

Youth Connection

An independent living newsletter
for Nebraska's foster youth

Spring 2009



*Rosey Higgs and
Jordan L. in Hollywood.*

It's My Life Conference 2008

Hollywood, California — Seven members of the Nebraska Foster Youth Council along with four program staff attended the It's My Life Conference hosted by Casey Family Programs. The youth joined over 700 other youth in care, alumni of care, care-givers, practitioners, and advocates from across the United States.

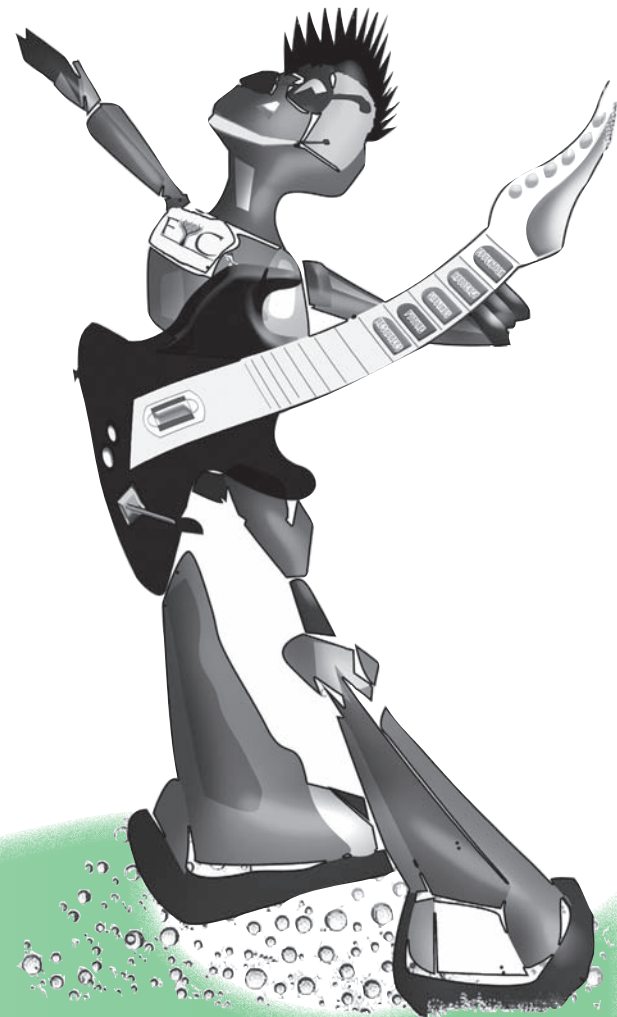
Meet Cindy Woodbury!

Cindy Woodbury joined the Foster Youth Council in 2004. A remarkable advocate for youth in care who learned early on the importance of speaking up and taking matters into your hands, Cindy entered foster care at 16 after turning her mother in for neglect. Unfortunately, after she aged out at 19, her case was dismissed and her younger siblings were returned to her mother's home. After high school, Cindy explored several career paths: first photography classes at Metro Community College and then business at the University of Nebraska Omaha. Finally, Cindy settled on a major in social work. It's a natural fit given her experiences and determination to improve the lives of all youth in care.



Today, Cindy has her hands full. She is the proud mom of one-year-old Mason, and is engaged to be married. She is employed with the Nebraska Children and Family Foundation as the Youth Advisor for the Omaha Foster Youth Council, where she oversees all OFYC activities. On top of that, she is working toward a degree in social work. After that, the sky's the limit!

If you or anyone you know is interested in joining the Omaha Foster Youth Council, contact Cindy at cwoodbury@nebraskachildren.org.



Come out and **ROCK** with the Foster Youth Council!

Life's not a **sound check**

Crank up the volume on your life! Jam with others who are like you, and get the instruments you need to make change — in your life and in the foster care system.

If you are a current or former foster youth and between the ages of 14 and 24, your local Foster Youth Council (FYC) is the VIP pass you need. Meet other youth and work together to change key issues in the system. FYC puts you at center stage to insure your voice is heard — from foster parents to state and national policy-makers. Don't just be a groupie, grab the mic and change the system!

Scottsbluff FYC

The Scottsbluff Foster Youth Council (FYC) has been getting to know each other and discovering what we want to accomplish as a group. We have been discussing what projects we want to take on in 2009 and what we would like to see changed in the foster care system. We are particularly interested in the issue of sibling separation. Many of us are living apart from brothers and sisters.

The men's and women's basketball teams from Western Nebraska Community College have teamed up with the FYC. They will be arranging activities, such as going to basketball games and pizza nights. The college is also educating us about financial aid options as well as linking us with the auto department to learn more about that program.

We have also participated in fun activities and volunteered at Kids Explore.

Omaha FYC

Welcome to Chessica, Jessica, Chloe, Oscar, Ricardo, Denisse, Sierra, Whitney, Kenyatta, Anna, Karen, Cassandra, Jean, Latasha, Devina, Delila, Michelle, Emily, Stephen, Wambli, Rachel, Breanna, Brielle, Emile, Brittany and Dan!

