

the

VOICE

of the future

Issue 08 | Youth in Care Newsletter Project | May 2008



JENNIFER CLARK

BOB MULLER

Lawrence McKee

AMANDA JACKSON

REBECCA MOORE

JAMES RILEY

LUCAS KRAFT

JOHN WALTON

NATHAN PERRY

LAURA JOHNSON

KRISTO MACVICAR

THERESA HUNTLEY

TINA DOUGETTE

SARAH PENNEY

JESSICA ANDERSON

MANDI JARVIS

TONGA HOSLIP

AMMY PURCELL



These youths attended James Devine's world-class tap dancing performance at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium in November, courtesy of Coalition for Kids.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Heather Milne (Volunteer), Jennifer, Rebecca, Mandi, Amanda, Tina, Tonya FRONT: Nathan

Youth from the Newsletter Project and Youth Moving Forward (from New Beginnings Ministry, Cherry Brook) created collages together.

LEFT TO RIGHT – BACK:

Jamal, Lawrence, Blake, Jordan, Jennifer, Laura, Nathan, Rebecca

STANDING, BY CLOCK: Jason

FRONT: Amir, Sabrina, Amanda, John



An icebreaker at one of our first sessions this year. LEFT ROW: Krista, Tonya, Lucas RIGHT ROW: Ammy, Amanda, Laura, Sabrina, Lawrence

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Fear of the Future

by Laura Johnson



When I think of the future my first feeling is fear. It's not fear like the world is going to blow up. I know I'm not afraid for the future to come because I'm always looking forward to it, waiting for the next interesting whatever. I think certain things about the future scare me.

The one aspect of the future that has been on my mind most recently is where my family will be in the near and far future. By family I mean biological family, foster family, extended family and future family (husband, kids). I wonder if everyone will be happy and healthy and who will die first. I just want everyone to be mostly happy and healthy – rich would be good too.

The biggest fear I have for myself is if I will be truly happy in the future. For me, being truly happy would involve enjoying my occupation, high income, having a family and being healthy. In my eyes, that boils down to if I make the right decisions now. The Department of Community Services has given me an opportunity to have three years of post-secondary education paid for. If I do turn out unhappy, I'm afraid I won't have the chance to fix it, that I'll be stuck. I just really hope I can get myself together and figure out what I want to do, but it's hard. I wish I could just put the money on hold so I would have time to decide and not have the pressure of rushing into a life.

So in the end I guess what I am really afraid of for the future is if my family and I will be my definition of happy. Regardless of everything, the future is here now and coming fast. My future life is up to me. I guess that's the reason I'm so afraid of it.

Adults vs. Youth

by Tonya Haislip

I believe that most adults treat youth unjustly. I believe that they do not relate to them very well. Adults, in general, treat youth as beings who are on a lower psychological level than themselves. They believe that because youth are less experienced in life, they know nothing of the stress that they, as adults, experience. They believe that youth are carefree and irresponsible.

Many adults treat youth unfairly, as if they are felons. Adults look at a youth's clothes, where they come from, their appearance, and their age and they automatically assume the worst. Youth are not even given a chance. Adults judge youth by all these trivial things—when they should be concerned about our well being, who we are as people, where we're going, and how we, as individuals, contribute to society.



Although many adults do not relate to youth, there are those few individuals who do. These rare few relate to youth as though they are important. They

treat youth with hospitality and respect, as though they are real people, with real thoughts and feelings. They understand the difficulties that youth experience in their everyday life and, remarkably, they don't judge! These considerate human beings are models of how we, the youth, want, demand, and deserve to be treated.

This has been a terrific year!

Twenty youths – most in child welfare, a few on income assistance, and a few former youth in care – contributed articles and illustrations to this edition of *The Voice*. They are between 14 and 19 years old, with the exception of a few older mentors. Their challenges, realizations, frustrations and hard-won experiences burst forth from these pages.

The Newsletter Project Team is diverse, insightful, comical and earnest. Laura speaks from the heart about her fear of the future, while Tonya cracks the adult-youth divide (this page). Nathan's "Never Say Never" strikes a chord that grows louder in Lawrence's explanation of youth in care's resiliency in "The Strongest People Around" (p. 5).

The youths' knowledge of the system rings out loud and clear in "About Care" (pp. 8 & 9). Sabrina appreciates it when her foster parents encourage her to try new things (p. 10). Jennifer's "Hot Twisted Metal" is original and searingly honest (p. 11).

Amir's illustration of Racism (p. 12) makes a statement, as do Rebecca's words on the same page. Theresa relates an unusual mixture of emotions (p. 14). When Amanda lost her foster mother to cancer, she wrote the moving tribute, "Freda" (p. 14). Jessica's enthusiasm is almost catching in "Why I Joined the Newsletter Project" (p. 15), while Mandi – who could be a journalist if she wants to – shares her post-secondary twists and turns (p. 15). Newsletter Project veterans Ammy and Lucas offer fresh perspectives (p. 16),

while James weighs in on what it's like to be moved around (pp. 16 & 17). Krista, who could be a great singer one day, explains how "Music Can Change the World" (p. 18). What a team!

For some articles, pseudonyms have been used to protect the privacy of the writers.

I would like to thank the Department of Community Services and our other funders for making this unique experience possible. Collectively, these youth are, indeed, *The Voice of the Future*.

– **Andrew Safer, Executive Director & Editor**

Adults vs. Youth *cont'd.*

by James Riley

I feel that adults treat us youth so differently than the way they treat their own friends or their workmates. I feel they think because we are youth we sometimes may not be as important as their work, or their friends. Adults sometimes think they know what youth are going through, because they may have had the same problem we have. But that is not always true. Our world is so different than what it was back in their day. There are drugs and drive-bys in some cities – things they would have not even known about back in their day. They've got to try to understand us a lot better and not always judge us on what they think they know because they're so much older than us. Sometimes they've just got to listen and not talk. They've really got a lot more things to learn about as their lives go on, 'cause things do change and will never stay the same.

by Jennifer Clark

It really bothers me when people stereotype youth, because not all youth are bad. People look at me and say, oh she must be a drug addict or she must steal stuff. But that's not true. I know a lot of youth who are like that, but I am not. It is like saying that all elderly people have Alzheimer's. I know quite a few of them do but not all of them do. Just like I can say ALL babies cry ALL the time—not all of them do! Don't stereotype because when you do, you're hurting my feelings and ruining my image.

by Theresa Huntley

Most adults relate to youth as being childish or immature. Most people think that youth, especially youth in care, are criminals and bad people. That is how I think that most adults relate to youth. Most adults think of youth in care as criminals because of other youths' actions. For example, a young girl was burned all over with a cigarette on her ears and face. She had a broken nose and eye socket. The girl who assaulted her makes all youth look bad.

by Jessica Anderson

I think that most adults today look at us youth and think one thing: trouble. They do not relate to us in an appropriate way. Some youth make it bad for all youth. Adults today hear of us youth doing bad stuff; they do not hear of all the good stuff we accomplish.

The word is stereotype! If one youth will do it, the next youth will do it. We are not all one person and I don't think this is fair. Some of the stuff that the youth are doing today is not right, but I don't think that adults are keeping the issues' severity in the right proportion. For example, every time I go into a store, I am followed. Why am I followed? I haven't done anything out of the ordinary...yet the store staff still keep a heavy eye on me. Another woman with two kids walks in the store and is greeted cheerfully. She is left alone to look around in peace.

Just because someone else has stolen does not mean that every other person of that age is going to steal.

And then there are adults who appreciate us for who we are, like at the Youth Achievement Awards!

The Youth Achievement Awards is an awesome ceremony that happens once a year (in November) where the Nova Scotia Council for the Family recognizes youth in care for their accomplishments. Last year, 41 youths from around the province received awards including Newsletter Project participants James Riley, Justin King, Jessica Anderson, Amir Jaber and Tonya Haislip. Tina Doucette was one of the MCs (see p. 16). (Tina is a longtime Newsletter Project participant who became a volunteer this year.) Amanda Murley, who is the Administrative Assistant to the Newsletter Project, was a mentor for the Awards recipients. Congratulations to you all!



LEFT: Tonya Haislip receives a Youth Achievement Award from the Honourable Judy Streach, Minister of Community Services, at the Westin Hotel in Halifax in November, 2007.

ABOVE: Youth Achievement Awards recipients also received a Scotia Capital Stay in School Award. Amir Jaber is featured opening his. Krista MacVicar is looking on. Jessica Anderson is on the right.

