

the VOICE

ISSUE 10 | YOUTH IN CARE NEWSLETTER PROJECT | MAY 2010



Photo by Jeff Harper





Photo by Jeff Harper

Grace-Ann Timmins(left) and Rebecca Moore host the 2009 Newsletter launch at Alderney Landing Theatre.



Photo by Jeff Harper

Many former participants in the Youth In Care Newsletter Project returned to celebrate the 2009 launch, including program founder Andrew Safer (centre).

Welcome to the tenth edition of the Voice.

Congratulations on the 10th issue of *The Voice*

My hearty congratulations to all the youth who worked so hard to produce the 10th edition of *The Voice*. The writing is insightful, powerful and honest, allowing us all a privileged look into their world as youth in care.

The Department of Community Services is again proud to be a key financial supporter of the Youth In Care Newsletter Project. Supporting projects like *The Voice* is another way we are working to make life better for families in every region. Best wishes for another successful year.

Denise Peterson-Rafuse
Minister of Community Services



Some of the Newsletter crew at the Nova Scotia Community College.

Sandy MacDonald, Executive Director



Ten years of positive growth is a great measure of something worthwhile. Diamonds may take a million years to form into a precious gem, but you have something valuable in your hands that took but ten years to shine.

Since its innovative inception as the brainchild of visionary youth advocate Andrew Safer, the Newsletter Project has grown into a unique, well-respected program for youth in care.

Over the years, scores of Halifax teenagers from a variety of backgrounds have participated in the Newsletter, lending their thoughts, energy and insight to the program. It is their bold voices and opinions that give the Newsletter its strength and character, and hopefully the Newsletter has given something back to them.

This year's group met first back in October, a mix of returning youth and new faces. For some, the weekly sessions are a welcome evening of stability and camaraderie amid the turmoil of adolescent life. For the new participants, the group represents an exciting opportunity to meet new friends who have shared the difficult experience of living in care.

This year, we tackled several challenging topics in the 30 weekly sessions. We looked at dealing with angry emotions and finding the right words to better communicate their feelings. Some sessions focused on defining personal goals and how to achieve them, while considering the many hurdles that can waylay the best of intentions.

We worked at improving writing skills and media literacy by taking apart newspaper articles and looking at key messages behind the stories.

The youth made beautiful collages expressing their views of the future. Keeping an eye to the future, the group prepared online resumes and collected their writing and other material into informative portfolios.

Along the way, we invited in some special guests to talk about their experience and share their talents with the group.

I'm very pleased that the United Way of Halifax Region is coming onboard as one of the funding partners for the Youth In Care Newsletter. With the long-term support of the United Way in addition to the on-going financial support from the Department of Community Services, the Department of Education, the Children's Aid Foundation and the Halifax Youth Foundation, the Newsletter can move ahead to continue working with youth in care in the city.

I personally would like to thank the folks who make all this possible. Without fail, adult volunteer Catherine Young and care worker Clete Deschamps are at the weekly sessions, helping out in a variety of ways. They both bring a calm and wisdom to the group that is much appreciated.

The facilitators Lucas Kreft and Ammy Purcell and new facilitator-in-training Rebecca Moore all have a dedicated commitment to the Newsletter project, and bring their enthusiasm, insight and nurturing care for the youth every week. They are each outstanding role models for the youth in the group.

Key Messages

By Shakisha Downey

Success for me is about achieving my goals and being pleased with my career. I hope to live a clean and healthy lifestyle with accomplishments I can be proud of and know I'm living my life right.

Money is not everything to me, but I do hope my life will be filled with those things I need to live comfortably. Because I'm not being able to see any of my family regularly or at all, I hope to be able to see them whenever I want to and can because they make me happy.

Being popular is not a main priority for me, but I do hope that throughout my life I have people to lean on and talk to and have fun with. I'm going to try to be the best I can to the people in my life and treat them with respect and kindness.

I also hope that I am able to keep my self esteem up and have respect and kindness for myself.

By Haley Glaspay

Success — I hope to be very successful some day. I know I can achieve my goals if I want them enough!

Money — Believe it or not we need money to survive for food, and money is always something everyone wants in their future!

Love — I chose love because I want love to be in my life. I want a husband.

By Patricia Schofield

Everyone has rights — to do what they want, knowing that there are consequences for your actions.

To tell people what it's like living in care. We all look the same. Nobody can really tell if you are in care or not, unless you open your mouth and tell people.

To write about living in care, so others can hear and see what it's like. Some people who are not in care think it is always about negative things. In fact, there are some positive things and good memories about being in care.

The Most Important Thing

By Nathan Perry



As my life goes on, I ask myself "what is the most important thing to me?" As I sit here in my room, I'm thinking random thoughts that are flying at me.

Then I hear my mom calling me "Nathan.... Nathan....Nathan". Then boom my mom is the most important person in my life.

But I started to think again, my dad is important, my brother, my sister.... even my aunts and uncles. Even my grandparent is important to me. Therefore my families are most important to me—even my foster parent. So my families are important because they will do anything for me and they love me too. And I will also do anything for them. I want to say to them that I love you too.

By Shakisha Downey

The most important thing in my life is my family. This includes my sisters, mother, grandmother, aunts, uncles, and cousins. This is the most important thing to me because I love my family and don't know what I would do without them.

The only reason that I am keeping my head up and dealing with this stupid foster care crap is the vision that I will soon be with my family.

