

# THE Voice

ISSUE 19, MAY 2019



## DISCOVERING YOUR VOICE

**ON THE COVER** — FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: **Brandy Warman, Ammy Purcell, Wesley Roberts, Max Scott, Chloe Roberts, Emily Rondelet, Olivia Macdonald and Kaitlin Wolfe.**  
Cover and other inside photos by John Chiasson (unless otherwise noted) with thanks to the Discovery Centre for the location.





**Photos by Aaron Dawe**



**Kelly Besler, Director of Child Protection and Children in Care, presenting Brandy (above) and Chloe (below) with their OYA awards**



## **OYAS**

*Brandy Warman*

I was nominated for an OYA, Outstanding Youth Award, this year. I was nominated by my social worker, Cody Doucette, for all my hard work and progress throughout the year, for doing good in my school work, for being able to come off an IPP in my first year of high school and for being able to be so independent and responsible at such a young age. It felt great to be recognized for my achievements.

## **Outstanding Youth Achievement Awards**

*Chloe Roberts*

Receiving an Outstanding Youth Award was an amazing opportunity. My social worker nominated me for working hard academically, seeing the positive side of things and having a strong passion for my family. Also, because I have the goal of attending post secondary school after high school.

Walking across that stage was a great opportunity getting all the love and support from my friends and family. There was a lot of memory-making that night. There was a photo booth, candy table and a dinner buffet. For the photo booth, there were so many props. There were all types of candy for the candy table, including fuzzy peaches, sour keys, gummy worms and gummy bears. For dinner, there were many different types of pasta, salads and breads. It was all so great!

# ABOUT THE VOICE



This year's group of Voice contributors along with Kaitlin (Executive Director), Ammy (Program Director), and (volunteer) Olivia.

## Brandy Warman

I came back to *The Voice* this year because it's like a second home to me and a place where I don't feel judged and I can be myself and not have to worry about what people are thinking about me because they are my family.

## Mya Manual

I came to *The Voice* as I was told that I was signed up for the program and that it started today. I was told what it was, and I thought it was interesting. I really hope that I learn things from this program. I think it is good that I was signed up because my social worker and my foster parent are always telling me that I need to do something more productive and come out of my room (which I do but according to them I don't). I hope that I will get to meet people I can relate to, so I don't feel so alone and confused. I hope that I benefit from this program and learn and grow from it.

## Wesley Roberts

I came here today because of last year. I made great friends and I love writing.

The magazine is really good; a lot of laughs and dedication goes into it. It's crazy how everything can happen so quickly — at only 14 years old, I was published in a magazine. I can't wait to show my nieces and nephews. My family shows a lot of support toward my writing and it makes my heart fill with pride. *The Voice* helps me when I am doubting myself about my writing.

## Kyra Kendall

I joined *The Voice* because I thought it would be a good learning experience and a positive experience in general. The pay is a bonus!

## Chloe Roberts

I came to *The Voice* this year because I came last year, and it was blast! I like having a place to go every week to write, have fun, talk to a bunch of people and make new friends. The reason I came last year was because I wasn't really doing anything after school, and I thought it would be a great way to meet new people and share my thoughts. *The Voice* is a place where you'll be heard and where your voice matters. It's like a second home to me.

## Chris T

I came to *The Voice* at a time where I didn't have anything else to do and I was trying to figure out what I want to do with myself. I spent a year in a placement where I wasted a lot of it at home not doing anything and the foster parents didn't help me with doing other things to occupy my time. I essentially wasn't sure what I could do that was accessible. Then, my new foster parent got an email about *The Voice*, told me what it was, and I thought it sounded pretty cool. When I got here, I did my best to get into the feel of it (not feeling it yet\*) but it's only been a couple sessions so I'm still feeling it out.

