

the VOICE

Issue 09 | Youth in Care Newsletter Project | May 2009





Welcome

to the ninth edition of The Voice



This has been a year of transition for the newsletter. In the fall, Andrew Safer, the project's creator and long-time director, took up a new challenge in St. John's. Our loss is definitely Newfoundland's gain. Andrew's quiet leadership, educational innovation and unshakable empathy for youth ensured the Youth In Care newsletter would continue to grow solid as an oak.

Change is always difficult, particularly when it comes to something as central and stable as the Youth in Care newsletter. But in September, we rolled up our collective sleeves and leaned into year nine of the newsletter.

The participants in this year's newsletter project are a lively mix of returning youth and new faces. Some live with foster families or a biological parent, some in group homes and others in assisted apartment situations. Each brought their enthusiasm to participate, a willingness to learn and their own unique story into our weekly sessions.

In your hands you hold some of the writing the youth produced through the year. They learned about free-association writing, and then wrote about their social workers. They produced beautiful collages exploring their vision of the future they'll grow up in, and then wrote about the key messages in those artworks.

Each wrote about memories of being in care, both positive and negative. The writing is honest and soul-baring, and reveals much about the experience of living in care.

They explored media literacy, read newspaper articles and discussed them

in depth and then wrote an analysis of what they'd read. With an increasing confidence in their writing, the youth wrote about the power of words.

As the Halifax winter stretched on and on, we invited in special guests to warm up our evenings. Shauntay Grant, the acclaimed Halifax writer, musician and poet, shared her insight into spoken word and performed some of her beautiful poetry for the group.

Award-winning roots musician Thom Swift brought his guitars and powerful story of commitment to his passion, and the group wrote a collaborative song. Michael deAdder, one of the country's finest editorial cartoonists, visited the group and talked about his own perseverance to achieve his dream, and then helped the group with an impromptu drawing lesson.

We are continuing to work with HRM school staff and the Department of Education so some newsletter participants will gain a high school co-op credit for their work with the project.

We explored alternative techniques for dealing with anger, for expressing difficult emotions through journal writing and for positive assertiveness. The group worked on becoming good listeners and good problem solvers.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to each of the participating youth, to facilitators Lucas Kreft and Ammy Purcell, to Catherine Young for her dedicated volunteering and to Clete Deschamps, who faithfully brings several of the youth each week and helps out in a hundred different ways. I also want to thank Amanda Murley, administrative assistant for the project and the scores of people and organizations who support the newsletter in many different ways.

The dedicated board of directors for the Youth Voices of Nova Scotia Society have ensured the newsletter continues to move ahead smoothly and build on its strengths. Thanks to them for their efforts.

With all the pressures that tug at the lives of young people, the newsletter can provide an oasis of stability, even as it undergoes change itself. I hope it has been a rewarding and uplifting year for the newsletter group. It certainly has been for me, as I begin to understand the strength and resilience of this group of youth in care.

*Sandy MacDonald, director Youth In Care Newsletter
May, 2009*

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Notes from co-facilitators



By Lucas Kreft

This year the Newsletter Project evolved in many ways. Andrew Safer who is the founder of The Voice Youth in Care Newsletter Project moved away to Newfoundland. This is very sad, for I have known him for about seven years now. There was a need for a new Newsletter Project Director and the lucky soul is: Sandy MacDonald!

So far under the eagle eye of Sandy, nothing has exploded! He is a great role model and a friend for myself, and the other youth involved in the project. I am very grateful and thankful that this year went without much of a hitch! Being a part of this Newsletter Project for nearly a decade makes me want this to continue. I have experienced many positive things from this, and the last thing I want is for the Newsletter to crumble.

Along with the Newsletter, I am also evolving. I can look back over the years and see myself like the youth who are in it now. Time made me grow; now as an adult I feel it is an obligation to continue with the newsletter, and give back like Andrew Safer gave me. The youth in the Newsletter need some positive exposure in their lives, and I try to help. Myself and Ammy Purcell as co-facilitators try to help the youth any way we can. We feel we cannot leave — this is part of our lives. Even when we are forty we will look back and still see it as a part of us.

Ammy and myself helped Sandy through the transition. We wanted to make this an easy transition for him so this Newsletter will continue to grow and become a success. If it was hard for him he would quit — and we don't have anyone else!!

We had special guests come this year: Shauntay Grant, who showcased some of her poetry and make a killer beat on her African drums; Thom Swift, who played some tunes on his guitar, and we wrote a song! And also Mike deAdder who drew some of us like political cartoons which you see in the newspaper. Lastly thank you for the donation for the skybox seats for one of the Mooseheads hockey games! It was a blast! Without the guns and violence!

Power of Words

By Johnathon Walker

We can change our lives in a good way with words by standing up for ourselves and by having our own opinion. Employers like people who are not shy and can talk. Talking can also be bad because people talk behind your back or tell other people things you've said. You can get in trouble if you slip and tell someone something you shouldn't.

I think if I wasn't a smooth talker, I wouldn't have gotten very far in life.



By: Ammy Purcell

This year at the newsletter was a different experience for all involved. We were all quite saddened when we were told that Andrew wouldn't be joining us this year, and I speak for myself when I say I was kind of concerned for the fate of the project without Andrew's leadership and direction.

But I came to realize that he had to do what was best for him and his family by moving back to Newfoundland. At the same time I had great faith in his choice in who would take over. No one could ever replace Andrew — he was more than just a project director to many of the current and past youth in the project. He took on our issues as his own, and did everything in his power to help in any way needed, whether it be with school, living situations, or just someone to give simple advice.

He was, and still is, always there for us when we need him. Andrew has played such a positive role in my life personally and I know many other youth would say the same.

I thought I would have a hard time accepting someone new in his position. But when I met Sandy, I knew we would be okay. Sandy has put his own new spin on the project. Although we still follow the same outline as we did with Andrew, Sandy takes each session in a different direction, and it works.