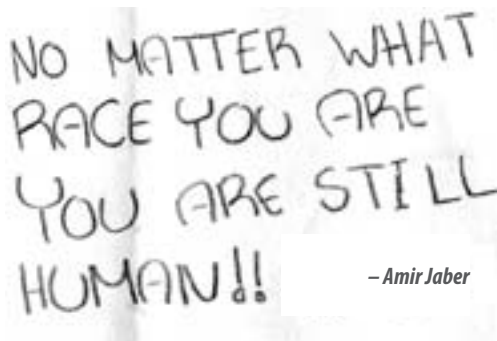


Nova Scotia Council for the Family

Key Messages

Never say never by Nathan Perry

Why I say "never say never" is because most people will say that you will never make your dream come true. But if you believe your dream can come true, you can make your dream come true. Nobody can tell you that you can't do it because they think that you can't do it. You can do it, you can do anything you want if you set your mind to it. There's no never in your life, there's a can in your life. So all I'm saying is never, never give up your hope and dream. And never say never again.



The strongest people around by Lawrence Pickrem

Youth in care are probably the strongest people around because they are the ones who are facing larger problems than most people could even imagine growing up. We don't need to worry about whether or not our clothes look good and match. We often have more pressing issues. Things like where we'll sleep tonight, what and how we will eat, and constantly worrying about money and the lack of support we are receiving. In the end, this makes us stronger individuals who are more able to live in the harsh world we are finding ourselves in, more often than not. People who live sheltered lives never get the benefit of experiencing these things or gain the knowledge that youth in care do.

They're doing a lot right by Amanda Jackson

The Department of Community Services does many things right and throughout our Newsletter, *The Voice*, you will learn things that they do:

- Help youth in care by supporting us.
- Change our life.
- Help us with our problems.
- Help us overcome our fears.
- Anything you need help with, there will be someone there to talk to.

The Department of Community Services changes my life from bad to good. When I first came into foster care about four years ago, I didn't want anyone to help me and I was very disrespectful to the people who were trying to help me. I was being very rude by telling them I didn't want to be separated from my family.

Best kind of family by Tonya Haislip

When most people hear the words "foster care" or "foster child" they associate these words with negative thoughts. People in general assume that we have some sort of problem or horrific disease. Of course we have problems, but who doesn't?

My experience in care has been relatively good. I have not been mistreated or neglected, and I certainly do not have a disease. My life in care has been rather happy. This may not be the case for every child in care, but I'm sure no harm could come to these children. If someone isn't fit to be a foster parent then they wouldn't be one.

As to the behaviour of foster children, I believe that we behave the same as any other child, in care or out. Foster children might act out but we can't say that it's because they are a foster child.

My experience in care has shown me that being in care is better than being in a biological home. I would like the world to realize that foster children are the same as every other child; our backgrounds are the only thing that differs. Our background will always be a part of us, but it isn't who we are.

Rights! by Theresa Huntley

I think children and youth in care should know all their rights while they are in care. While children or youth are in care they don't have enough knowledge about their rights. When you first go into care you are supposed to get a book called *Rights and Responsibilities While Being in Care*. A lot of youth never receive this book. My key message is know your rights, and ask if you don't understand.

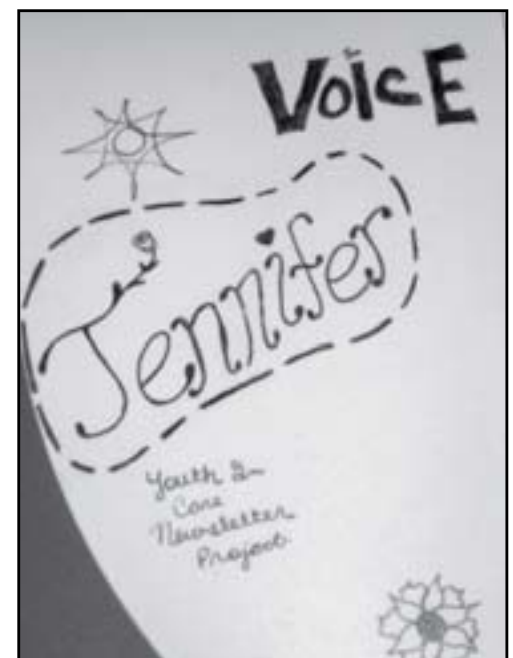
This is the cover to Jennifer's journal. ⇨ The youth do their writing in journals until the Web sessions at the Nova Scotia Community College, when they start writing online in Google Documents.

**"THERE'S NO
NEVER IN YOUR
LIFE, THERE'S A
CAN IN YOUR LIFE,"
- NATHAN**

Our families still love us! by Neveah May

Most of the time when you're in care, people think that our families have disowned us.

I know a lot of people try to tell me that I live in a group home because my mother does not want me or love me. That is definitely not the case. My mother loves me just as much as she loves my younger sister who still lives with her. People don't understand that youth have problems sometimes. When the problems recur at home, and no one can handle them any longer, a break in a group home or foster home can be a great thing. It brought me and my mother closer, and when I go home on visits, we get along way better now. So, even though we live in group homes, or foster homes, or anywhere.... Our families still love us.



Positive Memories

Contract lifted

by Neveah May

For the longest time while I've been in care, I've had an unwanted label: "bully!" Recently I've moved into another group home. My social worker placed a contract on me. I had no freedom at all. I had to meet all group home expectations plus the additional outcomes my social worker had placed. It was so stressful for me. I would always be worried about



losing my placement and this stressed me to the max. It was even affecting my school performance. Then one day I got to the point where I was so stressed I had to do something so I went to the school's on-site social worker. I discussed my problem with her. She was very nice. I explained that in the past I had done some pretty mean things but I had made a point to apologize to the people I had hurt. I explained that the "bully" word had stuck with me for a very long time and I was sick of it. She helped me very much and when I talked to her I felt a bit relieved from her wisdom. That same day I went home, the staff at my group home praised me for speaking up and saying something for myself. They told me that I had a lot of people on my side. This also brought relief to my stressed-filled mind.

A couple of days later, my staff brought me into the office. I was nervous. I was sure that I was being discharged. We started talking and when they told me my contract was lifted I felt a big wave of relief upon me. I was so happy. They told me that they never really wanted to put the contract on me. I am very glad for the contract though, for it has taught me well. Even though the contract is gone, I still act as if it is there.

I never get in trouble anymore. Life is way easier. It makes me able to be myself, and be a happier person. You always learn from your mistakes and this is a lesson well needed, appreciated and respected. I'd like to thank all the people who help me!

Valedictorian!

by Tonya Haislip

I have been in foster care for nearly eight years. These past eight years have been the most difficult and trying years of my life. Until recently, I always put myself down. I believed that because I was a foster child I couldn't be happy. I have had days where I felt as though life was just too hard, and that I would never succeed at anything.

On June 20 I realized that everything I believed about myself was wrong. Last school year I moved and completed grade 9. Although I had no confidence in myself, I always tried hard and did well in school. Throughout the school year I maintained a 97 per cent average. As the school year came to a close there were six students selected to run for valedictorian. I was surprised to find myself as one of these selected few.

We each prepared a speech to be presented and voted on. This is how the valedictorian would be determined. I wrote my speech to inspire the future generations of our school, and to reflect back on how we came to be where we are today.

As I presented my speech to my peers I felt nervous, and unsure. I watched everyone else present and felt insignificant compared to everyone around me. After everyone presented and voted we were asked to return to class. Our teacher said that he would send someone to inform us of the decision.

We all waited patiently in math class, the tension building with every move of the clock's hands. Then there was a knock on the door and Chris said "Tonya, the teacher would like to see you." As I walked what seemed like a never-ending hall, so many thoughts raced through my mind. When I reached the classroom, he informed me that I was the valedictorian of 2007!



A few days later I found myself once again on the stage reciting my speech. This time I was speaking to my friends, family and guests. As my speech came to a close I said, "Congratulations class of 2007, we did it!" As I was saying this out loud, in my head I was saying, 'Congratulations, Tonya M. Haislip. You did it!'

That was one of the happiest days of my life. In one day I realized that I was not just a foster kid. I realized that I was a person who could, and would, succeed no matter what label I was given.

Good things that happened

by Amir Jaber

When I was in care people treated me fair and the best thing that happened was getting free money. Another good thing that happened to me was meeting new kids my age and meeting new people. If I hadn't been in care last year, I wouldn't be in the Newsletter Project and I wouldn't be writing anything right now. Another good thing that happened was me still talking to my mom and dad on the phone, and I got to see them a lot.

My own room

by Rebecca Moore



When I first went on assistance it was because I had to move out of my dad's house, and live with a relative. I didn't really like it there because I didn't know anyone, and I was far away from my sisters and cousins. So when the school year ended I decided I would rather be in Halifax and be "homeless" than be alone all summer. So I stayed in Halifax and just couch surfed all summer long, staying at friends' and my cousins'. But not having my own space was driving me crazy. It was getting close to the new school year, I still didn't have a place to live, and I was really worried. I knew that if I didn't have a place to live there was no way I could go to school.

So one day I got a call saying that I was accepted into S.A.P. which is the Supervised Apartment Program run by Phoenix Youth Programs. That's where I'm living now. I have my own room, and everything I need to go to school everyday.

