager to please her and do what she said. He did bring us to the fishing place but none of us knew how to fish. We all had new "little kid" fishing rods from Easter which had been a few days earlier.

We all wanted to learn how to fish and the techniques involved, such as casting. He wasn't very inclined to show us how. All he did was fish with his own rod. We were all begging and pleading with him to show us how to fish but he refused to do so.

My brother eventually caught one on his own which greatly surprised my father (seeing as how he was using a line and bare hook). Then my dad proceeded to take the fish off of my brother's hook and insult it because it was too small. I remember my brother crying as my father tossed it back in the water.





Positive Memories...



Happiest moment

by Jessica Blake

My favourite memory is when I was asked to read a speech at the Women's of Excellence ceremony back in 2005. When the house director of Phoenix House came to me and asked me if I would mind doing a speech, I was quite hesitant. I had never done a speech before and it kind of scared me, but I also felt honoured to have been asked. I agreed and spent many hours trying to come up with the perfect speech. The night of the speech, I sat at a table with all kinds of Phoenix people I had never met before.

After hours of sitting there, being nervous, Star Dobson, the MC for the night, finally introduced me. I got up there and halfway through my speech everyone started clapping. I looked at the lady from the women's Progress Club with this "what do I do?" look, and she told me to continue. After my speech it took me 15 minutes to get back to my seat which was only two minutes away! The V.P. from Mount St. Vincent University stopped me to tell me how well I did. Then I had the Minister of Justice stop me to talk. Just as it was nearing the end of the night, I was told that there was someone very special who wanted to meet me. It was Myra Freeman, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia! This was the happiest day of my life because I got to share my story and let people know that not all youth are bad.

Back with my dad

by Mike Perkins

A positive moment in my life would have to be when I turned 12. I got out of Social Services and moved back in with my dad. But after three years it wasn't so positive because after I turned 15 I got back into Social Services.

But when I moved into my group home, it turned positive again because I met a lot of new people and got to know them. Living here has been one of the best experiences/times of my life but I'm hoping to move out and move back in with my father when he gets out of jail.

What dad taught me

by Steven Ryan

One positive moment in my life was when my dad taught me how to be good. He taught me how to act when I'm around people, how to use my man-

ners, and most importantly, how to give and earn respect. The reason that he did that is because he wanted to show me at an early age how to do these things, so I could use them once I got older. My dad showed me the importance of how to express myself, and why to express myself. He taught me that being good, showing respect, and listening to others would get me to the point in my life where I become a man.

Baby made me an Aunt

by Candace Jennings

One positive memory I have is when my sister had her baby. He was born X-mas day 2005. He was a huge baby. He was 10 pounds 4 ounces, but he was still a very cute baby. This was a very happy and important day in my life because now I get to be an Aunt.

My 10th birthday

by Lady Dymes

My happy experience was when I was 10 years old. On my birthday, we had a huge party for me and my twin brother. All of my family came over and we celebrated. I had a lot of friends over. It was a dance and a clown DJ party, and then after that we went to a magic show and learned a lot of new tricks. Then most of my friends, and and my brother's friends, ended up sleeping over.

Grade 10 surprise

by Jessica Anderson

It was the first morning of the school year...I had gone through all summer thinking that I was going to be attending junior high again. That would have meant I would have failed grade nine. I went through this whole summer with that chip on my shoulder...I..an exceptionally good, hardworking student..

had failed grade nine! I had felt very upset and in a way ashamed of myself, but I had to keep telling myself that it seriously wasn't my fault. It was because of all the moves and stuff happening in my life. I just could not make time for school. There were so many emotional situations. School was just out of the question.

On the actual morning of the first day of school, I had the mindset of a grade nine student. I told myself I was prepared to repeat grade nine and I would have a positive attitude towards school, even though I had failed! I got ready for school and then asked for a drive. The staff at my group home told me that the bus would be there in ten minutes. I asked if it was the Metro Transit bus they meant? Then they told me that I had passed by the skin of my teeth. I was sooo excited; that chip instantly lifted! Now I am in grade 10 and I am going to school faithfully and doing exceptionally well! I am so glad that I didn't have to repeat a grade! Now I can get to grade 12 faster and start my career as a youth care worker!

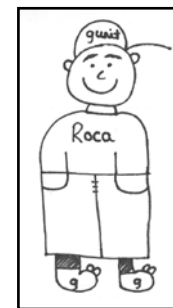


Illustration by Candace Jennings

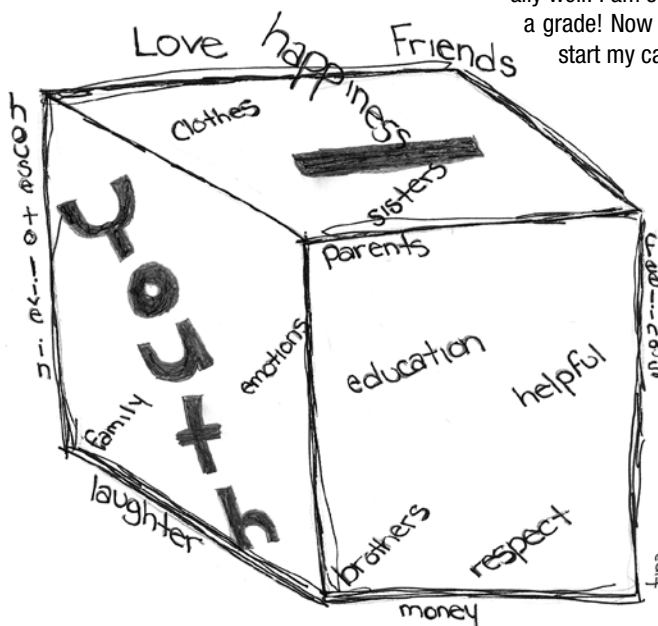


Illustration by Tina Doucette

Out IN the WORLD

where
we
are

Each year, the Newsletter Project takes on a life of its own, outside our regular sessions, and the youth shine!

T-DOC (TORONTO)

by Tina Doucette



Photo by Sonya Ferrara

Tina Doucette (R) went to the "Pump Up the Volume" conference in Toronto in October with Sonya Ferrara (L), Office of the Ombudsman

I've been in care most of my life and I haven't really left the Maritimes.

A great opportunity came up, is what Andrew had said to me, and I was going to Toronto for a conference called "Pump up the Volume" on October 21. I was going to represent the work I did with two youths about youth in care rights, and the Newsletter Project. I was so excited!

The conference was for youth and adults from across Canada to come together and learn from each other in celebration of advocacy – mainly about youth and youth care worker's interactions and youth rights.

I thought the conference would be like every other one, everyone being together doing activities or just talking. Well, I was wrong. There were sessions we got to choose from to fill the morning and the afternoon. The sessions were mostly put on by youth.

The first session I went to was put on by about ten youth. The session was about general youth rights which I liked because I did a project on youth in care rights. These youth did a good job. First, there was an information part, and then we played something like Jeopardy. It was so fun!

In the afternoon I went to a session run by youth

doing role plays about how to be a friendly social worker. They would act out a situation and tell what was good and bad. With the Newsletter Project, we did similar role plays with Department of Community Services staff. I think this session was good for me because they had the same experiences I've had being in the system.

We had a table set out with the Newsletter Project's stuff and the PowerPoint from the youth in care rights project. People came up and talked to me about the project and asked questions. Throughout the day, I always saw people taking our magazines. It felt good seeing all of the people reading them.

Going to Toronto for the conference was a vacation because it was so much fun. I was doing what I like to do. I got to go shopping and I had a little bit of time to tour the big city. When I got home, everyone kept asking what do I think about Toronto, and all I could say was: BIG AND BUSY!

Note: Tina and Ammy Purcell developed "The Law and You: Survival Tips!" (www.youthnewsletter.net/youth_rights.html), a PowerPoint presentation on the legal rights of youth in care last year, with the assistance of Pro Bono Students Canada (Dalhousie University). This year, they presented to the Newsletter Project group, and to their grade 12 law classes.

opportunities

by Ammy Purcell

When I first started this project five years ago I never thought about how much I would benefit from it. It has brought me some unbelievable opportunities and I am very grateful for it.

One of the most recent benefits I have achieved through my work with the Newsletter Project is when I applied for a job at Wal-Mart. When I put down the project for previous employment, I didn't think it would make much of a difference in their choice whether to hire me or not but apparently it did. I went for my first interview and the lady wanted me to explain to her what the project was about, so I did. When I got called in for the second interview and job offer, she told me she was going to credit me with two years Wal-Mart experience and an immediate 10% pay raise for my experience with the Newsletter Project! And she said that anytime I need a day off for a special event with the project, I should feel free to take it. The project can benefit anyone in it like this, if they apply themselves enough, like I have.