We had some very special guests this year. Shauntay Grant taught us about spoken word and shared her gift of poetry with us. Thom Swift told his story about how he got involved with music and what it has done for his life. He also helped us write our very own song.

Michael deAdder talked to us about art and drawing. I even got a deAdder original of me!

I think we had a great year and it was a lot of fun. It feels good to see that the project will continue even though we don't have Andrew close by to share it with. But I know he knows that we are all in good hands with the guidance of Sandy and the help from Catherine, Clete, Lucas, and me.

I would like to thank Sandy for being brave enough to take on such a huge and challenging project, and for doing such a good job doing it. I would also like to thank Andrew, for teaching Sandy what he knows and giving the youth the chance to continue doing all the good things they do through this project.

This project means so much to me and I am so happy to see it thriving as much as it is, with the new youth that are involved and the ones who have returned from previous years.

This year has gone by so fast and I already can't wait to start again next year. This year was proof positive that change can be a good thing, you just have to accept it. When you do, it can truly surprise you.

Why



(Above) The Newsletter group get goofy at our Christmas party.

Why I came to the newsletter

By Krista MacVicar

I came to the newsletter tonight because I was anxious to see who was all going to be here and see all the new people. I also came to make some money because I need it, and it's a great opportunity to keep me busy and keep me involved.

What I want to accomplish this year is to be more open to what I have to say and more opinionated. I have a lot to say — I want people to know my situation and understand my own perspective on things going on in life today.

I also want this year to be a learning experience for other youth. I know there are youth out there feeling the way we do and are going through the same situations we do and they feel that they're alone.

The Voice is a way to show youth who don't have a chance to be in the Newsletter that they're not alone. There are other youth that used to feel the same way they feel but they can make it. The Newsletter is a way to communicate that.

I am excited to see how hard working and determined the youth are willing to be this year, because I know that all of us are hard workers

and each and everyone of us have a story to tell. I'm so happy I have the chance and the opportunity to be with these people who are going through and went through the same experiences I have been through.

I know I'm not alone and I have people who I can share my feelings and thoughts with people who feel and have the same thoughts as me.

By James Riley

The reason I came to the newsletter is because I have enjoyed it the last two years that I have been involved. I enjoy each and every vibe that I get from each and every person here. To me, we're all a big happy family. The things I would like to accomplish this year are making friendships and being able to write things that will touch people like never before.

By Nathan Perry

I came here to see my friends and meet new friends — and for the food and money.

My goal is to do better than last year and write more.

About care

The hardest part of living in care

By Haley Glaspy

I would have to say the hardest part about living in care would be when the agency does not let me see my mom or when my dad keeps my little sister away from me. This stuff really upsets me. I guess the way I cope is every time I do get to see my mom, things get better and we are getting closer too. So that gives me hope for the future. As for my dad and my little sister, it still really hurts but I do the best I can to look forward to the future. That always helps me cope better.

By James Riley

The hardest part I found about living in care is having to move from place to place, and having to deal with situations that bring me down to a lower standard. Having social workers, parents, teachers and group home staff telling you how to run your life is the main thing I found to be a pain. The way I try to cope with this problem is by talking to people I feel I have a connection with, and who understand or may have been in the same situations as I have been in.

Sometimes, I keep these feelings and the frustrations inside and try not to blow.

By Milly Bagnold

Living in care presents several problems in my day to day life. To me, the hardest part is not having a “family.” By family, I do not mean people who are simply related by blood or marriage. To me, family is people who love and genuinely care about one another. Sometimes, I don’t feel like I have that. Whenever I go to a friend’s house and see the way they interact with their parents and siblings, I can’t help but be jealous. I envy even the friends who have separated families because they still have people to call mom or dad; they still have people to call family. I especially get sad on holidays because they are a time of family, and I don’t have any. I get sad thinking about the future and how when I get married I won’t have anyone to give me away. Or I feel sad for my future children who will never know their grandparents on my side.

How has being in care changed my life in a positive way?

By Krista MacVicar

Being in care doesn’t affect me as much now as when I was younger.

When I was younger I was confused and angry, in pain and full of hate. Back then I didn’t know what “being in care” meant because I always felt that I would go back with my mother. But when that didn’t happen, I started acting out and asking a lot of questions. When my questions were left unanswered I only began getting worse. But now I realize my questions will never get the answers I was looking for so I ended up not asking anymore.

Being in care is a learning experience because I know what and how it feels to be put into a system that I and “we” have no control. It has made me look at things more differently now than I have. I’ve learned to not head down the same path as my mother and not to make her mistakes.

I am a better person now from being in care because if I wasn’t I don’t know what, who or where I would be. Being in care helped save my life.

How care has changed my life

By James Riley

Care has changed my life in so many ways that are positive. Care has drawn so many good people into being involved in my life: youth care workers, social workers, therapists, and teachers. All these people understand how my life in care may have been tough. They all know I’m trying to better my life for myself, and do what is right for me. I think care has made me learn to be a stronger person than who I may have been years back.

Living in care

By Hope Cochran

I had a rough experience over the summer this year. I believed one of my roommates blackmailed me and went rooting through my belongings in my room. Not to mention that no one is supposed to go in other people’s room period. My privacy was violated and publicized to others in the home, and also others outside of the home. For the longest time, I stopped writing. It was my way of expressing how I felt

about everything. It just so happens that this person found a very personal piece of writing that I wrote when I was very upset, so of course there were some things in there that had the potential to hurt other people, and it did.

