



Funds Distribution Report

Recipient Organization:
Mockingbird Society

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Organization's General Goals:
Our mission is to transform the foster care system and end youth homelessness. Mockingbird creates, supports, and advocates for racially equitable, healthy environments that develop young people at risk of or experiencing foster care or homelessness.

Date of Award:	Level:
2022 Q4	\$2,501 to \$5,000

For more information, please read the attached report from Mockingbird Society.

8802 27th Ave NE
Tulalip, WA 98271
TulipCares.org

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May 15, 2024

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Charity URL: www.mockingbirdsociety.org

To our partners at Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund,

We are deeply grateful for your support of The Mockingbird Society in 2023. The following is a detailed report of The Mockingbird Society's work in 2023 illustrating the impact of your grant funding:

***Organizational Updates:**

2023 marked a meaningful milestone for The Mockingbird Society as the first year under the leadership of the agency's first executive of color, Natalie Lente. Her arrival has inspired a clear-eyed and ongoing assessment of how to most effectively improve the outcomes for our community's children, youth, and families over the short and long term—especially considering the unprecedented challenges facing our most vulnerable populations between the twin public health crises of systemic racism and the COVID 19 pandemic, as well as increasing economic pressures. Natalie has been approaching her work at Mockingbird emphasizing radical transparency around decision-making; professional development and training around both technical and antiracist competencies; the collective development of organizational values and team agreements in partnership with participating youth; and uniting communities in healing. She has oriented herself with the history of Mockingbird, formalized partnerships, fostered authentic connections across a broad range of communities, and developed a strategic plan for the organization's future.

Our new Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, Charles Smith, joined the Mockingbird team in early June 2023. Before joining Mockingbird, Charles was the Statewide Social Work Manager for the Washington Office of Public Defense, leading a team advocating for parents involved in the dependency court system, emphasizing family reunification, and reducing recidivism. Charles is involved in Washington statewide and national coalitions (including Coalition of Incarcerated Parents, Washington Background Check Committee, and American Bar Association Interdisciplinary Committee) committed to dismantling systems rooted in racism and focused on equitable solutions for the most marginalized populations.

***Youth Programs and Public Policy & Advocacy Program Updates:**



131 young people ages 13-26, with lived experience in homelessness and/or the foster system participated in Mockingbird's Youth Programs during the past year. Via monthly meetings and trainings, these 131 youth and young adults from our six regional Youth Program chapters collaborated with Mockingbird staff to follow a curriculum focused on not only growing youth's leadership, civic awareness, and advocacy skills, but also, community-building and healing.



Youth participated in 2023 Youth Advocacy Day at the Washington State Capitol in Olympia, held on February 3, 2023. This was the first in-person Youth Advocacy Day since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we welcomed 96 community partners and 63 youth participants for the event in person, as well as 53 community partners and 23 youth participants attending online. At Youth Advocacy Day, Mockingbird Youth Program participants presented refined legislative proposals to elected officials and provided critical youth testimony for Mockingbird’s legislative priorities. We celebrated three key 2023 legislative wins brought about by the advocacy of our youth participants, which will have a significant impact for the more than 10,000 children in foster care and 13,000 youth experiencing homelessness in Washington state:

- Washington House Bill 1406 creating a pathway for youth under 18 to self-consent to shelter;
- Achieving a provision within the Washington state budget directing the Juvenile Justice Council to report on juvenile record sealing and expungement;
- The full funding to support the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, & Families (WA DCYF) to implement Mockingbird’s proprietary MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ foster care model statewide. This legislative win will enable 8.5 full-time WA DCYF employees to be trained in, implement, and oversee 15 new WA DCYF-run MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ foster care constellations across the state—with the potential to impact roughly 10,000 youth in foster care annually.

Following these tremendous 2023 legislative session wins, our Youth Program chapters reconvened to start the process of preparing for the 2024 legislative session. Youth Program participants met monthly to collaborate on issue development, highlighting barriers faced through their personal experience in the foster care and homelessness systems. They shared and workshopped these barriers with participants from other Youth Program chapters during Mockingbird’s quarterly State Youth Leadership Council meetings. Youth from each of our seven statewide Youth Program chapters also elevated key barriers and proposed solutions to our key partners during the 2023 Mockingbird Youth Leadership Summit, which took place on July 31 and August 1, 2023. Based on this youth input from our Youth Program participants in 2023, Mockingbird advanced the following topics as legislative agenda items for the 2024 Washington state legislative session:

- Expansion of master leases extended to young people aging out of foster care,
- Expansion of crisis care and mental health resources for young people,
- Sustaining Extended Foster Care, ensuring that the state does not exit young people from systems of care into homelessness at age 18, and
- Increasing youth financial capability and readiness.

