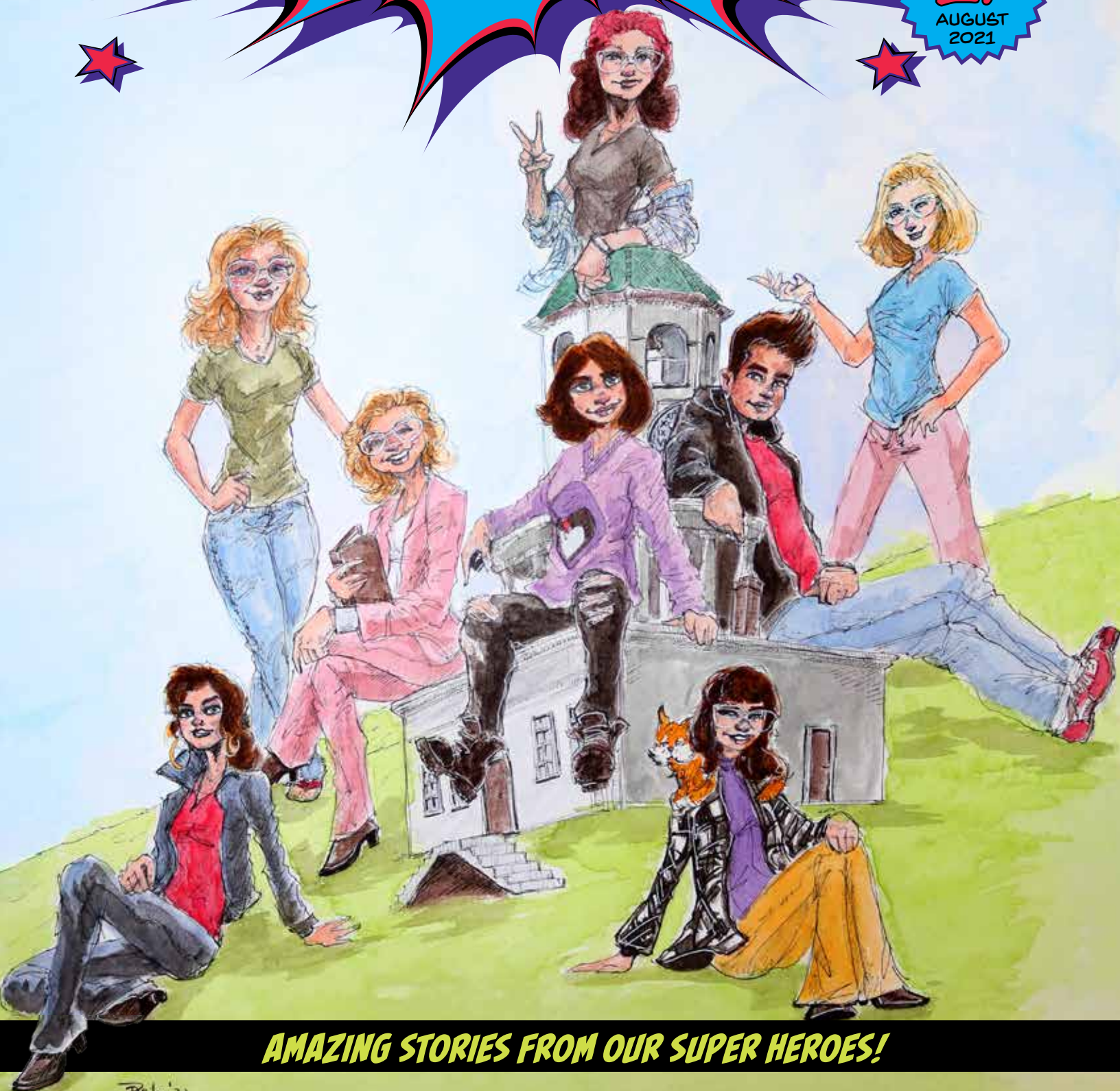


THE VOICE

ISSUE
21
AUGUST
2021



AMAZING STORIES FROM OUR SUPER HEROES!