Jessica Blaikie (L) and Lucas Kreft (R), met with Judy Streach, Minister of Community Services (Centre), in early May to discuss the Newsletter Project

GETTING OUR VOICE HEARD

by Jade Brooks

I think that Social Services should have a place where youth can go when they are stressed out or have a lot on their mind. Youth should be able to have a sort of “retreat” place where they can go to unwind. Things could be really hard at times so youth would need a place to go to relax. I also think that there should be a place where youth can go when they get kicked out of their house or on a time out. Most times they have to go to another group home or, if not, the police may have to come and youth may have to spend the night in jail. They should have an immediate place to go for that situation.

by Angela Lloyd

One service that I feel could improve things the most is more money for youth on Income Assistance. I think this is very important because it is hard to pay for all your living expenses and have money left over to play with. I'd like to be able to go to a movie or buy a cute shirt I like every once in awhile. It makes it quite hard to do this with only \$81.00 a month. Another big issue I have with money is that every so often we should be sent a clothing cheque. They are our legal guardians and I feel like our needs aren't being met. If these problems were met I think youth on Income Assistance would be pleased with the change.

by James Riley

I think they should have a service for families in care, that provides help getting children and parents communicating faster – seeing parents more often like once a week or something like that. Have a person work each family.

by AJ Smiley

My ideas for youth in care services I think would improve youth because, well, here are my ideas: more money because clothes are expensive and sports equipment is very costly and vacations are needed to relieve us from just all our problems or stresses we get from our family, school, etc.

I also think that there should be more social workers so then they could have fewer kids on their hands so then when we really need them they will be there.

And my last idea would be that there would be more housing placements because, well, I'm 17 and there are not that many options for me and housing. And, well, sometimes that frightens me just thinking about what if I get kicked out? Where will I go next?



Seven youths met with members of the Advisory Committee to the Minister on the Children's and Family Services / Adoption Information Act in November, 2006, to suggest ways to improve the system. *Front L to R:* Kathy Briand, Trena Slaunwhite, Jade Brooks, Amanda Murley, Justin King, Cheryl Harawitz (Advisory Committee Chair) *Back L to R:* Rick Gruchy, Andrew Safer, Lawrence Pickrem, Lucas Kreft, John Walker, Jessica Blaikie

by Cathy Woodward

The services/programs that I think should be running for us as youth are to be able to connect to social workers/ care workers whenever needed. That's why they're called care workers, because they care what we need to have done or said. It shouldn't be that you have to call a million times just to ask them to go to your friend's house!

I used to love my social worker, but now I'm getting to the point where I'm asking myself “what else can I do to get her attention?” Should I contact the Dept. of Community Services to ask for a responsible social worker? I never hardly talk to her. I'm hoping she's going to be there for the Youth Achievement Awards. Anyways, this is a good service that needs to be started for all social workers.

by Bonnie MacDonald

The only service I would change within Children's Aid would be to make contact with social workers easier. I have been in care in Nova Scotia for three months and I have still not met my social worker! My sister has made several attempts to schedule meetings and every time the process is the same – a date is made possible, my sister calls to confirm and gets no call back and then we are told because it was not confirmed she has “forgotten to pencil us in.” This has been going on for weeks and a meeting has still not been set. I think that I'm lucky enough to be in care with a family member but many (most) kids in care don't have that. For some kids, they may not always be comfortable in a foster home and their social worker may be the only person they feel comfortable around. If you cannot turn to the one person you trust, what do you have left? I think Children's Aid's biggest

problem is that there isn't enough contact between kids in care and social workers. You shouldn't have to call a million times to get one call back.

by Lawrence Pickrem

I think the programs that exist and are in place for youth in care are actually pretty impressive considering that most places don't even compare to what the HRM can provide its youth who are less fortunate. If I were able to change some things in the “system”, I would definitely raise the allocation of money for youth. I also think that bus passes should automatically be given to young people without a home and/or dependable transportation. I know that transportation is a great concern of many youth who wish to go to and from work, school, and some extra-curricular activities.

SCHOOL CREDIT

by Jessica Blaikie

I am currently attending the Adult Learning Program at Nova Scotia Community College to get my grade 12. While doing the Newsletter Project, we got in contact with my school and I ended up getting some credit in class for participating in the Newsletter. There are also some assignments I don't have to do, like media analysis, thanks to the Newsletter Project.

YEP, they helped me!

by John Walker

My experience with Youth Employability Project (YEP) is good. They helped me find out about a job with Dexter Construction, working with Halifax Harbour Solutions. There were also two other people who worked with me there who got their jobs through YEP. I've heard lots of good stories from people who have gotten help from YEP. I would also like to thank them for funding this newsletter, *The Voice*.



Lucas met Professor Divine at the National Social Work Conference in Halifax in June, 2006. Professor Divine came to talk to our group in January.

a divine man

by Ammy Purcell

I really enjoyed Professor Divine's speech about hope. His story is very inspirational, especially to young people involved in the system. When he tells his story about being an orphan and being in foster care and how he overcame it, it gives us hope.

What David talks about really makes sense. But overall, the best part of his speech was at the end when he said that guys don't have to be dogs to be men, and girls don't have to be sluts to be liked by people. That needs to be said more!

Professor Divine is the James R. Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies at Dalhousie University.

a special thank you

by Tony Braumier

I'm writing to thank the Nova Scotia Community College for letting us not only use their computer lab for the last five weeks, but to thank them for supplying it free of charge. I have had a great time while working at their Halifax location, and I'd like to thank Pam Walach for coming in and giving us a speech on how NSCC can help us in the future with our studies. So once again, a special thanks to the Leeds Street community college for helping us make this year's Newsletter a success.



Speakers at the Social Work Week Reception at Dalhousie University in March included: (far left) Ammy Purcell; Judy Streach, Minister of Community Services; Anne Vaughan, President, Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers; and Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard, Director, School of Social Work, Dalhousie University

social work appreciation night

by Jessica Blaskie

Upon arriving at the Social Work Week reception I met a lot of nice people. One of the first people I met was the Minister, Judy Streach, who is a very nice lady. She had a lot of really nice things to say

about the Newsletter group. I also met Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard, the president of the School of Social Work, who was also a very nice lady. While talking to her I received a lot of good advice about going into the social work field and about applying to the School of Social Work.

Overall, I really enjoyed the evening. My favourite part was Ammy's speech.



L to R: David Swick, Ethics of Journalism Instructor, University of King's College; Jessica Anderson; Don Curry, President & CEO, Young People's Press

wanted: Journalists of colour

by Jessica Anderson

When I went to the journalism workshop on Friday, I didn't expect for it to be like it was! It was actually fun and educational. I like the fact that there are openings for black/aboriginal journalists and they are pushing us to get out there and try it. It was a very interesting day. We even got to tour the school. That part was fascinating. I liked the recording room the most. I think it was a good idea for them to have seminars for us where they motivate us to get out and try it. It's a great idea for King's to get high school students of colour to become active in the community, or even globally.

The seminars are really the type of things that motivates you and widens your knowledge of this type of career. It helps you to get a better idea of what is really going on and what is really happening at the school, in the journalism field, and in the world. I think it was great and I would love to further widen my knowledge of journalism.

In collaboration with Young People's Press (ypp.net) of North Bay, Ontario, University of King's College hosted a journalism workshop for visible-minority high school students who are interested in writing, on April 27. Jessica attended from the Newsletter Project.

Photo provided by the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers

hungry for change

by Lucas Kraft

In November 2006, I was invited to attend World-Forum 2006 in Vancouver: "Future Directions in Child Welfare". Being in the foster care system from the age of six until my 21st birthday in January, I have experienced many things: good and bad. I wouldn't be where I am now if it wasn't for my social worker, Gina Crane-Wilson, and the other social workers now representing the Department of Community Services, and Andrew Safer. Throughout the six or so years that I have known him, he has impacted my life in an honest, professional way.

With all of this in mind, it was time to go to Vancouver. My business schedule in Vancouver was to present a PowerPoint. I, along with Mr. Safer, created one about the Newsletter Project. I must say it was the best dang PowerPoint in that whole conference! So with Mr. George Savoury hosting, Mr. Safer, Gina Crane-Wilson, and I presented in front of people from around the world. There was much positive feedback, and a woman from Indonesia wanted to create a Newsletter back in her country. The PowerPoint was such a hit, the Minister of Community Services, the Honourable Ms. Judy Streach wants to see this "fresh" PowerPoint ASAP! In the future, I will create a kiosk-based PowerPoint that everyone can view on our website.

Another task in Vancouver was to have the second meeting of RECYN (Revolutionary East Coast Youth Network). Amanda Murley and myself are the Nova Scotia representatives. The first step is to have a drop-in day, once a month where youth in care can play some board games and talk about youth issues. Then we'll take it from there.

