

RaeLynn Thornton, a CPY-BBBS youth from our HOPE Program, was one of the youth featured in the July 1st's Eugene Weekly article on 'forgotten youth'.

NOWHERE TO BE YOUNG & HOMELESS IN LANE COUNTY

Eugene Weekly, July 1, 2010

By Camilla Mortensen, Rick Levin, Shannon Finnell, Catherine Foss and Andy Valentine. Photos by Trask Bedortha.

They're musicians, derby girls, runaways and train hoppers. Some of Lane County's homeless kids are just taking some time to travel and escape a dull future, for others, it's life on the street that they want to escape. Some have been to jail; some have been befriended by cops. Just about all of them wish that instead of looking at them like their existence is a problem and a blot on the city, passersby would look at them like human beings. One homeless youth who goes by the name of Angel told EW, "I just want to say that a lot of homeless people get judged when they're holding their sign, or when they're walking down the street, and I think more people should stop and actually try to figure out their story before they judge. Not all of us want to be out here. It's not fun. I don't think any of us really enjoy looking like slime, like we don't have any worth.



RaeLynn Thornton age 20, Cottage Grove

RaeLynn is aging out of the foster care system. She says, "I was in foster when I was younger. I got returned home, then when I was 15 I got placed back into foster care. I was all over the place. I finally found peace in one of my homes and wound up staying there."

She says at age 18 kids begin aging out of the system, but they have services at least until they are 21. "They don't completely drop us, but they wean out of our lives."

Her 19-year-old sister is out of the system and is homeless. She began rejecting the help from the foster system: "She started acting up, so they closed her case," RaeLynn says. "I personally believe that most foster kids have a lot difficulties; we have a lot of challenges that we have to overcome."

"It's kind of tough," she says about transitioning out of the system. "It took me a while to find support people I can trust. You know that feeling where you feel like you can actually really trust somebody? I share some information, and if I can trust them not to say anything, then I'll share more." She adds, "Just being able to find somebody that you can look up to and be inspired by means a lot to foster kids."

"I think they just need to have hope," she says. "I was in the foster system and I'm succeeding." RaeLynn is starting her third term towards a psychology degree at LCC.