

# San Francisco Chronicle

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

### **Foster youths need support**

Thank you for your editorial bringing to light the plight of transition-age foster youth and the value of supporting us beyond our 18th birthday ("To invest in our children," March 11).

I was placed in foster care when I was five, after my father killed my mother. I lived with a nice family until the age of 12, but then started acting out and was bounced around to more group homes than I can count, all the way from Fremont to Suisun.

As a young woman who spent 13 years in foster care, I can tell you firsthand how critical it is to support youth after they leave care. On my 18th birthday, my "caregiver" literally dropped me off at a bus station with my worldly possessions packed in a duffle bag. I felt like a ship lost at sea with no destination, no gas and no motivation. I quickly realized I would have to survive by any means necessary.

Fortunately for me, I found First Place for Youth, a Bay Area program that is considered a national model for supporting former foster youth in making a successful transition to adulthood. Through First Place, I moved into my own subsidized apartment, found a full-time job and am going to school.

Most importantly, however, I have found a new family that continues to see me through my ups and downs. For the first time in my life, I can honestly say that I am in control of what's happening and I don't want for anything. I feel truly blessed.

Without this support, I can assure you, now at age 21, I would be homeless or in jail. The Fostering Connections Act would help thousands more youth, including my younger brothers and sisters. Californians should jump at the chance to save these precious lives.

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Vallejo

Available at: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/03/17/EDB216GNNB.DTL&hw=foster+care&sn=001&sc=1000>