Neily '21

ILLUSTRATION BY PHIL NEILY



THE VOICE CREW AT PAINT NIGHT HOSTED
BY OUR VERY OWN CHLOE ROBERTS



FREESTYLE PAINT BY CHLOE



FREESTYLE PAINT BY BRANDY



FREESTYLE PAINT BY CHLOE

WHY DID I COME BACK TO THE VOICE?

CHLOE ROBERTS

I keep coming back to *The Voice* because it's fun. Normally we do fun activities but with Covid we managed to make it fun. We were not able to go out and do things in the community, however we made it fun in the sessions. We were able to add in extra activities within the session. *The Voice* is a safe place and everyone is always nice. It gives me something to do every week and it's something I look forward to now.

BRANDY WARMAN

The reason I keep coming back to *The Voice* is that it became a family to me and a place where I could connect with others who share experiences similar to mine. Youth in the system sometimes have a hard time connecting with other youth that aren't in care because we share such different lives. It's hard to relate to others when it comes to family and our home lives, but coming here it gives us a place to open up and discuss our differences without being judged and a place where we can feel accepted.

Another reason I come back every single year is because of Amy and Kaitlin and how much they care about the youth and truly want the best for us. It's nice to have

someone like that lifting you up and giving you a place where you can talk to them about anything. They've helped me with so much and have helped me build my confidence and make me feel important.

LEXXY DODGE

I chose to come back to *The Voice* because I really enjoy it. I like to write and I like the people who also participate in *The Voice*. To be completely honest, I enjoy the virtual meetings more than in person (I still like the in person though). I also enjoy *The Voice* because it provides something that I can do after supper to keep me occupied in the evening.

CAT ELDER

I joined because *The Voice* newsletter is like a family to me, I have only been here for a short time. *The Voice* is a family I chose, and they accepted me. They didn't turn me away like I was unwanted. They are my family that has never turned me away, they don't judge you even when you're at your lowest of lows. Wednesday is my favourite day because I know that I get to smile and laugh with my family. I look forward to knowing that they actually listen to me, they hear what I have to say and I'm not alone there.

KEY MESSAGES

BRANDY WARMAN

I think some messages we should talk about in the newsletter are mental health and how childhood trauma affects foster care children and even adults who are aging out of the system. Trauma is something that shapes your mindset and affects how you view the world around you and how you react to things every day. When you start looking into the symptoms of childhood trauma, you can really understand what you're actually going through and that you're not alone.

I've struggled my whole life with not understanding my emotions and the triggers that remind me of my past, things I thought I had gotten over. Holding onto all of this hurt and pain from our pasts without understanding how to deal with it or people not believing or watering down our struggle can make us hurt even more and become sick from the anger we've been holding on too.

I feel like the system needs to look more into this too. The system needs to understand the things that we do that are "bad" or "disrespectful" are sometimes the only way we know how to communicate. After growing up in stressful environments, keeping our guard up is all we understand. Some of us communicate completely

differently. Some of us burn ourselves out completely trying to people-please and working too hard because the fear of disappointment consumes us. Although it may seem like we're doing really well with school and work, we're actually stressed out because we don't understand how to pace ourselves since being fast and adapting to forced change is all we understand.

Understanding trauma reactions is something that both we the foster children and the system need to work on. We need to find things that work for us and will help us grow and understand our trauma, rather than force it to go away. Trauma will always be a part of us, but if we continue to work on it and accept ourselves, it will help improve our lives. Some ways the system could help is implementing boundaries between the social workers and the youth and teaching the social workers about trauma, and trauma reactions. This would allow the social workers to show they care while actively showing and respecting the youth's emotions and what they do or don't tell their social worker.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

KAITLIN WOLFE

Welcome to the 21st edition of *The Voice*! Throughout the waves of Covid-19, our returning youth supported each other, reflected on previous experiences, tried new things, and created some of the most unique pieces of writing and artwork to date. Ammy and I cannot wait to share with you their experiences and reflection.