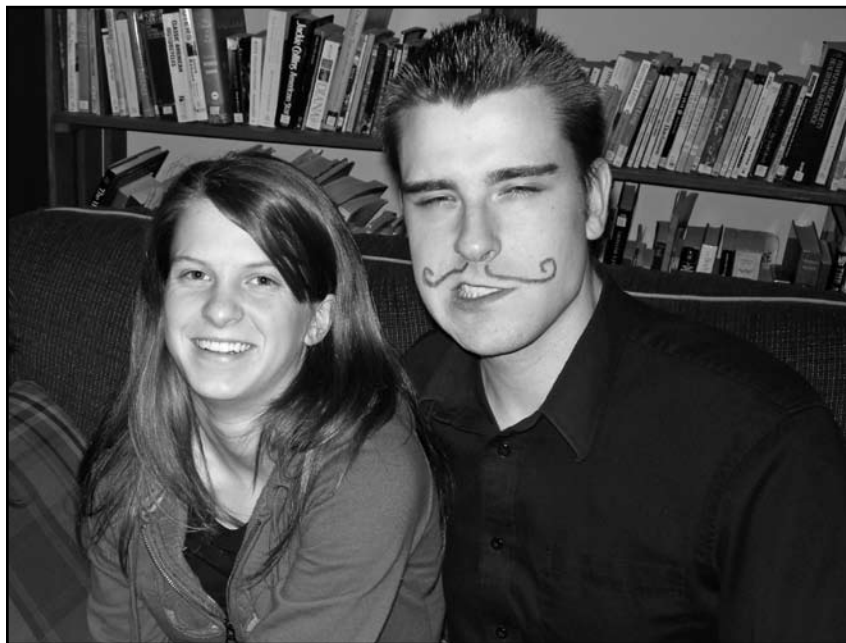
But since I've joined up with The Voice, my confidence in writing has improved. So even though something extremely unhappy happened, it turned out for the better in the end, and I've felt able to express myself in ways even better than before.

How I would improve living in care

By Nathan Perry

I make living in care a better experience for me by thinking positively. I've got two families who love me for who I am. What would improve the system to be more positive and beneficial to youth is just listening to what the children have to say. Child support workers should see the youth at least twice a month.

Positive memory of care



By Grace-Anne Timmins

I haven't been in care for very long, but I have many standout positive memories. I believe one was meeting all of the wonderful staff at Phoenix. I was so amazed by all of their personalities and how nicely they treated me. They made me feel very welcome, and instead of joining a program, I felt like I was joining a big family. They were also very supportive, and made sure I had everything I needed. This stands out to me because it's been a struggle to get where I am, and they helped so much. I feel like I can finally start over.

By Rachelle MacDonald

My best memory in care was meeting my mom and sisters. I started going out with this boy and one day I started talking about my mom and sisters. My boyfriend told me he knew them. So he told me where they lived and he took me the next day to see them. They were so happy to see me. I found out I had another sister, so now I have three. And one of my sisters was going to have a baby. That was the best day for me. I think if I never had gone to a group home I would never have found them.

By Johnathon Walker

A positive memory for me would have been when I first started to go into group homes and started getting clothing cheques and monthly allowances. I always had second hand clothes and then I got money for new clothes. This was awesome. Another memory about group homes was living in different cities and making lots of new friends. I never realized how many different people I knew until Facebook came out. I still talk to people in Amherst, Truro, Oxford, Sackville, Dartmouth, and Halifax. Being in care was positive and helped me get a lot with different resources. I never realized though until now that I'm getting older and need their resources. So thanks C.A.S. for giving me good advice and life skills.

By James Riley

Care has affected me in so many ways; it has made me look at things in a more positive way. I've been in care for more than seven years, so by now I know how the system works and runs. I've been from foster home to foster home, and from group home to group home. Now, I see how it may affect people in a negative way as well as in a positive way. The way I look at myself today, I see myself as a stronger and higher person than I might have been when I was younger. I have turned out to be a better person and look at things from a higher view.

Being in care has drawn a lot of people that really care about me into my life. Their support has helped me realize that there is a reason for things to happen and take place in the ways they do. Care, for me, has been half-good and half-bad. There are days I hate a lot of things about care but then, there are benefits from being in care. I thank all the people that continue to support and help me in my goals today.

(Above) Grace-Anne and Lucas at the Newsletter.

Collages



(Above) Krista and James explain their vision of the future through their collage.

Key messages in collage

By Krista MacVicar

The most important key messages we want people to know about our collage is that the artists represent who we want to look up too, who inspire and encourage us. They show us that they come from homes and families that were just like ours or worse. They also show us that they also came from nothing but turned that nothing into something. They're the same as us—the only difference is the money.

The inspiring words such as love, courage, determination, success, hope and excellence are all what helps us get through the very situations we face every day. They help us get through when we see them being determined to stay strong and make it. The words “get to know me” and “new beginnings” mean don't always judge a person by the color of their skin, clothes, hair or their outside appearance. Judge them by character. Take time to know that person, don't just judge what you see because you just might end up liking him or her.

“New beginnings” is saying that you can you start over and make the right choices for yourself and others. The four phrases we chose to stick out and also represent our collage are “All you have to do is dream”, “Succeeding against the odds”, “Live the life you deserve,” and “In this economy ...its best to give a gift that will never lose value.” We chose to use these phras-

es because they all have meaning. All four phrases speak to us in powerful expressions.

They all have different values and each one stands out supporting each and every one of us. “All you have to do is dream,” it's all about believing. It will get us the things we want and get us closer to our destinations. All we have to do is work hard and we will achieve. Succeeding against the odds means not to let anything or anyone get in your way or stop you from achieving your goal. You can't let anyone tell you that you can't or that you'll never amount to anything; you have to show them that you're willing and able to step out of your house with pride and acceptance. You have to prove to them that it's not about where you're at, it's where you're going.

“Live the life you deserve” is saying that everybody has the right to want and to live a better life. We all have the right to live that better life. But we can't live a better life without working hard to get it. No one deserves to have a life that is destructive. We should have the opportunity to live the life we deserve.