By Ashley Baxter

The most important thing in my life is a person and his name is Jeff. There are other important things in my life but Jeff is the most important. Without his help I would've dropped out of school or stayed home with my mom.

Jeff has done so much to keep me going, has helped me respect myself and taught me that I can be forgiven no matter what.

He has and still does love me for who I am. I used to think nobody could because of my past but he does and I believe he always will.

I have never met anyone like him and I love him so much.

By Manda Jackson

The most important thing in my life is my child and my family. My family has been there through the thick and the thin. They are always there to help me out — well not all my family, but mostly my grandmother and nanny. I couldn't thank them enough for everything they've done.

Becoming a single mother to a beautiful daughter is going to be hard but I don't know what I would have done if I didn't have my nanny and grandmother by my side.

I couldn't ask for a better grandmother or nanny. Thank you guys so much—you mean the world to me!!

Why I came to the Newsletter

By Shakisha Downey



The reason I came to this program was to meet new people who are in a bit of the same situations as I am in myself. I'd like to get to know them all really well and see if anyone has any of my past experiences.

I'm hoping I can sit down and maybe talk to them about things that have happened in my life and the struggles I've been through without them feeling sorry for me. I hope they can understand and relate to my situation.

It is good to come into contact with people who share the same kind of lifestyle and live under the same kind of ridiculous rules and restrictions. Maybe if I ever meet up with them in a group home or another foster home, I will not feel totally alone in a new environment.



By Patricia Schofield



Amy told me about the Newsletter Project and how much fun she had at there over the past nine years. I thought it would be very interesting so I decided to get registered.

I think the Newsletter will get me far in life. I get to meet new people, experience new things, maybe even gain new skills that I might need for a job.

Some people who are in care come to the Newsletter and want to gain something from it; some just come to talk about what it's like to be in care and what are the benefits. Or come for the money.

I didn't come for any of those reasons, only to talk about what it's like to be in care — and with the money I receive, can go to Rogers and get that awesome phone I've been wanting forever.

I hope I get to meet a lot of people. And I hope that this group thinks positive, and hopefully no bullying, because a lot of people go through a whack of stupid stuff. I look forward to meeting new people over this year.

By Ashton Glasgow



Well, when I was living at the Reigh Allen Centre, I wanted to read something. I found the Newsletter on a table and saw a picture of my sister Ashley on the back cover.

I got really excited and I wanted to be part of the Newsletter Project too.

By Ashley Baxter



I came to the Newsletter because I'd always heard about it from my friend Sabrina. She went all the time and told me about it but I wasn't able to go because I lived too far away.

I love to write, and hoped someday I would be able to go. I hope to make lots of friends and learn not to be so shy.

By Manda Jackson



I came to the Newsletter for my third year because I enjoy letting others know how I feel about things. I honestly love how I can meet with the group every Wednesday night and it doesn't matter what mood I'm in that day or week, I can come to the newsletter and express my issues and problems and they understand me and give me advice.

The most important thing I love about expressing myself at the newsletter is they always keep it within the group and they never judge me. Thanks guys!!

By Haley Glaspy



I came to the Newsletter to meet new people, to see old friends I knew from previous times, and because I love some of the assignments we do. That is probably because I love to read and write.

I think the newsletter is a good opportunity to get your opinion out there through the magazine. It's also nice to have good relationships with everybody who comes to the newsletter.

Upside of living in care

Family fun on Coney Island

By James Riley



A positive memory for me being in care was when I went to New York with my foster parents. New York was such an amazing opportunity.

I would never have had this opportunity without being in the system of care. When I traveled to New York I went to the Empire State Building, Statue of Liberty, and Coney Island.

Coney Island was my favourite because it was an island filled with amusement parks. Still, my main highlight of the trip was being with my family and being in a new environment.

Group trip to Disney

By Ashley Baxter

One positive memory I have is when I got older and realized my social worker was giving me much more freedom than I thought she would.

Without this freedom I could never spend my weekends with my boyfriend, or be able to spend my whole Christmas break with my boyfriend. I wouldn't be able to stay out late or do anything; I would be stuck at home all the time.

Another good memory is when I was 10 and was able to go to Disney World with the youth in care. It was the best time I ever had. I would have never thought I could have been so lucky by being in care but I was and I am happy that I did.

Great people for support

By Manda Jackson

I've been in care for almost seven years now. My most positive memory since I've been in care is when my social worker moved me to the Nova Scotia Home. There are so many great people there who helped me through my journey in life. Many things happened to me and they stood there by my side helping me through everything.

I love how the youth care workers come on shift and are so excited to see you. It just makes me feel so good and proud of myself that I have a group of such great people by my side — I honestly don't know what I would do without them.

Soon I am becoming a single mother. I really don't know what I would do without all the support — especially from my key worker at the time since she went through almost the same thing. She can relate to me and how I feel. I love you guys so much, thanks for everything — you mean a lot. You helped me through the negative and taught me to keep my head high up. Thanks!

Just looking for my place in the world

By Shakisha Downey

As a minority in society, people in our communities think we are so much different than the rest of our generation. Foster kids are stereotyped as out of control teenagers who have trouble with the law or their parents have trouble with the law.

In all reality, we aren't that different. Yeah, we have some anger, but what kids don't? In some cases, it's the stereotype itself that gets up our anger.

Just like every other kid in this world, we just want to belong and have a chance to be successful. People need to understand that and respect us for who we are and the situation we live in.

Little do they know that we have less control over our lives than they might think. Their attitudes toward us determine how we deal with living in foster care.

