

The Voice

ISSUE 20, DECEMBER 2020

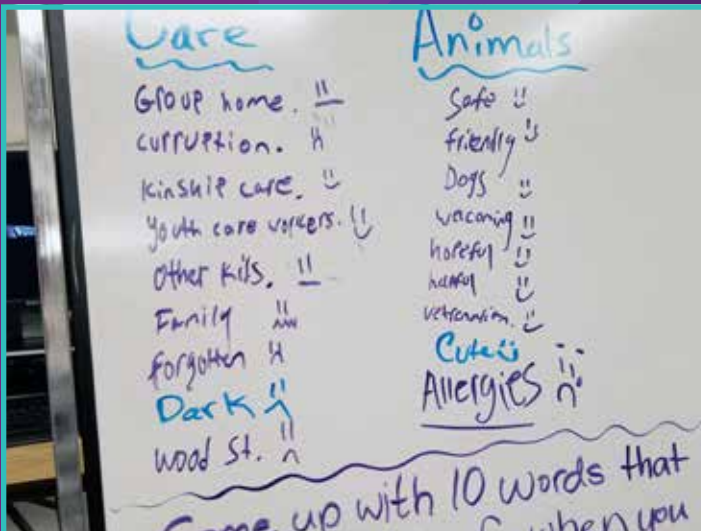


OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION!

ON THE COVER — FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Cat Elder, Wesley Roberts, Chloe Roberts, Lexxy Dodge, Brandy Warman

Photo by John Chiasson

Wednesday Nights



WHERE DO I SEE MYSELF IN 5 YEARS

Mya

In five years, I see myself hopefully in university studying psychology. I really like learning about the brain and why people do certain things and how they react. I hope to have an apartment and if not then trying to get one. I want pets like cats and fish. I really want a sphynx cat and lots of different types of fish. Maybe even a starfish if I can house it in an aquarium with other fish and creatures. I hope to have free time to do things I love like draw and find new music and tv shows. I hope to meet new people as well.

Cat

In five years, hopefully I will still be alive but in this world we can't take anything we have for granted. Hopefully I will have a scholarship to a medical school somewhere away from Canada. Before I go to school I would like to take a year off and travel the world helping other people. I would most likely be living on my own now and hopefully I found a reason to keep smiling everyday.

Brandy

In five years, I hope to see myself living independently. I'll be 20 years old and hopefully working to get my dream job as a vet assistant. But most importantly, I want to follow my own path and be working at my goals in life. I want people to see me as someone who is reliable, independent and someone who you look at and know they work hard. I want to see myself working at a good job, being happy with friends and family, and depending on myself.

Chloe

In five years, I will be 21 years old. I will have graduated high school and will hopefully be going to college or university for social work. I'm still not quite sure what I want to do yet but I've got a year to figure that out. I'd like to have a home with some dogs. I would love to go to Los Angeles but that won't happen for a while because I'll need to focus on school.

Lexxy

In 5 years, I will be 20 years old. I expect to graduate and maybe be in college taking nursing and practicing to be a doctor. If that plan doesn't work out then I will probably be looking for colleges or universities to go to. I hopefully will have a job and be working on saving up to buy a home for myself.



On the front steps of Veith House, the new home of the Voice's Wednesday night meetings.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Kaitlin Wolfe



iTunes, the camera phone, Xbox 360, are all things *The Voice* is older than. Let that sink in a moment. *The Voice* has been around through the change of an entire generation, major world events, and we are still here. To me, it is truly remarkable.

This issue marks 20 years of Youth Voices of Nova Scotia, serving youth, facilitating programs and allowing youth to have their voices heard.

Hundreds of youth have been through this program, and we are only getting started.

Being able to say we are celebrating our 20th anniversary doesn't come without challenges, and it wouldn't be 2020 without one. As you are reading the magazine, I invite you to reflect on your last year. This year was extraordinary, no one expected the world to shut down, toilet paper to be treated like gold, and face masks to become the new fashion accessory. Now I invite you to take a moment and reflect about why you are reading this magazine. Do you have a personal connection to one of the youth, or connected to the magazine in another way? Whatever your reason, I want

you to think about how this tiny non-profit, persevered, and became more resilient through the challenges. That is something to celebrate.