After all of that, my luxury time was to attend other workshops at the conference (like the one I did), and in the evening, to dance "the swing"... or something like that (!) with my social worker, Andrew, and Mr. Savoury. That was way before my time!! That was the majority of my Vancouver experience.

Not a lot of youth have a chance to go to international conferences, and at my age it's something I'm proud of. I'm very hungry, I'm starving to create change, make an imprint in this country, or the world, one way or another, so the next generation of youth can have it better than I did. Too many people bicker and stall, and nothing gets done. There are people like myself, and the other members of this Newsletter and other youth who are across Canada, and were in Vancouver, who also presented workshops. We all want change. We're starving for it.

Why get out of bed in the morning?

by Justin King

I wake up in the morning hoping that something good is going to happen, or something exciting, but sometimes I don't like waking up because I don't feel good if I'm depressed or tired or mad from the night before. Sometimes, good things don't happen. Bad stuff happens to me a lot. I wake up hoping my mom and dad and my cat are there and that my girlfriend will be there. I wake up in the morning thinking something exciting is going to happen so there will be no school. I wake up in the morning never knowing what the day is going to bring.

by Lawrence Pickrem

The things that make me want to drag myself out of my nice, warm, and comfortable bed in the morning and go to school is how badly I know I want to be better than my parents as an adult. I know that I want a really good job when I get older and the only way to do that is by going to school and doing well at it. This is my motivation and what makes me want to be a better person.

I guess it's my wanting to succeed in life that keeps me going, and moving forward. To me, a

person's life is what they make it. You choose your destiny and the person you want to become in the end. If you want to do good, do good things and treat others the way you would like to be treated. It's a simple thing to remember but for some people it can be a hard thing to apply, and live by.

If you don't have any direction and don't really care about anything, then you probably aren't going to do very well at all in reaching the particular goal that I want to reach.

One thing that can really help is knowing that people care about you and want you to succeed in life. Knowing that is important to me, and helps to further motivate me to go after what I want in life with passion and integrity.

by Michael Rhyno

Something that inspires me to get out of bed is a shower and going to school, hanging out with my friends and stuff like that. But to me the best thing is the nice, hot shower in the morning. It feels so good to know you're clean.



The Newsletter Team in November – Front L to R: Candace Jennings, AJ Smiley, Alesha Stevens, Jamie Johnson, Angela Lloyd Back L to R: Jessica Anderson, Samantha Nickerson, Lawrence Pickrem, James Riley, Justin King, Jade Brooks, Michael Rhyno, Sabrina Penney, Nolan Perry, Ashley Glasgow

So What's this Newsletter Project All About?

"I joined the Youth in Care Newsletter for a couple of different reasons, one reason being I want my voice to be heard and I want people to know my story. When it comes to youth in care, everyone has a different story. I would like to try and tell people that all youth in care are not 'bad'." — **Candace Jennings**

"The Newsletter has taught me that there are many other youth in care, and they are very similar to me. We all pretty much have the same feelings. We talk about anything, I am so comfortable when I go to the Newsletter. I had read the 2003 issue of *The Voice* while I was in the first group home that I was ever in. I knew a couple of people on the cover, so I was immediately interested. When I first read *The Voice*, I was almost in tears because it was so true, like one kid stated: "we are still humans." I totally agreed with her. Basically, the Newsletter is a place for us youth to vent. We can discuss stuff like, "Why does staff get to write logs on our every move? How would they feel if we wrote logs on them?" The Newsletter, every week, is my freedom. I love it there. It's a great, enjoyable, fun opportunity that I think everyone should experience at least once in their life." — **Jessica Anderson**

"I love to share my thoughts and opinions with others out there."

"The Newsletter is so fun. I like it because I've made a lot of friends and because I learned a lot about homes and group home kids and foster kids. Half of them can understand what I am going through, and I can understand what they are going through. If I never went to the Newsletter program I think I would have been a different person." — **Lady Dymes**

"I've been in the Newsletter Project for about five years. It's been so helpful to me. It's made me who I am today. I like writing for the Newsletter because it helps me with my feelings. We have journals where we write whatever we want, but I find when I write in the journal it's more easy to open up on paper than it is to a person." — **Tina Doucette**

"I think the Newsletter Project is worthwhile because it teaches many skills. It teaches you how to express your feelings effectively. It teaches,



L to R: Ammy Purcell, Jessica Blaikie, and Tina Doucette hold up collages they created collaboratively with others.

for example, patience, how to effectively express your feelings on paper, how to work well in groups, and many other important skills."

— **Jessica Blaikie**

"I love the Newsletter because it's a place for youth in care to express themselves about ideas, thoughts, matters and opinions about being in care. I also love that it will all be published in a magazine for other youth to see. I'm in it because I love to share my thoughts and opinions with others out there. It should always be continued so other youth in the future will be able to experience the same stuff we have. Also, so they can express themselves." — **Sabrina Penney**

"I want to get my word out to people in Children's Aid and to meet new people. I think this is a good program for kids that have nothing to do or get bored too easily. It shows kids in care that there is a place for them to go to talk about their problems or try to get them fixed, and to show that there is someone who cares about them and their problem. It's also good support for them." — **Justin King**

"The Newsletter Project is a wonderful experience and chance for youth in care to find a voice and say what they think is wrong and how to fix it. The youth are even able to submit anonymously if they write something and don't want anyone to know they wrote it. This is very helpful because it gives youth a way to say what they want to without having to face the repercussions." — **Elyse Saulnier**

"I'm in the Newsletter because it will keep me out of trouble and help me out by learning new things and seeing new things with a different eye. Also because I can meet new people and get to know them, and because it's fun. I think that I'll stay in the Newsletter because I have fun and I get to be me, and share my ideas with other people, and know that they understand me because I can put all my thoughts on paper and let people see what I can do." — **Chetecca David**



Chetecca David sketches as she prepares to create illustrations for *The Voice*.

Photo by Ted Power

My Biological Parents

mom is awesome

by Grace Marie

My mom and dad split up when I was three years old. My mom is like my best friend who I can tell anything to and she won't get mad. My mom is a nice lady who tried her hardest to raise three kids on her own. She did the best she could but it's hard with three kids. My mom is an awesome person over all. I don't really know my dad. He left when I was little, and I never heard from him for six years, until he called on my 11th birthday. I didn't get to see him until I was 13. I only get to see him once a year. My mom lives in Dartmouth and I talk to her every day.

her smile brightens me up

by Jamie Brown

My mother is the best. Well, I should say one of the best mothers in the world because we all say our mom's the best. My mom is the strongest person I know. She's been in and out of the hospital so many times due to asthma and she always ends up bouncing back. She is the funnest mother ever. She always has a smile on her face which brightens me up. Right now she's in the hospital with the worst asthma attack the hospital has ever seen. I'm praying and hoping she gets better.

coolest parents

by Justin LeDrew

Ever since I was young, my mom and dad showed me right from wrong. But my mom died when I was young. Ever since then, it's been me, my dad, and his girlfriends. But not all of it was bad; only some of them I didn't like. Now he's with my step-mom. She's the best thing that has happened to him. My dad has shown me a lot and so has my step-mom. But I didn't always make it easy for them. But as time went on, me, my dad and his girlfriend have gotten a lot closer. They are just about the coolest parents to have. I always think what it would be like to have different parents. But the more I think about it, the more I'm happy I don't. I love them, and won't stop loving them.

abandoned

by Mike Perkins

My parents have both abandoned me at some time in their life. First, my mother left me when I was young and my dad left after my mom came back because she brought her new boyfriend

home. My dad was gone for a few years, and then came back. When he came back, my mom left again. Right now, my dad is doing about seven months in prison. My mom lives in Halifax and I haven't talked to her in a year.

missing mom

by Lisa Brown

Well, I don't know a lot about my father but there is something that I can say. When I was four, he left me and my mother and he came around once every three months, and now he wants to be a part of my life. I hope that he's going to tell me everything about himself. Anyway, my mom is nice and she likes to take care of my brother and sister. She calls me and says how much she misses me. Man, I love my mom. She loves me just as much and she shows me that she needs me, and I love her so much, I miss her with all my heart.

questionmark

by Cathy Woodward

There's not much for me to talk about because I don't know who they are. I wish I did, but I don't!! All I've heard from my social worker and other people is that she "loved" me, but she just wasn't fit to be a "good" mother. She wasn't brought up properly to be a mother. She never learned the mothering skills she should have. Her mom was the same way, I assume. Her mom probably didn't teach her anything! So, my biological brother and I moved to a different home where we got separated into different loving families.

very different people!

by Bob Morley

My parents are different people. One of them is from the other side of the world. My mother is way different than my father.

My mom doesn't like all kinds of things on this side of the world. She doesn't like clothing that people wear and she doesn't like the styles. For example, she doesn't like long T-shirts and she doesn't like baggy pants that go all the way down, and stuff like that.