Missing you

By Ashton Glasgow

My happiest memory was when my social worker arranged a visit with my mom for the first time in awhile. I was so happy that I cried until I couldn't anymore.

When my mom got to the office, she was in the waiting room. When I saw her I ran for her and we hugged for 15 minutes, crying from happiness and joy.

We went in the visit room and ate hamburgers and talked. She had brought presents, toys and clothes for me.

It was the happiest I ever felt in my entire life.



Ashton just chillin' at the Newsletter.

Living in Care

Social worker gives more freedom with maturity

By Ashley Baxter

My social worker is a young worker who really understands me and she really gives a lot to me. When I see her she's always pleasant and understanding and she really explains stuff to me.

Carol (my worker) is truthful but nice and also thinks about what I want and how we can work to achieve it. She does have a hard time calling me back but when she does she is usually positive and has good answers. If there's something she doesn't know then she always figures it out in time.

Carol knows I'm 18 so she is very understanding when it comes to my boyfriend or going somewhere and that makes me happy. I know she understands I am older and have to learn stuff on my own.

My worker is looking out for me

by Patricia Schofield

My social worker is very nice to anyone that she meets. And she is always there for people, even if she doesn't know them.

My social worker's name is Karen. If social workers find out there's a problem in the community, they investigate it. If it's bad enough, they put the child in a foster home or group home until further notice or until the child moves out.

And if you want to do something outside of the house like go to the movies, they will give money to the parent or parents. Then they give it to you so you can go and have fun while you are a teenager.

That's good to do because when you're an adult, you can't have as much fun as when you were young — especially if you have a child. When you have a child, that becomes a lot of responsibility.

If i were in charge

By Shakisha Downey

If I were in charge of the foster care system, I would change a lot of the rules and regulations.

I would change the fact that the kids are not allowed to request their own worker. A child's worker is the one who decides everything that goes on with the child. If the child and their worker do not get along, it's not going to be a good situation at all. A child's worker should be someone they feel comfortable with and someone they can open up to.

I would like to also change the budget. The children would get more of the things they want and need to make them happy. They would also have the opportunity to go into different social groups and organizations to help them build better social skills.

I would also change that some kids do not get visits and some do,

even though they may be less deserving. I would at least make it so that all kids would have a visit with their family — the only thing that would be different is the monitoring of the visits.

There should be generally more freedom about who foster kids are — and are not — allowed to be with or visit. Above everything else kids in care should have more independence if they show they are capable so they do not feel like they are living in a box.

Explain to Me

By Ashley Baxter

I am a person like everyone else — I have a voice.

Why should I be looked at or treated differently because I live in a group home. Am I not human? Do I not have emotions like everyone else? Listen to me like you would others. I am not alien. I am not a baby. I am 18 and have the right to be listened to like you or anyone else.

I may be in care but I have something to say. Would you not listen to me because I don't live with my family? Would you ignore me because I am not always happy? Who are you to judge me when I don't judge you? You don't know me or my past.

I am not a child or a baby. I have a life, a voice, a right. I live fully and you will treat me like you would treat others. Do I even look like a child?

I could be younger than you but do I crawl or cry? I know for a fact I am mature for my age — for you to treat me differently is not mature.

I am not you but I am me and for that you should not think of me differently.



Tonya Haislip receives Andrew Safer Award at 2009 launch. Other winners were James Riley and Grace-Ann Timmins.

Facilitator's message

The Voice in my eyes

By Ammy Purcell

This year has been really great. Being a facilitator gives me a chance to closely observe the group as a whole and each youth individually. We had a great diversity of young people who blended together as if they had known each other their whole lives.

When someone comes in with great news, the whole group has great news. When someone is having a tough time, everyone wants to reach out and offer some advice or just an ear to listen.

Our Newsletter group has opened my eyes to what I really want to spend the rest of my life doing — working with young people. Maybe even becoming the director of the Newsletter project myself one day.

Probably the youngest member to ever join the Newsletter project is Ashton. He is a ton of fun, full of energy and a lively addition to our team.

Ashley is very bright. Although she may be quiet, she has a lot of potential and she knows her goals in life. I can't wait to see her reach every single one of them. Shakisha is very smart and she has a hidden talent — she is an amazing artist. It's too bad we didn't find out her passion for art until late in the year.

Several youth have returned to the project. I feel I have grown close to them and watched them grow so much. James, or 'Jaydee', has always been a consistent and very key member of our team. He fought for what he wanted and now is living independently.

Nathan is a funny guy. He is always hungry and will probably eat just about anything. I don't think he is really hungry; he just enjoys food. Maybe he will be a chef someday.

Manda is a ray of sunshine, always wears a smile and always has something new to tell us. She is so brave to be having a baby at such a young age and I wish nothing but the best for her and baby Ilyona. Haley is always full of questions and loves learning about anything and everything. She is never afraid to express herself or say what she thinks.

Each of these people has had an impact on my life personally. Once you read their stories, you will feel as if you know them as well. You will see why I love and respect them all so much. They are what keep this program going year after year. They are the voice of youth in care.

Another awesome year

By Lucas Kreft

This year the newsletter has been great, hey; it's great every year! I always try to be an example, to be like a big brother to the younger participants in the Newsletter Project.

Eight years working and dedicating my life in this Newsletter has got myself recognized for my contributions around the community.

In January I received an "Unsung Hero" award through Family SOS, sponsored by CIBC. I was one of four people to receive an award that night. I was also nominated by Nova Scotia Council for the Family for a Child Welfare League of Canada Leadership Award. I will continue to work hard and do whatever I can to help people who are in my shoes — Foster Care shoes, size 13.