As the executive director, I am humbled to be a part of such triumph. To be able to watch our participants learn, and support each other, there is no greater feeling.

This year we welcomed a new Chair of the board of directors, Dianne Hussey. A new Vice-Chair, Olivia McDonald. Also, we added three new board members, Johnathan King, Alice Kitz and Gil McMullin. Along with our returning dedicated team of volunteers on the board, we couldn't do what we do for the youth without you. Thank you.

To our continued and loyal supporters to the program, I hope you get a sense from this magazine that your support means the world to our youth. Each week the youth continue to show up, participate, learn and grow into young adults. That is not without your support. Thank you.

I want to thank Ammy Purcell who, each and every day, is thinking about this program. Her passion and dedication is immeasurable. Personally, I couldn't do my job without her and I wouldn't want to.

To youth participants, currently and in the past, thank you for writing. Thank you for participating. Thank you for being you.

To whoever is reading, I hope this magazine brings some light and joy to your day, it is exceptional.



The 2019 Voice crew outside Government House before presenting at the Children's Aid Foundation AGM



Thank you to our wonderful volunteer, Olivia Macdonald.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Ammy Purcell



Welcome to the 20th edition of *The Voice*! In 2000-2001 the very first edition of the magazine was called, *The System: It Doesn't Work For Us*. In 2002, *Listen to our Hearts*. Then in 2003, *Life Through our Hearts/ Mending the Tears in our Hearts*.

Then in 2004, we finally nailed our forever title, *The Voice of Youth in Care*. We had **truly found our voice**.

Over the last two decades (TWO DECADES!) our small but ever so mighty program has served over 100 youth within the child welfare system in Nova Scotia by helping them navigate the difficulties that come with living in care, through writing. Every article in this magazine, as well as the 19 issues before, was written by youth dealing with the struggles and triumphs that being in care can bring, most of which are incredibly personal and take a lot of courage to share. This is their Voice.

We all know that 2020 has been a difficult year to say the least. But *The Voice* still came through. We were determined to have a 2020 magazine and we were not going to let anything stop us. Better late than never. With the power of the internet and our very patient and understanding board members and funders, we were able to continue the program and produce a fantastic

20th edition. Thank you to everyone who has helped guide us through these uncertain times. I am so truly fortunate to have such a great partner/executive director, Kaitlin Wolfe. She is always a text or call away to help curb my anxieties or clear up any dilemma I may come across. Thank you, Kaitlin, for your dedication to this program and our youth.

As some of you may recall we had some difficulty last year finding a place to call home for our program. I am happy to say we have found a home at Veith House. They have graciously welcomed us with open arms and although we had to take a few months away during the lockdown, we are happy to be back in a space where we can be together as a group again, socially distanced of course. Thank you, Veith House, for your hospitality.

The most important part of our program is, of course, our youth participants. I want to thank each one of them for sticking with us and continuing the program. Whether it was on a Zoom meeting or a one-on-one telephone session, they continued to participate. And even though we had an extremely extended March Break, we all came back in October like we had never been apart. Brandy, Chloe, Mya, and Wesley, I have watched the three of you grow into mature, self-aware, respectable young adults. Now all high school students close to graduation. I am proud of you all and I cannot wait to see what bright futures you will have. Cat and Lexxy were both new to the group this year, but no one could ever tell. They fit right in from the beginning and I could not be happier to welcome you to our extended family. There is a clear bond that our group shares every year. Even through the difficulties of 2020, that bond could not be broken.

I hope you enjoy the 20th edition of *The Voice*! Because we certainly enjoyed making it. Stay safe and take care. Oh, and BYE 2020!



