

the VOICE

ISSUE 12 | YOUTH IN CARE NEWSLETTER PROJECT | MAY 2012





(Top) Ammy speaks to the audience at the launch of the 2011 Newsletter Project at the Alderney Landing Theatre. (Middle left) Dr. Margaret Casey of the Halifax Region Children's Aid Foundation presents award to Sasha. (Middle right) Stefan, Lucas and Becky in the green room backstage before launch. (Bottom left) Ashton backstage. (Bottom right) Andrew Safer presents special award to Jennifer Robichaud. (photos by Mike Dembeck)

WELCOME



Our own little family **Sandy MacDonald, Executive director**

The notion of family runs through the Newsletter Project, whether it's discussion about family lost, or dysfunctional or disconnected or reunited or even starting anew. It's almost never about the traditional concept of family but still the discussion remains a central issue for the youth participating in the project.

We usually have little sway over how family dynamics play out with the young people in our group. But the very fact they are participating in this Newsletter Project means they are away from the family they started out with. Some live with foster families, some in small group homes in the city or perhaps have been adopted into a welcoming family.

In some small way our Newsletter group serves as a once-a-week family. It's a place to connect for support, to freely talk about the stresses and joys of life, to laugh with each other and even occasionally to cry.

Like any family, it's not perfect. We fall short sometimes in providing all the youth need. We sometimes miss cues when they need a little extra support or the occasional push from behind.

But as the year unfolds through the 30 sessions of the program, the youth come to gain confidence in themselves and the unity of the group. They open up about important issues through the frank discussions around our table and in their writing for the Newsletter.

Perhaps their most powerful expression of what's really roiling inside their heads is through their heart-on-the-sleeve poetry. I'm pleased that we've been able to dedicate a couple of pages of *The Voice* to showcasing their lovely and insightful poems.

Since our friend Shauntay Grant first came to talk about poetry and spoken word to the Newsletter group, they have embraced the medium whole-heartedly. Her visits to the group are much anticipated and a highlight of our year.

We also had a powerful visit from author and former youth in care Linda Leblanc. I first encountered Linda through her book *I Was That Foster Kid*. I was so moved by her honest and soul-baring telling of her life story in care that I asked her to come to speak to our group. Her sometimes bleak tale is heartbreaking, but ultimately uplifting as she has been able to overcome her many struggles to become a writer and good mother.

The group seized some opportunities to get into the community and enjoy some of what Halifax has to offer. We went skating on the Oval one freezing evening, and took in a Rainmen basketball game.

The group went to a fascinating CommUNITY poetry slam at the Company House, and enjoyed a special workshop about creative inspiration facilitated by the wonderful Sheree Fitch.

Like any family, some of our members have left the cozy nest to move onto the next phase of their life. Lucas Kreft, whose looming presence was simply part of the Newsletter for the past ten years, uprooted in the winter and moved to Edmonton to pursue work possibilities. We've missed him dearly and wish him well.

George Dean came to the Newsletter last year as an adult volunteer. His own journey as a youth in care was wrought with hardship. He was able to bring a positive attitude and an insight into the challenges of living in care to the group. After graduating from college in the spring with a diploma in child and youth care studies, George has taken a job in northern Alberta working with social services there. We wish him well.

So as another successful year comes to a close, I'd like to thank all the fine folks who make this program work, including the great staff at Phoenix Leaning and Employment Centre, our funding sponsors, our dedicated Board of Directors, the three program facilitators Ammy Purcell, Becky Moore and Lucas Kreft, and youth alternative worker Clete Deschamps.

Congratulations on another edition of *The Voice*!

On behalf of the Government of Nova Scotia, I commend you, the authors and voices behind *The Voice*, for your work and dedication to the 2012 newsletter. Your words and talent make this enriching project possible. Your efforts are not only making positive differences in your lives, but also in the lives of your peers and friends.

The Department of Community Services is a proud supporter of *The Voice* and wishes the project continued success.

The Hon. Denise Peterson-Rafuse
Minister of Community Services

WHY I CAME TO THE NEWSLETTER

By Alex Randolph



I came to the Newsletter to tell people my story and hear others so I don't think that I am the only person that is going through all of this.

I also came so that I can talk to people that actually understand where I am coming from because they went through some of the same stuff.

By Nathan Perry



I came to the Newsletter because I really enjoy coming to meet new and old friends and I would like to play a role in this program.

By Jillisa Nickerson



I come from a disturbing background — one where you're always alone and are too scared to speak up. A background where you're confused and don't know who you are or where you fit in.

Writing lets me be everything I never was, and everything I want to be. It helps me look back and smile when all I want to do is cry. It helps me look at myself and try to respect what I see.

When I heard about *The Voice*, I was ecstatic. It was everything I loved — poetry, writing and meeting other kids who are in the same position as me. I longed to be part of something. Something special.

I hope at the end of the year I have something to look back on and smile instead of frown. I hope to have made good relationships with new people. I hope to improve my writing and become a better poet.

This is something I really want to do. It's one of the first things I've been interested in for a while. I'm positive I'm going to give my all to make this one of the best years the Newsletter has ever experienced. I'm excited to start this awesome journey with all these amazing people.

By Manda Jackson



I came back to the Newsletter again for the fifth time. I love meeting new faces. I've been through a lot in my years of being in care.

In a way I think group homes suck. The staff always wanna know where I am and they think they're better than me. But I realize now it was only for my safety.

I miss my family. Where's my sister? Where's my brother? There's so much that sucks about care but when I come to the Newsletter I can express myself and no one judges me.

I can actually help someone. I can come here and share my experiences and my past so others know they're not alone and they can be open here so everyone knows, everyone can help everyone!