Sandy MacDonald, our project director, has again delivered a wonderful Newsletter. The newsletter again covered many topics this year. We even had a few guests who came back including Thom Swift, talking about his experiences with music and sharing stories about his youth involvement.

Amanda Sutherland has traveled all around the world helping youth. She



Photo by Jeff Harper

Newsletter facilitators Ammy Purcell, Lucas Kreft and facilitator-in-training Rebecca Moore.

told some great stories and showed the Newsletter group a documentary about her travels. We also had a new guest Laura MacNutt, she came in and taught us a thing or two about art! It's great when we have a session to use our artistic minds! Sugar levels may have hit a high that week.

From our volunteers that help every week, to the drivers who ferry the youth to the sessions and my fellow Newsletter board members behind the scenes, everyone has done a great job!

Most importantly, I'm very happy to hear from my brother Robert. It's been about 12 years since I spoke with him. Soon hopefully my family can have dinner at the same table for the first time ever... and be a normal family.

Facilitator-in-training

By Rebecca Moore

I consider the newsletter project to be a blessing. It brings youth in care together. We speak about our situations and support each other. That's my favourite thing about it. Because we are all youth in care, we have that in common and can relate to each other in a way that perhaps youth who haven't lived in care wouldn't quite understand.

We encourage each other to progress in our lives, and we help each other navigate through the system using our combined knowledge and experience. I am proud to be a part of something like this. And I am proud to have the life experience I have, even though it wasn't the easiest at times. We all have a story, and this newsletter allows us to tell those stories.

I was 16 when I first entered care and I am told that I was a bit "rough around the edges". Coming from my previous situation that is understandable. But I was eager to improve my life. Having a stable home environment was new to me. I quickly looked for positive ways to spend my time, and positive people to surround myself with to avoid old habits. A few girls I lived with were involved in the newsletter, and I tagged along. I also got involved with other organizations in the community and devoted most of my spare time to them. One of these organizations that has played a huge role in my life thus far is the Kitpu Youth Centre. With the help of the newsletter, Kitpu, Phoenix Youth Programs, and many others I was exposed to so many amazing opportunities that really shaped my character.

I am now 19 years old, live in my own apartment with my little sister and am working on starting up my own summer business. When I was 16 I would have never thought that I would ever have such experiences and ambitions, and for that I am truly blessed.

There is a saying that it takes a village to raise a child, and I believe that 100%. I feel like I was raised by my community, and that is why I still volunteer much of my spare time. I just love to give back.

Thinking about the bigger world

Changing the world

By Haley Glaspy

If I could change the world for the better, I would do numerous things. First off, I can see myself flying to the less fortunate countries such as Haiti, Afghanistan, Niger, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and India. As I fly to those places, the first thing I will do is take all of the unfortunate families and homeless children with me to Canada. Before I take off with them, I will give them clean clothes, food, water, bathroom utilities and all the love, support and care they both need and deserve.

I can't see myself spoiling them with everything they've ever dreamed of, only because another thing I would like to do is change the way our society thinks and the way the government works. As I see it, a majority of us live our lives surrounded by selfishness, lies, violence, sexual abuse, emotional & verbal abuse, neglect and MONEY.

There are a lot of programs and things that are helping us, but I can't help but feel as though our world is lacking the love and hope we had at one time. It is simply not enough.

What I am trying to say is that before I leave this world, I want to do at least one thing I KNOW will make a difference. I am hoping that when I help all the unfortunate families, it will bring our society together, rather than the opposite effect.

I want to do this to prove to people that even though we may not be able to help ourselves, I CAN and WILL help EVERYONE in all of the poor countries. Although it's not the whole world, it's still making a huge improvement.

Where in the world?

By Manda Jackson

In the whole wide world, I'd most like to visit Africa. Something about me is in love with children. I would do anything to help them, even if I was down to my very last penny I would give it to the one in need.

Every time I flick on the TV screen I see the kids in Africa sitting there with nothing, with these little bits of clothes on. Some have no parents. Every time I see that I honestly just wanna breakdown and cry. I was brought up with my dad beside me — not very helpful, we didn't have a healthy relationship but at least I could say I had a dad there.

I couldn't imagine some little baby or toddler without their mom or dad; it would honestly tear me apart. There are ads that come on the TV screen asking for donations for food and clothes because the kids and their parents have nothing, literally nothing.

I understand how it feels to go hungry but I wouldn't want anyone to go through that. I would love to call in and donate anything to the ones that need it, but every time I try they tell me that I'm too young and it just makes me wanna cry.

I feel so upset. Most of the people out there are wanting and

willing to help, but they don't let us because of our age or because of where we live. So they should honestly let the ones that are capable and willing to help HELP. This why i wanna go to Africa.

Where in the world

By James Riley

In all the wide world, I'd most like to visit Spain. It doesn't matter where in Spain; just Spain itself would give me an opportunity to learn new things from a different background.

The reason why I would like to go visit Spain is because I would love to learn more about their culture and the people.

I feel that by traveling to a new place I could learn and explore new skills.

Super hero

By Haley Glaspy

If I was a super hero, and I could change the world in any way possible, I would get rid of all drugs.

I would try to convince users it is for the best. Doing drugs is not helping them by feeding their addictions, but only creating a monster that is overpowering their lives. I would explain to them that doing drugs doesn't mean you're in control of your life — the drugs are controlling you.