Volunteering at the 2019 OYAs: Brandy, Mya, Chloe and (far right) Olivia

ABOUT CARE



Mya



Lexxy



Cat

Cat

I hope that when people read the magazine it will inspire other children in care to reach out and talk to people. The most important things people should consider about care is.

1. Pro's and con's about care.
2. The stereotypes aren't true.
3. Care doesn't define who you are.

Pros

- A house to live in
- A fresh start
- Don't have to worry about getting a good education.

Cons

- You'll be judged
- People will think its your fault you're in care

STEREOTYPES OF CARE

- Your parents didn't love you
- You'll never go far in life
- You were a mistake child

CARE DOESN'T DEFINE WHO YOU ARE

Just because you're in care you probably gave up on yourself or stopped trying.

In reality, you have so many more advantages being in care. When you're in care you can become whole but you first have to realize that it wasn't your fault that you're in care. You really weren't a problem at all for your birth parents, they could have just been not ready to take on the responsibility of raising a child. Just because you're in care doesn't mean you can't do amazing things.

Lexxy

I don't really need much more than what I have but I could probably say more supports for mental health. I don't mean just having someone to talk to on the phone, but have someone to be able to come and talk to you in person and maybe go for a walk with you. I mean someone who can be there when your social worker is not. I don't mean a therapist because those aren't always helpful but someone who you may feel more comfortable with going out and talking to them and coming when you call at anytime.



Wesley & Chloe

ABOUT CARE



Chloe



Wesley



Brandy

Brandy

STEREOTYPES ABOUT CARE

I feel that being in care has a lot of stereotypes when it comes to youth. A lot of us are seen as bad kids or people will think the worst of their family. It's not always that way, some kids just need a better home and need to have better support.

THE BENEFITS OF CARE

My care experience has been a lot different from others, I've been able to get a lot of benefits from the system. My social worker has provided therapy, a tutor that has helped me with any school work. I've had the chance to meet with youth employment to help with finding work experience. Overall I've gotten so much support from care.

Chloe

When I was taken out of my home I was heartbroken not only me but my family as well. I felt shame going into care because I thought it was a bad thing but it was a good thing because that made my mom leave my dad. It was just a normal day I was watching netflix with my cat. There was a knock at my door. I opened it, my social worker at the time was on the other side of the door with about five police officers.

STEREOTYPES OF BEING IN CARE

- All kids are bad
- Foster parents are all in it for the money
- The system is too broken to make a difference

WHAT I NEED MORE OF FROM BEING IN CARE

- More freedom. Foster kids who play on sport teams need permission from their social worker's supervisor in order to attend out of province tournaments.
- More permission for foster parents. Foster parents are not allowed to take their foster children out of the country, even for vacation, without the social worker's supervisor's permission.
- More being able to stay at friends houses. Foster kids would rather stay home than sleep over at a friends house because no other child needs their friends parents criminal background checks just to sleep over.

Wesley

There isn't much stereotyping that I've experienced while in care. Maybe it all depends on who the kids in care are. Maybe the typical pothead, trashy kind get more negative attention.

I've had people ask if I've ever met my parents – the answer is obviously "yes". I've also been asked why I had such nice clothes... because apparently mine should have been dirty.

These are stereotypical, ignorant questions. But I've never been ashamed to tell anyone that I am in care. It is a big part of my life and who I am as a person. And I honour that.

JUST BECAUSE
YOU'RE IN CARE DOESN'T
MEAN YOU CAN'T DO
AMAZING THINGS.

HOLIDAYS

Mya

I really like the holidays! I enjoy spending time with my family each year. When I was younger, my brother and I would go with my mom and grandfather to my nana's and aunt's for Christmas each year. We always had a big Christmas up there. We would play with our toys and have Christmas dinner.

My favourite part was always the egg nog! Then we would go home and play with our toys even more. When I was around 10, I went into foster care, so I had awkward Christmases with presents that I did not want. It was not very fun. Now that I am home, I get to have a good Christmas again.

Cat

Holidays should be happy times spent with loved ones, but mine have never been like that. My family has never been together, and when they were they were always fighting. My mom and dad were always fighting on my birthdays.