By Sasha Sahabandu



I came back to the Newsletter this year because when I joined it last year, I found it helped me a lot. I felt I was helping teens and I felt I was helping whoever read *The Voice* who had gone through what I went through.

I love to write and I thought it would be fun to meet new people who have similar stories as I do.

I found the Newsletter helped me through a lot. It helped me with my writing and helped me be a better person.

By Ashton Glasgow



I came to the Newsletter because when I was younger I used to read a lot and I came across this magazine called *The Voice* so I picked it up and started reading it. I kept coming across this name Ashley Glasgow. I was like, hold on, that is my sister's name. I thought it must be a different Ashley but then I looked at the back and there she was.

I was like, wow my sister was really in this magazine. If my sister had the courage to join this Newsletter, 'cause that is a big step for her, then I could too.

So I joined and I have been in the Newsletter for three years now and I love it... I'm gonna be more positive this year and not start any problems. The main reason I wanted to go is because I needed a little extra money to put in my pocket but when I went I started liking it for more than just the money. I started liking the people and group situations. :)

WHY I CAME TO THE NEWSLETTER

By Jaydee Riley



Coming into the Newsletter this year I'm looking at things from a different view. I'm looking at myself as a role model to the new youth, being somebody they can look up to.

As well, I'm looking to take on a bigger role in helping out with some of this year's sessions. I'm hoping I gain more of a front seat, than just to be seen as youth.

I'm wanting the chance to be able to share my ideas and maybe even run a session. I'm strongly looking forward to meeting new people, and sharing my experiences.

By Fallynn Brooks



I attend the Newsletter because writing is important to me and it gets my opinion heard. It makes me feel like my words can help people, remind them (even though they most likely have heard it a lot before) that whatever it is they're going through, they're not alone in it.

The Newsletter is something that helps me cope with everything that's happened to me over the recent past, because the people that are in it listen to me and understand — almost as if they were going through it themselves. The Newsletter kind of makes us all a family.

I don't really aim to accomplish anything at the Newsletter. I write words and let people read them — that's pretty much what I do every day.

OUT & ABOUT

Dalhousie School of Social Work

By Stefan Ilsley

In January three of the youth from the Newsletter project went to speak with some first-year Dalhousie University social work students to talk about our experiences growing up in care.

While in preparation I had stressed about speaking in front of the first year students because I have never spoken in front of university students. But once we started talking to the students I became more and more talkative and decided to stay standing up and talking a little too much, in my opinion.

While I was up in front of the students I discussed my experiences, my feelings about some social workers, and the way some things have gone astray.

This was one of the best experiences for me.

(Stefan was joined by Jaydee and Fallyn, who each spoke very powerfully about their life experiences and issues around living in care. Professor Marion Brown, who teaches the first year students, was very impressed with their presentation and asked youth from the Newsletter Project to come again next year to speak to the Dal social work program.)

Youth Achievement Awards

By Fallyn Brooks

The Youth Achievement Awards is an awards ceremony held annually for youth in care of the government who have accomplished outstanding achievements and overall are a pleasure to be around.

I, and a few other members of the Newsletter Project, attended the YAA in Truro in mid-November. Hearing everyone's different stories was amazing. It really is nice to see that kids like me, who were taken from their home and put in a place with strangers, can still make accomplishments like that.

(Ed. Note: Fallyn and Jennifer Robichaud both received Nova Scotia Council of the Family Youth Achievement Awards this year, as well as Shakisha Downey and Michaela Newton, who had been in the Newsletter before.)

FACILITATORS' MESSAGES

Is it Wednesday yet?

By Ammy Purcell



There have been a lot of changes in my life this year. But one thing I think will never change is coming to the Newsletter Project every Wednesday night. I really look forward to it. I may be tired from working all day but as soon as I walk into that room I get a second wind that takes me right through to bedtime.

Last summer I started a new job that was kind of a lifestyle change for me. I was used to working evenings and always having Wednesdays off to come to the Newsletter. But with this new job I work mornings all week. I didn't think I would be able to do both but I had to try and it's really not so hard.

This group has such a great vibe and energy that it wouldn't matter if I hadn't slept in a week, I would still feel great after one of our Wednesday night sessions. Although I have had to take on a lot more responsibility at my regular day job, and a bit more at the Newsletter with Lucas leaving for bigger and better things in Alberta and Becky being busy with school, I still feel great about everything that has happened this year.

The group has been great this year, lots of fun and laughter. It really doesn't matter how bad my day was somehow these guys always brighten my day — whether it's Breanna's laugh, Sasha's smile, Ashton's crazy jumping around, or someone's great check-in story. Something always happens here that just makes my day so much better.

Everyone knows that I am completely in love with this program. It doesn't matter how many things in my life change, my Wednesday nights will always be booked. See ya next year ;)

Facilitator's message

By Lucas Kreft



I am sorry to have left the Newsletter Project after 10 years being a part of it. But I am thankful to have helped and inspired the youth participating in the project.

I recently moved to Edmonton, Alberta to have new opportunities with my business, and gain experience along the way! One of the leading reasons I moved was because my brother lives in Edmonton. This was a time in my life when I wanted to be with him. Family is most important to anyone's life, and it was an amazing experience seeing him for the first time in 16 years.

I am very happy to have made the decision to go to Edmonton, reconnect with my brother and start the first chapter working with international business partners from around the world designing my art/concepts across Canada, the Middle East and Asia. I always knew that I would be successful in my life.

I gained many skills through Andrew Safer, Sandy MacDonald and other people and friends who make the Newsletter a success. I even learned from the youth when I was facilitating the Newsletter sessions. No one ever gave up on me growing up in foster care, and it was my goal to give back and help.

I never gave up on my dreams. Even when at times things may have seemed unrealistic, I always continued pushing.