Since I will have super strength and have saved them in certain situations before, maybe they'll trust me that I am speaking the truth. That is what I'd do if I were a super hero.

If I could be a super hero

By James Riley

If I could be a super hero, I would change the world!! There would be no more poverty or wars. Everyone would get along with one another and would have equal rights as everyone else.

The world would be much more at a calm state. The air everyone breathed would be much cleaner, and everything around us would be much brighter.

I would help clean up the air and make the air we breathe much better for the world — no pollution around us at all. There would be a much larger food supply for everyone on earth to live off because I would have the power to make this supply of food.

There would be no more global warming. Everyone on earth would be able to live with no worries in their life.

Remember

By Ashley Baxter

I look out to the distance
Silence
It's a quiet day
I know why.
My poppy on my left side
To my heart
My soul, and
I stand there
In the distance I hear the last stand.
They march one after the other
Only a ceremony like this could
Make me cry
They died to save us.
Another generation will
live because they died
Silence.
So row on row the poppies will blow
We will stand, and remember

My Angel

By Nathan Perry

My angel ever at my side
How lovely you must be.
To leave your home in heaven
To guard people like me.
When I'm far away from home,
Or maybe hard at play.
I know you will protect me
From harm along the way.
Your beautiful and shining face,
I see not, though you are near.
The sweetness of your lovely voice,
I cannot really hear.
When I pray you are praying too,
Your prayer is just for me.
But when I sleep you never do,
You are watching over me.

Dreams

By Ashton Glasgow

A dream
Dreams are like a movie that play in
your head
Sometimes filled with happiness
Sometimes filled with dread
They play and play in your head
At least that's what my teacher said
What my teacher said made me think
in my head
What would my dream sound like if it
was read?

I Remember

By Ashley Baxter

I study the room
Cold with wooden walls
Sitting alone all I want to do is cry.
Memories of us flow like rivers in my mind
I remember your smile, and
The way you laughed when I tickled you.
I remember you telling me to be strong
When you saw me cry.
The room gets colder when I remember
How you held me in the winter, but
Where are your arms now?
As tears run down my face
I remember your last words
Before you drove away, "I love you honey
and soon we will be together again."
Do you think he remembers me up there?
Do you think he's saving me a place beside
him in heaven?
The hospital called and I remember
When you never left my side when I was sick
Now, I never leave your grave.

I am

By Nathan Perry

I am the glory of wonder
I wonder creativity of my own
I hear my soul running back to me
I see my life slowing down before my eye
I want a hand in life
I am the only one
I pretend I have no fear
I feel the love is gone
I touch other people's soul to feel
I worry that the sky will fall
I cry out a waterfall
I understand life itself
I say nothing is impossible
I dream that you will love me
I try to escape from the Pain
I hope to see another day
I am tomorrow.

Trying to Fight

By Ashley Baxter

Trying to fight through the days
 A step at a time isn't helping
 A tear a day makes it worse
 It just won't go away
 Flashbacks by day
 Horrors at night
 It just won't go away
 Every person is scarier than before
 Every dream is worse than the last
 Another bad memory
 Another ruined day
 So uncomfortable
 Nothing to say
 Hidden in my clothes
 It just won't go away
 Don't want to talk
 Just leave me be
 What do you want with me
 I just wanna cry
 Trying to fight through the days
 A step at a time isn't helping
 A tear a day makes it worse
 It just won't go away
 Flashbacks by day
 Horrors at night
 It just won't go away
 So uncomfortable
 Hidden in my clothes
 It just won't go away
 Please just go away

You

By Ashley Baxter

So crisp
 So green
 He has come true, and
 I thought dreams didn't come true
 I thought wishes were
 Only wishes, but
 I was wrong.
 Holding my hand is the man I wished
 upon a star
 Walking beside me is a dream I once
 dreamed, and
 Now it's all real.
 Life got hard
 Then you became real, and
 Life disappeared
 I could do things I would've given up on
 Now I'm alive.
 So crisp
 So green
 Here in your arms
 Here in my dream come true
 Which is you.

Lookin' at you

By Nathan Perry

As I look at you,
 you remind me of a girl
 Who's been there for me.
 When I'm looking at you
 there is a feeling that I won't forget.
 Looking at you make me want you more than ever.
 Looking at you is like a star in the beautiful night sky.
 Looking at you makes me think about you while I'm
 asleep.
 I'm dreaming about being with you and loving you
 with all my heart.
 I don't want to be a zero to you, I want to be a hero.
 JUST SAY I'M LOOKING AT YOU

A Dream She Will Never Forget

By Ashley Baxter

A quite sleepless night
 She tosses and turns
 Sweating violently through the clothes she wears
 Staining the sheets below
 A dream she will never forget.
 He stands with his arms open wide, but
 Her feet won't let her go.
 The rain beats against her window
 The wind brushes a tree against the house, but
 She won't wake.
 She screams his name
 He doesn't move, and
 He's slowly walking away
 And she can't chase after him.
 Her father will never come for her
 Only in her dreams does he
 Love her.
 Laying awake now
 With tears streaming down her checks.
 A dream she will never forget

Dealing with the feeling

Say it loud, I'm young and proud

By Ashton Glasgow

My favourite feeling is proud because I like to smile and show my pearly whites.

It feels good to have someone tell you good things about yourself and how good you are feeling.

When people tell me that I am good person I go home happy with my head up high.

What friendship means to me

By Nathan Perry

What is friendship? Is it when you and your best friend are pals for a long time or when a friend understands you and always listens?