My mansion

By Jennifer Clark

My most memorable moments living in group homes are Jenny's and my Wednesday night ice cream trips. We would take the car and drive down to DQ and get a Blizzard and with the funny stories we have from that place, we could make a book. Every time after getting our ice cream, we would take a little drive and check out my mansion that I am going to own when I get older. There were so many trips down to visit my house which has a bowling alley, movie theatre, pools, hot tubs, saunas, and, dear God, the reversible car garage (it turns your car around for you). I so can't wait to be there. It would always be my friend I lived with, Jenny, and me and we would just, you know, take the long way home just to talk and jam to the country tunes we brought with us.



By Nathan Perry

We went on a vacation to Orlando, Florida. We went on rides and got sick. We went to Animal Kingdom, went on the ride with the big towers, went to Seaworld, and stayed in a hotel called All Stars. They have a big swimming pool. Birds kept going into the hotel through the window. We stayed for two weeks. I met Mickey Mouse, Daisy, Pluto, and other mannequins but didn't get their autographs. The best ride was the Woody Woodpecker rollercoaster.



Nathan's tee shirt design for *The Voice*.

{ Negative Memories }

by Sabrina Penney

A negative memory I had while in care was a couple of years ago. I was taken away from my foster parents because I was acting up. They moved me to a place called Tatamagouche. I was there for a couple of months until I was ready to go back. That is a very bad memory for me because when they first moved me they said that I wasn't going back, but then they decided they would give me another chance. I was really happy. Even though we still have problems today, we get over them eventually.

by Tonya Haislip

A negative memory that I have from being in care is moving so frequently. When I first entered care I had no idea what to expect. I certainly didn't expect to never finish a full school year at one school until grade 7!



Every time I moved, I felt like I was leaving a part of myself behind. I never got a chance to settle down and get used to a place. By the time I was comfortable, I moved.

When I was around nine I made the biggest move of my life. I moved from Texas to Canada! This was the hardest move by far. I left

my real family and friends behind.

Moving would have to be the worst memory because I was someone different each time I moved. I had to readjust and fit into different crowds each time.

by Mandi Jarvis

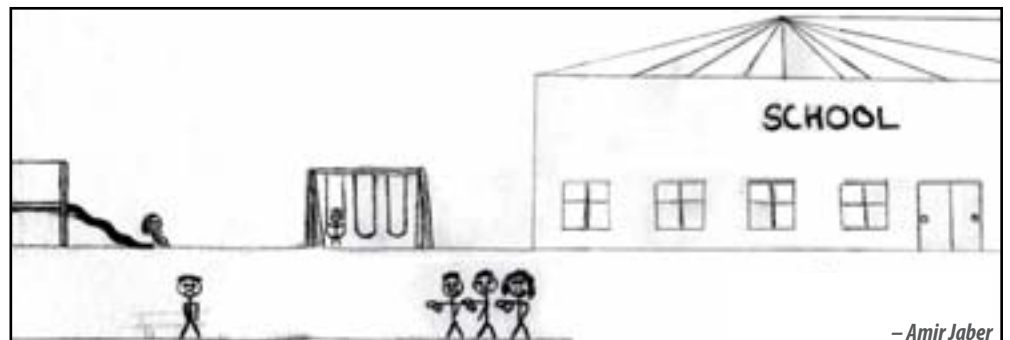


surrounded by five or six cars, three of which belonged to the police. The last thought on my mind was that they were there to take my brothers and me away. My worst nightmare had come true. With their teddy bears in hand, my two little

brothers walked out of the house ahead of me. A note was left on the table for my mother to explain that her kids had been apprehended. We left the only home we knew and all our stuff behind. At the Children's Aid office we were given more little teddy bears, and an explanation of what was going on. My brothers were moving into one home, and I was going to a different one, three to four hours away from them. Things did get better since then, but at the time I wasn't so okay with it.

by Ann McCormick

The most negative memory I have had while being in care was when I started overdosing. I was in the hospital for several months and then I was told by the doctor the last time would be if I O.D'd again. There was a chance I would die. I have a lot of medical issues that I would not have, had I listened to everyone who was trying to help me.



— Amir Jaber

When I first moved here, people made fun of me because of my race.

{ Who do you look up to? }

By Sabrina Penney

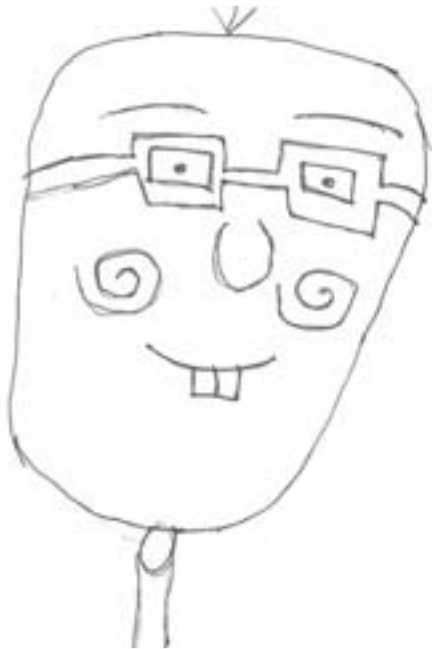
Someone I look up to is my mom. She's an amazing person, I don't know what I would've done without her in my life! She inspires me into doing things I don't think I would like at first, but I end up liking them. That's how I've become who I am now – a successful high school student attending a great new school. If she and my dad hadn't pushed me and made me comfortable with the things I didn't want to do before, I'm sure I wouldn't be "me." Thanks, Mom!

By Lawrence Pickrem

The person I'm going to write about is my stepmother. She is simply a great woman. She took on the responsibility of raising four young kids who she didn't even physically produce. I can only imagine how much guts, courage and pure bravery this act must have taken. I don't know if I would ever be able to give up a full-time (and well paying) job as a sales associate at a reputable firm to stay at home and raise kids practically single-handedly. She is the strongest woman and person I know. She would always be out there on the front lines for us, fighting for what is right and in our best interests. She had a formidable sense of right and wrong and giving up was never an option in her books. She would fall every now and then like every other person, but never would she stay down. She got back up and, like any other soldier, faced the battle and moved forward. She taught me many (often hard) lessons that I know have built the very foundation that I stand upon and keep building on to this day. I'm so grateful for her knowledge, care and understanding ways. I feel I can say with 100 per cent certainty that without her help and guidance, I would not be where I am today and I would lack the ambition that tells me to be as good as I can be.

By Theresa Huntley

The people I look up to are all the staff at various group homes and shelters where I have lived. When I grew up I was never taught the importance of personal hygiene and how to properly clean my room and other things around the house. When I moved to a group home they taught me how to clean my room and do chores properly. Although they taught me how to do these things, I never really tried all that hard. When I moved to a shelter I struggled with cleaning my room and doing chores but with a little help from staff, I am making a lot of progress with these things. I feel that the leaders/ role models in my life are my workers and the group home and shelter staff. The qualities that these people have are they have a good approach to helping youth. They're very helpful.



By Laura Johnson

The person I look up to the most is my and my little sister's foster mother, but she also takes care of my two older sisters who aren't in foster care. She is a super woman. She is always on the go doing something for anybody but herself.

By Jessica Anderson

The person that I look up to the most is my mother. I look up to her because of her power and strength. I love my mother very much and I could not live without her by my side. She is a single mother and I think that she has raised me and my younger sister exceptionally well. We both look up to my mother very much. We love her and she is very successful in life. That is why I look up to my mother.

By Tonya Haislip

Some people are inspired by the Michael Jordans, Beethovens and Einsteins of the world. Although these are all great inspirations, I believe that I have the greatest of them all: Tanya, my former case aide.

Tanya was my case aide, but to me she was much more. In all my years in foster care I have never met anyone as caring, nice and outgoing as Tanya. Throughout the time that Tanya drove me I got to know her very well.

Tanya was very selfless. She always thought of others before herself. For example, she always brought me diaries because we shared a mutual interest in writing. Tanya loved to write poems most of all. One poem that she wrote changed my life. This poem was called "Happiness." It taught me to enjoy life. Tanya always encouraged me to do things such as joining basketball, and trying out for the school play. No matter what, she always had faith in me, even if I wanted to do something ridiculous.

Although I have not seen Tanya in years I think about her a lot and admire her. Tanya represents everything I want to be in life: successful, happy and kind. To me, Tanya is a true inspiration.

Let's Pretend

*By Debbie Beaver**

Let's pretend that you love me
And that you're glad I'm here.
Make believe you didn't hit me
And I'll smile, through my fear.

We'll forget, for a little while,
That I'm so stupid and fat,
That you didn't mean to say it,
And you want to take it back.

Let's pretend I'm your real daughter
And that you love me so.
We won't think about the fact
That you can't wait to see me go.

Please, just for a little while,
Let me feel alive.
And then, I promise, I'll go back,
To being dead inside.