Please don't ever give up on your dreams, even if there might be people that say you can't do it. Prove them wrong!!



Rebecca Moore



Rebecca returned for another year as a program facilitator, balancing her commitment to the Newsletter Project with her busy course load at Dalhousie University. Her calm demeanor and wise life experience always brings a positive element to our weekly sessions.

(Left) Alex, Breanna, Manda and Jaydee at the weekly Newsletter meeting

FRIENDSHIP

By Jennifer Robichaud



Friendship honestly meant very little until two years ago. I didn't have a single person I could call a friend. More recently I have come to value certain individuals but my heart and mind are hesitant to call them friends after all my years of betrayal.

The most important part of a friendship is to protect them and treat them as family, because in a way they are.

By Breanna Latter



Friendship means a lot to me. I have a really close friend and we have been friends since grade four.

I feel like I can tell her everything. She is always there for me and I think that is the whole point of friendship — always having a person that you can count on and knowing that they will always be there for you, someone you can tell your secrets to.

The most important part of being a friend is always being there for them and just knowing you will always have their back, even when you have your ups and downs.

In the end, I know we will always be friends — that's the most important part to me.

By Ashton Glasgow

I could honestly not live if there was no such thing as friendship! My friends are my Life! I can vent to my friends and we can exchange our opinions and what not! The most important thing in a friendship is trust!

By Sasha Sahabandu

What is friendship?
The one who knows all your secrets?
Friendship to me is the one who came and never left.
The person who has seen you at your worst and at your best
Who caught you when you fell
I have many friends
But not many real friends
The kind where you can tell absolutely everything
And you know that they'll never tell a soul
Friendship is all about trust
Trust is a big part of friendship
Without trust, there is no real friendship
And once you lose trust
It's damn hard to get it back

By Fallynn Brooks

What does friendship mean? Friendship is a bond that can't be broken by something as silly as distance or an argument. Friendship is when you know you have someone you can talk to about anything and you're willing to do anything for them.

Friendship is when you have someone that makes you laugh so hard you make absolutely no sound. So you sit there clapping like a mentally disturbed seal.

Friendship is when you have such amazing memories that you could relive them over and over and still laugh as hard as when it happened.

Friendship doesn't care about age or race or "category of style" or any of the other things the rest of the whole wide world seems to be so keen on. Friends can't get rid of life's storms, but they definitely dance with you in the puddles. They don't give you complete happiness or make your life perfect because if we never had to go through things, we would never grow.

Friends pick you up out of your dark holes when you can't climb out by yourself. They're a pillow when you need to cry and they're your connection when you hide.

I have one really good friend. We've known each other for about two years. I know I can trust them with anything. They have an answer for every single one of my crazy questions I fire at them, and they helped convince me to come into care in the first place.

I love my best friend for the person they are and they love me too. Partners in crime will leave their mark!

By Alexandra Randolph

Friendship means honesty and having someone to talk to and to help when you are in need.



Drawing by Breanna Latter

LIVING IN CARE

The hardest part of living in care

By Breanna Latter

For me the hardest part of living in care would be not seeing my family everyday, or not having your worker listen to you when you tell him you don't want to do something. It's hard when you try to call him he is always away or not in the office, so it makes it harder to get in touch with him.

Moving from home to home is so hard, and having to meet new people and to learn how to trust them or even like them.

I just really hate being in foster care!!!!!!

The hardest part of living in care

By Ashton Glasgow

The hardest part of living in care is when they give you a placement like Reigh Allen Centre where a lot of kids judge you by what you wear and what you've done. Where most kids don't belong!

You can go from a straight A student to a D student.

The hardest part of living in care

By Jennifer Robichaud

The hardest part is not being connected to family. Not having a mother to hug you and call you her little girl, no matter how old you get. No one who will love you unconditionally like true family.

It's a world without love or deep connection that is unending and immortal.

Family visits

By Alexandra Randolph

The thing that breaks my heart about being in care is that when I go to one of my family visits. Those visits make me feel I'm special.

The four or five hours of these moments is all that will make me happy and the sad part is when all these moments are gone, I come right back to where I feel depressed in the group home.

The hardest part of living in care

By Manda Jackson

My hardest part of living in care is I move around so much. I've been in like six group homes in the past year, and it really hurts because now it is very hard for me to trust people. Everyone that came in my life is either out of my life because they walked out or I pushed them out of my life.

There's only a few people that actually stood beside me. When I said I pushed people out, it's mostly friends because I realized they weren't good for my life so they were gone.

But seriously, the hardest part is that I'm far away from my whole family. When my mother was sick, they wouldn't let me go see her. I had to go without permission. And people always yelled at me for going to see her. To all those people — look now, she has died. So don't tell me I didn't do the right thing and go see her.

Living in Care

Ashton Glasgow

We are not different. People treat us different because we're in a group home or foster care.

We have dreams like you too! We have goals we want to achieve. Some of us want to be youth care workers, some want to be music producers or rappers. Some of us just want to be treated the same — with respect and the loyalty that we deserve!



Ammy, Ashton and Stefan at the Skating Oval

WHAT CAN GOVERNMENT DO?

What can government do to make living in care easier?

By Fallynn Brooks

Try to understand a little more, get down to our level. Just knowing that someone's at least trying to understand us would brighten our days to no end.

Let us know that you care — not that you're just taking care of us because it's your job. We need someone to really care. If you don't care, who will?

For God's sake, when you get a kid, stay with that kid. Cutting off relationships we've built with someone over time makes us learn to stop forming relationships with anyone at all. I know people that are on their sixth social worker!

Living in care is similar to being babysat. Some of us are old enough to make our own decisions — let us have a little more freedom. Answer the phone when we call! I haven't had that issue with my social worker yet, but there are a lot of kids that have that problem, and it really upsets them. It's a lot better than just listening to it ring all day.

