



Frontline

Keeping America's runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.

FALL
2008
NEWSLETTER



GREEN
LIGHT
PROJECT

Runaway Prevention: Raising Awareness with NRPM

By: Jasleen Jaswal

November 1st marks the beginning of National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM), and once again, agencies around the country will leap into action to support the effort. Throughout the month, National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) and the National Network for Youth (NN4Y) strive to educate the public about the issues facing the 1.6 million to 2.8 million youth who will run away this year, and the role the community has in runaway prevention. Last year, Connecticut-based H.O.P.E., a support group for parents who are seeking help for problems with their children, purchased 1,000 green light bulbs for the Green Light Project, and coordinated an awareness poster contest for local youth. Alabama-based Family Connection, Inc. distributed outreach materials via internet, news media, and partnerships with local businesses and schools of Shelby County, AL, including distributing materials to all 13 libraries in the county.

For those who want to help, whether in groups small or large, there are many ways to support NRPM.

In past years, NRS encouraged community members to participate in the Green Light Project during NRPM. Green light bulbs are placed in porch lights across the country to raise awareness and show support for runaway youth. The program is a proven success, and an easy way to support NRPM.

Youth and educators are encouraged to promote NRPM at their schools. The Community Action Kit (available at www.1800RUNAWAY.org) outlines how to plan and implement runaway prevention programs. Adopting NRPM and using the Community Action Kit are perfect ways for extracurricular groups to give back and speak directly to their peers about what's really

going on in their communities. In the greater community, business leaders and congregations can become a partner in distributing information about NRPM, as well as encourage media coverage of local efforts to educate the public.

Of course, runaway prevention isn't a once-a-year event. Throughout the year, youth and educators can continue to educate themselves and each other about the risks of running away, as well as how to support a youth in a difficult situation. *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*, is an excellent way to start the conversation, and is easily implemented in 45-minute modules. This curriculum, as well as educational materials about runaway prevention, are available for download at www.1800RUNAWAY.org. Businesses can create opportunities for youth to grow and learn with mentoring or internship programs. As a whole, communities can lobby their local law enforcement agencies to include NRS' name and the 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline number on Missing Children and Runaway Report forms.

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NRS's Quest

The National Runaway Switchboard's (NRS) operations are based solely in a small office building in the Lakeview neighborhood of Chicago. Because NRS has compiled a database of over 16,000 local resources across the country, crisis callers may assume NRS is literally located where they are. To stretch our \$2.3 million budget to handle over 176,000 calls, NRS continues to rely on many collaborative partners to link youth with the 1-800-RUNAWAY crisis line.

National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM):

During November, 2008, NRS and twelve national organizations will partner to raise awareness of the issues facing runaway youth and to educate the public about solutions and the role it can play in preventing youth from running. NRS is proud to count the following organizations as partners in National Runaway Prevention Month: American School Health Association; National Association of School Nurses; Circle of Parents; Girls, Inc.; National Assembly on School-based Health Care; National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth; National Association of School Psychologists; National Center for Homeless Education; National Network for Youth; National Safe Place; School Social Work Association of America; and YWCA USA. In addition, Financial Service Centers Cooperative, Inc. is a corporate partner promoting NRPM to its over 5500 credit union locations.

National Safe Place:

For the last several years, NRS has contracted National Safe Place (NSP) to connect youth to help and safety. This collaboration, National Safe Connections, provides a critical safety net for youth across the country. Together, NRS and NSP assist youth and keep them safe through promotion of 1-800-RUNAWAY, *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*, and Safe Place locations in communities across the country.

America's Promise Alliance:

NRS recently became a member of America's Promise Alliance, the nation's largest multi-sector collaborative dedicated to the well-being of children and youth. The Alliance partners consist of businesses, youth-serving organizations, elected officials, educators, faith-based organizations, funders, and others who are dedicated to seeing that children and youth experience the fundamental resources they need to succeed.

Along with these collaborative partners, the board of directors, donors, volunteers, and staff all lend their support in NRS's quest to keep America's runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.



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Street Team

By: Lashawnda M. Carter

The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) recently implemented a new outreach program, Street Team. The purpose of the Street Team is to raise national awareness of NRS' services, 1-800-RUNAWAY, and www.1800RUNAWAY.org.

Street Team is the answer for individuals who want to help keep America's runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets, but handling crisis calls at the Chicago call center isn't an option. As a Street Team member, these individuals are supporting the mission.