This year we took a "comic book vibe" for the magazine. Throughout the year the youth were interested in creating art, participated in a



...IT WAS INCREDIBLE TO WATCH THEM GROW AS YOUNG ADULTS, AND FORM DEEPER CONNECTIONS WITH EACH OTHER THROUGH SHARED EXPERIENCES.

therapeutic mask-making workshop, and one of our youth even facilitated a paint night. Language comes in all forms, and this year we welcomed our youth to take the lead on what they would like to learn, and experience, and creating art was at the top of the list! As this year was all returning youth, it was incredible to watch them grow as young

adults, and form deeper connections with each other through shared experiences. I am humbled to be a part of their experience here at Youth Voices.

Ammy Purcell, marks another year as the facilitator and one of the longest standing member of *The Voice*. Alongside her as a lifelong member is our founder Andrew Safer, who remains as a consultant and member of our Board of Directors. They have been with us since the beginning, and their knowledge and passion for the program is immeasurable.

We welcomed, three new board members this year, Johnathan King, Alice Kitz, and Gil McMullin. With new faces, also means we say goodbye to three board members, Dawn 'Fig' Frail, Shaune McKinely, and John Demont. All of our board members bring a unique perspective to the table, to create the vision for Youth Voices. Our dedicated Chair, Dianne Hussey, has a lifelong passion for helping youth, and has been a tremendous supporter of the program over the years. We are very lucky to have her on our team.

Another volunteer in the program, Olivia McDonald, also sits on our board, and meets with the group weekly to aid in the facilitation of the sessions. She is a wonderful addition to the program, and we very much appreciate her dedication.

This program could not be possible without you, the readers, or funders, or supporters of the youth participants. Each one of you has an important part in making this program a reality for the youth. On behalf of the board of directors, and youth I thank you. I hope you enjoy reading this edition of *The Voice*!

GRATITUDE FOR OLIVIA

OUR DEDICATED VOLUNTEER, OLIVIA MACDONALD, HELPS WITH OUR WEEKLY SESSIONS, EDITS ARTICLES, AND SITS ON OUR BOARD.



PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S NOTE

AMMY PURCELL

Ok, so let's face it: 2021 has been just as difficult as 2020 was. So many ups and downs. From reopening, then back to lockdown/partial lockdowns to reopening again. It has been so confusing. Each week we had to keep an eye on what the new rules were going to be. Are we allowed to have in-person meetings? Do we have to wear a mask? How many people can attend? Where can we go? What can we do? Who can we see? Family bubbles, neighbour bubbles, social bubbles? Who was in your bubble?



**THE DEDICATION
OUR GROUP HAS TO THIS
PROGRAM IS REMARKABLE.
EVERY WEEK, THEY SHOW UP
EXCITED TO SEE
WHAT WE ARE GOING
TO DISCUSS.**

Then the bubble burst! We could finally be together as a group again! As great as technology like Zoom is, there is no better sound than multiple conversations happening all at once in one space. I used to try to stop that from happening, "shhh! Someone's speaking" would be said frequently. But when we all got back together, and everyone was catching up, it was music to my ears. Laughter and excitement and pure giddiness. There was no way I would interrupt that with a "Shhh!", for the first week or two anyway.

Then it was time to get back to work of course. And work we did! We completed a whole program year in just six months. If you're wondering why there is another edition so soon after the last one was released this is why; 2020 threw us a curve ball and we weren't going to allow 2021 to do the same. We could not waste the months of January – June doing nothing! So why not create another beautiful newsletter? With the support of our board of

directors and our fantastic group of youth participants we were able to get back on schedule. Or so we thought. Once again, another lockdown came. But we pulled together on Zoom and continued our mission. I would say, mission accomplished.

The dedication our group has to this program is remarkable. Every week they show up excited to see what we are going to discuss. Whether it was in person, or on a Zoom call in their foster parents' car in the driveway because they couldn't find a quiet space in the house that evening, it didn't matter. They did whatever they had to do to attend. For a couple of our youth, this has been one of the busiest years of their lives, the last year of high school! A big CONGRATULATIONS to Brandy and Chloe for graduating and being accepted to Nova Scotia Community College and Saint Mary's University! I am so excited for, and proud of both of you.