Don't keep us locked up all the time — that's why we go for days at a time. If we feel like we need to go out for a night, let us go!

If I could talk to the Prime Minister about living in care....

By Alexandra Randolph

People should have rights to have visits or supervised visits if your parents aren't in a bad situation.

What can government do to make life easier for me?

By Jennifer Robichaud

They could try not changing my social worker five or six times! Really, I know it's hard but seriously? What makes it worse is that I hate people, people suck and having to meet a new social worker and get used to them sucks, no matter how nice they seem.

What can government do to make life in care easier?

By Alexandra Randolph

Give more money out, like for hair styling and other activities would be nice. It would be easier to live in a group home with fewer girls and no double rooms because of people's stealing habits.

FREEDOM

By Stefan Illsley



Why do we have this thing called freedom of speech, but yet we can't express ourselves in the way that we the people want to, like these people who are doing this thing called "graffiti". When you really look at it these people want to have their art work on display for everyone to see, not hidden out of the public view. When you look at freedom of speech it says you can say what you want, not all this censorship about what you can or can't say when you're angry and want to "cuss" and say the way you're feeling.

The national anthem says we are free, but are we really free with all these laws and stupid things like that. Yes I understand all the shootings, and stabbings, and the domestic abuse that many of us know about. Look at the age we are "allowed" to drink/buy smokes and things like that while in many countries they barely even have an age to drink/buy smokes.

We the "free" aren't truly free because we have many things limiting us. If we were "free" then we wouldn't get taxed for things that we maybe need in our lives like an education.

If people come here for freedom, where's that freedom? You get taxed to death and have no say about what is actually "yours". You can own a house yes, but do you own the land your house sits on? No, 'cause the government makes you pay taxes on the land that your house sits on.

So understandably we as people, part of this society, are not truly "free".

By Jennifer Robichaud

Freedom to me means the freedom to make mistakes, the freedom to make choices and the freedom to acknowledge my mistakes.

ALL I GET

By Nelly Drummond

All I get is pain from you,
As you stand there with a lie down your throat.
All I get is pain from you,
As you tell me you love me with hate in your heart.
All I get is a soundless beat from you, as you pretend to care.
All I get is a letter from you, saying you want me dead with your feeling for me.
And all you get is a letter from me saying you're dead to me.

MAYBE

By Jennifer Robichaud

Maybe, if I could fly,
Soar high up in the sky.
Dancing among the clouds,
Far away from crowds.
Singing a heartfelt song,
As I simply soar along.
The sky would become my ally,
Maybe if I could fly.

UNTITLED

By Sasha Sahabandu

Walking down the halls
And holding myself tight
So the pieces don't fall out of my chest
Everyone looking at you
Because you don't belong
Hoping...
Praying someone will step forward and help me
But no one does
I'm all alone, just like in the beginning

LIFE & DEATH

By Nelly Drummond

Now I'm watching over you because I cut it way too deep
Don't worry, I'm still watching you
I watch when you're asleep,
I know you miss me so much and you loved me with all your heart.
But I'm in a better place now and you can't tear it apart.
You don't have to worry now, I'm with some of our relatives.
Just don't do what I did and you shall live
I'm always around you and always on the inside.
I'm in the wind, in your dreams, anywhere you seek me.
Just have the time of your life and don't cut it too deep.
Take in every second, minute, hour because you'll never know when you'll end up here where I am.

FRIENDS

By Fallynn Brooks

Here's to falling asleep next to an open window
Just to hear the rain on the sidewalk
To staying up all night listening to music that inspires us
To laughing, smiling and crying all on a daily basis
To talking to strangers
Or following them around in grocery stores, disinfecting everything they touch with Clorox wipes
To building forts in the canned goods department of Walmart
And shooting people with nerf guns
To laughing so hard we make no sound
So we just sit there clapping like a couple of mute seals
To dancing in public (because we're just so awesome)
To most passersby believing we're on a really big sugar high
(Little do they know, this is our daily life)
To the days we weren't okay, and to the days we have no regrets
To the times we made each other's lives better, picked each other up off the floor
Long live the walls we crashed through
I enjoyed fighting dragons with you
And I don't know where the purple penguin went to.

UNTITLED

By Manda Jackson

My body's tense, hands clenching.
Everything's bottled up, the words that haven't been spoken.
The feelings I left behind, the lines you've never heard.
You can see it in my eyes, you can't read it on my face, only behind the lips.
Everything you said to me, all your lies. Trapped inside.
And all the truth of the past, I can't forget.
All the horrible memories linger in my head, flashback.
They won't go away, why can't I forget you.
I am, today's a brand new day. Yesterdays are over now.
Even though what you did still hurts, but we only live once, and that means once to shine. I've got to cherish what I got now.
You took me for granted.
You never thought this day would come when I told you I'm gone.
It's gone, we're gone.
The hurt you made me feel will never disappear overnight.
But I know some day, someday, somehow, everything will be alright for me.
I didn't need to feel how I felt, when you whispered to me "don't tell".
When you hit me with that stick, then said "don't tell or I'll be mad".
Well, be mad
Because now that you heard the words that are spoken
The feelings that are inside, the lines you just heard.