*\*He continued to join us every week!*



# ON THE MOVE

By Ammy Purell

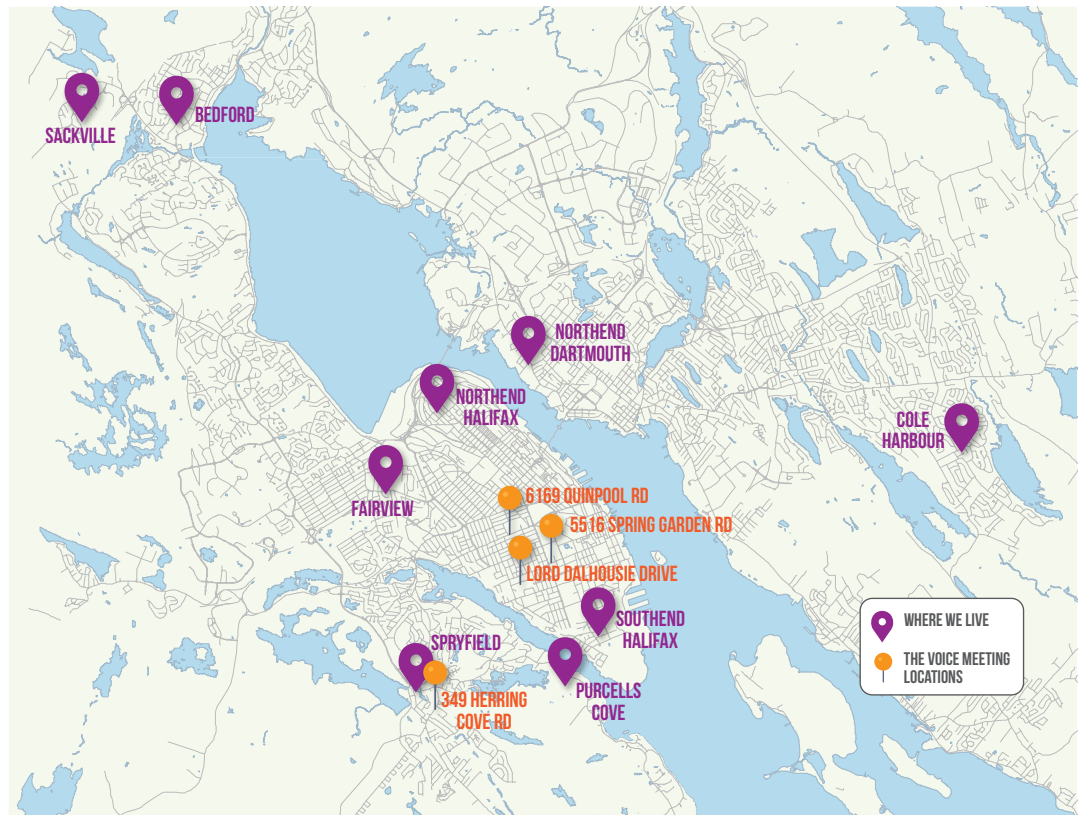
As most of the people reading this magazine know, stability is frequently absent in the life of a youth in care. Constant change in adult supports, schools, and living situations takes a toll on a youth, especially in these crucial years of self-discovery and growth. Here at *The Voice*, we have always tried to provide a feeling of stability in the lives of youth in care.

No matter what else may be changing in their lives, *The Voice* has always met on Wednesday nights — same place, same time — for the past 15 years. But unfortunately, as the saying goes, all good things must come to an end. When scheduling issues couldn't be resolved with PLEC, our home for many years, it was time for us to move on. But where would we go?

We reached out to all our supports in the community and were offered many different places to host our weekly meetings. We relocated first to Heartwood Center for Community Youth Development. They welcomed us whole-heartedly but unfortunately, the downtown location proved to be difficult. We are very grateful to Heartwood for hosting us and we look forward to partnering with you in other projects in the future.

And so we were on the road again to find a suitable space. I contacted Brendan Maguire, MLA for Halifax-Atlantic and a long-time supporter of our project. Maybe he knew of a space where our group could hold our weekly meetings. Brendan immediately offered up his own office to hold our meetings, for free.

I was so grateful for his generosity, we moved right in that Wednesday. We met there for more than a month, but unfortunately, his office proved to be too small to fit everyone and a bit too far for some participants to travel. A huge thank you to Brendan for taking us in without hesitation. You are a true ally to *The Voice*!



At that point we were already half way through our year and only needed a temporary solution to get us through to the end. With the help of our dedicated adult volunteer, Olivia Macdonald, we were able to secure a space that fit our needs. *The Voice* was able to carry on as normal, at least on a temporary basis.

We did have to miss a few weekly sessions due the instability of our meeting locations. But we also took the opportunity to go on a couple of community outings. We were able to go to the Halifax Central Library to participate in a fun scavenger hunt, and later to the Discovery Center to check out the Guinness Book of Records exhibit.

Although we are still on the hunt for a permanent “home” for next year, we are incredibly thankful to everyone who has helped us with the challenges we faced this year. We have proved that we can and will overcome any challenge we face.

*The Voice* is a true definition of resilience — much like the youth who come through our program each year. We are so very proud of the strength and patience from our youth participants, their guardians, and everyone else involved to help us stay true to our mission.

## Changing locations

Brandy Warman

This is my third year in *The Voice* and there has been a lot of change in our location this year. At the start of the year, we were at PLEC on Quinpool road. We called this our home. *The Voice* was there for 15 years but sadly, PLEC could no longer commit to us using their space.

So now we've got been going from place to place. First, we moved to Spring Garden Road, to Heartwood's office. That was a really big change. The streets were very busy, and a lot of the cabs were not good at getting us to the place that we were asked to be dropped off at and that was really unsafe. The roads were busy, and it was really dark when we were being dropped off. The building didn't feel welcoming, we had to buzz in when we got there, and we couldn't just walk in and see everyone. After we decided that Spring Garden Road wasn't the best spot for a bunch of reasons, we moved to Brendan Maguire's office in Spryfield. His office was okay. It still didn't feel like our home, but it was better than nothing. The office was very small and crowded and hard to fit everyone in there.

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**“We have proved that we can and will overcome any challenge we face.”**

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After a few months we decided to move again and thanked Brendan for the spot. Olivia was able to find us another location that was a much better spot than the other places we jumped from. I really like it there. It won't be exactly like our “home,” but the space is good, and the cabs are usually good at getting us to and from.

With all the moving around I feel like my writing has lacked a lot because I didn't always feel motivated to put out my best work this year. I know that I'm not doing my best but it's hard to when I've gotten used to a place and then I have to move. Even though I'm in care I have been fortunate enough to not have to move so much in my life, so this is probably why the moving is affecting me.