**This poem was written by a former youth in care who is now 47 years old. It's unusual for The Voice to include writings by people who did not participate in the program (in fact, this is a first) but the group wanted this poem to be in the Newsletter.*

Family

by Michelle Smith

To me, “family” is only a six letter word. Family is just another word that we throw around and use without thinking. To most people, their family is the most important thing. Your family is supposed to be there for you during the good times and the bad. They should support you, even if they don’t agree with what you’re doing. Most of all, a family is supposed to love you. My family has never represented any of these things to me; I have never really had a family. Every time I feel comfortable with someone, and I start to consider them my family, something goes wrong. I don’t believe in families. Although family is just a six letter word to me, I believe that to other people family can mean the world to them. I hope that someday the word family

will mean more to me than a six letter word. I hope that I will be able to start a real family and prove myself wrong, but until then, family is just another six letter word.

By Christina McGrath

Family means a lot to me. Both of my families are very different. My foster family is very thoughtful and nice and they always have my back no matter what’s going on. My real family... I don’t think they would have my back. They are the kind of people who would guard themselves, except for some people in my family. I love my foster family. They mean so much to me. They do so much for me. I don’t even know how I would ever repay them.

By Tracy Benedict

In my family there’s me, my mom and dad, and my three sisters. None of us live together. Susan lives with my cousins, I’m in independent living, Bonnie lives in her own apartment, and Charisse is between engagements, so to speak. My parents are divorced. I have a stepfather who I don’t get along with. I love my cousins very much. I am closest to my sisters and cousins, not my parents so much. They aren’t very helpful. So I am used to doing everything for myself.

To read more about what the youth have to say about Family, visit www.youthnewsletter.net/newsletter.html

Grandparents

My Mama & my Grumpy
By Jennifer Clark

My grandparents have played an important role in my life. Some people aren’t that close to theirs, but I call my grandmother Mama. Growing up my mother and I had an alright relationship, but I had a special relationship with my Mama. She spoiled me rotten, and so did my Grumpy. I was my grandfather’s first grandchild and you could tell how happy he was with me in the pictures. That twinkle in his eyes is like Santa Claus. My Mama and I go shopping. It is our thing. When I go on a home visit, Saturday morning Mama and I head to the mall, and spend all day and then go eat at Murphy’s (best haddock in Atlantic Canada – in Truro, not Halifax). I love my grandparents. They mean the world to me.

Train wreck
By Jennifer Clark

Yesterday I found out my grandmother has cancer. It is in her mouth and they will have to remove her tongue. She said to me not to worry, that she will see me get older. I left the hospital crying my eyes out and thinking, “Why me?” I feel like my life is a train wreck right now. Everything bad keeps happening and piling up and I have no way of stopping it. It’s out of control. This is just another train laying on the build-up of hot twisted metal that is my life. Exams, college, scholarships, family, friends. Why Me? Everything was going good until now. I hope it all gets better.

Tea time with Grammy
By Tonya Haislip



I’m going to tell you about an experience I have with my grandmother, five days a week, Monday through Friday. She lives across the street from me, so I can see her whenever I want. I think this is the reason that we are so close. Every weekday morning before school I go to my grandmother’s house for a cup of tea. My mum says I don’t have to do this, but I want to. My grandmother is from England so she has “tea time.” I love having “tea time” with my grandmother because we get to know each other. We form a bond that only a grandmother and granddaughter could have. I love listening to her tell stories about her life in England. Sometimes I feel as if I’m actually there. I treasure these special times we have together because I know there won’t be many more. My grandmother is very aged, and I’m scared that one day I am going to lose her. So I will continue having “tea time” with my grandmother until I can’t. One day when I’m old and I’m a grandmother, I hope that my granddaughter will come visit me so we can have our own special tea time.

My inspiration
By Rebecca Moore

The person who has inspired me the most in my life would be my grandmother. Her name was Stella Paul. She passed away when I was 15. She raised me up until that point. My grandmother was a saint in my eyes. She was a residential school survivor. I remember how I would always make her tea, and listen to her stories. It is because of her that I want to be a lawyer, and fight for the rights of my people.



— Amanda Jackson

ABOUT CARE:

Lawrence Pickrem, Amir Jaber, Tonya Haislip, Amanda Jackson, Nathan Perry, John Walker, Jennifer Clark, Theresa Huntley, Sabrina Penney, Krista MacVicar, Troy Mullett, and Mandi Jarvis shared their views about the good, the bad, and the ugly...



TOP TO BOTTOM: Krista MacVicar, Nathan Perry, Amanda Jackson, Sabrina Penney, Jennifer Clark, John Walker, Tonya Haislip, Amir Jaber, Theresa Huntley, Lawrence Pickrem

Foster care

I'm really mad at the girl I live with. I want to shave her eyebrows off.

You're treated differently than your foster parents' biological kids, and when one person does something, everyone is blamed.

Your personal stories are chucked around.

The worst thing about it is not being with your biological family.

OK. Deep breath. Foster care is really positive. I got to meet a lot of people who cared and wanted the best for me. I don't think I'd be where I am today if it wasn't for them. Another positive thing is I know when my meals are coming. I don't have to worry about my dad not feeding me.

Even though you don't have parents, you still have a family.

Group homes

You go on a lot more outings (movies, sports, bowling, fairs, swimming) than if you're in a foster home. It's more like a 24-hour youth group.

Group home staff are rude; they're only there for the money. There's a buzzer for opening the door, you have to ask for a drink of water, or to use the washroom. You're always being watched on camera, and you can't call anyone you want (on the phone). The reason for most fights is when people steal your stuff. But when they steal your dirty socks and underwear, you don't want them back.

Your things get stolen. You get into disagreements with people you live with. There's a lack of funding for basic needs – groceries, etc. Some kids may feel they don't get enough emotional support, like in a regular family.

Make sure more staff are present. There should be locks on doors. You should be taught more skills to get along with people. There should be a set schedule at home, where you eat meals together, etc.

Shelters

Living there is helping me learn how to move onto Assistance (from Child Welfare). I'm learning to do chores regularly. Staff is only there for emergencies, so you learn to take care of yourself.

Social workers

Social workers are "fill-in parents", so they need to act the role, not just be money givers.

I'd like to ask my social worker what she does during the day because I can never get hold of her.

They need to teach us how to spend money appropriately – that's not happening right now. When I was working I had to pay for everything myself but I couldn't afford the necessities.

Income Assistance

My social worker has paid for medication, college bills and other things but I don't get to see her much because she has such a large caseload. I wish there was a closer relationship because she pays for everything. I feel I should know her more than I do.

There's good support, financially and emotionally. You aren't expected to do as much, so when you prove you're special it surprises people.

Independent Living

I had a pretty wicked time. No curfew, making my own decisions. It requires more patience and discipline. There's nobody to tell you what to do.

I hate my live-in (a staff person who lives with you). A live-in can't tell you what to do. They're more of an older sister or brother or something.

There's supervised living and independent living. I never went into supervised living. The live-ins are there to talk to you if you need help. You're allowed to have guests stay, just be respectful of the house. This is the best situation I've lived in. I'm a lot more mature than someone in a group home. You can stay in SAP until you're 25. I would get about \$800 a month. Some youth get a full clothing cheque, some get less.



A group home – Amir Jaber

MORE ABOUT CARE:

During March Break on a Saturday morning at 10am, six youths went to Camp Mockingee to HeartWood's Destination Up program, to interview other youth who are in care. We interviewed several youths about how they feel about being in care. In groups of two we interviewed the youth with questions we had prepared. Some interviews were better than others. I found it rewarding because I have always felt that I was alone in some situations but through the interviews, I found there are others who are going through the same situations I'm going through.

— **Krista MacVicar**

We had a good time going to the camp and interviewing other youth in care. The camp between Windsor and Chester is a camp also for youth in care who can come together to share their experiences being in foster care, and to just have fun and to get out of the city for a bit. It's a worthwhile weekend, being with others who go through the same things as our youth.

— **Sabrina Penney**

Advantages of care

Feeling safe, having your own life, doing what you want within reason, and being respected. — **Cathy**

Activities: During March Break, Christmas Break and weekends, we get to do a lot of things that most of us enjoy. — **Jay**

Meeting other kids. When I first got there I was nervous, I didn't know who I was living with but after awhile I got used to it. — **Christie**

Meeting new people. Sometimes you get freedom. I enjoy having people around me and knowing that I'm safe and nothing is going to happen to me. — **Zoey**

You learn that your problems can be solved, and you might be able to move back home. — **Zoey**

Money. — **Amy**

They help me. — **Cathy**

You get to travel and meet people you probably wouldn't have met if you weren't in foster care. — **Char**

Disadvantages of care

Not living with your family, you may not get to see them as much as you normally would. — **Jay**

Sometimes I want to go somewhere and I'm not allowed to go to my friend's house. — **Christie**

I don't get that much freedom because I'm not old enough to have freedom. In our house you have to be a certain age to have freedom. The rules are strict and we don't get much freedom. I don't get to see my mom that much. — **Zoey**

Curfews. — **Cathy**

Therapy. — **Amy**

They talk about family too much. — **Char**

What would you like to tell the people who read this?

