

# the VOICE

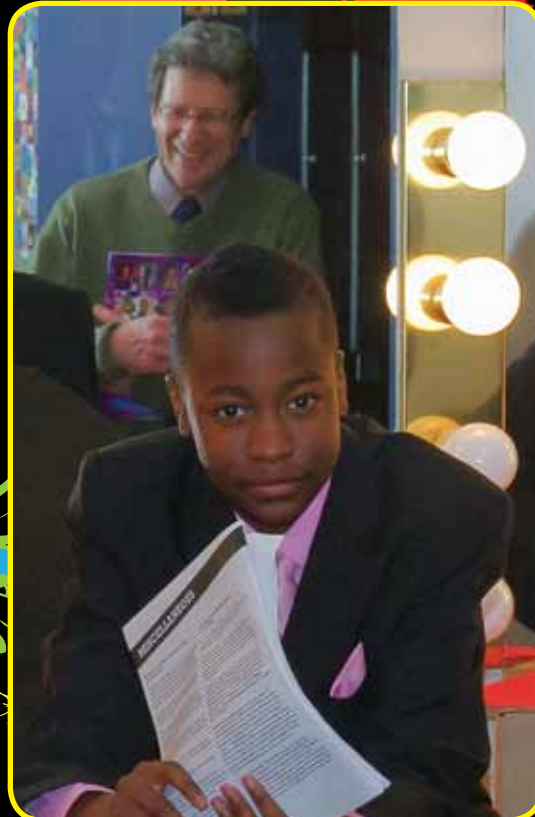
ISSUE 13 | YOUTH IN CARE NEWSLETTER PROJECT | MAY 2013



*...a collection of writing by Halifax youth about their lives.*



# Newsletter launch 2012



**(TOP LEFT)** Jennifer Robichaud receives her Newsletter award from Honorable Denise Peterson-Rafuse, Minister of Community Services, while Breanna and Becky look on. **(TOP RIGHT)** Ashton Glasgow, co- MC for the launch gets ready backstage with Andrew Safer. **(BOTTOM)** The 2012 Newsletter Project group after *The Voice* launch at the Alderney Landing Theatre. (Photos by John Chiasson)

# Executive Director's message



Welcome to the freshly-minted 2013 edition of *The Voice*, a collection of writing and drawings from the young people in the Youth in Care Newsletter Project.

It's a lovely coincidence that *The Voice* arrives just about the time the trees of Halifax begin to leaf out and neighborhood gardens start to show the colours of spring.

In some little way, *The Voice* is the fruition of the efforts through the cold winter months of the dozen dedicated young people. We meet first in October, an interesting gaggle of returning youth from previous years and some new faces keen to get involved with the Newsletter Project.

Over the following eight months, we meet each week to discuss issues, challenge ideas, share successes (and sometimes frustrations), meet inspiring people from our community and above all learn about ourselves and our place in this complicated world.

Each of the young people keeps a journal for writing their weekly assignments. Granted they don't all end up with the same book they started with — notebooks tend to get lost in moves from one home to another, get forgotten on buses or somehow misplaced. Usually, though, they get filled up with wonderful writing.

We gather up the writing and drawing and photos from the year and pull it all together in *The Voice*. Some of the writing is outstanding, all of it is heartfelt and honest and soul-baring.

We've had a great group of young people working hard to contribute to the Newsletter Project this year. Each and every one has shone in their involvement with the program — whether they're loud and enthusiastic or quiet and shy.

Each year we try to broaden the Newsletter experience by opening up the horizons of the program. In January, thanks to the efforts of Art Gallery of Nova Scotia assistant curator of education, Laura Carmichael, the Newsletter group had a wonderful guided tour of the gallery. The youth got an up-close visit through the beautiful galleries and exhibitions, as our guide Catherine shared her knowledge of the art and artists who created it.

Earlier this year, some of the youth suggested they'd like to have someone come to the group to talk about handling money. Who couldn't use that session!

Tim Nowlan from TD bank came to talk to the group about the rudiments of managing money — whether you have a little or a lot. Nobody from the Newsletter Project is set to handle the provincial finance department yet, but the session was very insightful. Each of the youth drew up a personal budget to illustrate the balance between money coming in and money going out. A very valuable lesson!

Shauntay Grant returned to the Newsletter to lead a great session on writing, and brought along Halifax poet, musician

and spoken word artist Verena Rizg from the local group Poets 4 Change. They talked about the role of poetry in advancing social change, and had everyone pumped about writing and performing their own poetry.

Other community guests came to share their knowledge and experience with the group, including Gia Greer from Phoenix, David Swick from the King's College School of Journalism and Jerry West from CBC Radio.

Ammy Purcell and Becky Moore continue to be a supportive and positive influence in their leadership role as youth mentors for the program. Clete Deschamps managed to stay focused while his Blackhawks tore up the NHL, helping ensure many of the youth arrived safe and sound each week, and then helping keep the space neat and orderly.

None of this would have been possible without the ongoing financial commitment of our funding supporters. Many thanks to our financial supporters again, including the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, Department of Education, the Halifax Youth Foundation, and Halifax Region Children's Aid Foundation and the United Way of Halifax Region.