“In this economy..... It's best to give a gift that will never lose value” says you can give anyone a gift for an occasion and for a while it may seem like the perfect gift. But eventually it'll wear out and you'll get tired of it.

You want to give a gift that someone will cherish and remember always. I chose this phrase because it stood out to me the most. It spoke to me in a different way than the rest did. To me my collage is very inspirational because I have dreams and inspirations I would like to achieve. To me in the future I want to achieve greatness, and acceptance for myself.

Anyone can give you a gift from a store or give you a card and tell you that they care. But when they tell you they love you and mean it, it'll make you feel special and wanted. Love is a strong, powerful and passionate feeling that shouldn't be taken for granted. It's a gift that will last a life time.

If I tell someone I love them they're going to want me to mean it—if someone told me they loved me I would want them to mean it as well. When I look at my collage I see all of the above: the love, determination, strength, courage, hope and guidance. Guidance because all those things I see in my collage can help guide me to do things I want to succeed.

My collage is a gift because it's about life expectations. Life is a gift that will never lose value because it has love and encouragement.

Key Message

By Grace-Anne Timmins

I would like to be healthy in the future. This would mean I would like to quit smoking cigarettes altogether. This is a challenge, as they are very addictive and I have been smoking them for some time. I would also like to start to eat healthier and start my own organic farm and grow my own fruits and vegetables.

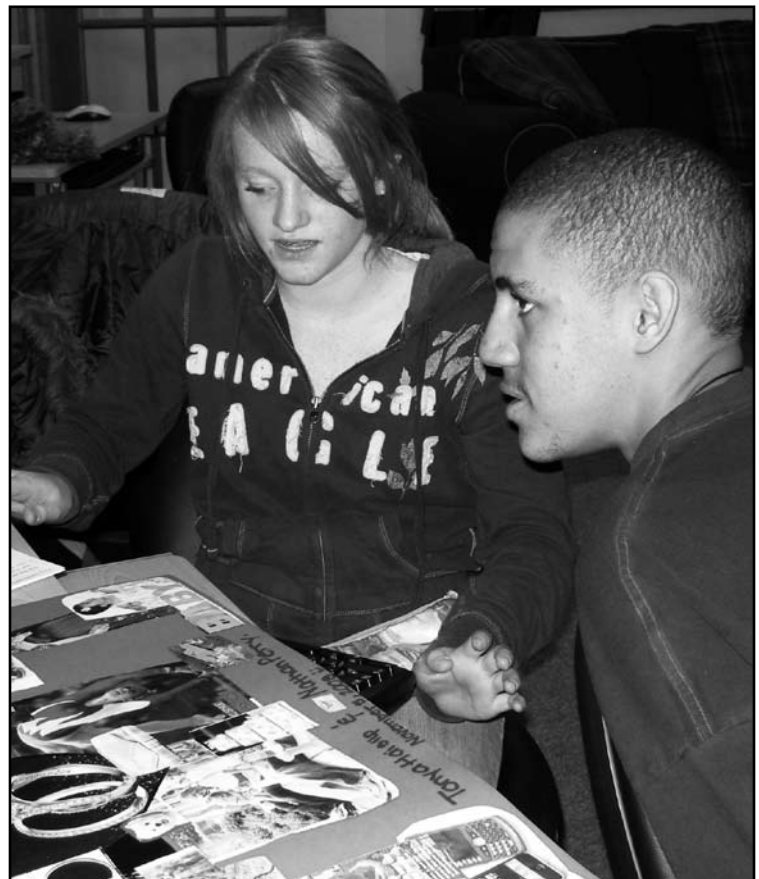
Another one of my key messages is to express that education is so important to me. To have a happy and successful career and life, you must have a good education to start off with. Otherwise, things will remain in despair for a long time.

Women also need to know that beauty comes from within and girls need to know that now more than ever. There is too much going on in the media right now that gives women the impression that they must be a certain size, weight or have the perfect face in order to be beautiful. And that couldn't be further from the truth.

Grace-Anne Timmins (*right*) explains her collage to the group.



Jasmine Mayo (*above*) working on her illustrations.



Tonya Haislip and Nathan Perry (*above*) discuss ideas for their collage.

Poetry

I Let Go

By James Riley

I let go, and let it fade away
This pain that I once had
It's time for me to move forward, live big, and dream
Wake up and then I see.

Times are hard, but then I let 'em go
I move forward and attempt
Then I fall, there's no one there to pick me up.

I sit there in a ball, and ask myself why
I try to move forward and try again
I know there will be a time when I see the light.

I let go, and let it fade away
This pain that I once had
It's time for me to move forward, live big, and dream
Wake up and then I see.

To Find My Wings and Soar

By Haley Glaspey

As time flies by there's always that moment
Where I just stop and remember what you said that day
You said "No matter what happens when I leave, I will
always stay in your life
I'm leaving her not you"
That's what you said to me
So yes, you lied
But part of it is my fault
It was my fault because I made the mistake
of letting only a few words sink into my heart
I made the mistake then, but you left me behind to pick
up the pieces
Now I trust nobody, not even myself
Now it's time for me to let go
Find my wings and SOAR.

My Voice

By Grace-Anne Timmins

My voice is a powerful wave
That crashes through cities and towns
It is a ray of sunshine
That breaks through darkness
It isn't always spoken
It can be written, or shown through a facial expression
My voice provides leadership,
A comforting home for those who feel misunderstood
Or a place for people to disagree with me
No one can shake it from me
No one can make me stop using it
This is my opinion, expression, emotion and experience
You can ignore it if you like
But you will never be able to mute it

By Rebecca Moore

I am happy.
Time is in my favour.
Productivity and positivity are my daily goals.
Thinking right and doing good.
I respect myself and others.
I am a free individual.
I have my own mind,
My own thoughts,
My own goals.
My own morals.
I will support those who need help.
I am fully aware of my personal power.