I WAIT TO HEAR

By Jillisa Nickerson

I wait to hear the call from them to say
but they tell me to take it day by day
I don't know who I am, I hide deep down
Turn every pain I get into a smile instead of a frown
Uncertainty, the unknown and questions are her
nightmare
The tears and emptiness will always be there
She's always alone with no one to love
Her father's dead in the heavens above
The anxiety she has before she answers the call
She's leaving on Monday with no say at all
So she packs her stuff and awaits her fate
Gets sent to a place she despises and hates
Unpacks her things and tries to get settled
Her face is burning up hot, just like a tea kettle
Her head is spinning, she's sweating a river
She starts to cry with a bottom lip quiver
When I'm alone and comfortable I pull off my face
And await another home to where I am placed
I wait for the call from them to say
"Pack up your things, you're moving again today"

DEPRESSED

By Nelly Drummond

Depression is a feeling that makes you think and feel
Like there is no place for you in the cold world or feel
like you want to die.
So here is the story of "Alive to Dead".
A day when I had a life and a girlfriend,
I thought I had everything and my life was getting
better.
I was a man now, not a boy.
I had loved her with all my heart but weeks turn to
months, months turn to years
My love turned to hate as the relationship goes on and on.
My life and soul turn to dust as my girl turns to my Ex.
I couldn't believe it, I felt depressed as my life came to
an end.
I don't wanna feel like that again, so I try not to love
again, not no more.

FOOD

By Jillisa Nickerson

Devouring of the provisions
As they reach the limit to my tonsils.
Moderately taking its time to reach the black hole of my
hunger.
Satisfaction of the provisions warming my empty soul.
Eating the food as I slowly take a bite as the reach
The back of my throat.

LYRICS FOR A SONG

By Alex Randolph

I can see him walking through the door
I can barely speak
I can barely afford another messup or breakup
I can't take anymore
As I'm walking, people laugh and boo
But I know I got to keep my head

COMMUNICATE WITH UR EYES

By Morgan Spencer

They hold me in
I choke it down
The words I wanna say not spoken
What I need to hold in is out in the air
Truly what I wanted
Has eluded me forever/thus far
A stone step away
I see who you are
If only for a moment
Dreams slowly go cold
If you cannot grab them
And hold them
You may never get very far
Not a day is seen
Not a moment to lose
Silence is essential
To get to where we are
To keep a secret that will never die
Communicate with ur eyes.

JUST A DREAM

By Nelly Drummond

I stood there in the dark with evil on my mind.
I thought of killing my soul and love for you and I don't
mind.
You wish I could open my eye and realize it is just a
dream.
But my eye remains close and believing the lies that you
brought from the devil.
I sat there in the dark with tears in my eye,
I'm crying of what I became before your eye.
But you still wish that I would open my eye and be glad it
just a dream.
But my eye remains closed and paralyzed with fear.
I lay there in the dark with pains in my chest.
The Pain in my chest hurts forever.
But you still wish that I would open my eye and realize it
is just a dream.
But I just laid there with an endless sleep and hoping to
wake up from the dream.

I BELIEVE

by Breanna Latter

I believe...that we have responsibilities in life
I believe...that everyone should have rights!
I believe...that there is a reason why we're all here
I believe...that life has a purpose
And that we can change the world, one step at a time and make a difference.

by Ashton Glasgow

I believe
In a world without bullies
A world without you
A world without drugs
and a world without thugs

I believe in me
I don't care what YOU think
I'm doing ME
I'll stay strong
I believe :)

By Sasha Sahabandu

I believe that life has a purpose
I believe that we have to find our meanings in life
I believe that we are all different people
But I also believe that we should be treated equally
I don't think that anyone has a right to make fun of anyone because of who they are
Black, white, Indian, gay, lesbian, bisexual... it doesn't matter
We all have our rights
And no one can take that from us

By Jennifer Robichaud

I believe there is fire in everyone, a flame of passion and desire that fills us up at times. When we find things that spark this inferno, it is a special moment, finding our soul's true joy.

For me it is singing, gently harmonizing or loudly vocalizing. It fills me with contentment and a feeling of wholeness that can, even if only temporarily, fix all agonies of my past.

Everyone can find this fire. It is a pile of tinder just waiting to be set aflame. Everyone has a fiery passion that makes them feel powerful, wonderful and perfect.

By Fallynn Brooks

I believe that the worst thing to waste in the world is your mind. I see so many people dropping out of school, drinking, doing drugs and ultimately turning their brains to mush because they aren't happy; to be quite honest, I think it's a shame.

I believe that if you're really happy and relatively content with yourself, it shows. If you're not, well that shows too.

I believe in all of the small details. Because without those details, without the birds in the street or the weeds that grow in the cracks of the sidewalk, the world would just look clean-cut, cold and sterile.

I believe that in the end, everything is always okay. It may be a while to the end, and a lot of times that "light at the end of the tunnel" is the light of an oncoming train. But if it's not okay, it's not the end yet. I believe you should laugh, smile and cry — all on a daily basis.

I believe that no matter what anyone else thinks, you should always be yourself. Because you're so much better than those people that don't like you. And for the love of Skittles, you're much better looking!

I believe in people even if they stop believing in me.
I believe we're only as strong as we're willing to be.
I believe if you have a problem with something, you should stand up for it. Someone else might think the same; maybe they're just not brave enough to say it because it's not what "everyone else" does.



Sasha and Breanna

FAMILY

What is important in life

By Jaydee Riley

Family: Family is important because they are the people you have till the end of time. Through thick and thin, they're the ones who stick it out and stand by your side no matter what the state. The ones you share the highest joy and the ones you can depend on for support.

Time: Time is important because it's what keeps us all going. Without time where would we be? Everything good or bad happens within time — a new job, finishing school, marriage, kids. Time is what keeps the world going.

Money: Money is important, point blank to the fact. You can't get anything without it.

By Alexandra Randolph

Just being around my family makes me happy. Family means a lot to me now since I've been in care for a while.

I miss them so much, and I'm now talking to my mom more.

EDUCATION

By Alex Randolph

Education is the achievement of a part of life. Education is important in my life because everyone has goals in life and my goal is to be successful and proud of what I have become.