My father is different. He lets me do anything I want, like go out and chill with my friends. He lets me have friends over and lets me wear whatever I want. He lets me do more stuff than my mother.

nice memories

by Jannah-lee Howe

When I was little I used to have the best relationship with my mother. She used to make me smile and laugh, and sometimes she would take me to the store and buy me whatever I wanted.

i'll always love them

by Emily Smith

Like every other person in this world, I have two parents – a mom and a dad (LOL)... My parents were never married and I am the only child they had together. My mom has three other children and I am my dad's only child. Until the age of 11, I grew up moving back and forth between them. They broke up when I was two years old. My father was and still is an alcoholic and my mom used to gamble and drink a lot, too. But I am happy to say that they are now both doing a lot better. My dad owns his own business and my mom is the manager of a cleaning company. I really don't know anything else that I can say about my parents. They have made mistakes in the past, like when I went into care, but I do still love them both very much and always will, no matter what.

where
we
are

James Riley
is writing an
article for
The Voice.



Theresa
Huntley
with last
year's
Newsletter
at Law Day
in April

My Social Worker

The queen is easier to reach

by Neneah May

My social worker never comes to see me in the home I live in. She never calls, and right about now I think it would probably be easier to get through to the Queen's phone than hers. She always lets me get the things I need but sometimes it takes a little while to get a hold of her. But the thing that gets me the most is the day she took me to my group home...She just left me here. I didn't even get to say goodbye to her.

she's up front

by Jade Brooks

This is my second social worker. My first one I had since I was seven, but she was my temporary care worker. I had to switch workers when I went into permanent care. My new social worker I've only met a few times but so far she seems like she sticks to the rules and is really up-front. She says whatever she wants. Well, she says what is on her mind. She took me out to lunch and we talked. We had met once before that.

it's all good!

by Lady Dymex

My social worker is funny, nice and fun to talk to. He lets me do things that I want to and hardly ever says no to me and that's why I'm glad that he is my social worker. He lets me stay at my best friends' houses, and he put me into gymnastics from September to January every Thursday. I also signed up for tumbling and trampoline. And my social worker also brought me to the right home.

mia

by Una Taylor

My social worker is so hard to get a hold of on the phone! I call and leave a message. It would sometimes be weeks before we would be in touch. She's missing in action. Whenever something happens, most likely my social worker is not there: school meetings, celebrations, meetings. And if she does come, usually she's late. My worker and I have a meeting and she's MIA. I called her on her phone and she's not answering.

rude old

— not! by Candace Jennings



I will be honest with you. When I hear the words "social worker", I think of this rude old _____ who's only trying to make my life more hell than it already is. But deep down inside I know she is only doing her job. Seriously, social workers are not out to get you. They really do want to help. After all, that is what they are paid to do.

mama-g

by Lucas Krefl

She likes to be called Mama-G. I see her as a second mother. Whenever I have a problem, she tries to help as much as she can. It is not just her, but all the social workers try their best with everyone on their caseload. I also believe she will be there for me when I am out of care.

crossed signals

by Cathy Woodward

My social worker is okay I guess, but I hardly see her. That should be a big rule: that social workers have to see their "kids" for check-in meetings. When I do see her we have good conversations (most of the time). When I call her, she never answers my phone calls. She'll maybe call me back, but she won't ask for me. She'll talk to my parents. That really bugs me a lot. But I have to leave it alone 'cause I know I can't get in fights with my foster parents about it. That would cause more problems.



Illustration by Jessica Anderson

bossy, but fun

by James Riley

My social worker and I do a lot of fun things together. We go out for lunch, go go-karting and lots of other stuff. But some days she can be "bossy". She says that I'm not allowed to do this and that, and some days I feel like telling her all about herself. But most of the time we talk and enjoy hanging out. My social worker tries hard to make things not hard for me.

scared of teens

by Marli Kense

My social worker is on a power trip. He thinks I should have to listen to everything he says. He thinks he's the boss. He should not be a worker for older youth. My social worker is very insecure. He is intimidated by teenagers, and realizes teens on his caseload are going to walk all over him.

she's busy!

by Lawrence Pickren

My social worker works pretty close to where I live. I have known her for less than three months so I don't know her that well yet. I would like to get to know her better as a person, by talking to her and listening to her advice. All I know about her is that she is responsible for many youth, and advocates on their behalf. She never really has the time for individual youth because she is an

extremely busy person who has a large caseload so I don't get to see her too often. She is a very nice person who probably wishes that she had more time for the youth she helps.

I really do appreciate the system and the people who help make everything happen. There really are systems and approaches that help keep youth off the streets and provide them with a safe and secure place to live. I believe this is something everyone deserves no matter what their past or current living situation is. I am looking forward to thanking her one day myself for everything she's done and is doing for me.

fortunate

by AJ Smiley

I have known my social worker for about a year and a half. I think she is the best because she gives me everything I want, with exceptions, but she makes me work for it. She won't just give it to me. I have to do good at home and go to school and do my work and stay out of trouble. She is really nice to me and I am very fortunate to have her as my social worker. But on the other side, I would like it if I had a little bit more trust from her. I am 17 years old and I make very good choices with staff most of the time. But come on, I am still a teenager: what can you expect? But all in all, I think that if I keep improving I will be fine – plus she must think I am doing something right because she nominated me for a Youth Achievement

Award. I got an award on November 23, 2006, and I am very happy about that.

cares about others

by Jessica Blakie

When I think of social workers, I think of the one I have now. She is kind, and willing to help the people on her caseload. I also think of someone who cares about others. When I have run into problems she has helped me in numerous ways to get out of the problem, or help me with it. When I moved into the Supervised Apartment Program I was having a hard time. I didn't have money for groceries and was starving. She faxed out a food voucher to hold me over until my cheque arrived. When I've needed anything she has been caring, kind and very helpful. For all that I am truly grateful.

like my dad

by Jeff Ferris

What I think of social workers is that they are good. I mean, my social worker is the best. I've had him since I was four years old and I still have him. Sometimes I get mad at him and call him a snotsucker, like the time he put me in a secure treatment facility, but for the most part, we get along. He is like my dad. I've known him for a long time and he has been my guardian. So yeah, I think social workers are good.



If you could change one thing about care, what would it be?

"There should be more group home facilities, and I would categorize people: Mature people would live with mature people, and immature people would live with immature people. There are a lack of facilities. If you need to go to a treatment centre, you get shipped far away. There is nothing in Nova Scotia." – **Ashley Glasgow**

"I would pay for more people to go to school to be staff and to be social workers, foster moms and stuff." – **Chelsea Boutilier**

"There would be less arguing, and more programs for youth to be in." – **James Riley**

"Kids should have only one social worker, not keep switching them, and they should be able to choose their own social worker." – **Steven Ryan**

"You should be able to get a hold of your social worker and not have to leave messages upon messages, for a month. And there should be a bit more money (for youth on Income Assistance). When we live in a group home, we only get \$81 a month (plus

money for a bus pass), and we don't get clothing cheques anymore." – **Natasha Clarke**

"I think they need to realize that there is a change, that they're stuck in the past. For one thing, the money. \$25 for allowance (in foster care) is not very much. A long time ago it might have been but it's not anymore and I think they need to realize that." – **Angela Black**

What's the best thing that's happened to you since you've been in care?

"Moving into my foster home that I'm in now, because they completely changed my life around." – **Chelsea Boutilier**

"The best thing about being in care is meeting new friends." – **Michael Rhyno**

"Coming to HeartWood's UP Cafe and seeing all my friends I haven't seen in a year." – **Tracy Campbell**

ABOUT ME

where
we
are



I am...

ANGELA LLOYD:

- I believe in karma
- I like people who are down to earth, honest, outgoing & friendly
- If people really knew me, they'd know I strive to be the best friend I can be & I love learning



I am...

JESSICA ANDERSON:

- I believe I can do anything if I put my mind to it
- I like people who are trustworthy & honest
- If people really knew me, they'd know I'm a funny person, but don't push my limits



I am...

JADE BROOKS:

- I believe in friends
- I like people who are honest
- If people really knew me, they'd know I'm a writer...I'm going places



I am...

SABRINA PENNEY:

- I believe anything is possible if you just believe in yourself
- I like people who are non-users
- If people really knew me they'd know I'm a good singer



I am...

STEVEN RYAN:

- I believe that youth in care need to be heard
- I like people who are cool, funny, big or small, & have personality
- If people really knew me, they'd know I'm a smart guy, cool & funny, I'm too generous & I'm caring



I am...

JUSTIN KING:

- I believe I can do anything
- I like people who are funny
- If people really knew me, they'd know everything about me & that my favourite candy is chocolate



I am...

JAMES RILEY:

- I believe in God
- I like people who are caring & loving
- If people really knew me, they'd know I'm not a judgmental person & I'm always there where people need me



I am...