One year, my mom and dad got into a huge fight right before Christmas and my mom kicked my dad out, so I'm always upset around Christmas time. That was before foster care but now my holidays are perfect, I could never ask for a better family than mine. We bake cookies, get chinese food, do some karaoke, watch some movies, and track Santa on the TV.

Brandy

I feel like holidays are really different for kids in care. Everyone has their own situations and it can make it difficult. For me it's really special because holidays are the only times of the year when I get to see my mom. It makes the day more important than anything. I also get to see other members of my family that I don't usually see during the year.

Chloe

Holidays for some people are exciting, joyful but for me, it's a stressful time of year. Trying to figure out if I'm going to my moms, when will I be celebrating Christmas with my foster family or when will I see the rest of my family. Instead of celebrating three Christmases, I would rather just have one big Christmas all together.

Lexxy

To me the holidays mean spending time with my family and friends. I enjoy this time because every year my biological family has a get together at my aunts and we get to enjoy being around one another having snacks and appreciating each other. During the holidays I get to see family members that I don't usually see much during the year.



Christmas party at Boston Pizza, December 2019

LOSING SOMEONE

Lexxy

I haven't really experienced loss but to think of someone I'm really close to dying would be devastating. It makes me sad just to think about what I'd do but until it happens I won't really know how to cope with loss. I have helped a friend out that was going through loss. She was having a hard day because she was thinking about someone she lost and I offered to talk and go for a walk around the school with her and we did then we ended up watching videos that made us laugh.

Mya

Coping with loss? That is a funny one for me because I don't show my emotions, so they are just there. Yeah, I am sad/angry/upset that people die. I just don't know how to show how I feel.

Wesley

Experiencing loss can be very freeing, or very stressful. Loss isn't always death. You can lose people from death, breakups, distance. I think loss hurts when it's unexpected, but even if it is expected, you're never really ready for it.

Sometimes loss can be a weight lifted off of your shoulders. Knowing that a loved one is no longer in pain, or breaking up with an abusive person.

Not everybody hurts in the same way. Not everyone copes in the same way either. We need to respect how we heal.



Gone from our Sight,
But never from our hearts

Illustration by Chloe

Brandy

The loss that affected me the most was when Paul passed away, Paul was a good friend of my mom's. I really felt a trust with him. One of my favourite memories is that he always remembered to bring home my favorite chocolate bar when he returned from work. Even the little things like that made me feel important. After I moved out of my mom's house and was put into care, I didn't get to see him after that. When I was in grade 8, I found out that he passed away from cancer. It didn't hit me until a few months after. It really hurt me that I didn't get to say goodbye. He was a really important part of my life. He was one of the first males I felt comfortable around. I think about him a lot. It's sad he was taken too soon but I'm grateful he was a part of my life.



Chloe, Wesley & Brandy at Veith House

EMOTIONS

Lexxy

A time I felt hopeful was when I met my foster parents because I wasn't living in a good environment and the staff weren't very nice at the place I was living. I had always wanted to live with a family that was complete.

A time I felt angry was when I had to go to WSC residential. I had found out while I was in WSC secure treatment and I realized that I already didn't get to see my family much because I was in Truro and now I definitely wouldn't see them as much as I wanted because I had to remain in Truro. This also made me sad because I missed my family.

Cat

FEARS

One of my biggest fears is being forgotten or replaced. I'm scared that I will go away and never return but when I do I see someone else has taken my place. I am a teenager and we over think a lot more than we should, we will stay up until the morning crying to ourselves. My other fear is growing up. It sounds crazy, but it scares me to death, I'm worried about getting a job, saving my money, and living alone. Something all of my fears have in common is that I'm scared of being alone.

If I'm forgotten, I'm alone with my thoughts and I have no one by me to help. If I'm replaced, it's like looking down on the inner circle of what use to be my life but no one will let me back in. If i'm alone I start to overthink even if it's the little things I've done wrong they still get to me. A wave of anxiety washes over my body. I'm too scared to ask for help or to even move. It's feeling like I'm just stuck in one spot while the world keeps on going.