To me a true friend won't leave you behind or leave your life. Friendship is when you are friend with someone from the beginning of your life to the end of time.

That's what true friendship is to me, but everyone has a different idea about friendship.

Calming the anger inside

By Shakisha Downey

When I get angry, I want to scream and swear. I go for brisk walks or listen to loud-base music. Sometimes I find it helpful for me to sleep off anger.

Second thoughts about first instinct

By Ashley Baxter

I got really angry once at a ex-resident, who used to run for one or two weeks and come back on the weekend. We would then be shut down which means we were not allowed to go anywhere and she would do this all the time.

One weekend she came back and we were then shut down. I was mad because I wanted to go out. I was in my room packing to move to a different home when she came to my room and started yelling at me saying I was in the wrong for being mad at her just because we were shut down.

She got in my face because I was trying to ignore her when she got too close. I then said, "Listen here you little kid, get out of my face and get out of my room."

I was given a warning that next time I could be charged with threat. The next day I moved out and I never saw her again or said sorry.

If I could change the incident, I would give her a warning that if she didn't listen I would go to my staff and get her in trouble instead of me.



Rebecca Moore was a torch bearer for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games.



Patricia with Newsletter Project volunteer Catherine Young.

The Future

The future is still a mystery

By James Riley

Even though the future is still a mystery, in my future I see myself as a stronger person. I see me being successful in every part of my life. This stands for my dreams and goals.

I see my life without the bumpy roads and down falls. In my future I don't see failure; I see much success being gained. The way I see myself getting there is by surrounding myself with people who believe in me. With that little push from friends, family, and the people who are involved with me everyday, telling me I can be a success only makes me believe and know that I really can.

I see myself finishing school, even though it might take me more time than I expected. But I see myself walking across that stage and receiving my diploma then working at a job that I truly love and enjoy doing.

I see myself having a family of my own and me pushing my children to be that person I know they can be.

In my future

By Ashton Glaspy

In my future, I see a beautiful wife and no kids in a big house with four floors and a swimming pool. I'd have a German Shepherd named Snoopy with his own room and bed.

I will be working full-time as an inventor of electronics and have a clean record and travel to places like Cuba and Miami — making large amounts of green.

I will support the Homebridge Youth Society by donating and helping the houses and being a successful man. Holl At Ya boy.

Billions of stars

By Nathan Perry

Even though the future is still a mystery, in my future I see billions of stars. I'm laying on the ground with people running around, screaming. I try to move but I can't, like something is holding me back. Then I can see myself as I lay on the ground, as I stand there wondering — why.

As I take a look around, I see people crying for me. Then I realize that these people are my families and friends. And I'm just thinking about my life, how it could end like this.

Then I fall to my knee, as tears run down my face. The doctor has pulled a white blanket over my feet to my head. My life was over like that, the end of the book.

Then an angel touches my shoulder and says "It time to come home, Nathan". As I start to walk away, I take a look back and see my mom yelling at me, "Nathan come back please, Nathan."

But nothing happens. My families come up one by one and kiss my cheek as they say, "I love you forever, Nathan" for the last time. I look away and whisper "I always love you more". As the sadness fills the room, I..... was gone.

The Importance of Reading

By Shakisha Downey

The importance of reading is to boost your intelligence. The more you read, the more you are teaching yourself — to spell, to pronounce new words and even how to write.

Reading is also a way to learn new things. The more you read about different things, the more knowledge you have about different things.

By Haley Glaspy

I think it is important to read because when we read, we learn new things, useful words, interesting facts, life stories and true love.

Reading is special to me and I feel like I can relate to what the characters are saying. Also, every time I read a book I know for a fact that I will not be judged. You see, it's just a book; I feel safe and important.

A book is not just a book to me; it is much more than that. It goes deep down into what I am feeling and helps me rediscover myself every time.

A favourite book of mine is *Identical* by Ellen Hopkins. *Identical* is a moving and empowering novel that I couldn't seem to put down — a phenomenal and touching novel.

By Ashley Baxter

Reading is very important in my life — it keeps me going. I like to read because it's entertaining and fun. My boyfriend lives in Dartmouth and I live in Truro so reading helps me through the day.

Reading helps keep me from getting mad or start yelling at people. When I get a book from my boyfriend, I want to read it even more. But I always finish quickly because I love to read. So I always have more than one book I like in my room.

By Patricia Schofield

The importance of reading is that you can learn new things like spelling and comprehension. Basically you can explain the story very well if someone asks you.

It's important to me because I can find key messages in each chapter. Once I am finished the book, all the messages I wrote turn into a summary/plot about the story I have read.

My favourite season



By Shakisha Downey

By far, summer would have to be my favorite season of the year. I love the warm sun and bright outdoors that summer brings, along with the numerous activities like swimming and taking long walks on the beach and in the woods. These things are most enjoyable in the nice hot sun. (Watching topless boys playing sports included lol)



I love not having to wear a jacket or big clunky shoes. To be able to go out and hang with my friends with just a mini shirt and tank top makes me feel free, alive, and happy.

Summer is also a good time of the year to go out and meet new people. Personally, I get bored with the same ones I go to school with everyday. I love to party, safely of course, and what better outfits are there to choose from when you don't have to worry about getting cold?

For the most part, summer is my retreat season, when I get to get away and relax a bit from the stresses of school. I count down the days when I can put my winter jacket to the back of my closet and break out the flip flops! yaaaahhhooooo!!!