LADY DYMES:

- I believe in friendship
- I like people who are kind and humorous
- If people really knew me, they'd know my personality



I am...

LAWRENCE PICKREM:

- I believe in people
- I like people who are honest, non-judgmental & have personality
- If people really know me, they'd know I love to sing & dance



I am...

BOB MORLEY:

- I believe in God but not the Bible
- I like people who are friendly
- If people really knew me they'd know I like basketball



I am...

JAMIE JOHNSON:

- I believe everyone is unique and special.
- I like people who are respectful and exciting
- If people really knew me, they'd know that I don't have a favourite colour.



I am...

CHETECCA DAVID:

- I believe in miracles
- I like people who have personality & are funny & nice
- If people really knew me, they'd know I'm a smart & talented young lady who has great aspirations to fulfill one day



I am...

MIKE PERKINS:

- I believe ____
- I like people who are tall
- If people really knew me they'd

know I'm weird & crazy



I am...

KRISTA MACVICAR:

- I believe in me
- I like people who are respectful, opinionated, and not afraid to let people see who they really are
- If people really knew me, they'd know I love to sing, laugh, smile, talk & be very interactive



I am...

THERESA HUNTLEY:

- I believe youth deserve equal rights and equal opportunities
- I like people who are friendly

and helpful

- If people really knew me, they'd know where I would like to go & what I like to do



I am...

TINA DOUCETTE:

- I believe in myself
- I like people who are honest and trustworthy
- If people really knew me, they'd know I don't like huge groups of people



I am...

AMMY PURCELL:

- I believe I can achieve anything
- I like people who have a sense of humour & are honest, outgoing & friendly
- If people really knew me, they'd know my nickname is Mousie, I love shopping & the colour pink & I work at Wal-Mart



I am...

TONY BEAUMIER:

- I believe anyone can change
- I like people who are honest
- If people really knew me, they'd know I'm outgoing.



I am...

ANGELA BLACK:

- I believe in karma
- I like people who are non-judgmental, nice & have individuality
- If people really knew me they'd know I try my best to be loyal



I am...

CANDACE JENNINGS:

- I believe in God
- I like people who are honest and funny
- If people really knew me, they'd know I am a kind person



I am...

LUCAS KREET:

- I believe I'll do good in the future
- I like people who are humorous, friendly, and have all of their teeth
- If people really knew me, they'd know I'm very funny, like to take long walks on the beach & I would like to be introduced to a girl 5'6" to 6'



I am...

SAMANTHA NICKERSON:

- I believe that we can do much more than we are doing
- I like people who are creative and trustworthy
- If people really knew me, they'd know I'm sarcastic



I am...

JOHN WALKER:

- I believe everything should be equal
- I like people who are not shy,

preppy & clean

- If people knew me, they'd know that sports is my favourite hobby



I am...

ASHLEY GLASGOW:

- I believe everyone has something to say
- I like people who are honest

and loyal

- If people really knew me, they'd know I'm a real person



I am...

NOLAN PERRY:

- I believe in God
- I like people who are cool.
- If people really knew me, they'd know I'm a good person



I am...

JESSICA BLAIKIE:

- I believe everything happens for a reason
- I like people who are kind, who share & are courteous

share & are courteous

- If people really knew me, they'd know I'm very caring & would do anything for anyone



I am...

ELYSE SAULNIER:

- I believe in equal rights for everyone
- I like people who are honest

- If people really knew me, they'd know I'm shy & I hate to be the centre of attention

POEMS AND MORE

where
we
are

undying love

by Ashley Glasgow

I love you today, I'll love you tomorrow
My life is filled with pain and sorrow
As I sit and wonder, are you thinking of me
As I'm thinking of you?
Words can't express my love for you
I've cried and cried and cried some more
My heart has wept since you walked out the door
I think and wonder and think some more
You are the one I truly adore
You were once my everything, now nothing at all
I always dreaded the day we would fall
Fall out of love
When our love conquered all
So these are my thoughts of you and me
My love for you stays with me
And I'll never let it die

my life in care

by Theresa Huntley

My life in care has been so hard for me
I was in a group home since two thousand three
I started out and I was falling back
I knew I had to get my life on track

I was in Windsor, the years equaled three
I ran away to Moncton where I thought I was free
When I got there I did not know anyone
I thought it was going to be lots of fun

In April of two thousand six
I figured out my life needed to be fixed
I moved to a group home that was quick
I have been there for almost a year
I am getting an apartment: I am full of fear

I got my apartment in Fairview
My life will start: it will be new
I know I will have support from my group home
I am not completely on my own

it's good to work!

by John Walker

I never had a very good résumé. Then, one day, Andrew helped me with my résumé and it went from one page to two pages just from thinking about what skills I have. Now I try to do extra things. Since I made my new résumé, I've had interviews at Empire Theatres, Subway, and the Superstore, and got a job at the Superstore. When you go from getting no money a week to having \$250 a week, I think it's worth it. So get a job because you can do so much extra stuff with money. It's good to be able to buy any food you want, and new clothes. It's bomb. After awhile you'll realize you've got to work. Don't quit if you don't like it. Get a new job first. Anyways, it's just good to work!

Take a Look

by Candace Jennings

Take a look around you
Is it everything you dreamed?
Is it what you always wanted?
Is it even what you need?

Look at your life and how you lived it
Did it turn out as you liked?
Or are you a perfect stranger
Living someone else's life?

When you see your reflection
in the mirror
Is it who you want to be?
Or is it someone else you don't know
Is it someone else you see?

Do you see yourself as others do?
Or do you look inside?
Because if you go by looks alone
Shallowness may be your guide

Next time you look in the mirror
Look past everything you see
Look deep inside at who you are
And who you want to be.

my protective family

by Lisa Brown

My family is protective of me because I'm the baby in the family, and because they would not like anything to happen to me or anyone in the family. Me, I like it because I have people looking after me, and making sure that I'm OK, and that way they don't have to worry that I'm getting into any trouble with the law or with anyone.

When I'm up there with them they don't like me walking the road at night by myself. They don't want me going with them, when they're with their friends, because they don't want to see me hurt.

I find that having a family like that is good because I know that there are people who care about me and my life, and know that they don't want to see me six feet under. I'm happy I have a family that cares.



Krista MacVicar



Steven Ryan



Elyse Saulnier



Michael Rhyno

(Give us a Chance continued from page 3)

by Chateau David

We all make mistakes and we all sometimes learn from the mistakes that we make. There are some people who say that we should not get another chance, but I say that we should because it does not matter who we are and what we did. The more you give us all a second chance, you can see that we can change and that it helps us believe in ourself and lets people know that a second chance can make a difference.

by Mike Perkins

Being in Children's Aid can be a good thing or a bad thing. God put you on this earth for a reason. Everyone has a purpose in life. They just need to find it. Just play the cards the way they were dealt to you, and do what you need to do to get by. Doing drugs and acting stupid just make things harder for yourself and everyone who is there for you. There will always be some people in your life you can trust. Make sure you pick those people wisely and make as many right decisions as you can. Everyone has good and bad days, but you need to learn how to deal with them – with some help if you need it. We all need a second chance.

a good group home...

by Lady Dymus

A good group home should have children of every colour and have lots of money for the kids when they need something. It should have good staff and people to talk to when the kids have a problem, and they should get the kids most things that they want. They should treat every child the same and treat them like they're in their own real house.

BETTER LOCKS

by Jeff Ferris

Safety is important when you're in care because I think you should not have to worry about getting hurt. At my group home, kids have brought knives and also one time a gun. The kids did not get caught with them. I think your social worker should put you in a place they know is safe. But what the hell, my social worker doesn't care. He won't even let me call him. I mean, what kind of social worker is that, anyway? One of the most important things is safety.

A big thing when you're in care is losing your stuff, like when people steal from you at your group home. I think they should put better locks on your door.

WHAT We NEED

where
we're
going

understand why we're in care

by Angela Black

A lot of people think that kids end up in care because their parents don't want them. Just because kids are in care, it doesn't always mean that their parents don't want them. They could be in care for a number of reasons, and most times the reason kids are in care is because something happened to their parents making them unable to care for their kids, even if they really wanted to. Some kids are in care because they feel uncomfortable living at home – because they are concerned for their own mental and/or physical health.