Cat

High school is extremely hard, everyone judges you. If you're fat, lose weight, if you're skinny eat, if you're ugly wear makeup, if you wear makeup you want attention. You ruin yourself just to fit in, forgetting who you really are. Never miss a day of school ever, your work piles up crazy fast, the teachers don't actually care what the other kids are calling you. Never let anyone know how you feel, always smile, never let anyone know you eat real food.

I'm not going to lie, parents and teachers don't realize how much stress they put on us. In reality we don't know how to deal with stress, do we cry? Drink? Smoke? Self-harm? Steal? Honestly a lot of teenagers will tell you how we feel, but you have to ask us because we're never the first one to talk.

Brandy

ANXIETY

I struggle with my anxiety every day. I feel like I'm always anxious, I sometimes stress myself out over the smallest things without even realizing it. When I'm at school, my anxiety makes me feel like I'm drowning. I feel like my anxiety never leaves me even when everything is going right because I never truly feel confident.

Mya

I consider myself a person who seems to always be angry. I feel angry a lot of the time. If I think about it actually, maybe the reason is because I think life is so pointless because we are all going to die eventually. So I feel like there is no point to life besides just living. Nothing matters because in the end you are not going to remember being alive at all and that upsets me.

I think I am just a person who sees the world differently. I look around and see everyone and just think, no one is going to remember this. That is why I feel its unnecessary to do all these things if we are just going to die. On the other hand, I can be very assertive about things because I feel like you should be living YOUR life and stand up for things you believe in while you can. I am very calm most of the time, but people think I am angry.



OYA winners Lexxy, Cat and Wesley celebrating with Brandy, Olivia And Mya.

SOCIAL WORKERS

Mya

I think a social worker is a good support system for helping children in care and for supporting their needs. I think it's important to have the right social worker that suits your needs. They must be someone you are comfortable with. Sometimes you don't always get that so it can make your time in care difficult. Hopefully, they are someone you are comfortable enough with to go to when you need support.

In the past, when I was living with family friends, I didn't really have a social worker I could go to for anything, nor do I remember speaking with one but maybe I was too young. When I got older, I got a real social worker. She was supportive but she wasn't someone I could connect with personally or emotionally. Another social worker I had was much better and understood me well. She was very nice and benefited me a lot. She really helped me all the way until I got back home. I think it depends on who the social worker is as a person that decides how they are as a social worker for me. It's the person rather than the occupation that I focus on.

"I LIKE TO HAVE
CONSISTENCY... BECAUSE
IT'S EASIER TO BUILD
A RELATIONSHIP
WITH THEM."

Wesley

My social worker is great. She does a lot for me, even though she is not technically my social worker anymore, which kind of makes me sad because I really liked her.

No two social workers are alike, and I like that. Everyone does things differently. I like to have consistency with a person who is involved in helping me out with my life because it's easier to build a relationship with them.

Cat

I only get to see my social worker once every two months. My brother on the other hand has a totally different worker. I don't really know his social worker that well. When I first heard about social workers I didn't really like them, I thought it was their fault that I was taken away from my family. Now that I have been in care for almost 3 years, I have learned the social workers are people who want to keep you safe and with your family. In my experience, I have met some social workers who were so close to us they became family when we were on visits and we could call them aunt or uncle.

Chloe

At the moment, I have a temporary social worker. When my social worker left, I had many questions but no one to contact at the time since no one had told me anything or any information. A week later my temporary social worker randomly called. I felt weird since I have not met her before. To top it all off I probably won't meet her because of the Corona virus and I'm getting a new social worker.

Lexxy

My social worker is very young and new, but she is working very hard at becoming the best social worker she can. She does a lot for me and we get along great. I hope she will be my social worker until my old social worker gets back from maternity leave because I enjoy her company. She is also a great social worker because she calls to check up on me.

Brandy

I feel like social workers deserve more credit for all that they do because most of what happens is out of their control.