**The Voice Squad at a Wednesday Night meeting**

# ABOUT FAMILY

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*Chris T*

Family is a loving and caring group of people consisting of parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and sometimes friends — family friends. Sadly, for the best of us, this group of people isn't always the easiest to find. This issue usually ends up happening because of mental health backgrounds and financial struggles in families that make the living environment not so great to be apart of. These issues often break-up familial relationships. This can result in children getting taken from these unhealthy environments and get placed in different living situations. When this happens, there is often a loss of cultural background which is important when trying to figure out who you are, and where you come from. I feel it's important to know who your family is when trying to figure out who you are.

Although there is sometimes a chance for ending up in a bad placement, there is also a chance for the opposite to happen. You can end up in a home with supportive, dependable, excepting, and respectful families. I've been lucky enough to find all that in my second home. At this moment, I am doing better than I did before and am a lot happier.

*Annabelle James*

My family was always broken. When I say broken, I mean that it was never a good situation. It is something that someone would want to always avoid. My family was always angry at each other, always on bad terms with one another. My family was never a good thing. Everything was always negative; there was never a lot of positives that had to do with my family. My family is different, not like the 'normal' family. My family was somewhat loving towards me while I was growing up, but that definitely went away as the years passed. I consider my family as 'messed up' and this is not the word I want to use to describe my family, but it is the first word that comes to mind. So yeah, my family is not normal, they are just messed up and have problems with mental health that is hard to deal with. This alone made my life a living nightmare.

I have a brother and I think it would be cool to have a sister, I think that a lot of people have both brothers and sisters, so I feel a little left out without a sister. My family was supportive to me in some ways, but not for what I wanted for myself. I wish that they would have been. I think that 'family' is togetherness, but mine wasn't together that often. We don't have a big family either so there wasn't a lot of getting together on holidays.

*Brandy Warman*

I'm very proud of the stuff that's improving in my mom and dad's life. I really believe they deserve it. My mom sounds like she's been doing really good — she seems happy and getting a little better. For Christmas she really stepped up, like when it came to shopping. I know it's not all about the gifts, but it really was a nice surprise. My dad has been doing a lot better. He's now going into public housing and going to be getting his own place, and I couldn't be more proud.

*Kyra Kendall*

Some families are caring, some are close. Sometimes things can be upsetting. You'll have some entertaining times and you'll create new memories.

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**“...what I consider family are the  
people who support me every day  
and challenge me to go on..”**

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*Brandy Warman*

Family can be a difficult topic, whether you're in foster care or not. Everybody has a different look on what family means to them. Some people call their friends family. Some people have never even met their family. Some people call their foster and group homes family. But what I consider family are the people who support me every day and challenge me to go on, that is what I think it is about.

*Wesley Roberts*

I love my family and care for them a lot. Sometimes family losses, such as death, bring sadness and stress. Birthdays were always hard for me -- I never got gifts. But we went on vacations. The holidays were a blast; everyone was filled with happiness.

*Chloe Roberts*

My mother is a woman like no other. She gave me life, taught me, fought for me, held me, kissed me, but most importantly, loved me unconditionally. I like everything about her. She's strong, kind, caring, and funny. She's smart and beautiful.

There are not enough words to describe just how important my mother is to me and what a powerful influence she continues to be.





## Family

*Emily Rondelet*

Family are the people closest to you and the ones that mean the most. This includes friends, as friends can be there for you just like blood family.

Families are not immune to mistakes. Mistakes happen all the time and you can't always control them. But the mistakes can help you know what not to do next time.



## Love

*Chloe Roberts*

You don't fall out of love.

You can reject love; you can run from love but you don't really fall out of it.

If you fall out of love maybe, it's because you were never really in love to begin with.



## Discovery of a lifetime

*By Max Scott*

In April 2019, *The Voice* went on a trip to the Discovery Centre. We took lots of pictures for the magazine. We had visited at the time of the special *Guinness World Records* exhibit. We learned lots about the tallest man alive and the largest snake to ever slither around the earth. During our time at the Discovery Centre we watched a show in the planetarium. I personally thought that seeing all the constellations right in front of your face was SOOOOOOOOOO COOL!

On behalf of all *The Voice* crew we would LOVE to THANK the Discovery Center for their hospitality and their willingness to care and help us. We would also like to thank them for allowing us to use their premises for our headshots and cover picture for the magazine.

On a last note I couldn't resist but to give the height of the tallest man alive... He was 2.71 metres tall, so that's 271 centimetres! COOL, ISN'T IT!?



◀ *The Voice* members at the "Tall Tales" exhibit in the Discovery Centre, April 2019 (Max, Chloe, Emily, Brandy and Wesley)



## Proud of myself

*Brandy Warman*

The thing I really want people to take away from what I'm writing in this newsletter is that, even though with all of the challenges I've been through throughout the years and all the stuff that's happened to me (like the months where getting out of bed felt way harder than it should, and going to school felt so overwhelming, and when trying to keep up with everything I'm doing gives me anxiety), I'm still doing it! I'm still going to school everyday and trying my hardest. I'm still going to all my activities throughout the week and never miss any of it. I really don't understand most of the time that doing all of this is so amazing and I should feel proud of what I do everyday! Even the little things deserve to be recognized.