By Rebecca Moore

Thank you to my Creator
Thank you for my heart, which pumps my blood throughout my whole body.
Thank you for my mind's thoughts, which are directly connected to my soul.
Thank you for my speech, which allows me to communicate and express myself.
Thank you for my legs, which take me anywhere I need to go.
Thank you for my lungs, which allow me to breathe the sweet breath of life.

A Voice Told Me

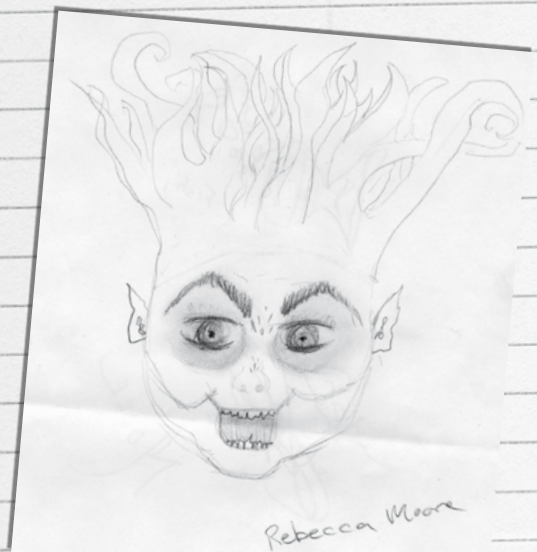
By Nathan Perry

A voice told me that you will be all right
A voice told me that you will be there when I fall
A voice told me that you will say "I'm happy for you"
A voice told me that you will be sad when I leave
A voice told me you are my Family.

A Diversity of Colors

By Tonya Haislip

RED is love, AIDS and anger.
ORANGE is autumn, Asia and bright.
YELLOW is sunshine, laughter and life.
GREEN is grassy hills, shyness and Earth.
BLUE is the ocean, sorrow and the vast sky.
PURPLE is violets, grapes and wine.
RAINBOW is peace, serenity and diversity.



The Life I've Been Through

By Mary MacLeod

I always feel that no one can feel what I feel when I move from home to home.
Different people liking me or hating me for the things I don't do, the drugs I do, the people I hang
with and the trouble I get into.
It's hard sometimes but I guess I can get through.
I used to be a better person but I guess I changed.

Music

By James Riley

Music means so much to me. Without music, I wouldn't be me. Music is how I express myself, and show who I am. Music is just one of the ways I express myself. "Unconditional Love" by Tupac is a song that I grow from. It makes me think of what my life is now. One of my favourite verses from the song is:

*"Come listen to my truest thoughts, my truest feelings
All my peers doing years beyond drug dealing
How many caskets can we witness
Before we see it's hard to live
This life without God, so we must ask forgiveness
Ask mama why god deserved to die
Witness the tears falling free from my eyes
Before she could reply"*

Music can create power for positive change in our world because it lets you express your thoughts, feelings and emotions. No matter how you write music or perform it, there is never a wrong way. When you write down your words on paper, that means something to you. You know what you're writing. Not everyone needs to understand the meaning and concept of what you're writing. I feel music is free verse that lets you express yourself in the ways that set you free.

By Jasmine Mayo

Music means a lot to my life. When I get mad or sad I can just go in a quiet place, turn my jamz on and relax.

Music also helps me cope with hard things in my life. I have never really had a specific song change anything in my life or made me think of anything differently.

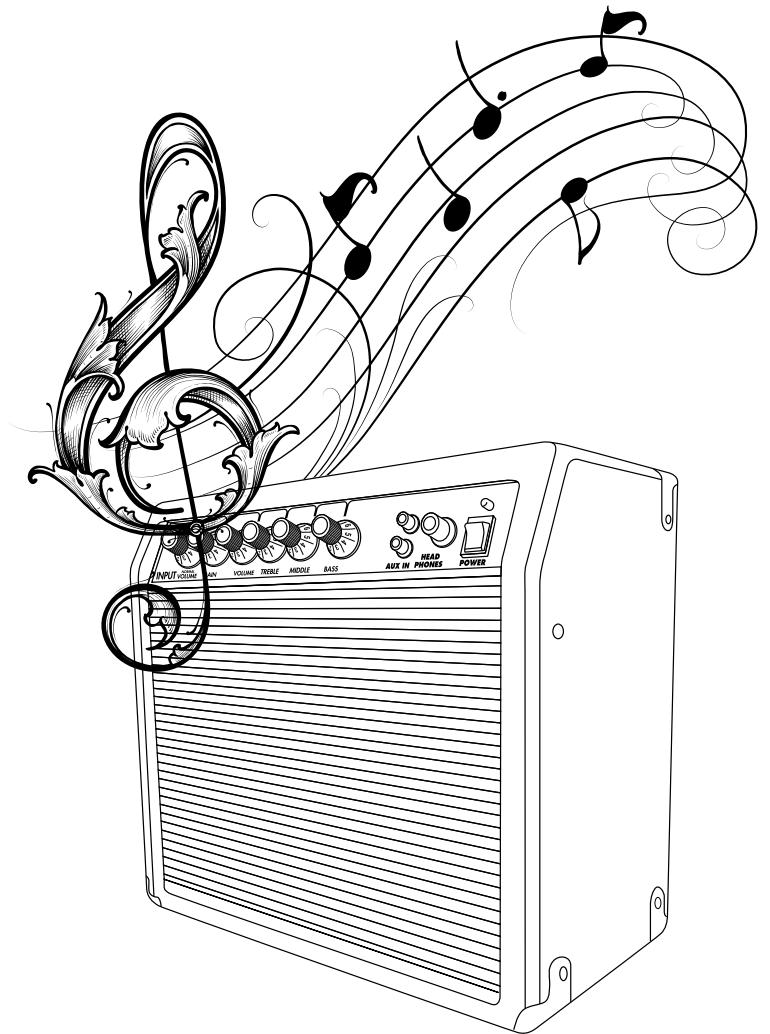
Music can be a power for positive change in the world because it might help someone escape their situations they might be in that moment.

