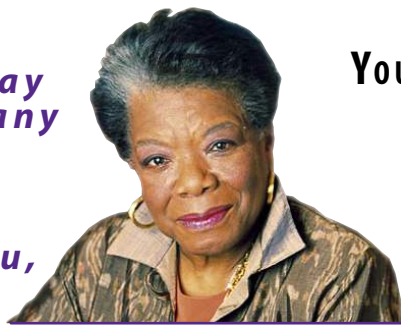


The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange is a program of Judson Center and is funded by the Michigan Department of Human Services.

To learn about foster care adoption and view photolistings and videos of waiting children, visit our website at www.mare.org.

'While one may encounter many defeats, one must not be defeated.'
 - Mya Angelou, 1928-2014



'In Our Voices' art exhibit

by Whitney Banks, Wendy's Wonderful Kids Recruiter

As a recruiter, many teens have expressed to me that they feel no one is listening to their voice.

We all know when workers come to see kids they ask questions like, "What would you like in a family" or "How do you feel about adoption"? You were probably wondering at some point, "Do you know me," "Are you really listening to what I need"? Growing up in foster care as a teen can be challenging and frustrating especially if you feel your "voice" is not being heard.

Believe it or not, on May 4, 2014, six youth had the opportunity to share their voice to the Lansing community with the "In Our Voices" Art Exhibit featured at [Absolute Gallery](#) in Lansing. It was a special project for this recruiter because this was a great way for youth to show the community what it's like inside of a teenager's mind.

Each youth created a vision board that focused on the one thing people needed to know about him or her that was in the center of the board and his or her interests (this was around the



board). It turned out to be a great show, and participants found it interesting as well.

To all of the kids who feel their voice is not being heard, I leave you with this quote by American author and psychotherapist Virginia Satir:

I Am Me

"In all the world, there is no one else exactly like me. Everything that comes out of me is authentically mine, because I alone chose it -- I own everything about me: my body, my feelings, my mouth, my

voice, all my actions, whether they be to others or myself. I own my fantasies, my dreams, my hopes, my fears. I own my triumphs and successes, all my failures and mistakes. Because I own all of me, I can become intimately acquainted with me. By so doing, I can love me and be friendly with all my parts. I know there are aspects about myself that puzzle me, and other aspects that I do not know -- but as long as I am friendly and loving to myself, I can courageously and hopefully look for solutions to the puzzles and ways to find out more about me. However I look and sound, whatever I say and do, and whatever I think and feel at a given moment in time is authentically me. If later some parts of how I looked, sounded, thought, and felt turn out to be unfitting, I can discard that which is unfitting, keep the rest, and invent something new for that which I discarded. I can see, hear, feel, think, say, and do. I have the tools to survive, to be close to others, to be productive, and to make sense and order out of the world of people and things outside of me. I own me, and therefore, I can engineer me. I am me, and I am Okay."



PHOTOS BY LAURA RUTKOWSKI,
 MARE ADOPTION WORKER LIAISON

From left to right, Bryce, Nicholas, Logan, Whitney Banks, Abbi Lynn, Tashiana, and Trazon.



'THE KING OF THE WORLD'

Making a mark while preparing for the future

by Jennifer Brooks, MARE Youth Specialist

While on location shooting Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) recruitment videos I had the pleasure to talk with one of MARE's waiting youth, [Blaine](#), 15 years old, who has been waiting for his Forever Family since 2011.

What drew me to Blaine was his confidence and excitement to not only complete his recruitment video, but also to make his different from other's by incorporating a program he is involved with. Blaine stated that he wanted to shoot the video in the woodshop and garage of his Employment Training Program (ETP).

This provider is one of the only to offer job training services through its Employment Training Program (ETP). This program receives no public funding and is supported 100% by donations to the Children's Hope Annual Fund. The staff teaches the youth how to succeed through involvement in real-life work environments and provide services to customers in the community ranging from yard maintenance, woodworking, upholstery services, cleaning services, car detailing, and small projects.