Thank you to everyone who has continued to support this program and the fantastic youth it serves. Our board of directors, our funders, and our community supporters alike. It truly does take a village. I would also like to thank our volunteer, Oliva Macdonald, for helping with sessions, editing, and sitting on the board. And of course, a big thank you to Kaitlin Wolfe for her continued passion and love for what we do.

As difficult as the last 18 months or so has been for everyone all over the world, I feel we have all learned so many valuable lessons. Enjoy each other's company. Don't take anyone or anything for granted. Be kind to one another. And finally, wash your hands!



HIGH SCHOOL

CHLOE ROBERTS

The last year of high school gets very stressful. Applying to universities, keeping grades up, school work, jobs, sports and many more things. Even after being accepted into a university, it is still very stressful wondering where you are going to live. On campus, in an apartment or stay at home, or if you're going to have a roommate. All the money you need for books, school supplies, tuition. Having your last year of sports and not knowing how to move forward after the season ends is hard, not knowing if you'll play the sport you're most passionate about again. School work gets piled up when having a job or sports to worry about. After a while it gets exhausting doing the same thing every single day. Most days, I just need to stay home and do nothing.



LEXXY DODGE

School is something that I enjoy a lot. I enjoy seeing my teachers every day and my friends. I have a really good relationship with all of my teachers. I don't have trouble with school work right now but when I do my teachers always take the time to explain it until I understand. When I am doing school work, I enjoy listening to music because it helps me concentrate.

Most of my friends go to my school so I enjoy seeing them every day as well. I have enjoyed school almost all my life.



LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

LEXXY DODGE

After high school, I expect to be going to NSCC to take child and youth care or social work. I also expect to have a job and be saving up for an apartment. I expect to have a car and my full license by then. I will still only be 17 so I won't be able to do much by myself but I am hoping I will be more independent than what I am now.

Apartment

CHLOE ROBERTS

Pay attention to the brownstone,
The brownstone is the most neighbouring
townhouse of all.
Does the brownstone make you shiver? Does it?
How happy are concierge downstairs?
Do downstairs make you shiver? Do they?
One afternoon I said to myself,
"Why isn't the apt smaller?"
Are you upset by how epic it is?
Does it tear you apart to see the apt so enormous?

CAT ELDER

When I was younger, I wanted to be a vet, then it was a princess, then a lawyer and around grade six, I wanted to be a doctor. My grandfather got me the Encyclopedia of the human body. I read that book all summer over and over again, I knew that book inside and out. It was my favourite book.



I had my heart set on being a doctor for years until I got to high school. I knew that colleges and universities looked at your grades so I made sure my grades were the best even though colleges don't look at your first year of high school.

For a while I was looking at NSCC for business school. I found a program that was two years long, but that was a while ago now. I'm thinking about being a firefighter, mostly because you don't need a lot of schooling for it and ever since I was a kid I wanted to help people.

GROUP HOMES

CHLOE ROBERTS

Group homes are theoretically intended as a last resort and have limited scientific evidence for effectiveness. Group homes can provide support during times of crisis but people can become too dependent. Group homes can be very costly. Group home placements cost 7 to 10 times more than placing a child with a family. A group home is NO place to grow up. Kids benefit from a parental figure at every stage in their life (something group homes can't provide). Boys are more likely than girls to be put in group homes and teenagers more likely than young kids. These are not ideal placements for most kids because they can't provide the kind of individual attention kids need.

**GROUP HOME
PLACEMENTS COST
7 TO 10 TIMES MORE
THAN PLACING A CHILD
WITH A FAMILY.**

The structure of a group home makes things like getting a driver's license (a typical milestone) nearly impossible. When staff are busy trying to manage a huge group of kids, one kid's needs get pushed aside. This can lead to many kids leaving group homes ill-prepared for adulthood. There are kids who can benefit from around the clock care, but not too many kids do. More than 40% of kids in group homes don't have a documented reason to be there. Group homes aren't always safe, you have all these kids clustered in one area, and you don't know who will react to what. Kids who have dealt with a lot of trauma can be triggered by something another says and a fight breaks out.