Even though you're in care—you're a normal person. You have good things and bad things, you just happened to have had a hard time. — **Jay**

You'll get used to it after awhile. I know you feel nervous when you first get there, but after awhile you'll settle down. — **Christie**

Being in care is the best thing that has happened to me. — **Zoey**

Stay in school and don't do drugs!! — **Amy**

Being in care is all about being safe and knowing that you're protected by the people you live with. — **Zoey**

Never give up on life, and live your life day by day! — **Char**

THANK YOU



HeartWood
Centre for Community Youth Development



TOP TO BOTTOM: Mandi Jarvis, Rebecca Moore, Lucas Kreft, Laura Johnson, Tina Doucette, Jessica Anderson, Ammy Purcell, James Riley, Troy Mullett, Jessica Blaikie

Racism

by Rebecca Moore

Being a Native person, I have experienced racism on many different occasions, and have heard many stories. I have been called many different racial slurs in my life. I have been called a “wild Indian”, “wagon burner”, “savage”, “squaw”, “red skin”, and even a “red skinned n.....”. All of these names offend me because they are usually used in an aggressive way. When people call me those things, naturally I get pissed off right away. But it doesn’t make me feel like any less of a person, because I know that they’re the ones who have the problem, not me. I am very proud of who I am and where I come from, and nothing anyone says can change that.

by Laura Johnson

I don’t think there is one story about racism that somebody hasn’t heard. My experience of racism isn’t much of an experience at all. I’m a white female and haven’t really had any problems with my race thus far. I have been there when other people have received racist comments, but they were never directed at me. I don’t agree with it or like it. I feel fortunate that I don’t have to deal with it in my everyday life. Whether it be racist or prejudice, judging anyone based on one defining characteristic is a quick way to miss out on a lot of life’s adventures.

by Amanda Jackson

I experienced racism when a group of my friends made fun and used racist slurs against another one of my friends, just because he was Native. It affected me because they didn’t like him and he didn’t like them. I dealt with it badly. I said I couldn’t be friends with him because if I was his friend I would lose my other friends.

If I could change things, I wouldn’t want to be friends with the people who were teasing my friend. I would just hang out with my friend who didn’t deserve to be teased.

by Theresa Huntley

The time I experienced racism was when I went to a private school and my teacher would not let a black girl in her class. She said she only teaches white people. If I was in that school now and she said that I would switch schools.

by Lawrence Pickrem

One time when I was walking home I came to a stop at an intersection as I waited for the light to change. All of a sudden a car came and started waiting for the light as well. It was overloaded, and everyone in the car was black. When the light changed they looked over and all of them held up their middle finger! I didn’t do or say anything to them. I still

haven’t figured out why they would do such a thing for no reason whatsoever. I was a little upset but what could I do? Nothing. I think it may have happened because I was dressed atypically for a person of white descent. I was wearing a fitted cap and baggy clothes like I usually do.

by Nathan Perry

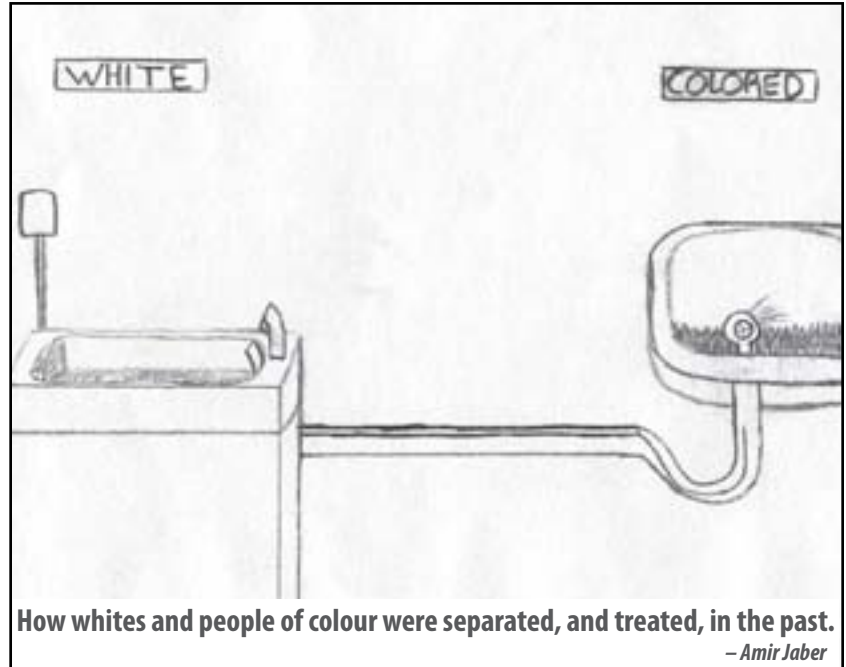
I haven’t come upon racism in years. I think racism is wrong because being against coloured people is so wrong. Being different is not so bad. If we were all the same nobody would be popular and cooler. For girls, nobody would be hotter than the others. If I built a time machine and went back in time, I would tell the white people to stop.

by Tonya Haislip

I attend a mostly white school. There are only four or five African-Canadians, so I don’t expect to hear much about racism. However, it’s like they say, “expect the unexpected.”

One day, during CALM, a friend of mine looked up at the ceiling and saw a list of African-Canadian inventors. Then this “friend” proceeded to tell several racist jokes about black people. Everyone was laughing. I had no idea how to respond, so I just sat there.

I think if I could go back to that day I would handle the



situation differently. I would say something to this friend and my other friends who were laughing with him. I should have told him to have more respect, that a person’s colour is only a physical trait. That maybe he should get to know someone before he makes jokes that aren’t funny.

I would also like to remind him of a poem we read last year. It was a poem about a “coloured man.” This man, in fact, was not a black man, but a white man. It was a very good poem that made a strong point.

**"I AM VERY
PROUD OF WHO I
AM AND WHERE I
COME FROM, AND
NOTHING ANYONE
SAYS CAN
CHANGE THAT."**

— REBECCA

Emotions

by **Jennifer Clark**



I feel as though writing about your feelings is a very important thing in life, especially if you live in a group home. Roommates, staff, rules; it's a lot of stress put on an 18-year-old girl! I came from a complicated home life and that is enough stress already. I want to be cool with everything and not get upset with people and not disobey rules, but I can't. I have been in anger management since grade 7 and I use these skills I have learned all of the time, but sometimes I need something else. This is why I love coming to the Newsletter. I know there are people here who have all the problems I have and sometimes more, but we are all in the same boat. I like writing about my feelings and enjoy expressing negative emotions in poems, and this gives me the perfect opportunity to do so.

Overwhelmed

By **Laura Johnson**

For the last two and a half days I have literally lived with a school assignment. It was the only assignment thus far in accounting, on chapters one through five. It was estimated to take six hours for an accountant to do. In total, it took me about 20 hours.



I have never been so overwhelmed in my entire life. I ate and slept with this assignment. It was one of those problems that have to work out. You know if you do something wrong, so you have to go through everything to find your mistakes. Argg. Finally I did it! Everything balanced!

So today I was searching and searching for my accounting teacher to hand in the assignment. I had to find him. I was cruising down the hallway when I spotted him in a class. I put on the brakes and busted in the class, stumbled over the desk and gave it to him. I told him I almost cried when it worked out! I have never been so overwhelmed with happiness in my entire life. Finally it's done and I got a 95.

Happy

By **Tonya Haislip**

Happiness is an emotion that everyone feels, though some more than others. I am generally a happy person. However, I can recall a time when I was so exceedingly happy that I couldn't contain myself.

This occasion was last year at my grade 9 semi dance. This night was memorable for me because I was surrounded by my friends, and they make me happy more than anything. My friends and I made a friendship pact — we would be friends forever, no matter what.

We had so much fun. As a result of my happiness, I was crazy with my friends. We ran all through our school screaming and dancing, basically acting like teenagers. That night I didn't worry about anything, I just had fun. I believe fun is the key to happiness, and happiness is the key to life!



Joy

By **Lawrence Pickrem**

One time in particular that I experienced joy was when I was informed I had won the CIBC Youth Vision Scholarship. I remember feeling so happy and filled with joy. I couldn't believe I had won a prize of this calibre and am still finding it hard to believe! This scholarship mattered so much to me and still does. I plan on attending Dalhousie University for a year before moving to Montreal with my girlfriend. I have a burning desire for success in my future and this scholarship, I know, will help me a lot in that ultimate goal of mine.

I am also glad I won this scholarship because the cost of tuition is so high these days as well as the interest rates for student loans. I decided to write about joy because I tend to experience it more than sorrow and I'm glad about that.