After more than a dozen years, the Newsletter Project continues to be a place of safety, support, challenge and learning for the young people who participate every year. Enjoy this year's *Voice*.

## WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT THE VOICE

*"Congrats on another amazing issue of The Voice! Our community needs to hear these stories, and The Voice fills that need. Thank you."* — Megan Leslie, MP for Halifax

*"The Voice is amazing. And I know Shauntay well and love her and what you do. Blessings to you in your work!"* — Sheree Fitch, author

*"I receive The Voice in the mail, and want to continue receiving it because it is TOTALLY AWESOME!"* — Christina Martin, award-winning singer/songwriter

*"I've just read the May issue of the Youth in Care newsletter and want to thank you for sending me a copy and commend all the brave young voices who make up the issue."* — Ramona Lumpkin, president and vice-chancellor of Mount Saint Vincent University

*"I appreciate being sent a copy of The Voice, featuring the articles and illustrations by young Nova Scotians. It is inspiring to see the energy and effort that such a diverse group of youth have put into this project."* — Honorable Rob Nicholson, Minister of Justice & Attorney General of Canada

# Where are they now

## Jessika Anderson



Jessika is a resident of Port aux Basques, Newfoundland. She's going to college to bring her marks up for university.

"I'm pretty sure I was involved with the Newsletter for three years," recalls Jessika.

"The Newsletter taught me that there are always people struggling, and that we aren't alone. Andrew Safer was one of the best people I believe I have and ever will come across. I hope to one day make it to another launch. Hope everyone is doing well."

## John Walker



John is living in Halifax, working at landscaping.

"I think I got five plaques so I was involved for five years," says John. "I'd say learning to talk in front of people is what helped me the most. I believe in the Newsletter program to this day."

## Tony Beaumier



Tony is living in Halifax with his girlfriend and 18-month old son.

"I'm a contractor and I was involved with the Newsletter for roughly six years."

## George Dean



George is living in Spruce Grove, Alberta, employed as a youth care worker in a facility for aggressive youth aged 10-16. He came to the Newsletter as an adult volunteer.

"I was involved with the Newsletter for about a year and a half until I moved out here...or I would probably still be there.

The Newsletter made a difference with me to help understand the differences between kids. It helped me realize that every kid has a talent... you just have to help them dig it out."

# One change

## The thing that would change my life

By Kimber



The thing that would change my life for the better is to do better in school and to not socialize so much, and to do my work and focus more and pay attention.

I don't think it's important now but I know it will be in the future. I know I'm going to regret not doing better.

## The one thing that would most change my life for the better right now is...

By Stefan



The one thing that would most change my life for the better right now is my daughter. Being a father makes me think about my childhood and how I don't want her to have the same issues I had.

She has changed my outlook on everything, including myself and my education. She is my main motivation in

everything I do — I always ask myself if it's beneficial for my daughter or not.



# Letters to the Minister

## If I could tell the Minister of Community Services one thing to make my life better, it would be.....

By Stefan Illsley

Dear Community services,

If I could tell the Minister of Community Services one thing to make my life better, it would be.. well, I couldn't find solely one thing that would make my life better but there could be a few things that could help make many of our lives better. I would ask some of the youth what they'd like to see in the policy.

Many things haven't really changed in over 20 years, like the amount of clothing allowance that youth in care receive (\$272). Because of inflation, many youth in care would be lucky to get one outfit with these "clothing cheques".

They continuously revise policy every few years and do nothing about this issue. And every month most youth get \$40 for spending. Many of the youth would be lucky to pay for their personal cell phone or even to go out on a date with their significant other. Birthdays and such for their friends and family is only \$40 per "special occasion", and yet many of the youth don't receive it at all.

The cap on recreational spending is \$500.00/year. You cannot participate in Scouts for this amount of money anymore. It is meant to cover everything including transportation to activities.

Ironically, cost of therapy for three months can be more than \$1000.00, which would be covered no problem. I believe sports are more therapeutic for so many youth.

## Things I need to say

By Anonymous

Dear Community services,

I have a few things that I really need to say, starting with I think there's too many rules to follow, like why do you guys get to choose if we want to see our parents or not? I really feel like that should be up to us, depending on how bad the situation is.

I want to be able to make my own decisions, well at least some of them. Community Services can be really unfair about a lot of things. I want to have a really good social worker, one that will listen and is there when I need to talk to them because I have been through four since I been in care.

I think that they could do a whole lot better and try to make more of an effort and try much harder. I am now 15 years old and I still only get \$25 a month. Now to me it doesn't seem like much. I can't do much with \$25 and it certainly does not last me the whole month. I feel it should \$40 a month. I can get a whole lot more with that and it will probably end up lasting me most of the month.

I don't complain about much, but if you could really consider changing some of the things I said, it would be greatly appreciated.

# Doing nothing

By Jillisa



You never realize how many moments you can spend not doing anything until you have no choice.

But to do nothing takes more energy than you think. The process of completely turning your brain off, whether intentional or unintentional, is difficult. Have you ever been able to sit in a room in dead silence with no thoughts? No? I didn't think so.