When I was younger I thought social workers were bad and trying to break up me and my family it seemed like all they did was hurt people rather than help them.

As the years went on I understood more about what social workers are doing for the kids, they sometimes have heavy caseloads and have to deal with a lot of kids at once. They deal with a lot of things most people couldn't handle.

I've learned that at the end of the day you just have to be patient with them, they are only one person. My social worker is amazing. She makes sure everything is looked after. Even though some things take longer than others I understand that patience is key because she will still always have things looked after.

WHAT I WANT PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

Wesley

I want people to remember to love.

To me, that was the hardest thing about care. Not being away from my family, although that does suck too. But it's learning to love and trust the people around you, and the environment you're in. Love is an amazing thing and can create wonders.

It could create the most amazing friendship of mankind, or an adventure of a lifetime. Don't forget to love yourself though.

The expression "You have to love yourself before you love someone else" isn't true. You can definitely love someone else, and maybe that can give a boost of confidence or self-love.

REMEMBER THIS

Cat

Remember this before judging someone. Try to see things from their eyes. Remember not everyone has food to eat everyday. Remember just because someone is always smiling or laughing, does not mean they don't have their own demons to fight. They are just in disguise.

Remember that suicide is not a joke, so don't point out someone's cuts or bruises because one day you could be the one getting made fun of. Remember that all over the world someone is killing themselves because of bullying, abuse, neglect. So that means someone is saying goodbye to their son or daughter, mother or father, brother or sister.



The 2019 Voice crew at Government House with the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, the Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, ONS, QC, during the Children's Aid Foundation AGM

by Cat



F FOREVER, FORGIVE AND FORGOTTEN
A APPERCEPTION
M MISTAKES AND MEMORIES
I INSPIRING
L LIFE, LEARNING, LAUGHING & LOVING
Y YOUTH

My family, we are together, trusting. We have laughs, fights, memoires, adventures, love and sadness. I'm stuck, feeling lonely, lost in the dark, crying myself to sleep. I'm crying for my family, my friends, my events. I'm scared, I want my life back. I want to be happy, tears are running down my face. I want to go HOME.

Mya

Sometimes my family struggles to thrive, well a lot, but we also have a strong bond. Id like to spend more quality time with my family and go out to dinners, but we don't. When I am in trouble my family is usually my go-to. They will help me if I can't do it myself. I consider family to be "blood".

Chloe

Family should be safe, loving, and caring. Filled with animals, kids, and siblings. Having movie nights with your mom. This is one of my favorite things to do with my mom. At points in my life my mom lived three hours away. When family lives far away you don't really get to see them. Technology helps makes family seem closer than they are, through texting and video chatting.

Lexxy

I have a huge family but I only see some people. I see my Nan a lot and I enjoy being around her. She can be a little embarrassing but all Nans are. She's the best Nan I could ask for and I enjoy my time with her. I see my biological mom a lot and I enjoy going to sleep over at her house to spend time with her. She's a good cook. She always makes sure to ask me what I want and tries her best to make it happen. I see my brother sometimes because he is busy at work a lot but he is a very special person to me and I really care about him. The only thing that sucks about him is that he thinks he's funny but really I'm the funny one. I see my brother's fiancée sometimes and I love her. I'm glad that they are together because she is very nice and she understands me.

I consider her my sister more than anything and I just love her daughter. Her daughter is so cute and I want to see her grow up and be amazing. She is amazing now but I know she will be a very good citizen. She is so caring. I see my aunt and uncle sometimes but I should probably ask to see them more. I don't really see them as much as I want to see them but they are really kind people and they do everything for me and others. My favourite time with them was when we used to go to PEI. I had a blast. I see some of my cousins and the ones I see I love. There are alot of you but my main ones are Rory and Kelsey. They are very lovely people as well. Rory has a wife and a son and his wife is an amazing nurse and mother. Kelsey has a fiancée and will hopefully have kids. I talk to my dad sometimes but I hope I can build a better connection with him. Last but not least, I have my foster parents. I really appreciate them even though I may act like I don't. They have contributed happiness and a sense of belonging into my life and I hope that it continues. They are really important to me and I care so much about them. I love everyone on this list and hope you love me too.