Another reason kids end up in group homes is because there isn't anywhere else for them to go. There aren't enough foster parents, especially those willing to open their homes to teenagers and kids with a history of behavioural issues.

WESLEY ROBERTS

My group home is a very good place for me. I trust the staff and can connect with them and talk very openly. I've lived there for 3 years, soon going to be 4. I was 13 turning 14, or 14 turning 15, I can't remember. It sucks building a connection with someone and having them leave. Like when they get a new job, or move away. I've had a few good staff leave and I miss them dearly. I'm mostly close with the women who work there, easier to talk to I guess. I've only ever hated a few staff members. I feel like myself at my house, I don't mind calling it my home.



I'm very cautious and territorial when it comes to my house, and strangers. When new people come in, I put a guard up. Eventually, depending on the vibes and impression I get, I'll stand down. I'm also defensive of the staff and the people who I care about at my house. I'm not into watching people treat them like shit, bullshit. The end of the day I remember that they're human beings just doing their jobs, whether they agree with everything or not.

I wish we could have friendships and stuff, because what am I supposed to do about these amazing people when I leave? I'd probably come to visit. To show them the person I have become. Also, to see who works there and see their progression in life. Sometimes I dread leaving this place, terrified to live on my own and scared shitless of the great unknown. I hate the idea of living alone and being stuck with nothing going for me in life.

I never thought that I'd make it this far and to this age. I'm almost an adult now and I still have no idea what the hell I'm going to do with myself. My staff helped me become the person that I am starting to be, to help me not be someone hating his life and wishing that he could have done something more with his life. I give every single one of them credit.

EMOTIONS

Who am I?

CAT ELDER

"I feel as though I have no face. Living in these years with no real feeling"- Christie Reid

I relate to this because I feel as if I'm invisible, like I could go missing from my family and no one would notice. I can't tell if I'm alive anymore. Everything is a mess; I'm a mess. I'm numb to the point where the only time I would know if I was alive was if I was bleeding. Half of the time, I can't even tell if I have real emotions anymore. I can't read my own feelings.

CHLOE ROBERTS

Happiness

- Positivity
- Good
- Proud
- Excited
- Relieved
- Satisfied
- Relaxed
- Smile

LEXXY DODGE

Happiness

I feel happiness a lot more than I used to since I moved. I guess I feel happier because in the end I have gotten what I have wanted for years which was to move back in with my family. Some things that make me happy are music, friends, family and school. A lot of people don't like school but I do. I like being happy because it makes me feel better about myself and others. I don't like to be upset because I am not a very polite person when I am in a bad mood.

CAT ELDER

I know I should be able to know my own emotions but when you've been hurt or betrayed as many times as I have been, shutting off your emotions is easier. I keep my emotions off 24/7, therefore it's very hard for me to tell if I'm actually feeling or if I am just faking it. I became very good at acting because I mask my emotions to the point where everyone thinks I'm doing okay and everything's fine. My anxiety is getting so bad to the point where I'm scared to leave my room because I don't know what is out

there waiting for me. I get scared at the smallest things, if someone moves too fast by me, I jump, or sometimes loud noises scare me.

Anger has always been a strong emotion for me and to be honest, I don't really know why. Maybe it was because I was introduced to it at a young age. When I was younger, I was always angry at my dad because of how he treated my mom. The way I describe my happiness is to imagine a butterfly landing on your nose. That butterfly represents my happiness but when the butterfly lands on your nose, it tickles causing you to sneeze and that sneeze represents my sadness. When you sneeze, you scare the butterfly away.