By Haley Glaspy

My favourite season would have to be fall. One reason why I like the fall is because that is when my birthday is. I don't know what it is about it – the way the leaves turn different colours, all the leaves starting to fall off the trees preparing for the winter.



Fall is a nice season because it's not too hot and not too warm either. The water looks so beautiful because it's not winter, but not summer and the sun is changing, so it looks amazing.

About Time

By Ashley Baxter

I sit outside. The wind is chilled.
The smell of winter is finally here.
All I have to say, "It's about time."



I've waited all summer for this season.
I waited through the sweaty hotness
for the cold to finally arrive.
The sun is up, and
I sit with the wind in my face.

The smell in my senses, and
the cold against my back.
I'm finally home.

By James Riley

My favorite season is the summer. I love the summer because it has the best weather! The summer is bomb because you get two months off school and it's the best time to travel.



I like the summer because it gives me more time to be with family and friends :) The favorite thing I like to do over the summer is to hit up the beach and go to family BBQ's!

Favourite Quote:

"Live everyday as if it were your last"

By Nathan Perry

This quote means to "seize the day". You should be living as if you got no other day. Live as if you are the king of the world, never take no as an answer. And never let anybody tell you how to live your life or tell you you can't do anything or tell you you can't go anywhere.

Therefore you can do anything and go anywhere you put your mind on it. Seize the day.



Haley Glaspy and James Riley

Guests

An important part of the Newsletter is welcoming a variety of guests from the community to share their talents and experience in the wider world. Amanda Sutherland is a former youth in care who has created a very powerful video presentation about her troubled experience growing up in care. She spoke frankly to the youth about her healing process and the importance of giving back to the community.

Thom Swift is a former youth care worker and award-winning musician who brought his stories of working with youth in the prison system as well as a pair of beautiful guitars to share some music. Thom's new CD Blue Sky Day features the song One Way Track he wrote specially for the Youth in Care Newsletter last year.

Laura MacNutt is a Halifax-based artist and teacher who dropped into the Newsletter to talk about the subtle meaning of art we see around us everyday, and gave a little drawing lesson.



Amanda Sutherland

By Shakisha Downey

The main message I got from Amanda Sutherland's presentation to the Newsletter was that some people go through very terrible things when they are in foster care, but they can still stay strong and make it through.

If you look at your situation as positively as possible, things can really turn out great. You can end up even better off than you were in the beginning.

For me, listening to her presentation gave me a kick in the ass and helped me to realize that other people's experiences are much worse than mine and that I should suck it up and be grateful for the things in my life.

After hearing Amanda's story I felt guilty for feeling sorry for myself. Of course my life is not perfect — I am in foster care, so it is never really going to be. But Amanda has made it through so much in her life. I think if she can make it through her trouble, I can sure stick it out through mine.

Amanda's Presentation

By Ashley Baxter

Amanda's presentation really touched me because we have both been bounced from group home to group home or foster home. It's always hard and for her the experience was terrifying. When she wanted to live at a foster house, they got sick and she had to move again.

It might seem Amanda would be a hard person to get along with

or be traumatized. Amanda has been through so much but yet she is strong and living to the fullest.

That is what I want and I know I can do it — anyone can as long as they believe in themselves.

Thom Swift

By Ashley Baxter

There was a man with a heart for music and also a heart for youth — his name is Thom Swift. A talented man who wanted to work with youth but also pursue a career in music.

I got to meet this man at the Newsletter. Thom was so nice and funny. His music touched me so deeply. It was of course his guitars I liked most but his songs made me smile and enjoy him even more.

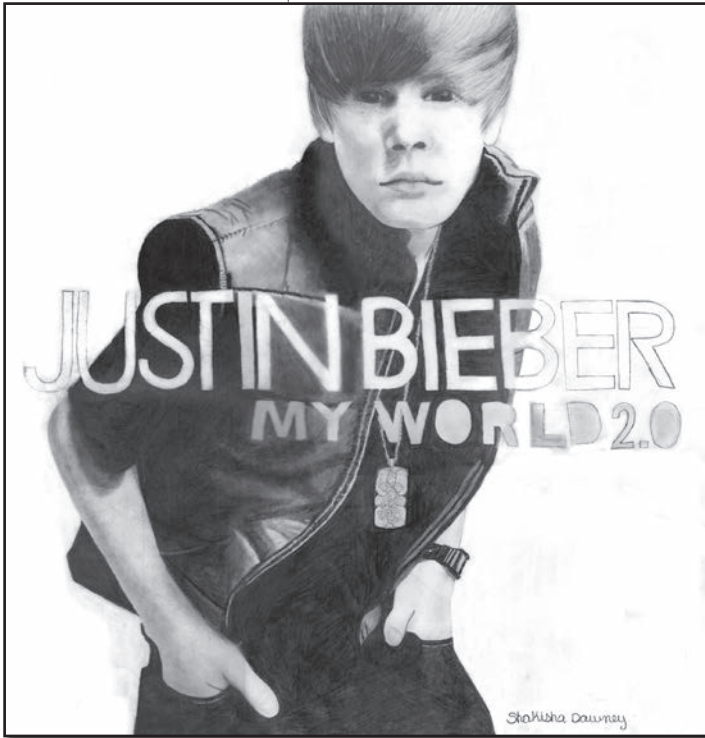
Thom wrote a song for the Newsletter the year before I saw him. *One Way Track* is an amazing song that I enjoyed because he wrote it for us.