Education is to learn the way in life and how it works, which is sometimes complicated. It takes time getting your education throughout the years but it is all worth it in the end.

Education is to help you go places like jobs that you need a degree for so you're not working at fast food restaurants all your life because of not going to college or finishing with a degree.

It's very important why people should get their education; if you want the choice of not living on the streets because you made the wrong choice about your education.

That's why I want to set my goals high!

By Jaydee Riley

Education is one of the most important things in life. Without it, you go nowhere in life. Education is knowledge to learn and to enhance your creativity.

Education is important to me first and foremost for income purposes.

Statistically speaking, the better educated I am, the more opportunities for gainful employment and financial freedom there will be.

The next reason is that we simply have an innate desire to know and understand more about our world. Education is simply us actively seeking this knowledge. If we stopped seeking any form of education, most of us would probably sink into a real depression or a sense of uselessness.

Data is not information, information is not knowledge, knowledge is not understanding and understanding is not wisdom — Clifford Stoll

By Manda Jackson

I won't lie. I used to think that education was nothing. When I was little, my parents used to make me go to school. I thought they hated me and that it was a punishment.

But now I realize I can't do anything without it. If I don't have an education I'll be flipping burgers all my life. Or when you look out and see if the garbage truck came, that would be me getting off the truck getting your garbage.

Now I understand it is gonna open so many doors for me and I'm excited to show I'm responsible.

CAN MUSIC CHANGE THE WORLD?

By Alexandra Randolph

I think music can change the world because what people listen to is not always bad. The music can also have a good message in it too.

I think of the positives in songs. A lot of Demi Lovato's songs have good messages and I look up to her. So that changes my perspective of the things in the world.

By Jennifer Robichaud

No. Music can inspire people to change the world but by itself, music cannot change the world.

One song has changed how I see the world and everyone who has hurt me. *Amazing Grace* was my grandmother's favourite song, and when she died it became a special melody for me.

It meant to my grandmother what it now means to me — we must forgive even the vilest among us. Even if they beat you down a thousand times, you must forgive them each time.

By Manda Jackson

Whenever I'm angry, upset, depressed or hurt or going through a hard time, I just go to a quiet place and listen to music. I listen to rap and hip hop and I sing along and it gets my mind off things because I'm the kind of person that worries a lot and thinks too much about things.

At this time in my life, I gotta stop and focus on other important things.

The best song that cheers me up is *Mama* by Boys 2 Men. It reminds me of my mother and it gets me thinking she's looking down on me and she wouldn't want me upset or getting angry.

By Stefan Illsley

I don't know a book, movie or song that I feel better listening to, watching, or reading. But in some ways I've figured out that just listening to music can fluctuate my moods and my productivity.

By Breanna Latter

Music can't change the world but it can change the way some people think and how people act. But it really depends on what music you listen to. When I listen to rap music it can make me feel angry or scared when they talk about guns, killing people, or stuff like that. But when I listen to R&B or hip hop it can make me feel like I want to dance and I feel happy. My favourite song that makes me giggly is *LOL* by Trey Songz.

Music hasn't really changed how I think about the world but it can change a lot about people in a lot of different ways. Music has a way of touching your soul in ways that only you can relate to.

By Jennifer Robichaud

Music brings people together. No matter color, no matter creed, no matter size or ethnicity or religion.

A perfect example of this in my memory is grade four, I was going home on the bus when a song came on, it was 'Party like it's your birthday'. Almost as if orchestrated everyone began singing along as they danced in their seats. It was one of the most memorable moments of my life. It didn't matter that I was beyond unpopular, weak and hated; I sang like everyone else and for that moment I was accepted.

Music makes you forget about your anger, pain and your hatred for a moment and lets you leave your discriminations. No matter if it's color, sex or culture.



Morgan

WHAT MAKES ME HAPPY?

By Fallynn Brooks

Music makes me happy, or if I can't be happy and I refuse to leave my room, it helps keep me company.

My brother and sister make me happy. Seeing them smile on a "bad day" or when I'm in a "bad mood" takes my whole world and turns it upside right.

My best friend in the entire world makes me happy. I know for a fact he'll never give up on me and we're in this for life. He has an answer for every single one of my weird questions and I've poured my whole life in to this boy, more than once.

Photography makes me happy. A picture is worth 1000 words, but a photograph is worth everything.

Writing makes me happy. I could write for days if I wanted to - and if I had a good subject.

Solitude makes me happy. I often thrive on the white noise of the world outside my window when I feel as though everyone's left me behind.

The rain makes me happy. The whole world seems brighter when it rains; it makes me want to go out and dance in the puddles.

Seeing other people smile and laugh makes me happy. It's like their good mood is contagious.

My mom makes me happy. Seeing that she believes in me and supports me keeps me going when I could swear my sanity's abandoned me.

Trains and planes make me happy, because I like to wonder. I wonder who the people on them are, I wonder where they're going, I wonder what their story is.

Flowers make me happy because, like people, they're still just as beautiful when they're old and withered.

Cemeteries make me happy, in a way. They remind me that, even in death there is life and even in despair, there is hope.

Stars make me happy, because you never look at the same one.

The sun makes me happy, because even on a cloudy day, I know it's still there.

By Stefan Illsley

What makes me truly happy is listening to my music cause it helps me focus and opens my mind to aid me in my problems with writing.

By Breanna Latter

A lot of things make me happy. But the one true thing that makes me happy is my phone. I honestly feel I can't live without it; I am on it all the time.

My phone is my life. I wouldn't know what to do without it. It truly makes me happy.

Life

By Amya Jackson



Life. Wow, things I would love to tell you about life. There's a lot going on in my life — drama, stress, and also happiness!