And to the people who said yes, sit down and shut up. Thinking is always such a chain reaction process. My back hurts. I wonder if I have arthritis. The word arthritis reminds me of Don Cherry. Is Don Cherry even a real name of a person?

See? Crazy.....

I wonder if thoughts are stored away in cute little color-coded filing cabinets. Like, if I smelled a flower, and it smelled beautiful, I'd get a thought from the purple flower.

# Facilitators' messages



## Facilitator's note

By Ammy Purcell

**W**hen I was 14 years old my social worker told me I had to join a program. I had to do something to keep me off the streets and out of trouble.

I was already in cadets and I really didn't want to do anything else in my spare time, I wanted to hang out with friends at the mall like a typical teenager would. Then I was told about this writing program. At first I thought NO WAY! I already hated school and I wasn't doing well at all, why would I want to write in my spare time?

I heard a couple of my friends were already in the Newsletter and said it's not that bad and you get paid. So I joined. What did I have to lose? Truth is, I have done nothing but gained, every year, ever since: knowledge, responsibility, perception, and a new look on life.

I honestly don't know where I would be without the Newsletter. Would I have graduated high school? Probably not. Been accepted to University? Definitely not. Got a job and worked my way to a management position in less than 5 years? I don't think so.

I feel I owe a lot to the Newsletter and I am so grateful for everything I have learned over the years and I am still learning now. There is nothing I enjoy more than knowing I play a part in helping this new generation of youth get even half of the benefits I have gotten out of this wonderful program.

I really wish this were my full time job.

## Facilitator's note

By Rebecca Moore

**T**he Youth in Care Newsletter Project is more than just a newsletter, it is a support group as well. This program is unique and one of a kind. There is no other group in Nova Scotia where youth in care get a chance to meet and not only speak about their experiences living in the system, but write about it and have those writings published. It really gives these youth an outlet to have their voices heard, and a program like this also teaches them that their voices are valuable and people will listen.

Each week we all "check in" and share with each other how our weeks are going or share any news we may have. This really creates a strong friendship dynamic in the group, and a place where we can put our heads together and help each other overcome any obstacles that may arise while navigating through the "system" or through life in general.

The Youth in Care Newsletter also provides a platform for the youth to have some public speaking experience at the annual launching of the newsletter. I know this is where I had my first experience with public speaking, and I have been speaking in public ever since. It is an amazing thing to watch these youth grow and gain confidence throughout the years, and I believe that programs like this do a great job influencing young people to grow in a positive way.



# Living in care

By Barbara



**L**iving in care has changed me and made me have more respect for my mom and dad.

My time in care has been scary, amazing, disappointing and good. I had to see that bad times and good times without being able to see my parents is hard.

But in a way it's good because before I left, things were bad. I won't be able to forget what happened but I can forgive.

Nowadays telling your life story is nothing because it just comes out. You tell the person that you're talking to like it's nothing because it's so easy — you've already told so many people.

By Jennifer



**L**iving in care isn't hard in the physical sense, but mentally and emotionally it's a different story.

Mentally it stresses your ability to adapt to the max. You learn everything you've ever known is wrong. It's like going from feeling your age to feeling like you're five again, and being treated like you're a five-year-old, with adult responsibilities.

Most people lie to you without even knowing it — they even believe it most of the time. They are so self-deluded they don't understand their follies.

But the emotional effects burn the deepest. Every day you wake up and are alone; every challenge and every pain you must face alone. No one will help; no one can sympathize, no matter how much they might want to.

The cultural shock is agonizing at times, going from a passionate and loving home, to a socially correct and stale house.

By Kimber

**L**iving in care hasn't really changed me much because I have been in care for most of my life. I was in it when I was first born until I was two and then back into care when I was five until I was six and then back in when I was eight years old.

I remember when I was first put in foster care and I was very sassy. I would have very big temper tantrums and I was always in the timeout at school. I think I was just confused about the fact that I wasn't living with my mom and I didn't understand why I wasn't living with her.

By Ashton



**L**iving in care has changed me a lot as a person. I was bullied my whole life in care because of my skin colour and various other things.

I've learned to be more cautious of my surroundings and my personal belongings.

Living in care has changed my personality a lot. I constantly have a shield up, protecting my feelings and never letting my guard down, but through the years I've gotten better.

By Alexandra



**L**iving in care changed me as a person because every bad experience that happens to me also helps me.

It makes me stronger as a person and boosts my self-esteem. Living in care has helped me deal with difficult situations when I'm put in a different group home and have to deal with change and learn to manage being around other personalities.





# The future

## The kind of person I want to be

By Breanna



**I**want to be the kind of the person everyone loves to be around.

I want to be the kindest person. I want people to love to be around me. I want to live life with no REGRETS.

I never want to be sad or mad, I want to always be happy and smile all the time and live everyday like it's my last. I want people to like me for who I am and not what they would like me to be.

I know that I'm not perfect but I would like to be pretty close to it, even though my friends say I am, I still have a hard time believing it.

I want to be respectful, nice, caring and loving. I probably already am all those things but I want to try to be better at doing those things. I just want to be the best I can be and try my best at everything I do in life.

I want to be very successful and smile everyday because that is what keeps me going — just being happy.