## Ghost Walk

*Mya Manual*

The ghost walk was pretty fun. I liked the instructor who taught us the stories of the Grey Lady. It was fun to try and summon a ghost and attempt to talk to them. I would have liked it if we had gone into the underground tunnels! Also, it would have been more interesting if it was Halloween based, like if it actually had Halloween decorations.



## My heart inside of a cage

*Wesley Roberts*

I should not be wondering if his heart still belongs to me. No, I did not deserve such a heart. And he did not deserve such a heart as mine — a monster.

Inside the cage of the blackness of my own heart, oh how I'd break him. With a heart as black as mine.

But I have been wondering, as he stands in front of me with a tear in his eye but a grin on his face. Do angels like him ever get tired of smiling?

**The group at Citadel Hill for the Halifax Ghost Walk in October (Wesley, Chloe, Amanda, Emily, Brandy, Mya and Olivia) ▶**





# ABOUT CARE

*Emily Rondelet*

Good things about foster care:

- The kids can never be homeless.
- Gives the kids a chance to not live in a group home.
- Give bursaries for kids pursuing a secondary education.
- Give innocent kids a second chance.
- Many schools give free/ reduced cost lunch for foster kids.

What I want to change about foster care:

- More frequent and thorough check ins from social workers
- For children over 15 years old the allowance goes straight to the kids, not the foster parent.
- Children have the right to know who their family is after a certain age
- Children should be alone when talking to the social worker about their home and they should have confidentiality.
- Educate every foster kid on their rights/ what they're entitled to

I have been in foster care a long time and good things happen as well as a lot of bad things. The best thing is having some people in my life that I know, trust and can have a good time with.

*Chris T*

New encounters are the basis of the stressful and depressing times of being in care. I myself have had a couple fearful experiences but not as many as the people that I sit by in this room currently. Support has been a main factor on working to resolve the amount of traumatic experiences I've had in my life. Friends and family are another factor that go hand-in-hand with support that will help cure the abuse that I've lived through.

*Brandy Warman*

Care can have its good times and its bad times. Sometimes what's going on in your home situation isn't the best for you at the moment, or you're not in a good place when it comes to your mental health. Sometimes where you're at can be one of the best places for you because of the support and comfort around you.

*Wesley Roberts*

I'm always stressed when it comes to being in care. I'm usually nervous about where I'm going to end up. I could be placed anywhere, I could go to Woodstreet, or a new group home. I have found that you always have to be careful.

*Chris T*

Being in care comes with good and bad experiences, for the best of us the experiences are more bad than good. In my experience I've equally had the good and the bad. The most positive experience in care for me has been going on a road trip with my sister's foster family, (now my foster family) last summer. I was in a very bad state mentally, and I got to go on this trip and have a little getaway from my emotions. This experience was very fun and was overall the best experience last summer and, in my life, so far.

*Chloe Roberts*

Foster care has some positive sides to it. For example, you get free secondary schooling, free eye care, and whatever you need medically. You also get clothing and hair-cut money. Being in foster care gives you connections like 'The Voice' or 'The Ombudsman Youth Council' and The Dream Team. The social workers are pretty good too. They will take you out to the mall, out for dinner, or go with you to your doctor's appointments. You have a guaranteed place to stay and you get to do any sports or activities you want to and the fees are paid for. If you're like me you'll have a loving, happy, and for the most part, "forever family." Your housing after high school when you go to college or university is paid for as well. Having younger foster siblings can also be a positive thing, because you can be a good role model and be there for them.



*Chris T*

# ABOUT CARE

*Kenny Ashford*

If I were put in charge of the Department of Community Services, I would make it so kids over 16 can choose where they want to live. There would also be more options to be with friends and family. Kids over the age of 16 would also be able to make more personal choices.

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**“...in time things can change and hopefully they will.”**

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*Wesley Roberts*

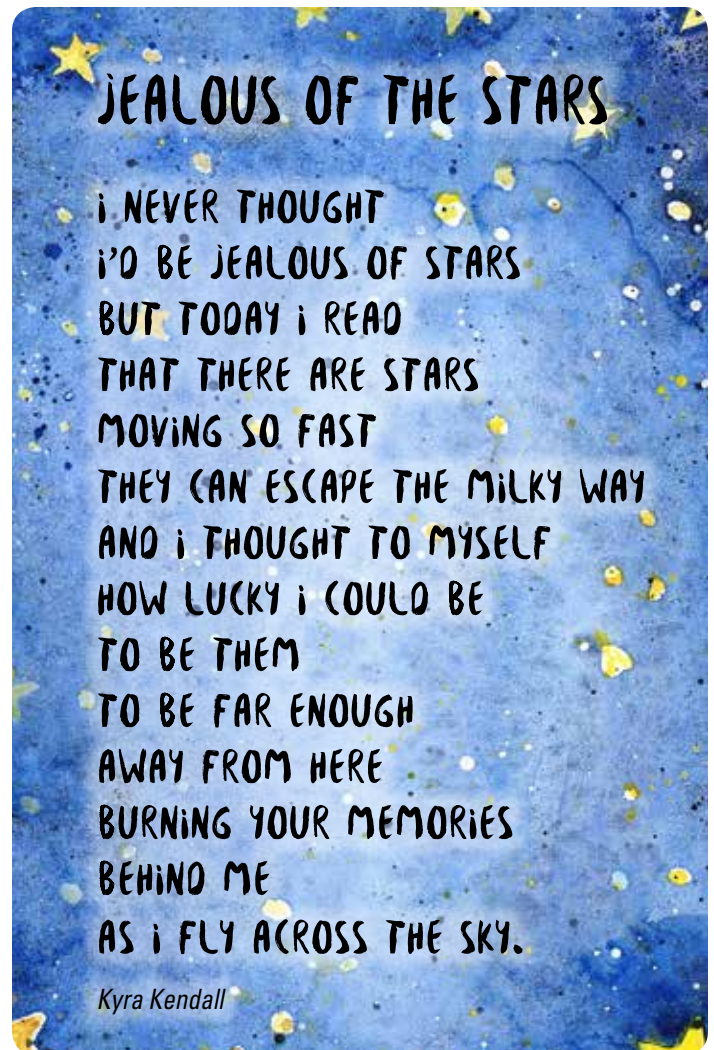
If I was in charge of DCS, I would make sure that the kids don't have a lot of pressure. They wouldn't get sent to Wood Street over the stupidest things. Also, they would be able to see their families and friends — and have overnight visits.