What I don't like about my life is the drama, and being in care. Well, there are some things I like about being in care, like a safe home, money and a bus pass!

I understand that I missed out on a lot. I do make some good choices in life but I know that some I make are not good.

When I get upset, I tend to ask people for help or talk to them. I do not like them asking me if I need to talk — if I need to talk, I'll ask you.

I want to finish high school, get my grade 12 and go to art school. In Toronto, there's a lot going on for art.

I love making friends with everyone. If you don't like me or don't like what I say, ignore it 'cause I ain't going anywhere.

What I like about myself is my personality. I like who I am from head to toe. I like my skills but I do need to upgrade them to make them better.

Just anything that excites me makes me happy.

This is who I am in my life. I'm not perfect but who cares. Forget the drama and move on!

MISCELLANEOUS

All our scars and the whole heart shrinks

By Fallynn Brooks

So tell me how your story goes. Have you ever suffered? Did you get better or have you never quite recovered? Did you find your love lying in a bed with another? Did you let it hover over everything you did well after the fact? Show me your bruises, I know your body wears them. They broadcast the pain — how you hurt.

Did cancer take your child? Did your father have a heart attack? Have you ever had a moment that forced the entire heart to grow or retract? Or just shrink?

Tell me everything you know. Were you told as a child just how cruel the whole world can be? Tell me what your purpose is. Who was it that put you here and why? Did anyone really put us here at all? And what of these necessities? Like how to cope with pain and tragedy. Did anyone really show you how?

Do you think that if the heart continues to shrink, that one day, there will be no heart at all? How long does that take? When it hits, will my heart burst or break or crumble? Will it grow? Is there really only one way to know?

I'm not sure I'm ready yet to find out the hard way how strong I am. What I'm made of. I'm not sure I'm ready yet to walk through the fire. I'm not sure I can handle it.

Tell your stories to me. Show your bruises. Let's see what humanity is capable of handling.

She lost her baby, only seven, to cancer. She answered in faith to God and carried on. While he was attacked by his son, stabbed in the back, arms and his stomach. 82 years old. Told me "I still have my wife and my daughter. I still have my life and my son."

Tell me what your worst fears are. I bet they look a lot like mine. Tell me what you think about when you can't fall asleep at night. Tell me that you're struggling; tell me that you're scared. No, tell me that you're terrified of life. Tell me how you lost; tell me how they left. Tell me how you lost everything you had. Tell me about God. Tell me about love. Tell me that it's all of the above. Say that you think of everything in fear. I bet you're not the only one.

Everyone in the world comes to suffering at some point. I wonder when I will. I wonder.

Everyone in the world is out searching for something. I wonder what I'll find. I wonder.

The views on the inside looking out

By Stefan Illsley

How many children and youth live in care across Nova Scotia? What is and what can be provided to make living in care easier and less stressful than it is currently?

I've lived in and out of care for thirteen years and still live in care. While being in this poorly viewed system I developed a lack of confidence within this part of the government. Many businesses and people frown upon children and youth who live within the system, because these young people are deemed "problem" or "troubled" children and youth.

Over the years, I have come across very few programs or services available to bring these young people together, and make them feel as if they aren't the only ones in care. The first program which brings youth in care together — and seemingly the only one which deals solely with youth in care — is *The Voice*. Another group who work with youth in care or "troubled youth" is "Leave Out Violence". Finally, a group which provides programs and resources for "troubled youth" is "Phoenix".

While considering what is provided for youth and children in care across Nova Scotia, I looked at what is provided in the other provinces and territories. I came to the conclusion that Nova Scotia does not have much for youth and children who live in care. In the last eight years of living within "The Department of Community Services" I have only attended four or five events aimed at bringing youth and children together. There could be more programs or events, like more information on what is or could be provided for those living in care. I've had five or six social workers within the last eight years, and have only been able to attain one alternate worker. I asked for one within the last three years, and no one got back to me.

There are approximately 1,200 children and youth in care across Nova Scotia; the majority live within HRM and Sydney. There are only three programs or services available to bring youth and children together. Many young people in care don't have access to or knowledge of what is available to them. So many of these youth and children who haven't attained the knowledge of what is available are lured into criminal activity, becoming institutionalized within many of the government services, which keep them on the "hamster wheel".

Write a book **By Sally Smith**

Ever wonder what hell was like? I never had to wonder. A stepfather who mentally, physically, emotionally and sexually abused me, a mother who refused to even acknowledge it, a little brother who was spoiled rotten while me and my older brother suffered. My older brother, himself a strong and wise person, took all my pain away when he was near.

I'm told I'm lucky that I didn't commit suicide, I'm told I'm fortunate that I didn't become insane. I don't feel lucky. I don't feel fortunate.

Living in a box **By Jaydee Riley**

My whole life I felt like I was living in a box, hiding my inner self and being ashamed of who I thought I was about to become.

Being a child of many feelings and emotions, living my life in two separate bodies, no one ever understood.

I tried to be the person they wanted me to be, but deep inside that wasn't me. Fear upon my shoulders that shouldn't be. Living a life upon judgment, betrayal, lost faith and the lack of self. Yet I told myself to live my life for me and no one else. I doubt I'd be where I am.

I was told **By Ashton Glasgow**

When I was seven I had a mentor, the nicest guy you would ever meet. At that time in my life he was the closest thing I had to a father. He had a big influence on me and he taught me how to use my knowledge to MY advantage.

He taught me how to express my feelings properly. I wasn't in the greatest space for a while so my mentor set up a meeting for me and him and he told me about how he went through the same thing I was going through and that caught my attention.

I sat down and listened to what he had to say and I will never forget what he told me: "SHAPE YOUR FUTURE WHILE YOU CAN OR SOMEONE ELSE WILL!"