Some people also relate to some of their music they listen to, and sometimes that's just what they need.

The singers I like the most and relate to are 2pac and Keyshia Cole.

By Krista MacVicar

To me music is a form of soul, culture, fun, pain, deep concentration and thought. R & B is all about expression and feeling. It takes a lot of work and energy and time to be an R & B singer. It's about vocals, rhythm, talent and confidence. Rap is about self expression. It tells a lot about a person. It takes skill and rhythm as well. It's kind of like story telling. When a rapper raps they're telling a story. Anybody can rap but you have to be on beat and on point. You have to make sure your audience is following along with you —they can't get lost in what you're trying to express to them. You have to keep their focus and attention.



Reading

By Tonya Haislip

I think that reading is one of the most important and rewarding things a person could do. Reading helps build one's vocabulary and broaden their general knowledge. Wherever one may go, whether it be 1000 miles away or two, reading is everywhere. On signs, billboards, books, magazines, and the newspaper; reading affects everyone, young or old.

To me, reading is a way to escape. Whenever I am sad, bored or worried I can pick up a book and forget everything. I love opening a new book and getting so immersed in the story that I can't stop reading.

I love getting to know, and falling in love, with the characters. Sometimes it amazes me how much compassion I have for fictional characters. This is particularly so in the case of the Harry Potter series. I have followed the story of the boy wizard since the first novel was released in 1997. Over the years, the books have made me laugh, cry and smile. I think that is what makes a great book.

I enjoy most genres of books. One of my favorite books is *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini. This book is a story of betrayal, hope, and love. It was one of the more graphic novels that I have read. I think this added to its allure. I thoroughly enjoyed it, and would enjoy reading it again. If I could write a book myself, I would most likely write a work of fiction. However, I think it would be interesting to write the story of my life thus far.

A few of my favorite books include: *The Kite Runner*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Ellen Ullman's *The Bug*, and *Mozart's Sister*.

By James Riley

Reading is very important as it helps us become stronger learners. I've read many good books but my fave of all has to be the *The Rainbow Kite*. I'd found that this book made me think.

I enjoy books where you become the character, and ones that make you think.

If I were to write a book, it would be about my life and what it has become today.

By Jasmine Mayo

I think reading is very important because it helps you learn more things.

One good book I read was *Brianna's Gift*. It was a really interesting book. I like reading books with lots of action to keep my mind open and busy. I like sad books to a certain extent, because they touch my heart.

I would like to write a book on how my life is, and what I would change about my life and what I want in life. There are a lot of people out there who can relate to my lifestyle and how I live it.

By Johnathon Walker

Reading is important because it keeps your brain going.

My favorite books are *I hope they serve beer in hell* by Tucker Max, *Omerta* by Mario Puzo, *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo, and *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*.

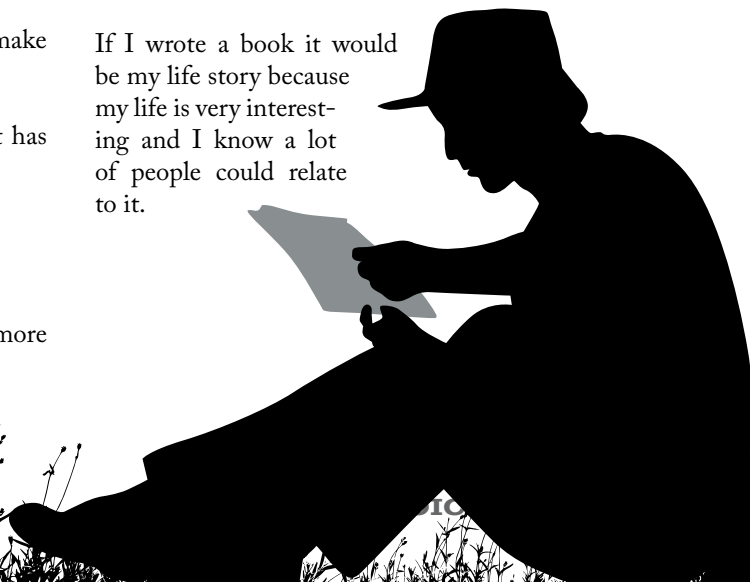
I enjoy crime novels and true stories. If I ever wrote a book it would be about my life because I have had a lot of different experiences, some good, some bad. I think reading is also a good way to get tired and fall asleep.

By Rachelle MacDonald

I think reading is important because the more you read, the more you learn and catch on to words you don't know. Reading can also give you a good imagination.

A good book I liked was *Somebody's Daughter* by Phonse Jes-some. The kind of books I like are crime books because they relate to me.

If I wrote a book it would be my life story because my life is very interesting and I know a lot of people could relate to it.



Role Models

My Role Model

By Jasmine Mayo

My role model is my beautiful Grandmother. I look up to her for everything and anything. I love my Grandmother with all my heart and soul; she taught me right from wrong. If it wasn't for my Grandmother I don't know what would have happened. I go to my Grandmother for everything, because she has the best advice. I feel this way about my Grandmother because she's special to me, and means the world to me. I've learned how much my family really does mean to me and my life.

By Nathan Perry

I have some role models and there can be only one that can stand as the number one role model. That's my Dad because he taught me to hunt and he was a father figure. He helps me all the time and he is always there for me when I need him. Once he told me to put all the people and things on the back burner and focus on my future and education. And that's why my Dad is my role model — he always makes me feel special when he says "I'm proud of you and that's my son".

By James Riley

Someone that I consider a role model to me is my Mother. I look up to my Mom because she's the strongest person I know. My Mom has been through a lot, going in and out of the hospital. Last year, my Mom almost died on me. But every time, she always seems to bounce back. I wish I could bounce back when things get rough for me, too. My Mom is my biggest role model.