## The future I want to grow up in

By Alexandra

**T**he future I want to grow up in is a world that doesn't capitalize on the worst things going on in life.

For example, there are a lot of fashion models that are not representing what they should be advertising in the media because most of them are so small they look unhealthy.

The media affects how people look at themselves and often makes their self-esteem worse.

The economy is bumping up the cost of needs in life such as food, gas, etc, which leads to not being able to live a healthy, affordable life.

I hope I get a great job that I am committed to, like a flight attendant, an entrepreneur or a costume designer that can help me afford all the needs and wants in life.

Eating healthy in the present and in my future will help me with my self-esteem. I would also love to have a family, a husband and children and a nice home in either Toronto, New York or Rome. Those are some of my dream places to live.

## The world I want to grow up in

By Morgan



**T**he world I want to live in is peaceful, healthy and beautiful. In my world, there is no crime and no liars. In my world everyone has what they need to survive and then some. In my world, people are happy.

## My Future

By Jillisa

**H**elping others. That's all my dream has ever been since I can remember. I want to have a family and be surrounded by people I love and care about.

I want to be happy, just bathing in all the joys being successful brings. I want to always smile and be able to frown when it's okay.

Oh yes, I almost forgot the most important part... I'm gonna marry Justin Bieber! Mrs. Bieber at your service.

## What is the goal for my future?

By Alexandra

**M**y goal for the future is to have a good paying job, one that I am passionate about, one that involves travelling the world or something creative like designing clothes or a movie producer.

To help me get those goals I have to go through school and get good marks, find jobs to start me out, maybe some volunteering to put on my resume for experience. Money is a big part of these kind of jobs.

## My goal in life

By Kimber

**M**y goal in life is to have a child and raise it right and be able to give it everything it needs.

How I'm going to achieve it is by staying out of trouble and staying in school so I will be able to have a career and have money for a house and food.



# The future

## The Future

By Ashton

I'd like the future to look a lot better than it is now, without the polluted air and global warming and greasy and unhealthy food.

I'd like a country where my kids can walk round their hometown safe without the worry of getting kidnapped or harmed, where everybody can vote no matter what age they are (within reason), where gay marriage is legal in every state, where LGBT youth and young adults can live without the fear of being bullied or having to worry if their new school or sports team will accept them for who THEY ARE.

I'd like a future with no bullies, where a bad haircut is old news, where something embarrassing can happen to a female youth and people reassure them that it's happened to everyone. In my future I want FREEDOM.

## The future I want to grow up in

By Kimber

The future I want to grow up in will have less drugs. Nowadays, there's hardly a teenager who doesn't do drugs on a regular basis, most teens have at least tried it once.

The most common used drug is marijuana. To teenagers, marijuana is so popular they don't even consider it a drug. Fifty years ago I'm sure this wasn't the case.

I'm scared for the future because eventually people will think marijuana isn't good enough and will want something new. Maybe in the future, cocaine will be the new drug everyone will be using. I would not like my children using cocaine.

# Dreams

## Dreams

By Anonymous

There are two kinds of "dreams". There are dreams that we have while we're asleep and dreams we have while we're awake. But sometimes my dreams feel like reality. I can wake up thinking my dream was real and thinking it actually happened.

I will sit there wondering if it really happened or was it just a dream. Once in awhile I will have the same exact dreams, thinking to myself could these dreams mean something? — the ones that I have been having over and over again, could they be trying to tell me something? Is there something that I am missing?

Then there are those bad dreams where I just wake up scared and scared to get back to sleep. Then there's times that I'm believing in my dreams and hoping that someday they will come true.

Dreams can be an escape from all the pain you're dealing with or even if you're just having a bad day. It's a place where you can finally be yourself and not worry about anything or anyone.

Dreaming is my escape from everything.

## Dreams

By Alexandra

When I think of dreams I think of dreaming big and fun. My big dream is going to be unique. That is what makes it a reflection of me.

## Dreams

By Morgan

Dreams are what create the future. They help make things the way they are, as people had to dream up most of what is created. The mind is a dreamer's paradise — you can make anything as perfect as you dream it.

Sometimes dreams are ugly things that bother us but make the most amazing stories. A lot of books start with dreams — some are happy and beautiful, others are sad and horrible.

Dreams create every fiber of who we are in this world. As children, dreams would frighten us. The older we get, we realize the beauty of our dreams and the ones that scared us as children fade into the background and don't bother us anymore.

Dreams are us, as we are dreams — creation is only a dream.

## Dreams

By Jillisa

Dreams are beautiful, cute, funny, laughing snuggly clouds. I want to lay on them forever.

I'm Justin Bieber's girlfriend and he's singing to me, music to my ears.

I jerk awake to my own snoring. Now I'm awake and it was just a dream.

## **She**

*By Alexandra*

I cried in her arms as she fell with me.  
I told her I wasn't going to leave her side and she trusted me.  
I went down the wrong road and she came with me.  
I told her I will make it out as different people one day  
And she believed me.

## **Family**

*By Tamara*

It could be a foster family, your blood family or even a church family.

Family could be your group of friends at school.  
Family just means no one is left out or forgotten.

So I say thank you to my families who have welcomed me into their lives with open arms.