SUCCESSFUL AT 16!

Brandy:

I've come such a long way in life and right now I feel I'm at my best. I'm 16 and I'm going to school full time and working three jobs and still making time for other activities and not missing anything.

I'm currently working at the Fairview Animal Hospital and Cineplex and going to *The Voice* and therapy and getting tutored. Even though I'm constantly busy this is what I need for me to start enjoying things. Before I didn't have anything to look forward to but now I do and I feel I have a purpose in life. I'm seeing all my hard work pay off I'm so grateful for all the people who have pushed me and believed in me to get this far. My social worker, my nan, tutor, employment worker, and therapist are the people who have supported and helped me achieve my goals.

WHY I CAME TO THE VOICE

Chloe

I came back to *The Voice* for the third year because I enjoy writing and having something to do during the week. I like meeting new people, and going with *The Voice*. In the past we have gone to the Oval, Neptune Theatre, and we've gone out for dinners.

Cat

I'm here because I heard about how the *The Voice* is a place where kids in foster care can voice their opinions, their hopes, dreams and past. It's a safe place where kids can find other kids like themselves in care. My foster sister was here last year and was telling me how much fun it was.

Writing is one of my coping skills where I can truly be myself, where no one is allowed to judge me. I'm hoping to encourage other kids like me in my situation to show that things get better and it is okay to speak up. I hope that parents, foster parents, teachers and kids when they read what I have experienced, they can see that life isn't perfect but the bumps in the path make you who you are.

"IT'S A SAFE PLACE
WHERE KIDS CAN FIND
OTHER KIDS LIKE
THEMSELVES IN CARE."

Mya

I came back to the voice 2019 because last year I really enjoyed coming to *The Voice* and listening to other people's lives while in care and hearing how they dealt with situations in their house. It made me think about my situations and try to work things out the way they do. I liked going out and doing things with everyone. It's a good experience and it keeps me busy so its nice.

DEAR ME...

Chloe

Dear me,

I'm sorry that there were days when smiling hurt but you forced yourself to laugh so no one had to worry about you. I'm sorry you gave all your time and effort to people who didn't give the same amount back.

"...WE SHOULD TALK MORE ABOUT WHAT OUR PLANS ARE FOR AFTERCARE AND OTHER PLACES FOR SUPPORT. ONCE OUT OF CARE, SUPPORT AND SERVICES ARE DECREASED, AND IT IS SOMETHING THAT I AM WORRIED ABOUT."

— Brandy

Cat

Dear younger me,

Listen, kiddo. I know you're hurting right now but trust me: things do get better. You must be tired of hearing that. It's true though. Remember when you couldn't wait to grow up? Well imagine all of your childhood friends 50% out of 100% will throw you away once you get to highschool. Remember when wearing protection meant wearing a helmet, when dad was your hero, when goodbyes only meant until tomorrow, when the worst thing you could get from boys were cooties, and when getting high meant swinging on the swings at the playground?

Listen. I know you're scared but foster care isn't that bad. Yes, going to a new house is scary but think of it as a vacation or a sleepover! I know you miss your family but you'll never forget them. No! They don't lock you in dog cages or feed you cat food. You're gonna do amazing things, you're gonna learn to love again and when you get to highschool you actually find friends who like you for you, You have a home! You finally belong! So don't give up on yourself no matter what. We got this. Together forever I promise!

Love, older you xoxo

OTHER THOUGHTS

Chloe

It's funny how someone who was just a stranger last year,
Can mean so much to you now.

It's terrible that someone who meant so much to you last year,
Can be just a stranger now

SOCIETY

Cat

I feel lost in this messed up place we call society.
Feeling like I don't fit in, asking myself what's wrong with me!?
Drowning in my emotions, I want help, I want out, I want to be
free. I've been stuck here for so long, I'm friends with my own
demons.