A kid can't end up in care because their parents don't want them, or they just don't feel like living at home. Sometimes kids end up in care because

they have chosen to do so as a means of well being for themselves. Often when kids end up in care they are only there while a social worker checks out the situation in the home. The reason for this is usually someone will call in and complain about the child's situation out of concern for the child.

more social workers

by Tony Beaumier

I think the system needs to hire more social workers because their caseloads are too packed for them to concentrate on the more serious and messed up individuals. I think some youth would benefit from this because then social workers can deal with their problems faster and be more accurate with the treatment they need. I also think they should offer courses to parents who are trying to get their children back.

more money!

by Theresa Huntley

I think that youth in care should have their rights as well as their needs met, and that includes receiving more money for personal care items. I believe that all of us who are paid to work lose taxes that go to the government. This money should go to youth in care who need it, not to smoking bylaws that can't be enforced. Also I don't think that complaints made by youth are being taken seriously enough. A lot of times, what I think is a "need" is classified as a "want" and I don't think that is very fair. Before I end off I just wanted to say to all youth in care: Be strong, keep smiling and have hope for your future.

by Jade Brooks

I think that we need more financial supporters because I know that on more occasions than one, a youth (including myself) has been told that he or she can't do something because there is not enough money. It could be a recreation thing or maybe even a person thing, but sometimes there is not enough money to support the things the youth wants to do.

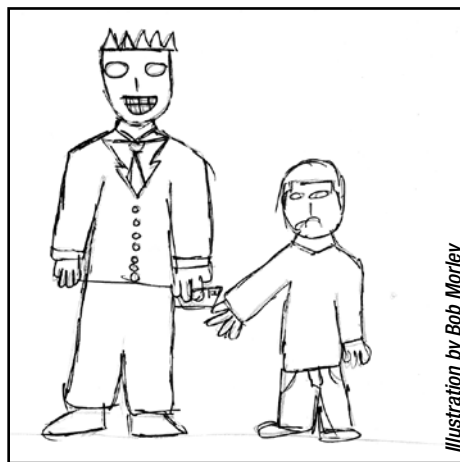


Illustration by Bob Morley

"The government
should give more money
to youth in care, not to
smoking bylaws that
can't be enforced."

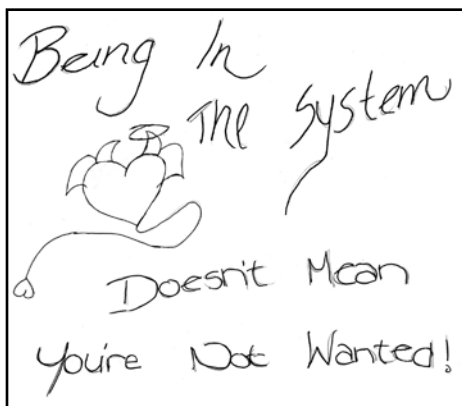
care: good and bad

by Jessi Eisner

Some youth in care believe that the experience of being in care sucks. I was that youth probably one year ago. Sure, I knew what CAS provides for me, but I didn't want to take it. But now that I'm 17, I'm realizing that I should have taken hold of what my worker dished out for me. CAS pays for your medical, dental, eye care, personals, clothing, driving, school, and for college or university. They pay for so much, and the youth don't realize it.

There are a lot of disadvantages about being in care too. I would say there are more disadvantages than advantages, but it all depends on how you deal with them.

When I was 15 to 16 years old, I wish I knew what I knew now because it would have given me more time to figure out what I want to do with my life and my career path. I have four more years left in foster care and believe you me, I am going to take as much as my worker will provide me. Because if you ask me, kids in care deserve it.



stop stereotyping!

by Lawrence Pickrem

I believe youth in care are too often stereotyped by society in general. I know that when a person first sees someone they automatically form an opinion, just judging on that first impression. This is definitely not a good thing, but everybody does it regardless of their class or social status. Many times, a person dresses or acts a certain way, not because they're like that but because that is the style of those around them and is considered to be the norm.

I've seen someone getting stereotyped before and I didn't like it. People get made fun of and are believed to be a certain way all because of a general (often false) belief held against them by a certain group. This is not a good thing and only contributes

to negative feelings and attitudes in today's world. I think stereotyping can be stopped one person at a time, and if we all work together it can easily be accomplished.

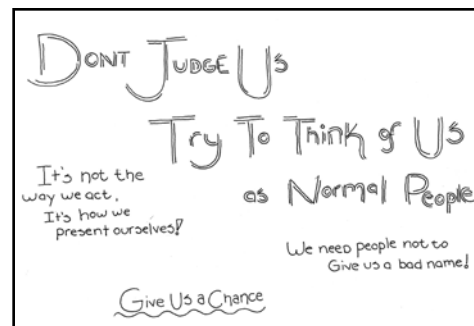


Illustration by Steven Ryan

we're not bad kids!

by Samantha Nickerson

All kids in care are not bad! People may have witnessed some kids who have a lot of hurt and anger in their lives, who act out by beating people, stabbing people, and whatever other crimes. It's just that these kids never had a parent to teach them right from wrong. That still doesn't make their actions right, but they are still human beings and deserve to be treated like ones, and not the stereotype of juvenile delinquents.

People do have to realize that kids in care are just like they are, but some of us choose to show our anger and frustration in a different way. People

have to learn that some children in care have had parents who beat them or sexually abused them. All kinds of things can happen for kids to be put in care. It doesn't mean we are all bad. That's why nowadays there are jails like Waterville for the youth who never learn their lesson the first time. There are also anger management programs for the youth who just need to learn how to handle situations in a different way. So we are not all bad. We just choose to do things in the way we were taught growing up.

We're Not Bad Kids!

money management 101

by John Walker

I personally believe that Children's Aid sometimes gives us too much money. In a way, at the time (when I was in care), I thought it helped me but it made me depend on Children's Aid. I used to have all kinds of money, in like grade 10. Then when I moved to my mom's, they kept me in care but wouldn't give me any money because I was at my mom's. Then when I left, I usually had a job, it was just I used to have everything paid for so when I got money I wanted to spend it on clothes and hygiene products, and for fun with friends. I didn't really know how to manage my money and still don't because they just pretty much threw money at me and when I had no money from them, I expected my mom to take care of me. Now that I'm 21, I'm starting to get the hang of living on my own. I just think they should help us manage our money better, like even our personal money.

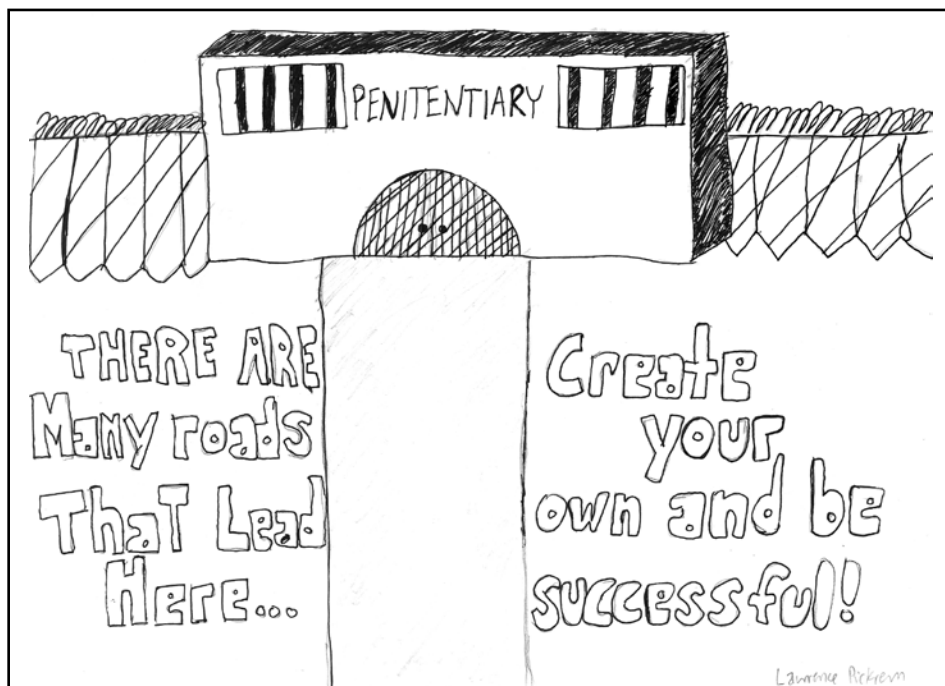


Illustration by Lawrence Pickrem

What Halifax Needs..

where
we're
going

Fix the potholes!

by Steven Ryan

Halifax needs a lot of things and what I would like to change would have to be the pot holes. I would do that because when people are driving and they hit a pot hole, there's the pain and stuff, but the thing about people hitting the potholes is that when they do, they don't know if they have a flat tire right away until someone tells them. People will have to go to get their tire changed and they will have to pay money. I think that the government leaves some of the pot holes there because it wants people to pay more and more money. That is just more money in the government's pocket. That would have to be the only thing that I would want to change, or what I think Halifax needs.

Get rid of violence & racism

by Theresa Huntley

I would clean the water in the harbour and make it free of pollution.

What Halifax could use is to have all the roads repaved so that it is not so bumpy.

I think that Halifax could use a lot of things. It would be cool to have an amusement park in the city so people could have fun.