By Tonya Haislip

There are several people in my life that have the qualities of a great role model. However the person that I admire most is my Grandmother, Eileen Humphrey. Eileen is everything that I aspire to be when I grow up. She is loving, kind and the most compassionate person I have ever had the opportunity to meet. Whenever I am sick she gives me a warm cup of tea and a warm place to rest my head. When I am sad, she gives me a shoulder to cry on and an ear to talk to. I hope when I grow up I can be a fraction of the person that she is.

My Social Worker

By Grace-Anne Timmins

Committed
Dedicated
Helpful
Caring
Supportive

My social worker is such a dedicated woman. She has many caseloads and I sometimes wonder how she stays sane. It can be frustrating, because sometimes she is very hard to get a hold of. However, she is very good at dealing with emergencies. She deals with many youth across HRM and I know she does her best with each one. She never gives up on anyone and she enjoys spending time with her youth.

(Right) Hon. Cecil P. Clarke, Attorney General and Minister of Justice for Nova Scotia, presented Rebecca Moore with the Youth Crime Prevention award at the Crime Preventions Symposium on April 2, 2009.



Guests

Mike deAdder

By Tonya Haislip



I thought Mike has an amazing talent, and am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with him. I really enjoyed watching him create a work of art from nothing. Like a true artist he took a blank canvas — or in our case a blank sheet of paper and a marker — and he created. I couldn't believe how talented he was and how whatever he was trying to draw was identical to what it was supposed to be. I also enjoyed the book of his work. I admire that he can take the more serious world issues and lighten them up and make them funny. I also admire that he has the courage to put his more eye-raising comics out there to the public. He must get a lot of grief for some of them, but what he is doing is really good.

Thom Swift

By Grace-Anne Timmins

I had a great time when Thom Swift came to the *Voice*. He was a fresh face to join us for an evening, and I'm really glad he came. He shared with us not only his music, but the background of it. It was nice to see the other youth come out of their shell and enjoy the blues music he played, even though it isn't typically what we all would listen to.



I think everyone felt a connection with Thom when he spoke of his past career working in correctional facilities. He talked about how he

found it to be too stressful, and he didn't like seeing bad things and bad people all the time. He said that it wasn't good for the mind to always be looking at the negative. So surprisingly, he left a good paying job with an even better pension to pursue his passion for music. After living with a professional musician for some time, I know that the money is definitely not what it should be. It can be a struggle to find gigs around town. So I can really appreciate what Thom did, because it seems he was more concerned about what he wanted to do rather than how much money he would be paid doing it.

Thom was definitely one of the best special guests we had at the newsletter this year, and I think I can speak for everyone when I say that I had a really fun time!

Shauntay Grant

By James Riley

One of the guest speakers who came to share their time and teach us a little bit more about poetry was Shauntay Grant. Shauntay is a poet who expresses herself in so many different ways through rhythm, sound and expression. I feel Shauntay taught us how to express ourselves in a way that will show the meaning of what we write in poetry in a way that will catch the reader's eye. Shauntay's presentation made me like poetry more — now knowing there are many different ways of expressing myself through sound, dance and instruments.



Michael deAdder produces award-winning editorial cartoons for the national Metro newspapers, the Moncton Times & Transcript, Maclean's, The Hill Times and is syndicated throughout North America.

Thom Swift is a Halifax-based singer-songwriter. His debut solo album Into the Dirt won an East Coast Music Award, a national Maple Blues award and CBC's Galaxie Rising Star award.

Shauntay Grant is a Halifax-based poet, writer, musician and CBC radio broadcaster. She was recently named Halifax's poet laureate and won an Atlantic book Award for her wonderful children's book Up Home.

Travel

Anywhere in the world

By Haley Glaspey

If I could go anywhere in the whole world, it would be Hollywood. I would bring a digital camera, cell phone, calling cards and my girl Kristyn — and definitely buy lots of new clothes. If I ever did go to Hollywood, I would try to meet a lot of famous people. Hollywood would be the best place for me to go because it's hot, beautiful, big, and busy. Sometimes I think Hollywood is too hot and busy for me but then again I like people, especially famous ones. The first thing I would do is look for my favourite stars — Pretty Ricky, Plise, Ciara, Ludacris, The Game and Bow Wow. That is my dream place to go.

Travel

By Jasmine Mayo

If I could travel anywhere in the world it would be Miami, Florida because it's really pretty and hot. There's always something to do there, and you can just get your mind off things. I would bring my best friend with me, and I would bring lots of money. I wouldn't bring any clothes down, just go shopping as soon as I got there. I would learn to get used to the warmth down there and no more coldness, like where I'm at now.

Travel

By Tonya Haislip

If I could travel anywhere in this amazing world of ours, I would travel to the lands of Greece. I would love to visit Athens, the city of the Olympic idea. I would love to visit the temples of the Acropolis as well as the Parthenon and the temple of Apertor Mike. I spent a great deal of time learning about Greek culture and way of life in school. I would love to have the opportunity to experience it first hand. If I traveled there, I would like to go with a small group of friends or maybe even alone. I think it would be a great place to make memories with my friends before we all graduate and go our separate ways.

Anywhere

By Rachelle MacDonald

If I could go anywhere, I would go to Hawaii. I would bring my clothes, laptop, family, boyfriend and that's it. I would lay out in the hot sun and get a tan.



(Right) Taking in the Circus. James, Grace-Anne, Tonya, Rebecca and Nathan (in front) after a performance of Circus Circle in Motion at Neptune Theatre.

UnCommon Law

By Haley Glaspey

Uncommon Law was created to bring youth, the police, and lawyers together to talk about what needs to happen to improve things.