## **Hate**

*By Tamara*

Gruesome looking face.  
Life's a little rocky.  
Deathling black  
Nasty smelling trash.  
The feasting place for rats  
Headache for my ears  
Salty and round.  
Hate.

## **I Forgive you**

*By Jennifer*

I forgive you, you know. All the hurt and outrage that filled me in those first few years has faded into an acceptance. That which has happened cannot un-happen, not that I would ever want it to.

On my solitary journey that your actions sparked, I have met friends and lost family, and met the man with whom I hope to spend my life.

So I suppose I should thank you, though my disappointment cannot change until I hear you apologize and admit of the wrongness of your actions.

I need no video camera nor crowd to embarrass you. All I want is a token to quiet the disappointed voices in my heart.

## **Anger**

*By Barbara*

I wanna scream at the top of my lungs,  
Put anger in a room, in there it will burst.  
It bolted up inside me and I try to stop it.  
But I slowly fall apart  
and I'm the only one that will be able to pick up the pieces.

## **the Reason**

*By Tamara*

You used to be the reason for my smiles,  
The never-ending butterflies in my belly,  
The sun in my dreams,  
The reason my heart used to beat as fast as it did.

Now... you're the reason for my pain,  
The aching pain in my heart,  
The nightmares that fill my nights,  
The reason my heart beats as slow as it does.

So... Don't be fooled by my smile,  
Inside I'm breaking,  
Hiding in the dark because there's so much sorrow,  
Still alive, but barely breathing.

## **Human**

*By Morgan*

We are all human  
Vulnerable to nature's call  
Knowing that yesterday's pain  
Makes today harder  
Frozen in our thoughts  
Not realizing  
That what we believe in  
Can ruin us  
And make happiness  
Unattainable

## **Time**

*By Tamara*

Time is sometimes slow.  
But time flies when you're enjoying yourself.  
Don't let time stop you from doing something you wanna do.  
You're never too old to try something new.  
If you can't do something, keep trying.  
Never give up.  
People change in time.  
Time changed everything,  
The past doesn't matter.  
Let it be a ghost.

## Messy Room

By Jillisa

Sitting in my messy room and I'm dreading cleaning it.  
Ah well, gotta get it done.  
My room is finally clean and I found an old journal in the process.  
"Chill & Spill"  
I remember this book. I got it when I was in the hospital.  
I'm so hesitant to open it.  
I was really sick then, I might regret it.  
I'm feeling secure and safe so I opened it.  
Ashamed, flustered, petrified, cold. Who is this girl?  
Aggravated, Pathetic, miserable. Two years ago, this was me.  
Hurt, lonely, depressed and rejected.  
Horrible pictures and repetitive sentences that literally give me excruciating chills.  
Chills that physically give me pain.  
I close the book and squeeze my eyes till I get dizzy. As I slowly open my eyes, something, or someone reminds me that I'm not that person anymore.  
All the negative is not me.  
Disconnected.  
Coldness that I can feel turning warm like stepping into a hot bath.  
I feel my lips moving and my cheeks raising.  
A smile.  
I am awed. Awed at myself.  
Jillisa.  
Me, I.  
I overcame that.  
My feelings of being real and connected are flowing to my brain through my ears.  
Happy, happy, happy  
I now stop, look up to the ceiling, with a tear falling from my eyes, and say thank you.  
Hopeful.  
I know I can continue to do it, with me, myself.  
Jillisa.  
Slowly feeling that grace of being secure and safe, so warm.  
You did it.  
I did it!

## Self Loathing

By Jennifer

I hate you. You bind and whip my pride; you strip me of my dignity.

I think about you every day and, with every thought. I feel my spine and head become alive with flames so hot and bright it frightens even me. The anger that your unjust criticism and lies bring up in me is wild and frenzied.

You held me down and made me cry and beg for mercy. But I will never bow to you again for to do so would be to disgrace all I have fought for.

I am beautiful, I am powerful and have everything to be proud of. Through my own resilience of spirit I have conquered you. I am no longer afraid.

## Perseverance

By Jennifer

Though the wind may blow,  
And the earth may quake,  
And the rain comes pounding down.  
I will stand and I will walk.

## God has a voice

By Tamara

He screams of pain and sorrow, dreading for light.  
This human, boy, son, an only child to the loving two.

He's thoughtful in so many ways. Would drop anything to see someone smile. He's beyond artistic and accepts you as is. Sensitive and caring, Hates to see a frown. Disagrees with some, occupies the rest.

We grew up on some of the same grounds. He stands up for me in every possible way, has been there for me through a lot. This is my brother. Overall a happy person smiling, but today dreads the pain suffering from the illness.

Strong, gripping for dear life. Never to let go. We're shouting out to "God" himself, screaming his name for all to hear. Praying for a better day. I kneel beside my bed at night asking, "Dear God give him the strength, a chance of a better life, don't let him let go".

We try everything but nothing seems to work. Seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks. They all pass while we're waiting, waiting for God to hear our shouts.

A miracle happens. Families join hearts and hands. All smiles to see friendly faces. "God we speak the phrase we did before". "Hear us dear God".