Can't you see behind these lies?
I'm dying inside, no one realizes. It's all because of society.
School is just a living hellhole for the weak.
The windows have bars on them, no one is allowed to speak.

I'm trapped in my own my mind but no one knows because I got
a disguise. My disguise is a fake smile that I put on everyday.
I wake up and put on a smile ready to start the day but most
importantly no one ever asks if i'm okay.

WOMEN

Chloe

Being a woman in today's society is hard. No boobs? Grow
some. Boobs? Cover yourself. Don't be a slut. No ass? Everyone
will make fun of you for it. Ass? Well, better cover yourself up
because you don't want to draw attention to that booty right?
Short? Need to wear heels. Tall? Damn you can't be taller than
men. Also never wear heels. Skinny? Gotta gain weight no one
likes bones. Chubby? Eat healthy! Nobody likes fat. You like
makeup? Ew be natural. No makeup? You're ugly. Everything we
do we are judged for. Just ignore whatever people are saying
and you do 'you' because no matter what, someone will have
something to say.

RELATIONSHIPS

Chloe

When you go from being complete strangers to being best
friends, it's the best feeling in the world and to lose that, that
has to be the worst feeling in the world. From talking 24/7
to barely talking once a week, that hurts. Heartbreak hurts.
Thinking you'll last forever only to end up in heartbreak, that
hurts.

All that "we're supposed to be together" is crap. That's not how
love works. You make a choice to forgive, you make a choice to
make it work when you can't even stand to look them in the eye.
You make a choice. This is not fate. It's a choice you make every
day.

OUTSTANDING YOUTH AWARD

Cat

On November 15, 2019, I won an award. I was honoured just to
be nominated, I'm not the type of girl who wears makeup or
dresses up, but I did for this. When I first found out my foster
mother of three years, Ann, nominated me, I was in shock. I
didn't believe that I deserved this award. I thought there must
have been many other people that should have gotten the award
and not me.

I soon realised after a few weeks of talking with my mom, she
was right. I deserved this award just as much as anyone else. I
wouldn't be the person who I am today if it wasn't for my mom,
Ann. When we got to the event, I was nervous. I didn't realise
that I had to walk up on stage to get my award in front of a
bunch of people. But as soon as I saw people from *The Voice*, I
knew that my family had my back no matter what.



THANK YOU!



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

INDIVIDUALS

Alice Kitz – Board of Directors
Andrew Safer – Founder, Board of Directors
Angeles Hopkins – Bookkeeper
Anne Jennex-Roberts – Treasurer, Board of Directors
Annie Baert – Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Education
Barry Schmidl – Department of Community Services – Manager of Service Provider Relations
Dawn Frail – Secretary, Board of Directors
Dianne Hussey – Chair, Board of Directors
Dr. Bill Hart – Halifax Region Children's Aid Foundation
Gil McMullin – Board of Directors
Jane Landry – Halifax Region Children Aid Foundation
John Chiasson – Photographer
John Demont – Board of Directors
Johnathan King- – Board of Directors
Kyle MacIsaac – McInnes Cooper
Leigh Daniels – Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Education
Lisa Neily – Graphic designer
Olivia MacDonald – Adult volunteer, Vice Chair, Board of Directors
Sandra McKenzie – Halifax Youth Foundation

Sandy MacDonald – Advisor
Shaune McKinley – Board of directors
Stacey Greenough – Department of Community Services
Sue LaPierre – United Way of Halifax Region

ORGANIZATIONS

Advocate Printing – Newsletter printing
Dartmouth Community Health Board – Funding support
Halifax Community Health Board – Funding support
Halifax Region Children's Aid Foundation – Funding support
Halifax Youth Foundation – Funding support
Nova Scotia Department of Community Services – Primary funding support
Nova Scotia Department of Education – Funding support
Nova Trophy – Award plaques
United Way of Halifax Region – Funding support
Veith House – Meeting venue

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

www.TheVoiceNewsletter.ca