Altogether these activities supported our youth and young adult participants to grow their skills and self-confidence while building a solid foundation to launch their future careers. Through our most recent participant survey, youth reported that through our Youth Programs:

- Mockingbird helped them see themselves as a leader (89%);
- They improved their public speaking skills (78%);
- They better understand how government works (89%), how to change laws and policies (89%), and how to gain support from decision makers (100%); and
- They increased their desire to empower others and fight for change (89%).



***MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ Program Update:**

We continued to grow and expand MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ in 2023. We launched new Constellations of foster families internationally in Nova Scotia and the Netherlands that are now celebrating their one-year anniversary. Building on years of work with government systems and child-placing agencies across Washington State, national partners in California, New York, and Oklahoma, as well as international partners in Australia, Nova Scotia, the Netherlands, Japan, and the United Kingdom, MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ is pleased to share the impact of our MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ program in 2023:

- 91% average foster parent retention in Washington throughout 11 MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ constellations of 91 foster families;
- 64 host (child-placing) agencies and 4 replicating (child-placing) agencies in 6 countries worldwide are utilizing MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™;
- MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ provided stability and support to an estimated 1,629 families and 2,172 young people in care worldwide through 181 Constellations.

As mentioned above, this year saw a pivotal victory in Washington State, securing \$4.5 million in funding for the statewide implementation of the MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ model by the Washington Department of Children Youth and Family (WA DCYF). This decision package explicitly identified the hub-home model as the preferred method for caring for young people with current or a history of behavioral health needs. This legislative success will empower 8.5 full-time DCYF employees to be trained in, implement, and oversee 15 new WA DCYF-run MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ constellations across the state—continuing to expand the impact of this program.

***Lessons Learned:**

The turnover and upheaval Washington State agencies have endured during and following the COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges. Key aspects of our mission work in certain localities are under the purview of newly formed agencies, and key relationships and alliances are being rebuilt, dismantled, and rebuilt again. Until the dust settles, lack of continuity, as well as interruptions in services and relationships will be a persistent obstacle to our youth leaders being able to enact systems change and to our sector doing its best work.

Throughout this time, Mockingbird has been emphasizing growing our internal capacity and working to prioritize advocacy with accountability and an uncompromising commitment to our values that this work can only be done in partnership with communities closest to the issues. We are being intentional in our outreach to communities disproportionately affected by systems, including BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ youth. In our efforts to elevate and empower youth voice, we are equipping our staff with the tools, training, and support to create safe spaces for all youth participants. We are also investing in organizational infrastructure and capacity building to best meet the challenges presented by the pandemic, shifts in our sector, and pervasive systems of inequality.

While The Mockingbird Society and our youth and young adult leaders have been a leading champion in advocating for changes in legislation throughout the years, we are far from significantly transforming the foster care system and ending youth homelessness, and policy wins are only the first step. To create lasting change, we have been working to be present at implementation tables—holding politicians and government agencies accountable. While we are excited about the progress




we have made, there is still more work to do. Specifically, we have found the administration and implementation of reforms to be one of our greater challenges. In response, we have deepened our coordination with state agency staff, establishing regular check-ins with the WA Department of Children Youth, & Families; Office of Homeless Youth; and Health Care Authority. This has allowed us to better monitor and influence policy implementation, and to coordinate in real-time to address issues as they arise.

***Success Story:**

Mockingbird Youth Programs alumnus Samuel Martin played a key role in Mockingbird's advocacy during the 2023 legislative session, while serving as our interim Director of Public Policy and Advocacy. Samuel has a combined 15 years of community engagement experience and is committed to tapping into the power of experience to elevate the voices of those impacted by policy and empower them to use their voice to advocate and lead. He has a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Washington – Seattle Campus and a Master's in Public Administration from Seattle University. Samuel has worked on legislative agenda setting and advocacy with organizations like Casey Family Programs, Foster Club, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI), and Foster Care Alumni of America (FCAA). He is also an experienced lobbyist, trainer, and public speaker, having been featured as a speaker and facilitator for organizations like Treehouse, Community for Youth, and City Year.

Thank you again for your generous support of The Mockingbird Society's work to transform foster care and end youth homelessness in 2023. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can provide any additional information about our progress over the past year.

Sincerely,



Jenni Rebecca Stephenson
Director of Development
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PS: Please also see our [2023-2024 Annual Advocacy Report](#) and a special [November 2023 edition of The Mockingbird Times](#), our agency's flagship program and publication dedicated to elevating the voices of youth with lived experience in the foster system and/or homelessness. (Both linked online.) Please enjoy!