Halifax could use another animal shelter as there are too many stray cats and dogs.

But if I could change only one thing about Halifax, it would be that violence would be gone, that racism would be gone.

more places for time-outs

by Jessica Anderson

I think that Halifax needs more group homes for girls. There seems to be way more male facilities in the Dartmouth/Halifax area. In my opinion, more girls get into little prissy fights over nonsense than boys, and when these pathetic fights take place there are never any beds for the females to go on time-out because there's a limited amount of female homes and the beds are usually full. I think there should be a specific place for time-outs. Then supervisors and social workers wouldn't have such a hard time finding open beds when people need to go on time-out for whatever reason. I also think that this facility for time-outs would be great because living in a group home

and being in the same environment everyday and looking at the same people's faces every day can become stressful and sometimes us youth need to just take a breather. The place could be used for respites if it is approved that the teen can go to the time-out facility for a night or so.

more money!

by Candace Jennings

Halifax definitely needs more money!! There needs to be more money for fixing up schools and putting new computers and gym stuff in them. There needs to be more money for housing and fixing roads and hospitals. I do not think that this will happen, though. They put all the money the government gives them into other things, or other things we don't need so much.

Lots of things!

by Elyse Saulnier

Fix roads - Reinforce Citadel Hill (no skyscrapers) - Clean Harbour - Jobs/skilled labour - Improve cancer centre - Landmark restoration company for old historic houses - Street outreach workers - Free health clinic - Restoration of public parks / gardens (hurricane damage) - Better trained police force (training with handicapped, drunks: how to handle them) - Places of support for in and out of school kids (more youth outreach programs, counselling, etc.) - Harsher punishment for crimes involving children and rape - More police officers (can take up to one hour to respond to a call) - Solar panels on all buildings five stories and higher (prevents pollution, cuts energy costs) - more bylaws to improve building laws - Better

school supplies for schools / cut school fees. This and much more is what I think Halifax needs, and what Halifax needs to improve on. If the government could improve or do most of these things, I think we would start to be better off.

more places for youth

by Jessica Blauie

I think Halifax should have a drop-in center for teens in all major neighbourhoods. If there were more places for teens to go and do fun and productive things, there would be less vandalism and crime committed by youth. I also think that if there were more places for youth that were free, then it would make things a lot easier for low-income families, and for youth in care and living in group homes.

no more pampering!

by Tony Beaumier

If I were in charge of Halifax, it would be different, that's for sure. I'd spice stuff up a little bit. The crimes in Halifax are stupid. People still commit crimes because all you get is a slap on the wrist. I think that needs to change a great deal before anything else can happen. Crime is at an all time high and it's because they pamper us. Send their butts to jail and maybe things will start to turn around. I also think that there should be a lot more foster homes. It's kind of sad. It seems like there are more group homes than foster homes. I think that youth would be in a greater position in life if they were raised in a family setting and not in a group home, where they're living with other youth that have the same problems, or worse.



Photo by Lisa Neily

What I Could Create My Own School

where
we're
going

by Bob Morley

If I was in charge of creating a school I would fix it up and have everything in it, like a big computer lab and a real science lab and a big gym. I would have five floors in it and I would make the office big and have a big rap studio and music classes for drums and stuff like that.

by Sabrina Penney

I would do the same things that all the schools do now, but I would put more activities in the schools because it seems people aren't eating healthy enough and are just eating what isn't good for them. It would help a lot if they would put more time for gym in the schedules each week. It would make them feel good if they eat properly.

Also, in the schools they should have more teachers in the hallways when classes change, so that all the fights and stuff won't happen when classes change. There seems to be a lot of bullying going on in schools and I think it should CHANGE!

by Jamie Lee Johnson

If I were in charge of building a high school, the first thing I would do would be to go to the junior high schools in that area (where I was building the school) and ask the grade nines what they would like to have in their new school. The next step would be to get a contractor. After that it would be a straight build up from there on in. In the school, there would be a heart. Where the heart is (in the centre) I would put the cafeteria. At the heart of the school would be the halls, and there would be halls coming off those halls. There would also be a library, theatre, gym and a workout room.

Outside, there would be a big field where sports teams could practice. The walls of the new school would have to be maroon and white (the school colours). Half of the walls would be maroon and the other half white. There would also be a smoking area behind the school so kids wouldn't have to walk a journey to go for a cigarette. The school would only be on one level. Also there would be a room for the following: student council, music room, storage room, wood shop, meeting room,

and teachers' lounge. The school I would build would be a place where kids are all equal. No one's any different than the other. It would also be a safe place where kids could go if they needed someone to talk to. A guidance counsellor would be provided.

by Jessica Anderson

If I owned a school, it would be a high school with lots of options for courses and classes. You would only need two credits for each subject (i.e., two for a science course, two for a math course, etc.) throughout the entire three years that you attend "Chantelle Regional High School". There would be different levels for each course. If you needed English essentials, we wouldn't place you in English advanced! You would also be able to decide what courses to take for extra-curricular activities. There would be classes for karate, dance, and swimming (which also means there would be a pool in my school... free of charge to students and free for students and families on the weekends when you showed I.D.).

There would be no such thing as suspensions because suspensions lead to missing a lot of school work and missing a lot school work causes a lot of stress for the students. Instead of suspensions there would be a classroom built specifically for students who were not following the rules. When you did something wrong you would be expected to go to that classroom with a teacher, along with everyone else who had made a mistake, for the whole school day. You would talk about what you did and what you could do to not make the same mistake again and learn about better choices.

You would be able to speak freely...speak what's on your mind. Also you would be able to wear whatever you like. There would be no school dress codes and definitely NO uniforms. I would want the students to dress how they feel because, in a way, how you dress shows who you are! There would be a specific counsellor for students who reside in group homes because teachers really don't understand what it's like to be in the particular positions you are in while residing in a group home. There would be an Apple laptop donated to those who decided to pay their student fees before the deadline. The students would be able to keep their laptop at the end of the three years at "C.R.H.S." if the students had an average mark of 50%.

There would be a lot of dances in the school as well. There would even be opportunities for after-

noon dances so students would miss some class time if they behaved well on every last Friday of the month! Students would be permitted to smoke wherever they desire as long as it wasn't inside the building. And there would be opportunities for free food vouchers if the student had a good week!

by Ray Spence

People would be well educated and there would be more sports. You would have to take gym and you would have to take English, no matter if you like them or not. There would be no violence or racism. I would have dances at the end of every month. Everybody would be able to attend. There would be no suspensions for people skipping too many classes. There would be a smoking room in the school supervised by teachers. We would have all the high-tech gym equipment. You would have at least one off period everyday. The classes would be shorter. We would have high-tech computers. The library books wouldn't have a time when they need to be back. There would be no French. There would be no suspension if you come to school drunk or high on any type of drug. There would be a PD day every Monday. We would have half a day on Fridays. We would have the best sports teams in the country.

by Michael Rhyne

I would put in bigger lockers and a bigger cafeteria and a MacDonald's and more after-school programs. There would be better dances and also more teachers and staff. There would also be a reward program and a bigger gym and more windows and an escalator instead of stairs, and that's about it.

by Bonnie MacDonald

The first thing I would do is make it so the younger grades and older grades are on opposite ends of the school. I think that this would help a little bit with bullying because the younger kids in my school seem to bully the same kids that the older grades do. They copy every move the grade nines make.

The most important thing I would do is make it known that there is zero-tolerance for anything in the school. I think that kids get away with way too much at school. Once when a girl did something to me the principal told my sister and me that he didn't want to punish her because he was afraid how she would react.

I think if the teachers and principal are intimidated by students there is a problem. And this is a huge problem at my school.

by Jade Brooks

I would only have junior high students. I wouldn't have elementary kids because I think it would be too much work. High school kids would be too difficult. So it would be a junior high only.

In my school there would be a guidance counselor for each grade. Students would be able to pick their own subjects, except they would have to take P.D.R., family studies and gym.

It would be located in a mansion, not a building. Grade seven would be on the bottom floor, grade eight in the middle and grade nine on the top. The teachers would be the very best. I would be the principal. I would not give out suspensions. I would take credits from classes and you would need 20 credits in each class. Each punishment (that deserved to be treated) would count as 10 credits being taken away.

The mansion/school would be painted white with burgundy trim. The cafeteria would be in a small one level house behind the school. Lunch would be free. The library would be open 24/7 and tutors would be available upon request.

by Nolan Perry

It would be like my house with lots of things inside like computers, laptops, movie rooms, swimming pools, pool room, party room, bathrooms, games room and other things.

But I would have to go to school so when I wake up in the morning I'd jump in the shower, get dressed and go to the third floor for classes. School would begin at 9:30 and end around 3:25 or 3:30 in the afternoon.