The pain slowly leaves, he regains his appetite, fragile bones start to move. This human, boy, man, son, an only child to the loving two. He is and I repeat "Okay". Recovering from something that was slowly tearing him down, from the inside out.

And because of this, I do believe, GOD HAS A VOICE!





# Friendship

## Friendship

By Alexandra

**F**riendship is when a certain person that you have a close relationship with gives a unique promise to be there by your side in most appropriate cases.

You exchange secrets with them, you share, hang out, be whoever you want when you're with them because you are that comfortable being your true self around them.

They should, in some cases, forgive you for your sins, be supportive, be a shoulder to lean on when you need it. You shouldn't have to ask for their care or sympathy!



## What Friendship means to me

By Barbara

**A**t first my friends were all I had. They were all that made me happy when I was upset.

I've had friends but I realize now that I never really did have a best friend.

A best friend is someone that's just another you. They know everything you're going through and have a lot of things in common with you.

I thought I had best friends but I guess they were just another person to tell everything to. But in a way, friendship does mean a lot to me because it shows the brighter side of life.

## Friendship

By Morgan

**F**riendship to me is when two or more people share interests and complement each other's personality. Friends are people who know who you are.

# Richness

## How do you measure richness in your life?

By Jennifer

**W**ell, to me richness has many definitions: richness in wealth, food and life experience. Experience is the most important form of richness, with food a close second.

Richness in your life can only be measured by you, for only you understand your motives and intentions.

One thing you need to live richly is a set of principles. I suppose you could consider this your moral compass.



## How do you measure richness

By Tamara



To me, richness isn't about the name-brand clothes or the most expensive phone out there. It's not about how much you pay for a new car, or even a home.

To me, richness is measured by what you do have, not what you don't. If you have a home, friends and family that love you dearly and food, this may not be everything in the world, but you're rich in my eyes because you have everything you will ever need right in front of you.

## How do you measure richness in life

By Alexandra

**W**hen I see a person with a truthful heart, that means they are always being truthful to the people they love. When it comes down to it, that is the person you should keep close to your own heart and that is a good value to add on to your life goals. That is the kind of richness you need in life.

# What people should know

## Media

By Alexandra

I want people around me to start thinking about the media — the bad effects the media can have on a teenager.

The media talk about how skinny you should be or what you should look like. The thing is these commercials are going to young people's heads because everybody wants to look like everybody other than themselves — it's creating a big problem. When the teenagers don't get the look they want, they start turning to other things that aren't particularly safe, like diet pills or other weight loss tricks.

We all have to make a change together or it sadly just won't happen. This is the media making me write this.

## World hunger

By Kimber

I'm gonna write about what I'd like to change about the world. What I'd like to change is world hunger and child slavery. I think that children deserve to have a childhood and should be able to play with their friends instead of having to work. Children should not have responsibilities.

For me, I eat when I'm hungry, when I'm bored or when I just feel like eating. It's always there around me and it doesn't seem like a big deal to me.

I can't imagine what it would be like to not have enough food and to have it so scarce.

## Truth

By Morgan

Truth in life is hard to come by. I myself would say that truth doesn't exist, that there is no such thing as true trust.

When I ask myself what the definition of trust is, I don't know and I like knowing what things are and what they mean. Trust is a word that I can't define in my own words to let others know what I mean when I say "TRUST me", when honestly truth is just an empty word.

When I hear people say you have to earn trust, I wanna know how anyone even measures that.

## The difference

By Chantel



What is courage? Courage is living in spite of the things that scare you to death; it's standing up for what you believe — even if people jump up and down on it and rip it apart. It's telling your story, even if it hurts so bad you think your heart will stop, even if the people you're telling judge you or don't believe you.

Courage is forgiving the very people that tied you down and treated you like some stupid animal. It's letting go of that horrid chain of events, so that you can move on and be a better person. It's loving someone, it's giving your heart to someone else; even if you've had it stomped on and shredded many times before.

Courage is asking for help and admitting that, yes, you are human with a heart that beats warm in your chest and sometimes it's too much for you to handle on your own. Courage is the tiny flower that sprouts after a wildfire turns a forest black.

However, I also know fear. Fear is human instinct; it's hatred and insecurity. It's a monster we let ourselves create, which can sometimes swallow us whole and leave us absolutely powerless.

Fear is intimidation; the tiny part of us that we can't quite control which lets someone or something have more power over us than they should.

Fear has not one form, but millions. It can hit you hard, like a rod of titanium to the gut, or it can take small bites out of you until there's nothing left of you to eat away at but a shell. Fear is what makes us feel so small and so lost, the tiny voice in our heads that asks "why did I even leave my bedroom this morning?"

Fear is when you feel as though you can't breathe, and you just want to lay in a corner and cry until you have no more tears.

Fear is what takes lives in one form or another, and its touch is far colder than the fingers of any corpse.

## The end of the world

By Ashton

If the world was going to end...

I wouldn't really do anything besides reflect on the past and the good times in my head, before I have my few last moments in the world.

# What people should know

## What I'd like people to know

By Alexandra

I want people to know that I am the kind of person that looks out for a lot of people and that I care a lot!

I might come off as having a nasty attitude and always cranky but I really am a caring and loving person to everyone.