*Clockwise from left:*  
**Wesley, Max, Emily, Chloe and Brandy**

*Chris T*

With my time in care, there has been a number of instances that haven't gone well with adults. I had an experience where I ended up being grounded for legit being late for curfew by 1 minute. I tried to justify the fact that I was only one minute late. Sadly, this situation did not go in my favour and I was grounded. I feel like this situation wasn't solved in a better manner because those specific people craved control and wanted to be right all the time. I feel some people that do chose to be foster parents want complete control of their household and everything in it including the foster child, which isn't good at all. This is a type of frustration I have faced being in care, and I'm sure others have too. There isn't much we as foster kids can do about it now, but in time things can change and hopefully they will. However, for now we're going to have to play the waiting game until things change.





## Formula for life

Max Scott

**Pain x Resistance = Suffering**

**Resistance + Pain = Depression**

**Resistance x Pain x Suffering = Life**

Explanation: No one likes pain. We try to hide it, or we resist the reality of the situation. But it will all bottle-up inside and one way or another it's going to get out in a rage, breakdown or depression. This is not healthy; talk about it. You will suffer more if you hold it in, rather than just talking about it. We hide the past, but the past will always catch up — it will effect your future.

## Food

Kyra Kendall

Food is great, my favourite food is anything Mexican. My favourite dessert is pancakes and ice cream, and my favourite snack is hot Cheetos.

## Therapy

Chris T

Therapy was very beneficial in the beginning of the road to recovery with my mental health struggles. Unfortunately, I do not see my therapist anymore which is very hard, and things are getting gradually worse for me mentally. I need to see a therapist at least two times a month, not during school hours. That isn't a lot to ask and if I don't get to see a therapist, I feel things will get worse.

I'M WALKING DOWN THIS  
STREET  
WITH ITS GHETTO DEMOCRACY  
AND HIGHRISE HYPOCRISY  
AND I'M HEARIN' WHAT  
THEY'RE SAYIN'  
SOCIETY'S FRAYIN'  
FROM THESE HOODLUM GAMES  
I'VE BEEN PLAYIN'

- Kenny Ashford

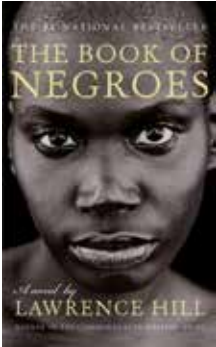


This year's group at the Ripley's *Believe it or Not!*® exhibit at the Discovery Centre

# ABOUT READING + WRITING

## My favourite book

Chris T



My favourite book I've read is *The Book of Negroes*. I have read a ton of books and nothing really interested me as much as this book has. So, I started reading this 600-page book with an open mind hoping it would be the book I truly enjoyed reading. Surprisingly enough, it was the book.

The book talks about an African girl living in a village, who ends up seeing her mom and dad get killed, the

girl gets kidnapped, and lives through too many horrible experiences to list. It tells a lot of sad things that this young woman went through (might even make you cry) but is definitely worth the read.

I personally feel I enjoyed the book because I connected to this young woman. Based off the fact that she went through a lot, just like I have; and her ability to cope and push through it all which is what I try to do a lot of the time in my life.

I didn't finish the book because I switched homes and wasn't allowed to keep the book. The foster dad said I couldn't because it was his, which was understandable, sorta. But it was definitely a good read as far as I got.

## My favourite book

Emily Rondelet



My favourite book is *Wonderstruck*. *Wonderstruck* is about a kid named Ben who was born deaf in one ear. His mom was a librarian, but she was killed in a car crash. Ben now lives with his aunt and uncle. Ben's father has always been a mystery to him. He finds a book that belonged to his mother called *Wonderstruck* which had a bookmark with a phone number written on it and the words saying, 'Love Danny'. Ben calls the number and then his house is

hit with lightning. It travels through the phone making his other ear go deaf.

## My favourite book

Kenny Ashford



My favourite book is *The Outsiders* because I like the storyline and the way the story is shaped around Ponyboy and his brothers and friends.

My favourite part is when Johnny is on his deathbed telling Ponyboy to stay golden. It's my favourite part because it's motivational. Johnny's last words were meant to keep Ponyboy going despite anything life threw at him.