Frustrated

By **Mandi Jarvis**

Frustration for me is one of the worst feelings. Lately it has been a feeling I have a lot. It's not an emotion that's easy to describe at times. When I'm sad I can say I feel like crying; when I'm happy I can describe that too. When I'm frustrated the only things that seem to describe it aren't even words, like erg, arg and ugh. Frustration can be brought on by many things, such as school, work, friends and family. It is avoidable to an extent, but how you deal with your frustration is what really matters. If you let it get to you, frustration can turn to anger, and you're in an even bigger mess. The best way to deal with frustration is to walk away from whatever is bothering you for a bit. If it's homework, take a break. If it's an argument with a friend, let them win. You win some, you lose some. It's better than being frustrated.



Ecstatic

By **Jennifer Clark**

I felt ecstatic when I did the Women's of Excellence Awards. My knees were trembling but I was so excited to get my story out. I think everyone should hear my story of conquering my drug addictions. It is quite inspirational. I know people look up to me because I got up in front of 600 people and told them some of my most personal ideas and stories — and I was so happy to do it!





To help the youth learn how to deal with anger, frustration, etc., sometimes they read articles about people who are having difficulties, and put themselves in their shoes.

One article was: "DFO's catch of the day", The Chronicle Herald, February 22, 2008. The fisherman had been fishing illegally and when he was caught, he threw the fish back in the water, blocked the officials from boarding his boat, almost started a fight, and ended up jumping in the water himself! Here's what some of the youth wrote...

This article is about a guy named Gary Lee Nickerson, 36, who must pay several big fines and is on probation for the next year.

The article said he's a captain of a groundfish vessel who pitched a childish fit while federal fisheries officers were

overseeing the unloading and seizure of his catch last fall. He has been forbidden to set foot on deck of a boat for 10 years.

He has been throwing his fish overboard, arguing and refusing to do what he's told by the federal fisheries officers.

The court says "he has only himself to blame," and I agree.

— **Sabrina Penney**

- Fined \$4,750.00
- Kicked off fishing grounds for 10 years

If I was this fisherman I would have approached the police officers with respect. Yelling and screaming never works. I've come to the conclusion that screaming at authority never works. Just explain your situation and follow the rules and all will go well. — **Jennifer Clark**

If I was Gary Lee I would most definitely not jump off of the boat. I would have stopped overfishing the first time I was caught, so I wouldn't put my family at risk. I also would have co-operated with the cops when they were doing the seizing of fish, which would have resulted in less charges.

— **Laura Johnson**

Emotions

By Theresa Huntley

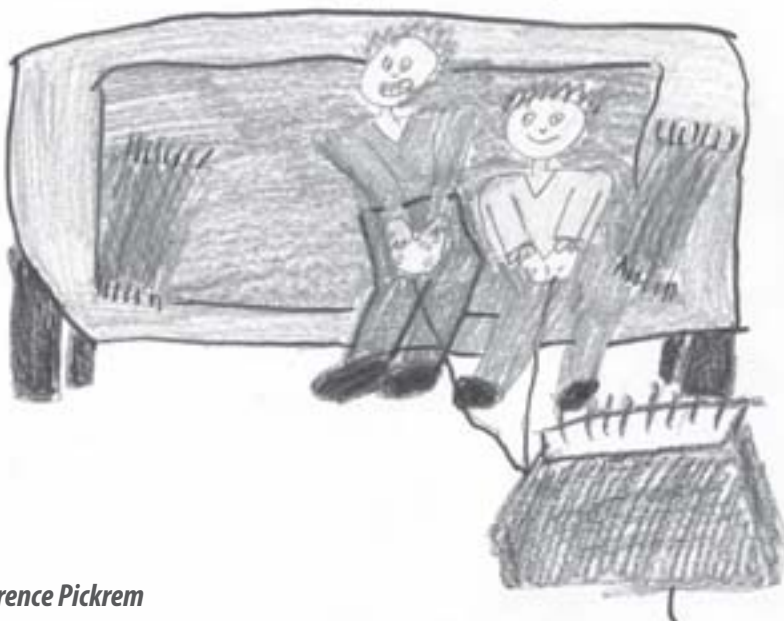
On May 6, 2003, my grandmother, my best friend, passed away. My grandmother was always there for me. On that day, my key worker took me for a drive. At supper time she told me we were going for a fun outing. I got ready to go and we went for a drive to Tim Hortons. I ordered an ice cap and she said "You're going to need a large one!" We went down to the parking lot and she said, "Theresa, I have some bad news. Your Grandmother Ruby has passed away." I cried for two days and I was angry because she told me we were going on a fun outing when really she needed to tell me my grandmother died.



Loss

One week in November, two people close to some of the youth died. At different times, Freda Waters had been a foster mother to half a dozen of the girls in the Newsletter Project. Michael Brooker, who died at 19 as a result of a bicycle accident, was a friend of many of the youth. That week, the youth expressed their sense of loss.

This is a picture of me playing video games with a friend of mine who has recently passed away.



— **Lawrence Pickrem**

Freda

By Amanda Jackson

Freda was a big part of me
She was the part that meant the most to me
Freda was also in a lot of other lives
She made me welcome the second I arrived
I was so happy that's where I was sent
I finally got to know what love really meant
Freda is a good person to be in the lead
She helps children and youth in need
When I was living at home with my family
There was too much fighting when they get mad
My heart felt like a rock so hard and cold
Then when I got taken from my home
I felt like I was being sold
When I arrived at Freda's home
I thought it was a break from my other foster home
My life was thrown on a doormat
But Freda helped me put it back on track
She's a great person for me to know
Even though she died, I will never let her go
She's still my mom forever
No one will take her place, never
Even though I didn't have a mom that cared for me
Freda was the one who meant "mom" to me
Freda was also in many other foster kids' lives
That's who I look up to since I've arrived

Why I joined the Newsletter Project

by Jessica Anderson

I came to the Newsletter tonight because I came last year and I enjoyed it very much. I got to learn about different youth in the similar positions as me! I got to widen my knowledge on youth and care and learn all about different experiences. I enjoyed doing all of the different activities. I got to go to a journalism workshop and learn more about writing. The launch to me was the best part! It was like a trophy. All the work that we had done throughout the year was very exciting. Last year, I did not get to start the Newsletter from the beginning and I am happy that this year I will be here from start to finish. I am excited that there are new people here and I can't wait to hear all of their stories and get to know them better. Next year I hope to be a volunteer and continue to hear all of these new peoples' stories. When I come to the Newsletter, I feel that there is nothing to hide, so I can relax. I always look forward to Wednesday nights so I can come to the Newsletter!

I really want to accomplish making new friends and widening my knowledge even further on this type of thing. I want to have a great year this year and learn lots of new stuff!

by Krista MacVicar

I came here tonight to make money (youth receive a stipend for showing up on time and doing assignments – Ed.), meet new people and share my ideas. I also came to get out of the house. It's something to keep me busy, and also because it's a great opportunity to expand my mind.

This year I would like to accomplish keeping focussed and getting my assignments done and passed in on time. I would like the group to accomplish some more great ideas, have fun and work very hard.

by Amir Jaber

I came because I had nothing to do at home and I liked it from last year so I decided to come back this year. I came because I want to learn how to write and to meet other people, to hopefully get school credit, and I want the money. I want to write about how people care about us and really want us to have a future, and not mess up our lives.

Volunteering at the Newsletter

by Mandi Jarvis

I was a participant in the Newsletter in 2003-2004. It was my first year living in foster care, and the Newsletter taught me a lot. It helped me in a lot of different ways, socially, in school and with writing. My ultimate goal was to be a social worker, and volunteer at the Newsletter. I hear opinions and stories of other youth in care. These are things I can keep in mind if I become a social worker. The Newsletter helped me in the past, and it does now too, with school. By volunteering with the project I not only have fun; I get my volunteer credit for class.

"It's a great opportunity to expand my mind!"
– Krista

School

by Mandi Jarvis

As a young child, many adults ask you the same question: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Most kids don't hesitate to respond, with their dreams of being astronauts or teachers or social workers. To achieve these dreams, these kids must first spend 13 years in school, and if you want to have a good career, you'd better plan on spending a few more years (and more than a few thousand dollars) in school. By the time you reach high school, your childhood dream may not be your plan. As you get older the question "What do you want to be?" turns into "What are you going to do?" The pressure begins to build as you have to make your decision, and it isn't always such an easy one to make. For some, it's a piece of cake, for those who know exactly what they want to do with their life, and have known for a while. For others, the choice isn't such an easy one to make...

(This complete article is available on our web site www.youthnewsletter.net/newsletter.html. This is Mandi's thoughtful account of the challenges she has faced in trying to navigate her way through college.)

by Sabrina Penney

A lot of youth have problems with college or university, and the majority of it is having no money, having no idea which program they would like to enrol in, or they just don't know completely what they want to do. In Canada, 22,000 young students between the ages of 18 and 20 years old drop out after their first year. That shouldn't happen! Something needs to be done.

Sabrina was reporting on a newspaper article she'd read.