ILLUSTRATION BY CAT ELDER

OTHER WRITINGS

Stereotypes for kids in care

LEXXY DODGE

One stereotype I hear about a lot is that we are the reason we are in care. That is definitely not true. A lot of kids are in care because their parents wouldn't or couldn't take care of them properly. Yes, in some cases kids get taken because of their behaviour but that's not usually the reason. Another thing is that a lot of people ask us why we are in care and most feel obligated to answer even though it's a super personal question. I hate when people ask that question and I also hate that people believe it's our fault.

Therapy

BRANDY WARMAN

I've been working on some things with my therapist this year about my trauma and abandonment issues. It has made me look at a lot of things differently and why I act certain ways towards people even when I don't mean it. All this fear and anger that I've been holding onto my whole life is still trapped in my system even when I think I've moved on or forgot about it.

Sometimes I feel trapped within my fear as it consumes my days, nights and leaves me feeling tired all the time. It may seem like I'm fine everyday going to school and work but, in all honesty, I'm exhausted trying to fight this battle of depression.

Friendship

LEXXY DODGE

I have a small number of friends because I have trust issues and the friends that I do have I have known for many years. I consider myself to be a pretty good friend. I try my best to make everyone happy and not sad or angry. Friendship to me means not going behind someone's back and talking about them. In order to have a good friendship you should trust that person. Also, a friend shouldn't hurt you in any way shape or form, they should be aware of your feelings and you should be aware of theirs.

Taking care of myself

BRANDY WARMAN

This year I will start taking care of myself better and be a lot easier on myself. I've been really hard on myself over the years and not giving myself the kindness I deserve. I will be speaking up for myself in situations that I feel are not right for me. I will be taking care of my mental health this year and making sure that I am healthy. I will be listening to my body when I'm feeling burnt out with school and work.

I want 2021 to be a year of positivity and growth for new things, I want to see myself doing new things and taking care of myself.

Family

CHLOE ROBERTS

My connection with my mom after being in care for six years is still very strong. We may not talk or text every single day but that connection is still strong. I go down to my moms' quite often; at first, I wasn't sure how my mom's boyfriend felt about me, but I quickly learned that he would do anything for us in a heartbeat. When my ex and I broke up he came and got me and took me back to Bridgewater just so I didn't have to be home and I could be with my mom. He has created a bond with me that I never thought I'd have again.

Relationships with caregivers

LEXXY DODGE

I have a really good relationship with my caregivers because it's my brother and his fiancée. I consider them more like a mom and dad because when I was little, my brother took care of me. He did everything a mom and dad are supposed to do from the time I was first born until I went into care and he still does everything a mom and dad are supposed to do even when I was in care. He loves me a lot and I love him a lot. He also takes really good care of me and his fiancée's two daughters. His fiancée is a really nice and a helping person and I care about her a lot. She has gone through a lot of the same things I have so she understands me. She takes really good care of me and her two daughters. They are amazing people and I am so happy that they are in my life.

ANGER

CAT ELDER

Part 1

When I was younger, I was told that I had anger issues. I was an angry child. I was always mad or upset at whatever I could be mad or upset about. My parents helped me with my anger issues by getting me to talk to my guidance counselor, but I felt judged whenever I talked to people about my problems so it caused me to bottle up my emotions.

Part 2

I was dating this boy. He became my everything, my world, my other half, my boyfriend and best friend all in one. He made me extremely happy. I felt as if I finally deserved to do something for myself when I was with him. My brain was quiet. He made the screaming stop. He was my peace and my joy. But us being young, we would argue over the smallest of things. Every time we fought, we always went back to each other until one time, we didn't. We never officially broke up. He just left while I was in the bathroom. When I went to message him, I was blocked on everything. I was madder than upset that we broke up, but the funny thing is that I wasn't even mad at him. I was madder at myself for letting my guard down and trusting someone. I was so mad, I started punching walls until my knuckles were numb. Once that finished, I started breaking glass, crushing it in the palm of my hand. I now have scars all over my hands and every time I look at them, I think of him.