## Why I don't like reading...

Max Scott

I don't like reading because it bores me. I have better things to do with my time, like playing on the computer or going outside. I don't have a will to read any kind of book, so therefore I shall not read unless I absolutely have too. In reality, reading a book is overrated for kids my age — that's why we have audio books.

## Poetry

Brandy Warman

This year I've been getting into poetry and writing a lot more. Some of my favourite poets are Rupi Kaur and Amanda Lovelace. They talk about female empowerment, standing up and letting your voice be heard, and the hard challenges they have faced throughout their lives.

Reading poetry really helped me when I was feeling depressed for a few months. It made thinking about and understanding what I was going through a lot easier. It was nice to understand other women are going through a lot of the same stuff I went through.

One of my favourite quotes from Rupi Kaur is; "Like flowers ache for spring, my heart craves my mother more than anything".

I understand that so deeply. I understand that not having a mother around is one of the hardest things. I need a mother. I need someone to talk to on days that feel like things are never gonna get better. Having a mother should be necessity, but for me it feels like a luxury. It's not something I have and get to feel most of the time. I need someone to look up to and to want to be like when I'm older, but not everyone has that in their life.



## Pressure

*Wesley Roberts*

I know that I 'm a good writer. People tell me that all the time. But sometimes I don't know what to do with this information. Sometimes it feels like my writing is not good enough or I have too many ideas. My writing app is filled with unfinished and unpublished and deleted stories.

I feel a lot of pressure from adults who think I have potential. They're so much harder on me than on others. But I know it's because they want me to do well.

## Reading

*Kyra Kendall*

I don't enjoy reading because I get hooked and then I waste too much time googling trying to know more and more about the book. I read the *Twilight* series eight times, watched the movies and googled everything about the characters and the authors. I was disappointed that the movies were not as good as the books.



**Brandy and Wesley in the OYA photo booth**

## The Teenage Mindset

*Brandy Warman*

I think the whole teenager and adult thing is messed up! Adults don't understand us at all. We get treated like children and we are expected to act like adults. Sometimes I don't even feel like I'm treated as a person with feelings and emotions when talking to adults about my feelings. I feel that something must change with that. Teenagers should be seen as people too and they should be heard when talking about important stuff that they are going through.

## HAPPINESS

*Kyra Kendall*

Happiness comes now and then,  
We cannot be sure just when,  
But when it's there, enjoy each hour  
Because happiness has such power,  
Joy to you it will bring  
Even make someone else sing,  
What piece of mind happiness can show  
Making you and others glow.  
Nurture it, make it last.  
Forget the troubles of the past.  
Never fear that it will go,  
For it could always grow  
And then tomorrow there it will be,  
For happiness can set you free.



# DREAM HOLIDAY

*Chloe Roberts*

My dream holiday would just be a weekend spending time with friends and family watching movies, eating turkey dinner, and playing some board games. Spending time with my family is the only thing that matters. Spending time with my family has greater value to me than any vacation.

*Brandy Warman*

If I could have any dream vacation, I would spend 24 hours with my mom. I haven't done that in six years and I miss doing all the stuff that we used to do like go to Sobeys or watch movies and just spend time together.

The grocery store was our place because food always brought us together. We each had our favorites; mom's were celery and cheese whiz and mine was pizza pops.

We'd be there for hours. I was always my mom's shopping buddy because she would tell me I'm good at finding the best deals. It felt really good to be with my mom one on one.

*Kyra Kendall*

I don't have a dream vacation. Although, if I had to go anywhere, I would go back to Ontario because life was so much better there.

*Chris T*

If I were to have my dream holiday, it would be the best time ever. It would consist of going on a month-long trip to a tropical island like Jamaica. I would stay in the nicest hotel or resort on the island. I would explore the whole island. I would bring my sister along and make the best memories. I would also meet a lot of new people and try lots of new food.

*Wesley Roberts*

If I had a dream holiday it would be to go to Norway. I love the accent and the language. I can also speak Norwegian. The foods -- kabobs, fish and dark bread -- seem amazing and the sights look awesome. It would probably be best to go in the summer because it is very cold there in the winter.



2018 LAUNCH PARTY: Brandy, Chloe and Nathan



# ABOUT THE XPO

## XPO!

Wesley Roberts

The Passport to Youth expo ( *Teens Now Talk* ) was great. We went around meeting new people and learning new things, but it was also a bummer to be up at 7am and sit at a booth for hours. It was fun though, getting to see old friends. We also got to see JRDN, Corey Writes, Nathaniel Cole and Zamani perform. And we handed out tonnes of copies of *The Voice*!



## Passport To Youth Success XPO

Brandy Warman

I volunteered at the Passport to Youth Success Xpo, put on by *Teens Now Talk* magazine on November 14th and 15th with Wesley, Chloe, and Ammy for *The Voice* and it was really fun. I had a great time. I was giving out copies of *The Voice* to grade 9s and high school students. The grade 9s were a lot better because they actually went into the booth and did stuff, but the high school kids didn't really care too much.



## Bullying

Chris T

Bullying is a very common and prominent behaviour in our society. Whether in work environments, school, public settings, relationships, or even by parents to a son or daughter. It happens all the time. Bullying shouldn't happen, but it continues to happen, even with all the great anti-bullying initiatives to fix the epidemic. So, it leaves the question as to why it still happens and how we can put an end to it.