But the best part is that I'm the only guy in that school and all the rest are girls. I'm talking about fine girls like L'il Kim, Cassie and Janet Jackson. Well, I can't be selfish so I have to bring my boys in the party.

I almost forgot: This school would be called "Best of All Schools."

by AJ Smiley

My idea of a perfect school would be getting paid for going. My perfect school would be a school nobody would ever want to leave. It would have a swimming pool and classes would only be 60 minutes, except for gym which would be two hours a day. All the classes would be teaching fun

things, not the boring old junk they teach now.

I also think that the teachers would be younger so that they can relate to us and understand a little bit more about our problems in life such as school, family, girlfriends, etc. And the teachers would be a lot nicer and wouldn't get mad all the time over stupid little things. The school would also have a "No fighting" rule, meaning if you fight, then you are expelled for the year and that rule would be there so everybody will feel and be safe.

And my last ideas of a perfect school would be only four-day weeks. Monday would be the day off because Mondays really suck. School dances would be every month and they won't be video dances.

by Lawrence Pickens

It would be a place people would love to come to everyday — even on the weekends. People would want to come because there would always be live sports happening in the arena, great food served all the time and free of charge to the students, and cool uniforms would be issued. There would, of course, still be classes but they wouldn't be as long and boring because they'd be more interactive with hands-on activity and more science experiments.

Skateboarding, rollerblading and biking would be permitted and encouraged because of how long it would take you to get anywhere by walking. There

would be rules but kids would be more able to follow them because of the rewards they would receive for acting well. These rewards would be things like iPods, cameras, movie tickets, CDs, bicycles, stereos, etc.

The student council would listen to what the students would like and try their best to make it work and implement it into the school.

Bullies and people who intimidate others would not be allowed to attend because that causes a bad environment.

There would also be daily field trips because nobody wants to be stuck in one place all day.

Every student would be issued a laptop computer upon registration but it is their responsibility to take care of it and bring it to school with them everyday.

Everyone who is willing to learn would be welcomed to this school no matter what their race, religion, or ethnic background is.





if I Had \$1 MILLION

by Justin King

I would take four thousand dollars and buy a dirt bike, and one hundred thousand and buy a car and customize it to be the way I want it. I'd put the rest in the bank until I am old enough to buy a house and a nice something for my girlfriend. I'd grow up, keep some money and say screw life. I'd buy a zebra and a monkey off the phone commercial, and one of the bears that eats bamboo.

I would buy a car for my mom, pay all of her bills for her, and buy her a plane. I would do the same thing for my father, and buy him a season ticket to the Toronto Maple Leafs games and pay for him to meet the Toronto Maple Leafs team and to get his name engraved in the Stanley Cup. I'd take my parents on a vacation to California and put the rest in a bank account for my little cousin. Then I'd blow the rest if there's any left.

by Candace Jennings

The first thing that I would do is put some away into a bank account so that when the time came I would have money to go to college. I like to travel so I would take my best friend and my boyfriend on a trip to Hawaii or somewhere hot. I would donate some to Community Services to build more group homes and hire more staff so that there would be more one-on-one time between the youth care workers and the youth. I would also donate some of the money to the IWK Children's Hospital so that they could get more health care for the sick children.

And now for me, I would buy a nice piece of land out in British Columbia and get a summer house built on a lake. I would also need to get a Mercedes and get it all fixed up. My family would be upset if I didn't share the wealth with them so of course I would give some to my family. There would be a lot of other things that I would do but I would have to sit down and budget the money.

If I had a million dollars, this is what I would try to do to help myself and the community.

by Samantha Nickerson

I would buy a duplex for me and my parents to live in. I would buy my parents and myself a car. I would definitely buy a burial plot because you don't know when you're going to die. I would also put \$4,000 away for college. Some would go to buying food for the needy as well as clothing, and whatever else they may need. Some would go to help the sick children in the IWK or the children's hospital in Toronto because I know what it is like to be in a hospital and be on machines to help me breathe. If there was any left after all those things I want to spend a million dollars on, I would then take a vacation to the Bahamas and relax from all the stress and people bugging me for money, like my friends and family.

by Jessica Blaikie

I would donate \$250,000 to the IWK Children's Hospital and \$250,000 to Phoenix Youth Programs. I would spend \$250,000 taking youth in need out shopping, getting them whatever they need. Last but not least, I would spend the remaining \$250,000 getting my life in order and getting my education so that I can be a social worker. All the places that I am planning to donate money have helped me in some way to become the person that I am.

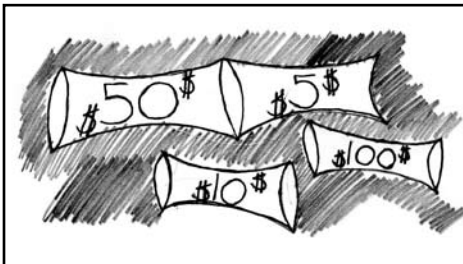
by Lady Dymus

I would buy everyone in my family something nice. I would buy my mother a car and a huge house and I would get a house for myself and my best friend, and a nice Hummer for me and my crew. Then I would pay a lot of people's bills. I would give our school some money and give teachers more money because if it wasn't for them, we would not know anything. Police wouldn't be police, doctors wouldn't be doctors, or anything. I would sponsor kids from Africa and give group homes and foster homes some money. I would buy clothes for friends, family and myself, and buy Christmas gifts for them.

by Angela Black

I would probably use it to buy a car. I don't know what I would do with a car because I don't have a license. I would also use it to help out with my singing career but I don't know what I would do with the rest of my money. I would probably just give it to charities or something.

Illustration by Steven Ryan



by Sabrina Penney

I would probably give a lot of it to charities because they need all the support they can get, and probably use some for university expenses (to go towards books, etc.). Also, the main thing would probably be for clothing, gifts, etc. I think I would give some to my family because they've supported me all my life.

by James Riley

First of all, I would want to bring my family together. My mom would have a nice apartment that she owned – a penthouse. That's what I call it. All my mom's bills would be paid and her medical things would be looked after. My brother would have a nice "house", a "red Ferrari", and money to help with his family.

I would have a nice overpriced house with maids. I would have beautiful children and a wonderful wife who believes in the "Lord." I would travel around the world to other countries. Also, I would help out poor people in Africa and other parts of the world. I would have pets, a nice car and more...

by Elyse Saulnier

First, I would put it into a savings account for one year and leave it alone. When the year ended, I would first, of course, buy myself a house. I wouldn't have anything too fancy or expensive, just a home to call my own. I would have everything I always wanted in a home, a comfy couch, good size TV, maybe a game system, rec room, and a really nice bedroom. I would try to make it so I wouldn't want to leave.

After that, I would put money toward fixing up group/foster homes to make them more "homey". I'd also put money toward building more homes where teens can go when they get kicked out of their home and have no place to go. I think this would benefit society because then there wouldn't be so many homeless teens on the street begging for change. There would be people there to help you make a résumé, develop independent life skills, help you get your education, etc. Basically, it would be a group home for homeless teens.

The last thing I would do is donate money to the IWK Children's Hospital to help them find cures, get more beds, and everything else they need to make those kids better. This is one thing I would do for sure because it breaks my heart when I see little sick children on TV, fighting for their life. They don't deserve that, and if I could help even one child get better, then I'd be happy.

Thank you!

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

Thank you,

**The Children's Aid Society of Halifax Foundation
Halifax Youth Foundation
Henry and Berenice Kaufmann Foundation
Nova Scotia Department of Community Services
Youth Employability Project**



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Professor David Divine – Guest speaker
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Peter Smith, Department of Education

David Swick – Guest speaker (Interviewing)
Mark Szpakowski – Web training instructor
Shana Wyse – Youth worker

Advisory Committee to the Minister – Feedback session
Alderney Landing Theatre – Newsletter launch
Atlantic News – Magazines for collages
Canadian Bar Association – Law Day
The Children's Aid Society of Halifax Foundation – Sponsor
Fusion Print & Imaging – Newsletter printing
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HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development
/ **Destination UP** – Access to interviewees
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Liberated Networks – Web hosting
National Youth in Care Network – *Networker* newsletter
Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers
Nova Scotia Community College (Institute of Technology) – Computer lab
Nova Scotia Council for the Family – Office space / Administrative support
Nova Scotia Department of Community Services – Primary sponsor
Nova Trophy – Certificate plaques
Office of the Ombudsman – Liaison to conferences
Phoenix Learning & Employment Centre – Meeting space, résumé instruction
Superstore (Barrington Street) – Meeting space
University of King's College – Journalism workshop
Youth Employability Project – Founding sponsor & jobs liaison

...And all the social workers, group home staff, foster parents, biological parents, and DCS staff who supported the youth this year!

To see past Newsletters, take a trip through our photo gallery, and more, visit: www.youthnewsletter.net

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

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