CHLOE ROBERTS

Anger Triggers

- Being ignored
- Pretending not to be angry
- The forgiveness speech
- Being told I'm wrong, when I'm not
- Not feeling heard
- Being talked over
- Blaming me for something I didn't do
- Putting words in my mouth
- People who aren't interested in my side of the argument
- Someone telling me to calm down when I am
- Bad drivers
- Wet socks
- Walking slow in crowded hallways
- Loud or disgusting chewing sounds
- Stopping in the middle of a hallway

BRANDY WARMAN

I don't act out on anger. For me, anger turns into overwhelming anxiety. I don't know how to express the fact that something or someone has made me angry because I fear hurting people the way they have hurt me.

To me, anger is worse than any other feeling because it consumes you and everything around you. I couldn't imagine acting out in anger to hurt something or others. When I feel anger and the overwhelming anxiety, I remove myself from the situation, then I talk about it with my therapist.

WESLEY ROBERTS

Anger in general is a pretty difficult emotion for anyone to understand. Sometimes you don't have control over it, or sometimes it affects you in ways you don't want to. Anger can be healthy. People try to say that anger is a negative emotion and shouldn't be expressed and try to redirect you with some breathing, hand-holding meditating bullshit. Sometimes it's the only way to get through to someone or something.

Anger can consist of things like: fighting, yelling, breaking things, slurs/hurtful things at others, harm to yourself or others. I've had plenty of angry moments. Sometimes I get so angry that my body and brain is almost like it acts by itself.

Once I lifted a skateboard up and threw it at my friend because he made me angry by whipping me with a wet towel. I hit people, and things. Anger is different for everyone. Some people cry when they're angry. Depending on how frustrated I am and what the situation is, I will cry as well.

Nobody feels the same way about anything. Only you can feel what you feel. It's important that people remember that.

BRANDY WARMAN

One circumstance that led me to be angry was a day in math. It was really hard for me to understand because I struggle with math. I wasn't taught like everyone else, so I got really upset because I didn't understand. I felt embarrassment and overwhelmed because I was not able to understand the math lesson. I felt dumb. I left the room and I went to the bathroom to calm down and then I went to guidance so I could talk about how I was feeling. I talked with the guidance counsellor about my feelings, which helped, and I returned to class.

RAGE ROOM

CHLOE ROBERTS

The Rage Room was fun. Although I wasn't angry, it was still fun to break things. I could see going to the Rage Room something someone could do when they are angry and need to release it. It was an amazing experience. It was a lot of fun being there with everyone and watching them react to breaking things. I will definitely go back again.

LEXXY DODGE

I had a lot of fun at the Rage Room, except for when I had got glass in my shoe. The next day my arms were very sore and I was extremely tired. My overall experience was really fun.

CAT ELDER

We went to the Rage Room today. It was my first time there. I really enjoyed it but I think my favourite part would have to be that I had a safe place where I could let all my built-up anger out in a safe way, without hurting anyone.

I enjoyed the electronics room the most because the electronics were hard and sturdy, making it harder to break them, which caused you to hit harder. Afterwards, I felt lighter, like you know when you get your haircut? That's what I felt afterwards.



FIVE-YEAR PLAN

BRANDY WARMAN

I put the most important things in my five-year plan. In five years, I will be 22 and I have set some goals I want to see myself achieve. I want to be independent and rely on myself and not others to get things done for me. Being independent is and will always be a goal I will work towards. I've seen a lot of people in life depend on things or substances to get through life and that's a cycle I want to break. Being able to say that I have a comfortable life is really important and something I know I can make happen with hard work and dedication.

Another thing that I added to my plan was family/home someday in the future. I hope to start a family even if I don't have children. I hope to see myself happy with someone and starting my own little family with them and enjoying time with their family as well. I hope they are at a place I can feel comfortable and call home.

Working is also something I see myself doing in the future too. I always have enjoyed the busyness of working jobs and I hope to see myself working with animals because it's something that brings me joy and is my happy place. I also added animals to my future as well because I really look forward to being responsible with my own dog to take care of. I love animals, and having my very own pet

would really help me feel better and it's a goal I know I can work towards.