## What people should know about me

By Morgan

One thing I would like people to know about me is that I'm a total nerd, I play Minecraft. If you have never heard of Minecraft I will explain. Minecraft is a survival game that features blocks — everything is made of blocks. You have to gather what you need to survive and after making things that that you need (as the name suggests) you mine precious things. You can also play in creative mode where you can build things, make castles and houses, or even statues. And in creative mode, you can fly.

I honestly love Minecraft. You can do so much and build beautiful things. If you ever need any help there are plenty of websites that will help you. You can also join multiplayer servers which are extremely fun.

## Something I'd like people to know about me

By Breanna

Something I'd like people to know about me is, I love to laugh, like all the time even when nothing is funny. I feel the need to laugh. People look at me like I'm crazy because I laugh so hard.

It's not something I have always done. I never used to laugh this much but now I laugh at everything. When someone falls and hurts themselves, I start laughing, especially when they're crying. I start to laugh so hard I start to cry.

Laughing has become a hobby of mine. It's what I like to do best.

No matter how hard I try not to laugh, it just won't work. I just keep laughing. I love to LAUGH!!



# Who I'd like to meet

## An amazing person I would like to meet

By Jillisa

I know this is going to sound cliché and just like a typical teenage girl, but Justin Bieber is an amazing person that I would like to meet.

He is such an amazing person inside and out. When I was in the hospital, his music made me hope and believe that things were life worthy. He's so silly and hilarious and has a huge heart.

He reminds me that there is still good in this world even when all seems bad.

## Hanging with someone

By Ashton

If I could hang out with someone famous, it would be Macklemore. He's my idol.

His music actually really means something. It's not like other rappers or artists rapping about hoes, money and clothes. He actually speaks on problems in the world, he's such a positive guy, he has a great sense of humor, and he's a very cheeky guy.

His personality is AMAZING, the fact that he means a lot to me as role model.



# Heather spelled backwards

*By Kimber*

Everything happens for a reason. That is something I have always believed in.

Rehtaeh was one of the few of my “besties” in grade seven at Sir Robert Borden. And with all the typical drama I’ve had with my other friends, Rehtaeh was never part of it. In fact, I don’t ever remember her being in any drama.

She never really cared about other people’s gossip. She was just an easy-going kinda girl.

Then in the summer, I moved to Brookside and lost touch with everyone including her. Then I moved to Spryfield and I had the option of going to Citadel High. I remember the day before the first day of school I was sick and had just woken up. Of course the first thing I do is check my phone. And there was a broadcast: “everybody add Rehtaeh, she’s gonna be new at Citadel so she needs to meet new people.”

Reading this familiar name, I definitely added her. There I was, the day before I start a new school and I find my old best friend is also gonna be new. I was excited!

The first day of school we found out we have math class together. We stuck together for the first few days and then she didn’t come regularly anymore.

On my birthday me and her and some other people sat on Citadel Hill at lunchtime. We had lots of fun and she introduced me to her friend and I introduced her to my friends. I never thought that would be the last time I would ever see her again.

On Friday after school I find out terrible news. Rehtaeh was on life support after hanging herself. I was shocked. The doctor said there wasn’t much chance of her surviving but for some reason I had the feeling she would. I thought she would wake up and in the future she would look back at the situation and think, “damn, I’m so glad I survived that!”

But on early Monday morning, her parents decided to pull the plug. Rehtaeh was dead.

I had never had someone I have recent memories of pass away so this is something new to me. We weren’t really super close but it’s just the fact of death is what gets me.

Gone, gone, gone. Never to return. Rehtaeh Parsons is gone. I still can’t believe it.

Rehtaeh’s organs have saved four people and gave sight to one. That is truly amazing. Everybody has learned from her, including me. I have never met anybody as strong as Rehtaeh. All the time I talked and hung with her I wouldn’t have imagined what was really going on, how she could just be the way she was after such traumatizing events.

I hope everybody hears her story and thinks about the following: about what you say to others; how amazing she was; and that even the happiest people can be holding the darkest secrets.

People say to me “I’m sorry for your loss” and I say, “It’s not my loss, it’s everyone’s loss” because Rehtaeh was an amazing human being. May she rest in peace.

## Stereotyping

### **Stereotyping youth in care**

*By Alexandra*

People that have heard of group homes are more likely to be thinking about negative things, like the youth living there are not “normal”. People need to understand we are just like everybody else and some of us do have goals for the future and some of us actually do achieve those goals.

### **Typical thoughts about foster children**

*By Kimber*

Typical thoughts about foster children are that they are “hoodlums” and that they won’t do well in life. That they are school dropouts, do drugs, are mentally challenged, have mental health issues and behavior problems. These are the typical thoughts about a foster child.

### **Perceptions of youth in care**

*By Barbara*

We’re people. We’re no different than anyone but we’ve been through a lot. The things that happen to us, we didn’t ask for. But we wake up and try just like you — it’s everyday things that make us just like you.

We need more people to understand us. Not many people care or understand. We all need that one person that makes us a better person. Sometimes people need more than one. The way I see it everyone has their reasons for what they do. Sometimes what they do isn’t good but if more people cared, they might try more to change.

