

Best of the NETWORKER

Feature Articles from Past Issues

The Northwest Youth Networker; newsletter of the [Northwest Network for Youth](#), edited by [Jerry Fest](#) of the [InterNetwork for Youth](#)

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The Northwest Youth Networker Congratulates President-Elect ()

by Jerry Fest

Every Friday when I send out the Networker, I save a template copy for next week's edition. If I already know what the feature article is going to be I sometimes get it started. Last week I put in the above headline as a place holder, but I obviously couldn't complete it until the results were in on Tuesday. Now we know the president-elect, and throughout the nation there is joy, relief, and hope. Well, at least throughout *half* the nation.

I was at a friend's home on election night. Her 21-year-old daughter had just participated in her first presidential election and had cast her vote for Obama. It was a big night for her ... the pride in voting, the thrill of seeing her candidate win, the expectation of how things may be in the coming years ... but I was impressed to see her temper her joy when she talked about how bad she felt for the McCain supporters. While she had never voted before, she had followed elections and she knew how *she* felt when she was not on the winning side. She disagrees with the policies and beliefs of republicans, but she understands that their beliefs are sincerely and deeply held. It was impressive to see her embrace her joy, hope, and optimism, while at the same time recognize that *tens of millions* of others are feeling fear, anxiety, and discouragement. She was celebrating, but there wasn't a hint of gloating.

It seems we can always count on young people to remind us of things we should already know. We should be able to disagree without demonizing. Even among colleagues whom I admire and respect, the "other side" (whoever that may be) often isn't just *wrong*, they're *bad*. We preach tolerance even as we are intolerant of people who preach differently. Now ... *especially* now ... it may be time to practice what we preach. As Mahatma Gandhi stated over half a century ago, we must be the change we wish to see in the world. If you want the right to believe as you do, you have to defend the right of others to believe as they do. Thank you, Corey, for reminding us of that.

And, with that in mind ...

The Northwest Youth Networker Congratulates President-Elect Barak Obama



Northwest Network Alaska Representative Named

by Gary Hammons

In assessing a number of considerations, it has been determined that Juneau Youth Services will serve as our representative in developing a new "Alaska Network for Youth." Final operational details are being worked out. Many of the "ANFY" activities will be directed by Jorden Nigro. Ms. Nigro is in charge of residential programs for



Juneau Youth Services and is currently the chair of the state-wide organization “Alaska Association of Homes for Children,” a role providing her with networking opportunities across the State and interaction with the State legislature.

Jorden has been a Northwest Network for Youth Board Member for four years and currently serves as secretary. She has quickly risen through the ranks of JYS and has continued to gain professional stature throughout her career. She is from the remote community of [Gustavus](#) near Glacier Bay and is very knowledgeable of the widely varied cultures and communities across the State.

While Jorden will bear much of the responsibilities for ANFY, Walter Majoros, the CEO of Juneau Youth Services and other staff members will be involved as well. Walter previously directed Alaska’s services for disabled populations and is well connected and highly respected throughout the State. He and the JYS staff will assure that this new state wide network for youth will prosper and sustain the momentum developed by the Northwest Network for Youth over the past several decades.

With the selection of Jordon Nigro as lead for Juneau Youth Services coordinating the Alaska Network for Youth, we are pleased to announce that your new Northwest Network for Youth team is complete!



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS!

by Jerry Fest

As the banner above indicates ... and as many of you know ... today marks the close of the National RHY FYSB Grantee Conference in St. Louis. Your humble newsletter editor was unable to attend, so I am asking for your help in getting information about this conference out to your Networker colleagues who also may have missed this opportunity. If you attended the conference, please take a moment to jot down a brief description from your perspective, or any general impressions that you would like to share. [SUBMIT HERE](#) no later than Wednesday, November 26th (next week) and please include your name and position. We will be sharing these contributions in next Friday’s Networker. Thanks in advance for sharing your experience with all of us!



Lessons from a Bad Trip

by Jerry Fest

This article was written in July of 2007. I thought a reprint was appropriate since many of you are traveling for Thanksgiving. Enjoy!

Please indulge my tale of woe, because I really do have a point.

I just got back from a bad trip. I traveled to Raleigh, North Carolina to present Youth Development for [Haven House Services](#). Don’t get me wrong -- that’s not the bad part, my trip to Haven House was wonderful. The bad part was the return trip home.

It began with a delayed flight out of Raleigh that got me to Charlotte, North Carolina at about 6:30 PM. I had a really tight connection to catch a direct flight back to Portland that would get me in at about 10:00 PM on Saturday, so I was listening very closely when the flight attendant was making gate announcements. My first clue should have been when she announced my flight number, paused, and then went on to the next flight without saying anything. My second clue should have been when I asked the flight attendant for gate information; she said she'd get back to me and then never returned or talked to me again.