I feel it takes place because people are facing problems in their lives that are hard for them to deal with emotionally. So, these people end up not knowing how to deal with the pain or hurt in their lives and end up taking their frustration out on other people who may even be struggling themselves.

In the bully's mind, those people are easy to push around, are quiet, and generally keep to themselves. This may not be the case in all situations, but it seems to be the main case in most situations.

I feel you can take action against bullying by putting yourself in the shoes of those who are being bullied in a social atmosphere like school. Being a friend to a victim of bullying can help too, along with spreading kindness. Doing these things can help put an end to this repetitive course of events. In conclusion, just don't be a bully!



# ABOUT MUSIC

## Chloe Roberts

Music is a positive aspect of my life in many different ways. In school, music helps me concentrate on my work. Even when teachers tell me to take my headphones out, I don't because listening to music helps me focus on them talking and shuts out other distractions. Even though they think it is distracting, listening to music actually helps me. I get more work done when I have music to listen to than when I don't.

Music puts me in a good mood, especially when I'm the one making it. I play my piano and it's cool learning new songs and composing.

Music also helps me relax. I listen to fast-tempo music to energize myself before I go onto the ice for hockey, when I'm working out, or running. Soothing music helps me calm down when I'm mad. I put my headphones in and block out everything and everyone.

## Brandy Warman

People ask me all the time "what's your favourite song?" or "what type of music do you listen to?" I always just say that I don't listen to music that much. I just feel my choice of music is private and I don't like talking about myself or what I like because I feel like people won't like it.



Ammy Purcell, Program Director, with Brandy Warman at the OYA photo booth

## Chris T

My favourite song overall is *Diddy Bop* by Noname. I like this song because I can sing/rap the whole song and I like doing it a lot for some reason. The song has a chill type vibe to it. Also, it's by an artist that I like and enjoy listening to. I could have chosen any song, but I chose this one mainly because I listened to it through a lot of hard experiences in my life. It really helped me get through the sad times, cry it out, and get through it. This is why my favourite song is *Diddy Bop* by Noname.

## Mya Manual

My favourite song is *Pain* by Youngen Ace. This is my favourite song because I feel like it relates to me a lot. One line says, 'they keep asking me if I'm okay, I ain't okay I've been hurt my whole life.' I feel like for the majority of my life I've been in a lot of situations that caused me pain. I've always felt more sad than happy my whole life. The song also says, 'I cannot heal all this pain when I am constantly hurt' and that is exactly how I feel, like I am hurt constantly and so stressed that I can't heal myself. Another line from the song is "I've been trapped up in the dark and I don't know where the door is" and I also feel like I'm in this type of darkness and I don't know how to get out of it.

## NO ONE KNOWS

SOMETIMES I THINK ABOUT ALL THAT I'VE DONE  
AND GONE THROUGH  
THAT NO ONE EVEN KNOWS ABOUT  
AND I GET SAD THINKING THAT  
NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW  
ABOUT ALL THE THINGS  
THAT MAKE ME, ME  
BUT THEN I THINK  
MAYBE IT'S BEST THESE THINGS DIE WITH ME  
MAYBE THAT'S NOT SUCH A BAD THING.

— Kyra Kendall



## Childhood

Wesley Roberts

I remember what my life was like before it turned for the worst. I remember unweighted laughs, natural smiles and sun-kissed emotions. I remember the childlike innocence that surrounded me. Shielding me from harsh realities that eventually tore through my safety and dragged me through life.

My childhood is precious to me. Looking back, it seems so dull and brittle compared to the lives of other children. But to me, in those moments I was every kind of happy and content as anyone else. I had everything I ever wanted and needed. I didn't occur to me that I didn't have any friends, never thought that it was abnormal to be so secluded. I was a child, I was blind, naive and irrevocably happy.

It was inevitable that this innocence would change. It is always expected, as you grow older you lose your innocence and everything that makes living pure.

But I didn't just lose that. I was stripped from my happiness so quickly that I didn't realize I was developing a problem. A problem that would stay with me for the rest of my life, like an incurable disease. And like any other disease, you learn to live with it. It becomes a part of you.

"THE THING ABOUT HAVING AN ALCOHOLIC PARENT IS AN ALCOHOLIC PARENT DOES NOT EXIST, SIMPLY AN ALCOHOLIC WHO COULD NOT STAY SOBER LONG ENOUGH TO RAISE THEIR KIDS."

— Rupi Kaur

This poem stands out to me a lot because I understand what it's like to have a mother who could not stay sober enough to raise me. The hurt of knowing that there's nothing you can do to save them is the worst feeling out there. You try so hard to hope for the best in life for them but sometimes that's all you can do — hope.

— Brandy Warman



Brandy Warman (back) with Wesley and Chloe Roberts at the Discovery Centre

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Kaitlin Wolfe



Nineteen editions of *The Voice*! That is truly incredible for a small non-profit such of ourselves to overcome the challenges of funding, program retention and expectations. The 19<sup>th</sup> edition comes with its own uniqueness and proves how fundamental connection and sense of community creates resiliency.

This year *The Voice* changed leadership

after ten years with the beloved Sandy MacDonald to myself, Kaitlin Wolfe. Not new to the program, I have been involved with *The Voice* as an adult volunteer for the last two years, and was extremely grateful to be given the opportunity to advance and take on the role as the ED.