Becoming a Street Team member is easy! Visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org and complete an application. Registered members receive the Street Team starter kit of outreach materials and activities. Some of these activities include: adding NRS' banner on a website, linking NRS to a MySpace and/or Facebook page, distributing materials at the local mall, promoting National Runaway Prevention Month, or presenting a module of the *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*.

But that's not all! Besides helping to keep America's runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets, team members earn points for each activity performed. Team members track their activity points to redeem prizes such as: pens, flashlight key chains, NRS mugs, hats, T-shirts and more!

For more information on how to get involved with the Street Team, visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org or email streetteam@1800RUNAWAY.org.

streetteam@1800RUNAWAY.org



Going once, going twice, helping youth in crisis...SOLD!

The National Runaway Switchboard's online auction is in full swing! Head over to www.1800RUNAWAY.org and click on the Spirit of Youth logo to bid on travel getaways, art pieces, sports memorabilia, and so much more!

For the first time ever – you can **Buy It Now!** All items in the online auction will be available for immediate purchase...for the right price!

This year's auction features:

- TWO United Airline International Business Class Roundtrip Tickets
- Tickets to TWO Chicago Cubs Spring training games in Phoenix, Arizona (United Airline roundtrip tickets and hotel included)
- Tickets to a Boston Red Sox game at Fenway Park – seating in the exclusive EMC Club (United Airline Roundtrip Tickets and hotel included)

And that's just the tip of the iceberg! Go to www.1800RUNAWAY.org to get your bid in NOW!

NOTE: Items that are not purchased using the "Buy Now" button will move to the silent or live auction at the Spirit of Youth event on November 7, 2008. Live auction items will be open to proxy bidding at the event.

2 United Airline International Business Roundtrip Tickets

Tickets for 2 Chicago Cubs Spring training games

Online Auction

Tickets to a Boston Red Sox game @ Fenway Park

CALL US. WE CAN HELP. 1-800-RUNAWAY

Maurice's Story

By: Lashawnda M. Carter

"National Runaway Switchboard," Stacey, an NRS front line team member "liner", announced as she answered a phone call to 1-800-RUNAWAY.

On the other end of the line was a quiet and hesitant young male's voice. "Hello?"

"Yes, I'm listening. Take your time..."

– Stacey, NRS Frontline Team Member

After a few moments of silence, 17-year old Maurice began to open up to Stacey about why he called 1-800-RUNAWAY. He informed Stacey that a year ago he told his mother he was gay. "Things were so bad when I first came out to my mom that I ran away. She had a hard time accepting me," he said.

For several months, Maurice had been going back and forth between his mother and his boyfriend. Although Maurice's mom had become very supportive of his sexual orientation, she was not supportive of his relationship. Maurice's boyfriend had been physically abusive.

"She doesn't approve of me being with him at all. And to make matters worse, she's moving away," he explained. "I'm not sure what I should do. I want to go with my mom, but I don't want to leave him."

Stacey actively listened to Maurice's story. As a liner, Stacy had participated in forty hours of solution-focused intervention training and had been active in the call center for over six months. Stacy was there to help Maurice discuss the pros and cons for each potential choice. Although Maurice realized it was his final decision, he appreciated Stacy guiding him through his options to ensure his decision was well informed.

As the call ended, Maurice decided that the best option was to continue discussing the situation with his mom, as well as distancing himself from his boyfriend. "Thanks for talking to me. I'm still unsure about everything, but at least I came to a decision that I think is best for me," he said before he hung up.

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Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth

By: Flor Bermudez, Lambda Legal Staff Attorney

In homeless service settings, LGBTQ youth regularly face harassment and abuse—physical, verbal and sexual. They are isolated from other youth, threatened or attacked by youth and service providers, blamed by service providers for their own mistreatment and even denied services outright because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.ⁱ Transgender youth face particularly poor treatment. They are often targeted for harassment and assault, receive rooming assignments in accordance with their birth sex rather than the sex with which they identify, are called by their birth names and are forced to abide by dress codes with no room for their gender expression.ⁱⁱ

LGBTQ youth need: safe shelters where they are respected, referrals to LGBTQ-friendly physical and mental health services, affirming mentors and role models who can provide long-term sources of support in their lives and independent life skills and other transitional services that take into account the specific challenges that LGBTQ people face because of the pervasive discrimination that continues to affect our society.ⁱⁱⁱ

In all homeless service settings, LGBTQ youth need protection from harassment and discrimination. All homeless youth serving agencies should be required to implement policies that prohibit discrimination and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression for youth, staff, volunteers and contract providers.^{iv} Such policies send a clear message that maltreatment is unacceptable.