It was the third clue that finally got me worried. That was when I got off the plane and looked at the departure board to see *no* flights to Portland listed. I went up to the nearest gate and asked them to check my flight. Only then was I told that my flight was cancelled and I'd have to go to the 'Special Services' desk.

I arrived at the Special Services desk to stand in a long line waiting to see one of only two Special Services agents. I was in that line for (I'm not kidding, I timed it) 2 hours and 55 minutes before I got to spend the next 25 minutes dealing with the agent and trying to find a way home. When I left the desk I had a \$10.00 food voucher (with only a few minutes left before the restaurants started closing; and just try to find food in the Charlotte airport for under 10 bucks!), a flight to Los Angeles leaving at 7:40 AM on Sunday, and another flight out of LA to Portland leaving at 6:45 PM Sunday evening. Not only was it going to be a long trip home, but it looked like I was going to be spending the night at the Charlotte airport.

I went to the gate I'd be using in the morning, found a rack of 4 chairs that didn't have arms, and bedded myself down for the evening. I was just drifting off to sleep when a security guard wheeled up on a Segway to tell me that the airport concourses close overnight and I'd have to leave. That meant I had to spend the night out past security where there was little more than a hard, cold, and dirty floor to lay down on. I decided to stay up all night.

The story has a little bit of good news. When I got to LA I was able to get on standby for an earlier flight, and I made it back to Portland dirty, tired, and a bit cranky, but only 17 hours later than planned. Of course, there were many irritations in that 17 hours, such as having to repeatedly go through security after I had purchased \$3.00 bottles of water, which I would then have to discard (I think I did this about 3 times) -- and, if I wanted to, I could lament the unpleasantness of my journey in far greater detail. But, as I said earlier, this story has a point.

For all the unpleasantness, there were also some good things that happened brought about by something we humans seem to do when we share experiences. We bond, and in bonding we make the hard times a little less hard for each other. I was not the only one whose travel plans were screwed up, and as I interacted with all the other people who were having a hard time I established some really enjoyable -- if temporary -- relationships.

My first acquaintances were the two teachers from Newberg, Oregon, who I later ended up having dinner with as we got to the restaurant just before it closed. We then met a young man trying to get to a party in Detroit. We'd hold his place in line as we sent him out seeking information in other parts of the airport. A woman trying to get to Nashville with her two little children commiserated with us as she struggled to keep her children from going bonkers, and we were later joined by a young woman from Longview whose husband was trying to get help at another service desk. She was in constant phone contact with him and we'd exchange what we were learning about the situation with what he was finding out. She was also dealing with her concerned mother who kept making crazy flight arrangements over the internet to the tune of 1300 bucks and up. We even discussed the possibility of renting a van and doing a road trip back to Portland, as a rumor was circulating that we wouldn't be getting a flight out until Monday or later.

Overnight in the airport I spent some time with the ex-marine who had just been discharged and was trying to get home; the lady from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania who tried to rescue a lost kitten wandering around the airport; and the Hispanic gentleman, also headed to Portland, who apparently had the same bladder as I do, as we kept running into each other on the way to or from the restroom. As it turned out, he and I both made it on the

standby flight to Portland out of LA the next morning. We were giving each other high-five's in two languages as they let us onto the aircraft at the last minute.

My final temporary friend was the woman I sat next to on the last leg of my journey. Scared to fly, she clutched her stuffed animal the entire trip. My reassuring her that we'd be safe may have been the universe's reason for delaying me to that flight.

None of us knew each other. It's likely we'll never meet again and, if we spent more time together, it's unclear whether we'd have anything in common or even *like* each other. But for the short period of time that we were thrown together in a bad situation, we were friends and formed a tight support system -- in some cases without ever even knowing each other's name.

And here's the point. Do we not see this exact same behavior with youth on the streets? Do we not see them forming tight bonds with people they've only just met and know little about? And do we not tend to pathologize that behavior, treating it as another 'issue' that the young person needs to deal with? Yet the fact is that this behavior, the tendency to quickly bond and form relationships with strangers who are in similar circumstances, is just like so many other behaviors that we tend to pathologize in street youth. It is a normal, rational, and predictable human response. Put yourself in their situation and you will do the same thing. The proof can be seen in my trip home.

I'm not saying that youth we meet on the streets don't have issues to work through. We all do. What I'm saying is that they are probably far healthier than we tend to give them credit for, and that many of the behaviors we see as 'problems' are really quite normal human responses. We'd be far more helpful to them if we didn't pathologize the behaviors *we'd* exhibit if we were in their shoes.

From all of us at the Northwest Network for Youth, Happy Thanksgiving!