With the new ED came new connections with community and funding partners of the program. I have been able to build new professional relationships with some of the most giving community leaders in Halifax. With that, I have been able to see how communities come together for those in need. As seen throughout the theme of the magazine, Youth

Voices has made its way throughout the city of Halifax this year, in both meeting space and from the youth. We have been invited by many organizations to share their meeting space each week. Without the help of our partners, *The Voice* would not have been as successful as it currently is.

Along with new community partner relationships, Youth Voices has welcomed three new members to our Board of Directors. Along with our dedicated returning members, we have had a committed volunteer return as our treasurer during the time of transition. This group of volunteers are a major driving force of guiding our program in the right direction.

With the celebration of our 19<sup>th</sup> edition, and the challenges behind us, I look ahead to the future. Youth Voices of NS, is a perfect example of resilience, in both the program and the youth it serves. It is my hopes that with my new knowledge and experience as a new ED, that I can bring a fresh voice to the program, enhance and continue the success of *The Voice*. Stay tuned for our 20<sup>th</sup> year celebration next year!

I would like to thank our program director, Ammy Purcell. Her continued dedication and passion for this program shows each and every week. Her experience with the program has been invaluable this year. Thank you to each of the youth for coming to the program, sharing your experiences and trusting the program to give you the best opportunities possible. Thank you to every person who made this year possible, and continues to support the work we do. Words cannot express my appreciation. Happy reading!



**THE VOICE LAUNCH PARTY 2018:** (left) Nathan and Sandy share a celebratory hug; (right) Brandy thanks Kaitlin on behalf of the group for her volunteer work with *The Voice*.



# PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Ammy Purcell



Welcome to this year's edition of *The Voice*! I am especially proud of this year's magazine. This year came with challenges that most programs simply would not survive. I was very worried when our fantastic former Executive Director, Sandy MacDonald, announced he was retiring after ten years. I do not cope well with change, evidence being my refusal to leave this program after 16 years. With Sandy leaving,

who would take on his role? How would my involvement change? Can we keep this unique program afloat? This is not the type of job that can be posted on job search website.

I knew we needed someone who genuinely cared about the program. Conveniently, our adult volunteer, Kaitlin Wolfe, had just graduated from Dalhousie with her Bachelor of Social Work degree and was on the job hunt. Sometimes things just fall into place like that. It was absolutely meant to be.

Kaitlin had a proven passion for the program along with an understanding of the population of young people we serve. I immediately suggested her to our board of directors and soon enough, it was official — she was to be our new executive director and I couldn't have been happier. Our partnership has proved to work tremendously. My role as program director remained the same and with the guidance and wisdom of Sandy, she has transitioned into her new role of executive director seamlessly.

I am also so very proud of this year's group of youths. We have had some challenges this year with finding a stable location, but this group followed us wherever we went. With three young people returning from last year, and six new recruits, this group was the largest we have had in the last few years.

They come from different areas of the city, and different status of care, with different views, experiences, and concerns regarding the child welfare system. This made for deep and thoughtful conversations and most importantly, great writing! I hope you enjoy what they have created!

As always, if you are, or know a youth in care who would be a good fit for our program, I encourage you to reach out to me to get your/their voice heard in next year's edition. Forward the contact information to [Ammy.thevoice@yahoo.com](mailto:Ammy.thevoice@yahoo.com).

# VOLUNTEER'S NOTE

Olivia Macdonald



My name is Olivia Macdonald, I am 22 and I have been volunteering with *The Voice* for about a year now. This experience has greatly impacted my life as I have learned so much from the program and the youth themselves.

*The Voice* is such an amazing, inclusive program that offers both hands on and off learning and activities.

It provides creative ways for the youth to express thoughts and feelings in a safe and understanding environment through weekly creative writing assignments, field trips, and more. I believe that meeting for *The Voice* every week offers a sense of unity and purpose for the youth.

Trying to sum up my entire year in a paragraph is difficult as I have so many good memories and experiences with the group; *The Voice* built up the confidence of the youth, pushed them to try new things, and showed them that there are opportunities out there. I have grown close with the group and I continue to enjoy every moment I get to spend working with the youth and aiding the staff. *The Voice* is something I look forward to every week.

# Thank you!



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

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shaune McKinley — Chair of the board  
Dianne Hussey — Vice-Chair of the board  
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Olivia Macdonald — Adult volunteer  
Sandy MacDonald — Mentor  
Kyle MacIsaac — Mathews Dinsdale & Clark LLP  
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Lisa Neily — Graphic designer  
Michelle Poirier — Phoenix Learning and  
Employment Centre  
Marilyn Smulders — Workshop volunteer  
David Swick — Workshop volunteer  
Jane Wortman — Office of the Ombudsman

## ORGANIZATIONS

Advocate Printing — Newsletter printing  
Discovery Center — Photo shoot location  
Halifax Region Children's Aid Foundation  
— Funding support  
Halifax Youth Foundation — Funding support  
Heartwood Centre for Community Youth  
Development — Meeting venue  
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  
Teens Now Talk Magazine — Passport to youth  
success XPO  
United Way of Halifax Region — Funding support

**The electronic version of this Newsletter, and more, are available on our website:**

**[www.TheVoiceNewsletter.ca](http://www.TheVoiceNewsletter.ca)**