Involvement in the Employment Training Program gives youth real job hunting experience, including how to fill out an application and how to handle an interview with confidence. After being hired into the program, they are given opportunities to advance to higher levels as they learn more job skills, develop consistent work habits, and take on increased responsibilities.

ETP prepares youth for eventual employment in the community by teaching them the important concepts

of teamwork, respect for authority, attendance/punctuality, professionalism, problem solving, accepting feedback, handling responsibility, and quality of work. From these, self-worth and confidence begin to grow as they realize they can be productive young adults in the community work force.

They also learn to interact with customers in the community, which gives them experience with people they might not otherwise encounter.

The ETP program has been helping at-risk youth for more than 10 years. Each year, the program has continued to grow in community customers and in the youth we serve.

Blaine credited this job training for his personal growth and ability to deal with his situation. Blaine's therapist and other staff members stated that all the credit goes to Blaine himself for allowing them to help him and get him involved in the program and boasted how far Blaine has come in the time since he arrived at their facility. A staff member introduced me to Blaine as "the king of the world" and from meeting him and getting to see how well he has come and how talented he is I agree!

If you would like more information on the Employment Training Program (ETP) mentioned in this article please contact: Jennifer_brooks@judsoncenter.org.

Blaine, 15



PHOTOS BY MARCO RUGGERI, MARE COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

FEATURED ARTWORK



Donald, 11



April, 17

God

Giving is the blessing of God.
Giving is the world of people.
Giving is the working of the Heart.

Giving is the love of the spirit inside
of you. Love is part of life.
Love is unconditional.

Love and Giving is the exchange of
the heart.

Faith and opportunity is the part of
life. Never let life ever affect you.
Keep trying. Never let anything get
anyone in the way.

You can do it if you just try.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS: SHARE YOUR SUCCESS STORY

June 18-19, 2014

@014 Michigan Teen Conference - Take Charge of Your Journey
3-9 pm

June 29, 2014

One Simple Wish's Ultimate Wish Tour
3-9 pm

July 26, 2014

Lansing Match Party

For more information regarding these events please contact Jennifer Brooks, MARE Youth Specialist: Jennifer_brooks@judsoncenter.org

Fostering Success Michigan is seeking student stories to be highlighted on their website!

We are currently seeking students who are interested in being featured on our website. We have all heard the statistics and know about the obstacles students face. This is an opportunity for students and professionals alike to read the success stories and learn about what supports helped youth succeed. The stories will be used as a way to highlight students and their

achievements.

If you know of any youth or alumni of care between the ages of 18 and 24 who are currently enrolled in high school or college we would love to hear from them.

Contact Fostering Success Michigan Student Researcher, Brittney Grant, at fostering-info@wmich.edu to have the interview questions sent directly to your inbox.

We look forward to featuring youth and alumni stories from across the state!



YOUTH RESOURCES



FosterClub - FosterClub is a national network for young people in foster care and young foster care alumni. The site includes blogs from current foster youth, success stories from youth who have come out of the foster system as well as celebrities who faced foster care. It also provides a listing by state of contact information for professionals and hotlines.



Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative - MYOI is a partnership between the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, the Oakland/Livingston Human Services Agency, and many other local community partners. MYOI's goal is to ensure that young people in foster care have successful outcomes in housing, education, employment, community engagement and health.



Foster Youth in Transition - An organization that is geared towards youth who are aging out of foster care. It's a comprehensive, youth-oriented site with information, advice, interactive features and a useful glossary of foster care terms. This is a website with information on a variety of issues important to current and former foster youth. The site provides links on how to develop supports, find services, get answers to important questions and just keep you posted on what's new.



Camellia Network - Camellia Network harnesses the power of new technology to connect youth "aging out" of the foster care system with a community of resources, opportunities, encouragement and support. Youth have profiles on the site, giving them a place to express themselves, share their goals for the future and articulate what they need to be successful. Individuals and companies from across the country are able to collectively provide the support these young people lack by offering up doses of encouragement, career advice, professional connections, and financial support to help them navigate their way into adulthood.