Our "newbies" are joining at a perfect time because we are working on some great projects.

Omaha FYC members have been busy presenting to foster parents, youth, caseworkers and other groups. Notably, we met with the Omaha Model Court Team to discuss common goals, youth participation in court, youth-signed court reports, and making sure everyone understands their role in the court process.

We are working with our neighborhood center to remove graffiti on Youth Service Day, April 25.

Enrollment in *Opportunity Passport*™ will begin soon. Everyone is excited and can't wait to start saving. We've been "secret-shopping" and have found some banks we really like and some that we don't.

Committees have been developed to plan a sibling event and we will share that information with you in the next edition of *Youth Connection*.

We've recently moved into a new building, where we're sharing space with Douglas County CASA.

Lincoln FYC

The Lincoln FYC is actively recruiting new members and a Kick-Off Event was held on March 13 at Champions Fun Center in Lincoln. The FYC is building the group foundation and discussing our 2009 goals. We have already expressed our passion for getting into schools to talk to teachers and administrators about how foster care impacted our education. As a result, FYC members will be trained on the *Endless Dreams: Building Educational Supports for Youth in Out-of-Home Care* curriculum this spring.

10 Questions

with Beth Wissing, CASA Director



1. What is a CASA worker?

A CASA is someone who is interested in assisting a child who is involved with the court system through no fault of their own. They must be 21 years of age. A CASA advocates for the best interest of the child.

2. How do you get a CASA worker?

Usually the court will contact the director of a CASA program and they will assign a CASA to the case.

3. How did you get where you are today?

I started as a CASA volunteer for another program and then was approached about starting a program in another county.

4. Did you have any obstacles?

There was not a lot of money or community awareness about CASA. It took time building up the program and the court having confidence in the program.

5. Who is the biggest celebrity you've met?

Judge Hatchett was at our National CASA Conference and spoke. I also years ago had a picture taken with Dave Thomas (Wendy's) at another National CASA Conference.

6. What do you hope to achieve by being a CASA?

I hope to make a difference in a child's life that is a positive one. I hope that they will remember some nice lady who cared about them.

7. If you could give one piece of advice to youth in care, what would it be?

There are many people in the world who care. I hope you will find someone that you can trust and let them be a part of your life. Set goals for yourself, try hard in school and enjoy what ever you choose to do after school is over.

8. What do you like best about working with kids?

Meeting all different kinds of children and listening to their views. Getting to know them and what they like to do.

9. If you had 1 million dollars what would you do with it?

I would give part of it to the CASA agency as we are always looking for funding and I would probably like to go on a trip somewhere where I have never been.

10. Who are your heroes and why?

My heroes are probably my parents as they have taught me to be active in our community and try to make it better. They also have been generous with projects that they believe in.

Scholarship & Financial Aid Deadlines

- Orphan Foundation of America Scholarship available online after January 1, 2009.
www.orphan.org
- FAFSA- ETV and PALS recommends completing this before March 15, 2009.
www.fafsa.ed.gov/

Other Post Secondary Educational Resources:

- Education Quest
www.educationquest.org
- American Legion Auxiliary-Department of Nebraska
www.nebraskalegionaux.net/
- Student Aid Grant or Vocational Technical Scholarship
March 13, 2009 deadline.
neaux@alltel.net (email)

Your Opinion Matters

"Your Opinion Matters" is where we give YOU, the foster care experts of Nebraska, a chance to give insight on tough issues. We want to hear your opinion so we can share them with other Nebraska youth. Send your articles, poems, pictures, or anything you want to share to Alana Pearson at apearson@nebraskachildren.org or mail to the address below.

Get the 411

Need more information on Foster Youth Council (FYC)?

www.myspace.com/nebfyc

www.nebraskachildren.org

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215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 200

Lincoln, NE 68508

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Youth Connection

Grab the Mic!

Life is a struggle by N.M.

Life is a struggle everyone should know this. I try everyday and I'm not going to quit. At Boystown I struggle in treatment and all but I have motivation so tend not to fall. When I get mad I sit down and write, cause my feelings sometimes change day and night. My goal for the future is to become a star and with the voice I have I know I can make it far. I've opened up to look and see that one day I'm going to have to face reality. I don't have to be a star just to get attention cause at Boys Town I have a chance to make the honorable mention. So what does it take to be a leader the one thing that I know I'm committed to activities and these things they surely show. Every night I do a re-cap over my whole day and when I do the results are not the same, "Life is a struggle" one day you'll say the same.

Hopeless Times. . . by K.B.

I feel so alone
I hope it hasn't shown
I didn't want it to be this way
I don't want to stay
I don't want to feel this hurt again
I feel like I'll never be able to escape
this life I have created
I feel so hopeless, lost, and hated
I try to tell people how I feel
But I don't want it to be real
I've been going through this for six years
And I've shed so many tears
I go through life pretending everything is fine
Why should it be any different this time
I don't know how to play their game
I'm just trying to maintain

check out www.myspace.com/nebfyc