I think it might have helped out a lot of people because they got to put in their word. Uncommon Law to me was just sitting down and listening to people's ideas and thoughts. There was one boy who gave a speech on his whole life in care: it was great but also sad at the same time. Uncommon Law held up some pretty good ideas that made me think. And I also thought more people should have gone up on stage and tell a little bit more of their life, but other than that I enjoyed the Uncommon Law.

By Rachelle MacDonald

I had a lot of fun and met some new people. I got to hear what everyone thought and had to say to one another. I got to say what I wanted to say.

By Jasmine Mayo

Uncommon Law brought together police officers, lawyers, youth and youth care workers to talk about a lot of issues that are a problem in group homes and foster homes. I thought it was very well organized and thorough. I also thought that it was very moving, impressive, amazing and insightful. I thought it was all these things because it just goes to show what happens when people come together and try to talk about issues that they've experienced and witnessed in their life. At least that's how I perceived it. I think it could have been improved if there were more people there to support the group and to talk about more issues.



(Above) Jasmine, Haley and Rachelle at the Uncommon Law 3 session at the Holiday Inn in Dartmouth. The event was organized by the Nova Scotia Barrister's Society to bring together youth and members of the legal profession to speak, listen and learn from each other.



Chef

By Nathan Perry



I see myself as a chef in the future because I like to cook everything, well mostly everything. As they say, everything you cook, you eat. And you know I love eating!

(Left) Krista checks out the hospitality fridge in the executive box during the Moosehead's hockey game attended by several of the newsletter youth in December.



Happiness

...what brightens my day

By James Riley

A lot of things tend to make me happy. Mostly, I find happiness in being around people that make me happy — outings with family and friends, memories that we hold together and the things that make my day better.

By Jasmine Mayo

My happiness comes from my two baby sisters. They bring the sunlight to my stormy days and nights. They look up to me and I love that. It's the best thing in life having two younger girls look up to you for everything.

They learn from my responsibilities to be a good person and to stick up for yourself no matter what's going on. I love having my sisters close to me, and to know what's going on with me in the situations I'm going through. I find my happiness in love of family.

By Tonya Haislip

Happiness is one of the many emotions that everyone either has had the chance to experience, experiences daily, or will come to experience. I think that happiness may, in fact be the most important feeling a person could have. It is a feeling that everyone strives to achieve, yet, for the most part, people seem to only get a glimpse of it.

By Nathan Perry

What makes me happy? When I'm looking around seeing my friends and family, seeing them enjoy themselves. I'm happy when my friends are laughing, and I tell them jokes that make them laugh. I have three brothers who are always there to make me smile. And my mom and dad always make me smile because all the things they do for me. It makes me feel special like a king. So that's what makes me happy.



By Johnathon Walker

A time I was happy was when I went camping. There were six of my friends and we were in Amherst. I had never really gone anywhere with friends on a trip because my group homes wouldn't let me go — it was awesome. The people I was with took me to a random spot in the woods and there was a river and waterfall, which was cool. We made a fire and all slept outside. Nobody slept until 4 or 5 am.

On the walk out we got lost but it was kinda funny and freaky at the same time. I got hooked on camping and have gone back to that place since then.



By Grace-Anne Timmins

I find happiness in helping others, knowing that I can bring joy to other people in their lives with something as simple as a smile or a hug. I recently found that this is what I want to spend my life doing. My goal is to be really successful and be happy doing it. I actually did some fundraising over the weekend for the orphanage that I am going to visit in Mexico, and the feedback I received was overwhelming! Everyone said I was grinning ear to ear. I didn't notice, I was having too much fun. Even though I was extremely exhausted by the end of the day, I really felt like I made a difference. I feel as though making the global community more of a better place is what truly makes me happy.

My little sister

By Haley Glaspey

I would have to say that my little sister Hannah makes me happy the most. I love how much she looks up to me for guidance. I also love how she always wants to see me and that she goes to school and is coping well with our parents' break up. I really think that if I start having visits with her, spend more time with her and get to know her better I will be able to start being happier. I KNOW I would be happier because I need something good to look forward. I'm definitely looking forward to this because I only have one sister and I'll always have only one sister. If I don't get to know her soon she will be shut out of my life just like everybody else has.

A huge Thank you

to our sponsors.
You make all the
difference in the world!



**Halifax Youth
Foundation**



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

Individuals:

Lorelle Baxter – Department of Community Services, Transportation logistics
Barbara Blouin – Board Member
Novalee Buchan – Driver
Michael deAdder – Guest speaker (illustration)
Clete Deschamps – Youth worker
Sonya Ferrara – Board member
Nick Field – Department of Community Services, Halifax
Shauntay Grant – Guest speaker (spoken word)
Emma Halpern – Nova Scotia Barrister's Society
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Chris Scott – Nova Scotia Community College
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Thom Swift – Guest speaker (music)
Mark Szpakowski – Web training instructor
Bill Turpin – Chairman of the Board
Catherine Young – Volunteer

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Alderney Landing Theatre – Newsletter Launch venue
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Halifax Region Children's Aid Foundation – Sponsor
Halifax Youth Foundation – Sponsor
Liberated Networks – Web hosting
Nova Scotia Community College (Institute of Technology) – Computer lab
Nova Scotia Department of Community Services – Primary sponsor
Nova Scotia Department of Education – Sponsor
Nova Trophy – Certificate plaques
Office of the Ombudsman – Newsletter distribution
Phoenix Learning and Employment Centre – Meeting space, résumé instruction
Youth Employability Project – Sponsor & jobs liaison
Youth Secretariat – Newsletter distribution

...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



Left to right, starting from the top:
Jasmine Mayo, Nathan Perry, Haley Glaspey, James Riley, Rachelle MacDonald, Tonya Haislip, Rebecca Moore, Grace-Anne Timmins, Krista MacVicar, Lucas Kreft, Ammy Purcell, Sandy MacDonald, Catherine Young, Clete DesChamps.

Photos by Jeff Harper.