# Amazing people

## An Amazing Person I Have Met

By Tamara

**I**t was challenging to think of an amazing person I know because there are so many of them.

The first person that came to mind though was my grandmother. She is my whole life, I don't know what I would do without her. My nan is so many things to me. She was a fighter of cancer several times.

I've made so many mistakes in the past but she's always there for me to talk to about them. She is super supportive of me and beyond accepting! She believes the past is the past and you should leave it at that.

Her jokes always make me laugh and her stories are amazing! She tells them in the best of ways. When I was first taken from my mom at the age of eight she fought with all her might and will power for us to be with family.

I can recall my nanny and poppy coming to one of our visits for our first Christmas away from home. She was crying and so was my poppy.

She is caring in so many ways. She loves when I come down on the weekends and never says no when I ask. My grampy once told me that the house was there for his grandkids any time they needed it.

She's kind and doesn't judge. She treats all her grandkids the same. She is loving and inspirational. I love this woman to the moon and back a thousand times plus some.



## Who is the most amazing person you've met?

By Stefan

**T**he most amazing person I've met is my beautiful daughter Sophie because she's my beautiful, life-changing, splitting image. She has changed my perspective on everything.

## My sisters

By Tamara

**I** have thought long and hard about what I'm going to write about, and I'm stuck on the idea of writing about my two amazing sisters Natalie and Natasha. They are twins, but look nothing alike.

They are the best thing that's ever happened to me. I can still remember the day I went to meet them. I told my mom they were my babies, not hers and still see it that way.

I can remember spending hours playing Barbies as kids and pretending we were in our own little world, going to the duck pond to feed ducks and wanting to escape reality.

We were taken once before and I can remember cuddling with them in bed crying, wishing things were different. We moved with a family for a little over a year. We grew up in the country, never did get to see the city. We moved back with our mom the summer of 2006.

My sisters and I started fighting again, not getting along. I now look back and realize how much I miss those days. I miss hugging them goodnight and telling them I love them all the time, watching them grow, the tears, smiles, and laughs. The joy of knowing we were together.

I go to bed now wishing I were with them. I made a promise to them and so far I have kept it. I try to call them as much as possible. I visit as much as I can as well, but there are still those moments when I wished they were by my side. But for now they're in my heart and that's where they will stay, forever, till the world comes to an end.



# Miscellaneous

## Travel

*By Morgan*

**I**f I could travel anywhere in the world, I would go to France, mostly because my family has a strong personal connection to France.

I would love to see the beauty and artwork in France, the wonder of how it was all made.

If I were to travel to France I would probably end up living there because I wouldn't be able to pull myself away. France is the homeland, the roots of where my family is from.

## Murder

*By Kimber*

**H**ow can anybody be so selfish as to take the life of somebody and not think about their friends and family?

There are people that need that one person and now they are gone because you were selfish and took your anger out on them and didn't think about the people that need them and that will grieve for them for the rest of their lives... and it's all your fault.

It not only affects the people that knew that person, it also affects you.

The consequence that comes for murdering somebody, jail time. To not think about your community, how the kids are scared because they are afraid the same thing might happen to them. To add to all the other murders that happen in the world, contributing to another statistic and to prove that this world is getting more and more unsafe. For people to hear about it and shaking their heads.

The question I have to ask you is, how can you live your life knowing somebody else isn't living their life... and it's all your fault.

## Trust

*By Breanna*

**T**rust is something you have to earn and I have learned that it's very hard to trust people. It takes me a while to actually get to the point of trusting people.

With trust, you have to be very careful because you might end up trusting the wrong person. Be careful, because you don't want to end up losing trust in the person you have trusted most because it can take a while to learn how to trust again. All I'm saying is be careful who you trust.

## What do you fear most

*By Chantel*

**I**fear not being able to protect the people I was put here to protect.

I fear growing up, because everyone makes it seem like nothing will ever be beautiful again.

I fear the world I'm growing up in; that eventually I'll just be surrounded by a bunch of "happy" pill-popping zombies and cold, gray steel or concrete.

I fear the monsters under our beds, with fingers colder than the touch of any corpse, and the ghosts in our closets; the slivers of doubt that lurk in the shadows and the thoughts that seep in to my mind at night like venom.

I fear being made into yet another joke to society, to the justice system, to my family...

I fear being ultimately alone; having nowhere and no one to go to when I need them.

I fear rejection, and failure. Not being good enough. Not being perfect at what I do.

I fear one day I'll fall apart, and everything will crush me; the thought of my weaknesses terrify me, because they're something I can't afford to have.

I fear that losing one world might not necessarily mean gaining another...

I fear being forgotten.





# 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  
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**Andrew Safer** – advisor, board member  
**David Swick** – guest editor  
**Jerry West** – guest editor

## 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 Council for 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 & Employment Centre** – meeting venue  
**Poets 4 Change** – guest performers  
**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](http://www.youthnewsletter.net)



*CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:*

**Chantel, Stefan, Tamara and Morgan speak about living in care to university students at the Dalhousie School of Social work.**

**Painting of a woman by Morgan.**

**Life under the sea by Jenny.**

**The Newsletter Christmas party at Jungle Jim's with Jennifer, Tamara and Morgan**

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