By Rebecca Moore

Ever since I began junior high I have struggled with school. It wasn't the teachers that were my problem, and it wasn't the schoolwork itself either. It was more the structure of it all. Just having to return to the same building every single day, all day long, was absolutely impossible for me. There were many contributing factors as to why I couldn't do it. My living situation was a big part of that. I would skip school

for weeks at a time, and this was a pattern for years. By the time I got to high school I still couldn't stick to a schedule, and got stuck in Grade 10 for three years. I never gave up the whole time though. I went back at the beginning of every single semester. I would hang in there for a month or two, maybe even three. But I would always miss too much time and get withdrawn. This is the first year that I am actually getting through a whole semester, the reason being I now live in a program called S.A.P. (Supervised Apartment Program). This gives me the proper living environment to keep going to school everyday. I am currently going to school at an adult learning centre called Flexible Learning Education Centre (FLEC). I have two weeks left and I'll finally have a couple of credits! This is a big accomplishment for me. I should really be graduating this year, but that's all right. Life isn't a race and I'll get through it at my own pace.



What some of our youth are up to

My life in the media *by Jennifer Clark*

I have had the great opportunity to be known 'Halifax-wide'. Being involved with Phoenix Youth Programs has opened up many doors for me, a few with the local media. It all started with the Women's of Excellence Awards. This event is put on by the Canadian Progress Club, Halifax-Cornwallis, who are huge supporters of Phoenix, so every year they get a female youth from my group home to get up and speak at this event. This year it was me, involved with this province-wide Award Ceremony. I also play the violin and in December 2006 I played with Symphony Nova Scotia at the Nutcracker Luncheon (again, thanks to Phoenix). All these have been a blast but the thing I like the most about them is that I get to be in the paper. I've also had other chances to be in the paper because I had an aggressive streak when I was younger and it has come to the attention of the general public that more girls are getting into fights, and the papers want to know why. I was on Global News and in *The Daily News* talking about such things. As opposed to a doctor commenting on it, I have an experiential perspective about this subject. I have really enjoyed my time being famous. I often tell people that I will have to autograph something for them because soon I will be in Hollywood.

Model UN *by Lawrence Pickrem*

The Model UN is a group that I found out about when I heard it announced over the PA at school. I thought it sounded like an interesting and worthwhile group so I joined up. I learned that it was a way to learn about different countries and the effort to establish a state of peace amongst them all. That is, after all, what the actual UN does everyday. I thought it was a great experience overall and I learned a great deal in the process.

From doing it, I got the opportunity to travel to Halifax West High School, as well as Ottawa as part of an international conference called CANIMUN. I would highly recommend the Model UN to anyone who would like to be more informed on global issues and develop a broader sense of what being Canadian is all about.

A great opportunity *by Amanda Jackson*

I've been a writer in two great magazines this year. I am so proud to see people actually caring about youth. Now, let me tell you something about both of the magazines. One of them is called "The Voice". This magazine is about youth in care. It's a very great thing because it helps people who

are in *The Voice* to get their feelings out and tell others the real issues about life and being a youth, and it helps the people who are reading it understand and realize what the youth are going through and what they feel in their day-to-day lives. Now, a little about the other magazine. It's called "Teens Now Talk" (www.teensnowtalk.com), and is another great magazine. It's an awesome opportunity for any youth. Anyone can submit things to this magazine. I am so glad that people actually take the time to make a magazine and invite youth to join it. *Teens Now Talk* magazine recently reprinted a few articles from last year's *Voice*. Thank you for everything, *Teens Now Talk* and *The Voice*!

My second publication *by Jessica Blaikie*

When I first found out that I had an article published in another magazine (*Teens Now Talk*), I was excited. It's not everyday that people want to publish the things you write. Because of this I am now able to tell people that I am a published writer, beyond *The Voice*, which I think is pretty exciting. I think that it's awesome that people want to publish my thoughts on what I feel the city needs to help improve the lives of today's youth as well as today's community. When you're a youth in a system where you feel no one cares it's great to have someone want to hear your voice and your thoughts. Now when I feel like I haven't accomplished something with my life I can get out the things I have written and know that someone cared enough to want to publish my works.

Facilitator-in-Training *by Ammy Purcell*

This year at the project was a lot different than any other year, and I've participated for the past six years. Last year I was a co-facilitator, but this year I am a "facilitator in training." This comes with a lot more responsibility. Not only am I helping to facilitate the sessions, I am consulting with Andrew beforehand, inputting my ideas, and completing notes about each session on the productiveness and result of the sessions. I even got to give the youth an assignment that I created myself. I think that because I have been in the project for so long I can give good input into the sessions. I know what the youth will be interested in, and what they won't. They can relate to me and they don't seem to have a problem listening to me. I feel I can be a friend and a role model to these youth, and that is something I know they need.

Motivating youth *by Lucas Kreft*

The past year has been great for me. Everything from finishing college (for the second time) with a Graphic Design diploma,

to being involved in a company. While some doors have closed, many doors are opening, with twists along the way.

Participating in the Newsletter Project for the past six years has been a door opener in many ways. Now, for myself and Ammy, we have the responsibility of helping to facilitate the sessions. This has been a process of learning about the Newsletter Project mechanics.

Throughout my years here, there were many people who helped me along the way – from social workers to youth care workers. Whether you are the people who have a profession that helps youth and community, you are a dedicated parent, or you are a youth reading this, I just want to spread my message of hope and prosperity. The motivation others gave me, I want to give it to you.

Everyone has the opportunity to become what they want to be – something more than just living with a minimum wage job. This generation wants everything now, and fast. With minimal effort, expectations are not met.

I was yelled at for years to do something with my life. Now I am.



Tina Doucette was one two youth MCs at the Youth Achievement Awards this year.

Movin' around

by James Riley

Over the last couple of months my life has become a roller coaster. I moved from a place that I saw myself calling home into a place where I thought I did not belong. At first, that change wasn't so bad. I felt that changing my location might make me feel a little different about myself, but at the end I guess I was wrong.

As the weeks and days moved on I finally moved into a new home. At first, things seemed to be all right, but as the getting used-to ended, I got the feeling I did not belong there and that no one really appreciated who I was. The staff seemed to treat me like I was nobody and like I was there to do things for them. All the other youth who lived in this house with me were a lot older than me; they were in the age range of 18-20, and I'm only 16 years old.

I got along with most of them at first. Then one day I came home from school and noticed that some of my stuff was stolen. At the beginning, I was blaming everybody because my stuff was gone. I told the staff and nothing happened, so I got up and left one day, and went to my mom's and stayed with her for awhile. I got a hold of my social worker and told her what was going on. We set up a meeting with the staff at the home, sat down and talked about the things that they thought I needed to change and the things that I thought they needed to change as well.



At the end, I felt things were not working out so I got up and left the meeting. I went back to mom's and stayed with her for a couple

of weeks until my social worker found me a new placement because I refused to go back to the home. She then came up with a foster home where I could stay. I was so GLAD and RELIEVED when I found out who I was going to be staying with. I had met her at another group home where I lived. She had dropped everything to take me in and become my foster parent. She had quit her job to look after me. I thank her so much because I'd been asking and praying for a place that I could call home again and a place where I could feel safe and not scared. And finally my prayers were answered. I've been living with her for almost a month now, and I love it.

Broke the rules

by Tracy Benedict

Recently I was kicked out of my home for three days. Living in S.A.P (the Supervised Apartment Program), there are some rules, and I broke one. We are not allowed to bring drugs or alcohol on the premises, which makes sense because Phoenix Youth Programs cannot support that kind of behaviour.

So I packed some clothes in my backpack and stayed at my friend's and cousin's places. I was not upset at the punishment at all. It seemed reasonable. I know that what I did was wrong, drinking on the property. I did not have a

party or anything like that. It was me and one friend having a couple of drinks before going out. We didn't make a mess or anything, but I did leave the two glasses out on the coffee table, and a staff member saw them and could smell the liquor in the glass. So I was caught.

The usual punishment would be seven days out of the program, but since I was very honest about it and took responsibility for my actions, I was only given three days. If this happens again, I will be removed from the program completely, and will have to move out of my house. I have learned from this, and won't make the same mistake twice. If I got removed from this program I would be officially homeless. It is definitely not worth the risk!

What means the most

by Michael Devoe

When I moved this summer, it was really a spur of the moment decision and I never really thought about the transition of moving from where I'm comfortable (Halifax) to a place I had never really been before (Truro). It was weird and I didn't really try and if I didn't have a wonderful girlfriend I probably wouldn't have made it the first month. I wasn't happy there because I missed Halifax. Then one day my girlfriend thought she should get a pregnancy test and it came out positive. That started to motivate me some but I still messed up and didn't always go to work and then just decided to leave and come back to Halifax. I was here maybe two days and realized



how much I missed my girlfriend and how stupid I was to leave the best girlfriend I'd ever had, and a baby in her stomach. Yeah, it may be scary having a kid but it makes you feel terrible to do that to somebody you love. I just stayed home and then realized I needed her back, so I tried my hardest to get her back and I did but the damage was done. I had treated her bad for too long so she just left. She lost the baby and that was what really broke us apart along with how I treated her. So what I'm saying is: if something happens like this think about what means the most, and do what you need to do to get it. I'm doing good right now and I have a good chance as long as I work and get my life straight. So just work as hard as you have to because in the end you will get what you want if you try your hardest and don't let things get in your way. Anything is possible.