Thom is an amazing guy — he wanted something and he went for it. Look at him now. He has recorded many albums, been to music awards shows and most likely has met many people he thought he would never meet. This man is an idol for us youth to look up to.

Thom Swift is an amazing singer who loves to work with youth. If you ever get to meet him listen carefully because you may never get to meet him again. Also his guitars are beautiful.

Thank you, Thom, for coming to the Newsletter once again to share your music and your stories. We really enjoyed it and hope you will come again.

Music



Pencil drawing by Shakisha Downey.

By Ashley Baxter

Music means a lot to me. It helps me when I'm upset, and lets me get out what's bothering me. Music affects my life by letting me express myself — I listen and understand what the singer is saying, and that helps me change myself.

If I were to meet some famous musician, it would be Trace Adkins. He is my favourite artist because he is a country singer. I just love his deep voice and his songs are awesome.



The Newsletter was well represented at a Lunch and Learn session at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Lecture Theatre, sponsored by the Nova Scotia Child and Youth Strategy.

By Manda Jackson

My favourite singer is Trey Songz. I love him so much because he's the best singer. I would listen to his songs all day and all night; he is a great idol.

Music means a lot to me. Whenever I'm in a bad mood, the only thing that calms me down is music. Even when I'm not mad, I love sitting down and listening to music. It makes me happy! Music just gets me in the mood!

By Ashton Glasgow

My favourite artist is Drake because all of his songs are true and not about war stories. A couple of Drake's songs really reach out to me and make me "me". I like his raps because they have a really good beat and they make me want to get up and dance.

Music affects me in a really odd way. It makes me feel calm and gives my mind stuff to think about and just cleanses my body. Music affects me like a bomb affects dirt.



Patricia, James, Amanda Murley, Haley and Rebecca at the Youth Achievement Awards.

The Blind Side

The Newsletter group attended a showing of the Oscar-winning film, *The Blind Side*. Many of the youth wrote their own reviews of the movie.

By Ashton Glasgow

I thought *The Blind Side* was a terrific. It was well structured and was based on a true story. If I was going to give it a rating I would give it a 4½ stars.

The Blind Side was really awesome but touching and sad. This movie is a good way to teach kids how some people actually live. I loved it.

By Ashley Baxter

The movie *The Blind Side* meant a lot to me because being in care you think nobody understands you and sometimes that's true.

But to talk or ever meet Michael (the character in the film), he would understand you. It would seem Michael had the worst of it and out of some of us he does. When we think about ourselves, we think we have the worst but should realize that sometimes others are even worse off.

The Blind Side was a very touchy but good movie. Michael is such a strong boy and brave to be brought up like that but never give up and to be so polite — I was blown away by him.

If there were more families like that there wouldn't be so many homeless people or teens.

By Shakisha Downey

I really like the movie *The Blind Side*. I think it was a good example of how far someone can come from a bad situation.

I liked the way that family took in Michael and their kids started accepting him at school. It was really nice how the sister stuck up for Michael at school.

Michael was lucky to have them take him in like that.

By Haley Glaspy

I thought the movie *The Blind Side* was touching and inspirational. It was thought provoking and it really opened my eyes to see how some people live.

It was amazing. I really liked the fact the movie was based on a true story, and that seemed to make it even better.

If I wrote a book

By Ashley Baxter

If I were to write a book, it would be about my life, through my hardship and how far I have made it. Some would say I am a strong brave woman because of what I've been through.

I would like everyone to know what I have been through so those who have been through the same can relate and know there is hope out there and it will come.

I would pick this topic because there are people out there who need someone to look up to and tell them there is hope and someday they will find happiness. I want to be that person they can look up to.

I also believe my life would make a good movie — to see everything and know what I say is the truth. The movie would show that I had a hard life but in the end I found my hope and my happiness.

Lots of people love movies but hate reading so if I had the chance, I'd make my life story into a movie. I could show people instead of just a bunch of words. I would want to play myself because only I know my true feelings — I'm the one who experienced it.

By Ashton Glasgow

My book would be about my fantasy life and my present life. Why? Because I think my fantasy life is interesting and it would be a great movie. Terrance Howard would play me and it would have a sequel and it would be shot in my home town right up to when I was 12.

A huge
**THANK
 YOU**
 to our funders.
 You make all the
 difference in the world!



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

INDIVIDUALS:

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Amanda Sutherland — Guest speaker
Thom Swift — Guest speaker (music)
Bill Turpin — Chairman of the Board
Catherine Young — Volunteer

ORGANIZATIONS:

Alderney Landing Theatre — Newsletter Launch venue
Atlantic Superstore — Magazines for collages
Empire Theatres — movie passes
Fusion Print — Newsletter printing
Halifax Metro Centre (Fiona Kirkpatrick Parsons) — Rainmen tickets
Halifax Region Children's Aid Foundation — Funder
Halifax Youth Foundation — Funder
Liberated Networks — Web hosting
Nova Scotia Community College — Computer lab
Nova Scotia Department of Community Services — Primary funder
Nova Scotia Department of Education — Funder
Nova Trophy — Certificate plaques
Office of the Ombudsman — Newsletter distribution
Phoenix Learning and Employment Centre — Meeting space, résumé instruction
Teens Now Talk magazine — Reprinting articles from *The Voice*
United Way of Halifax Region — Funder
Youth Secretariat — Newsletter distribution

...And all the social workers, group home staff, foster parents, biological parents, school staff and DCS staff who supported our youth this year!

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



Photo by Jeff Harper

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