And last but not least self-care is on my list. When I talk about self-care, I don't mean the little things like baths, I mean things like setting boundaries with my coworkers and family members. It's important to me that when I'm older no one is taking advantage of me and how I am. I want to respect myself and others to respect me. Standing up for myself over the years has been really hard. I am a big people pleaser and I've been working on my trauma for years now and I have seen how much I've changed and how people have seen me change. I can't wait to see where I am in the future. I have worked so hard to get to where I am today.

LEXXY DODGE

For my five-year plan picture a psychiatrist, which is something I feel like being at this point in my life. Next, picture a family. I'm hoping by then I should have a family of my own. Next, picture a graduate student. I am hoping I will have my master's degree by then. Finally, picture a house. I would be super proud if I could have a house by the time I am 26.

Struggles Of A Teenage Girl

CAT ELDER

Being a female in today's society is already hard enough but imagine being a teen, you don't only have the pressure of sticking to the female expectations but you also have the pressure of your parents. Being a female has always been hard but now more than ever it is extremely hard. As a female Canadian, there are struggles I don't know of, a time where females did not have struggles or expectations, the earth we call home is finally warming up to us which is amazing. Don't get me wrong but there are so many rules we still have to live by.

If you're a little curvy, you are the ideal women right now but if you're too skinny or don't have a figure then you have to try your hardest to get a figure or gain weight. If you do have a figure, you can't show too much skin or people will start to talk about you. If you are in a relationship then you have to give yourself to your

partner. I wish times were simpler, when boys could be friends with girls without having to be in a relationship with them, when wearing protection meant wearing a helmet, when getting high meant swinging on the playground, when race was about who could run faster, when your mom was a superhero and dad was your protector.

Growing up was so difficult for me. I struggled with confidence because I didn't look like any other girls at my school, I wore glasses, I liked sports, my teeth weren't straight, I didn't wear bright colours, I didn't sit in the front of the class because of that. I had a hard time fitting in so I started to get bullied. Being bullied by the other girls at my school because I liked hanging out with the boys more. Getting bullied made me go from enjoying school to hating it. I started hating the way I looked because the other girls would make fun of me. I hated my looks so much I started avoiding mirrors so I wouldn't have to look at myself.

MASK MAKING

The Voice newsletter welcomed a new approach to its literary curriculum that offered a creative lens to self-reflection. During the month of April, Registered Counselling Therapist, Sarah LePage, facilitated a four-week expressive arts workshop that challenged the youth to reflect inwards by exploring mask making as a tool for self-expression. Through the use of symbolism and metaphor, the youth integrated literary nuances into a visual process. The goal of this workshop was to introduce art as a fun and safe way to capsulize their identify. Through the use of plaster, paint, and far too much Vaseline, the youth shared many laughs and brought vulnerable storytelling to the table.

CHLOE ROBERTS

- Calming
- Slimy
- Hurt
- Cold
- Oily

- Creative
- Personal
- Colour
- Texture

LEXXY DODGE

- Frustrated
- Anxious
- Angry
- Livid
- Irritated



COOL!



ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHIL NEILY

THANK YOU!



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

INDIVIDUALS

Alice Kitzi – 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
Ashley Blenkhorn – Photography
Barry Schmidl – Department of Community Services, Manager of Service Provider Relations
Dawn Frail – Secretary, Board of Directors
Dianne Hussey – Chair, Board of Directors
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 – Mathews Dinsdale & Clarke LLP
Leigh Daniels – Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Education
Lisa Neily – Graphic Designer
Olivia MacDonald – Adult volunteer; Vice Chair, Board of Directors

Philip Neily – Illustrator
Sandra McKenzie – Halifax Youth Foundation
Sandy MacDonald – Advisor
Sarah LePage – Guest Facilitator
Shaune McKinley – Board of Directors
Stacey Greenough – Department of Community Services
Sue LaPierre – United Way of Halifax Region

ORGANIZATIONS

Advocate Printing – Newsletter printing
Best Western Chocolate Lake – Launch Venue
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
KPMG – Donation
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

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