My first job

by Bob Morley

My first job was working at a fast food restaurant and it was pretty hard to get because I put in an application, like, everyday. I met people at my school and they helped me talk to the manager and it worked out. The next day they called me and told me to come in for an interview and I did. They told me they would give me the job and I would start working the next day. It started off good. They put me on the grill and after a couple more weeks it started to get hard because the managers are on your case everyday and I had to do five things at once. And every time you don't finish the

things that you have to do quickly, they start to get pissed off. I had to yell at one of them and they fired me.

Life

by Christine McGrath

Life, family, death, suicide, I'm missing my mom. When I think about Life I think of me being in this world without my family. I think of living in care without my family and being in



foster care because my family doesn't care about me or my sisters and brothers. I think... of when I got kicked out of my home because I was doing drugs, because I didn't know any better. I couldn't think of any way to get back with my family, because I missed my

family so much. I couldn't think of one reason why I would get pulled out of my home. There is not a freaking day that goes by without me wondering what I did. How could I have done something so that mom and dad didn't want me? And why would I get taken away from my little sister after they promised that we would be together, not away from each other, which we are now.



Co-op credit

By Lawrence Pickrem

I have been involved in the Youth in Care Newsletter Project for two consecutive years now. I am now able to put these hours towards my entire portion of extra-curricular hours needed to complete my Grade 12 Co-op course at my high school. This has worked out nicely for me because not only has this project helped me in my personal life but it is also helping me in school. I would recommend getting involved with this project because of the various opportunities it allows youth to express themselves, as well as better themselves through education. We all know that learning happens in and out of the classroom setting. This project has greatly contributed to both of these aspects in my life.

At press time, Lawrence's Co-op credit had not yet been approved, but we're optimistic! His portfolio shows how much he's accomplished this year.

{ Music can change the world }

By Krista MacVicar

I think music can change the world by allowing more people to come out and open up more and let other people know that whatever they're going through they're not the only ones, and that it's OK to cry because you're human and you're going to cry no matter what you're going through, whether you're sad or happy. But at the end of the day whatever you're going through you're going to get over it sooner or later and it's not going to bother you anymore. There's a saying "laugh now, cry later" and that's what you have to do. I think music has started doing this, and is going to get that message through to people in the future. I think that's how it's going to change the world to make it a better place. Life doesn't always have to be about negativity and drama. It can be a fun, fulfilling place where you can love and have fun and just enjoy what you have. Don't be ungrateful. Take what you've got and be happy.

By Nathan Perry

I think music can help the world be a better place because if people listen to the words of the music, they can understand what the artist is trying to say. And then we can do something about what the artist thinks is wrong, like what Tupac was trying to do to change the world about black people, that we are all the same. And there are different types of music that get people together and dance.

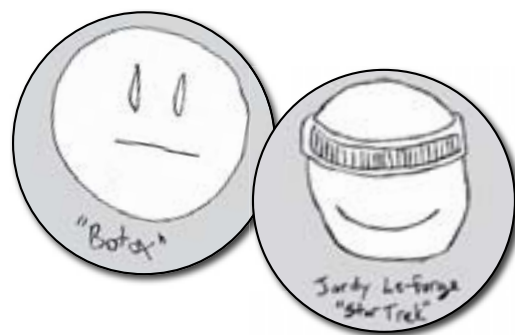
By Sabrina Penney

Music is supposed to be telling about someone's story, not about sex, drugs, money and "bling". It's just like a book... If the beginning of it sounds interesting then you'll keep on reading. If a song sounds interesting then you'll listen to it. If everyone in the world expressed their emotions through music, then I think that the world would be a better place. Then we would know what problems need to be fixed. Pretty much everyone listens to some kind of music, so I think that expressing yourself through music would be a good idea to put out there.

By Jennifer Clark

Music can change the world. You just have to have the right people singing it. Music is something that everybody listens to. Everybody likes at least one kind of it. Me personally, I like country. Other kinds of music are Rap, R&B, Hip Hop, Techno, Dance, Pop, etc. If the artists want to help with world peace, like the Black Eyed Peas, they sing songs about it and it reaches out to people. Also, music helps people with an anger release because when I am mad, I listen to my music and it honestly works. I get calm afterwards.

To read more of what the youth have to say about Music, and to listen to some of their favourite songs, visit www.youthnewsletter.net/newsletter.html



**"IF EVERYONE
IN THE WORLD
EXPRESSED
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THEN I THINK
THAT THE WORLD
WOULD BE A
BETTER PLACE."**

- SABRINA

The facial expressions in these articles were created by: **Jennifer Clark, Tina Doucette, Amir Jaber, Amanda Jackson, Mandi Jarvis, Laura Johnson, Lucas Kreft, Krista MacVicar, Nathan Perry, Lawrence Pickrem, Ammy Purcell, and John Walker.**



We formed our own non-profit organization last year, Youth Voices of Nova Scotia Society. BOARD MEMBERS (LEFT TO RIGHT) FRONT: Bill Turpin, Ammy Purcell, Sonya Ferrara BACK: Lucas Kreft, Heather Milne, Joan Purcell MISSING FROM PHOTO: Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard

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You make all the
difference in the world!



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Foundation**

Our thanks to the following individuals and organizations for their support of our project this year...

Individuals:

Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard – Board member
James Boudreau, Wickwire Holm – Legal advice
Jean Bremner – Advisor
Heather Carrington, Department of Community Services
– Transportation logistics
Suzanne Clarke – Volunteer
Don Curry, Young People's Press – Journalism workshop
Clete Deschamps – Youth worker & driver
Tina Doucette – Volunteer
Tracy Embrett, Department of Community Services
Sonya Ferrara – Board member
Nick Field, DCS, Halifax – Primary program contact
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Liaison, Public Legal Education Association of Canada
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Sandy MacDonald – Guest speaker (Interviewing)

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Joan Purcell – Board member
Robin Reid – Cherry Brook youth group liaison
Michael Reynolds – Guest speaker
Sherrolyn Riley – Guest speaker (Racism)
Susan Rhymer – Driver
John Rowan – DCS, Halifax
Chris Scott, Nova Scotia Community College
Peter Smith Department of Education – Guest
speaker (Portfolios)
David Swick – Journalism workshop, King's College
Mark Szpakowski – Web training instructor
Rob Turnbull – Driver
Bill Turpin – Chair, Board of Directors
Catherine Young – Volunteer

Organizations:

Alderney Landing Theatre – Newsletter Launch venue
Atlantic News – Magazines for collages
Bounty Print – Newsletter printing
Brookes Diamond Productions – DRUM!

Coalition for Kids – James Devine concert
Halifax Region Children's Aid Foundation – Sponsor
Halifax Youth Foundation – Sponsor
**HeartWood Centre for Community Youth
Development** – Access to interviewees
Liberated Networks – Web hosting
New Beginnings Ministry – Youth Moving Forward
youth group
Nova Scotia Barristers' Society – *Society Record* coverage
of Tina and Ammy at PLEAC conference
**Nova Scotia Community College (Institute of
Technology)** – Computer lab
Nova Scotia Council for the Family – In the Loop
conference & ongoing collaboration
Nova Scotia Department of Community Services –
Primary sponsor
Nova Scotia Youth Secretariat – Newsletter distribution,
Leaders of Today 2, and Youth Achievement Awards
sponsorship
Nova Trophy – Certificate plaques
Office of the Ombudsman – Newsletter distribution
Phoenix Learning and Employment Centre – Meeting
space, résumé instruction, ongoing collaboration
Subway (Downtown Halifax) – Party platters
Superstore (Joseph Howe Drive) – Photographic prints
Teens Now Talk Magazine – Magazine launch, articles
reprinted from *The Voice*
Youth Employability Project – Sponsor, jobs liaison,
ongoing collaboration

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

The electronic version of this Newsletter, and more, are available on our web site: www.youthnewsletter.net



Sabrina (left), Jessica (centre), and Krista (right) create a collage of "The world I want to grow up in."

Tee shirt creation session at the Phoenix Learning and Employment Centre. LEFT TO RIGHT: Katie Hanczaryk, Facilitator (far left, standing wearing tee shirt), Krista, John, Mandi, Ammy, Laura BACKGROUND, RIGHT TO LEFT: Catherine Young (Volunteer), Nathan ironing on his Voice logo, Suzanne Clark (Volunteer, with hat)



The Team behind *The Voice*!
LEFT TO RIGHT –BACK: Laura, Mandi, Theresa, Troy, Amanda, Sabrina, Amir MIDDLE: John, Lucas, Ammy, Jennifer FRONT: Nathan