And I will hold on to that forever. I will never forget that. If it wasn't for him I wouldn't be where I am now :)

Important books in my life **By Jennifer Robichaud**

There are two books that are very important for me. *Wish Upon a Unicorn* because it was the first book I enjoyed a lot.

The Legend of Drizzl by RA Salvatore caused me to look inward and question myself and all my motives and ethics. It's also one of the great joys I've shared with my mother.

A book that makes me feel better **By Jillisa Nickerson**

The book, *A Million Tiny Pieces*, is a good pick-me-up because it is talking about a drug addict's life and how he moves forward to something better in his life. It is a terrific self-motivator and makes you feel better about yourself because it helps you realize that in any given situation, you're not alone and you can do whatever you set your mind to.

The movie *Girl Interrupted* is a good pick-me-up because I can relate to it and it is very well directed. It is also very encouraging to move forward with difficult situations in your life.

I think anything that makes you feel good is a reassuring pick-me-up.

Change **By Breanna Latter**

As we go through life, we will all experience change. It can be wonderful and sometimes it can be hard, and most of the time it is both. But everyone goes through change differently.

Change is a big part of life. When I was growing up I experienced a lot of change and most of the time it wasn't good. I thought my life was turning upside down. Everything around me was changing, and I didn't know what to do.

I started to change. I didn't know who I was. Change can change a person in many ways, and some people don't know what to do when things change.

As we go on in life, change will come in all different ways — sometimes you won't see it coming and sometimes you will. But change will always come with choices.

I can speak about good changes in my life. Now I have a better attitude about life. But I'll just have to deal with change the best way I can.

My favourite character **By Jaydee Riley**

My favourite character is Nicole aka Snooky from *Jersey Shore*. I love her wild and witty personality and I believe she would be a cool and fun person to go partying with. Even though she has arguments with some of the other cast members on the show, she always has her friends back in the end.

Some people don't like her but I believe everyone has their own thoughts and views of a person. I like her because she's outgoing and loud. She's pretty and she's from Jersey, and I love New Jersey.

A HUGE THANK YOU to our funders. 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

Sue Barr – United Way of Halifax Region

Novalee Buchan – driver

Richard Cameron – Nova Scotia
Community College

John Chiasson – photographer (The Voice)

George Dean – Adult Volunteer

Clete Deschamps – Youth Alternative
worker

Sonya Ferrara – Chair of board

Mary Anne Fraser – Department of
Community Services

Sheree Fitch – workshop facilitator

Shauntay Grant – board member,
workshop facilitator

Emma Halpern – Nova Scotia Barristers'
Society

Dr. Bill Hart – Halifax Region Children's
Aid Foundation

Geoff Hood – Department of Community
Services contact

Dianne Hussey – volunteer, launch
co-ordinator

Angie Kokic – book keeper

Lucas Kreft – facilitator, board member

Marika Lathem – DCS, department
contact

Alan Lowe – Department of Education

Carole MacDougall – United Way of
Halifax Region

Kyle MacIsaac – McInnes Cooper

Kilby MacRae – Phoenix Learning and
Employment Centre

Jane Landry – Nova Scotia Council for The
Family

Linda Leblanc – guest speaker

Sandra McKenzie – Halifax Youth
Foundation

Rebecca Moore – facilitator

Claire Munroe – Phoenix Learning and
Employment Centre

Lisa Neily – graphic designer

John Odenthal – board member

Ammy Purcell – facilitator, board member

Andrew Safer – advisor, board member

David Swick – guest editor

Bill Turpin – board member

Catherine Young – board member

ORGANIZATIONS

Alderney Landing Theatre –
Newsletter launch venue

Atlantic News – magazines for collages

Fusion Print – Newsletter printing

**Halifax Region Children's Aid
Foundation** – funding support

Halifax Youth Foundation – funding
support

Nova Scotia Community College –
computer lab

Nova Scotia Council of the Family –
funding support

**Nova Scotia Department of
Community Services** – primary
funding support

**Nova Scotia Department of
Education** – funding support

Nova Trophy – award plaques

Office of the Ombudsman –
Newsletter distribution and funding
support

**Phoenix Learning and Employment
Centre** – meeting venue

United Way of Halifax Region –
funding support

Youth Secretariat – Newsletter
distribution

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



(Top) Ashton, Jenny, Jaydee and Fallyn with Sandy at the Youth Achievement Awards in Truro.

(Middle left) Fallyn, Stefan and Jaydee after speaking to students at Dalhousie's School of Social Work.

(Middle right) Jillisa and Ammy enjoying the Rainmen basketball game.

(Bottom left) Manda and Jillisa at Vinnie's Pasta Bar for the Newsletter Christmas party.

(Bottom right) Nathan performing his poetry at the Company House at the COMMUNITY Poetry slam.





ALEXANDRA RANDOLPH



MANDA JACKSON



AMMY PURCELL



AMYA JACKSON



ASHTON GLASGOW



BREANNA LATTER



CLETE DESCHAMPS



CHANTEL "FALLYNN" ARBUCKLE



GEORGE DEAN



JAYDEE RILEY



JENNY ROBICHAUD



JILLISA NICKERSON



LUCAS KREFT



MORGAN SPENCER



NATHAN "NELLY" PERRY



REBECCA MOORE



SANDY MACDONALD



SASHA SAHABANDU



STEFAN ILLSLEY

©2012 Youth Voices of Nova Scotia Society. This Newsletter may be copied in its entirety for further distribution. All of the articles and drawings herein were created by youth who hold the copyright to their work. Individual pieces may not be republished in print or electronic format without permission. For further information about the Newsletter Project, e-mail: youthnewsletter@ns.sympatico.ca