For more information about Lambda Legal, visit www.lambdalegal.org. Lambda Legal is one of the 16,000 database resources available for NRS callers.

ⁱ See Child Welfare League of America ("CWLA") & Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund ("Lambda Legal"), *Out of the Margins: A Report on Regional Listening Forums Highlighting the Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Youth in Care* 18 (2006) ("Out of the Margins"), Nicholas Ray, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness* 83 (2006).

ⁱⁱ See Ray at 84; Lisa Mottet & John M. Ohle, *Transitioning Our Shelters: A Guide to Making Homeless Shelters Safe for Transgender People* 1 (2003).

ⁱⁱⁱ See *Out of the Margins* at 34-43.

^{iv} See *Out of the Margins* at 28-29; Shannan Wilber et al., *CWLA Best Practice Guidelines: Serving LGBT Youth in Out-of-Home Care* 10-11 (2006). For a sample non-discrimination policy applying to child welfare and juvenile justice settings, see National Center for Lesbian Rights, *Model Anti-Harassment and Non-Discrimination Policy for Child Welfare or Juvenile Justice Agencies* (2006) ("Model Policy").

The Gift that always fits!

This holiday season, make a gift to National Runaway Switchboard in honor of a special family member, friend, business associate, or youth at www.1800RUNAWAY.org.

www.1800RUNAWAY.org



New Horizons for Young Women: a first step to understanding

By: Joel Kessel

"I wish I would have had the National Runaway Switchboard number in my back pocket," said Jacqueline Danforth, Executive Director of New Horizons for Young Women, reflecting upon her own challenging teenage days. "I may have called and gotten help before I put myself in such a risky situation."

Offering alternative paths away from choices that put teens in those risky situations is a driving motivation for Danforth's northern Maine-based New Horizons for Young Women. "Our mission is to support young women as they work to better understand themselves and what motivates their choices, relationships and behaviors," said Danforth.

Having experienced a tumultuous adolescence, including running away from her Malibu, California, home at age 15 to New Mexico for a few weeks, and spending three years at an alternative program in Idaho, Danforth understands and empathizes with the confusion, anger and depression that many at-risk teenage girls feel today.

The adopted daughter of broadcaster Barbara Walters, Danforth often felt out of place growing up around many powerful and famous people. "I had a lot of anxiety from people staring at my mom and me and felt very exposed, said Danforth. "I was very tall, not competitive, naturally analyzed everything, [was the] daughter of a famous woman, adopted, and seemed to look at the world from an abstract view. I didn't just accept things as I was told or saw." While she never physically ran away again, Danforth said she has been emotionally running her whole life.

Danforth knows she was lucky that her troubled youth had a happy ending and cautions struggling teens to be careful. "Even though I knew I had the unconditional love of my mother, it wasn't enough to give me the confidence and self esteem I needed. I would hope that you could talk to parents or guardians about how you feel, but if you don't feel like your parents/guardians will understand, try to find an organization, like the National Runaway Switchboard or a teen help line or talk with your school counselor."

Danforth's story may be more than 20 years old, but the issues and challenges facing adolescents today are the same. With that in mind, she founded New Horizons in 2001, one of 16,000 resources in the NRS database.

New Horizons enrolls teenage girls, between the ages of 13-18, who are engaged in behaviors that may be disrupting school or family life. Danforth points out that many of these teenage girls are testing the waters but their actions may threaten their future success.

A family is often compelled to contact New Horizons for a variety of reasons, including their daughter's loss of interest in school, running away or threatening to run away, high irritability, excessive sleeping, hostile behavior, isolation from friends and family and consistent feelings of sadness.

Founding this safe haven in the woods resulted in part because of Danforth's collegiate experiences, where she recalls young women seemed to focus more on competing with each other rather than sharing and learning from each other.

"Our students are teenage girls who are going through what many teenagers do – testing [authority], making mistakes and trying to figure out how to become an adult. Some teenagers go through this in a healthy manner and some have a more challenging time."

Like many of the youth who call the 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline, life wasn't easy for Jackie Danforth during her adolescence.

New Horizons for Young Women "is a first step in the students' and families voyage," offers Danforth. Surely for the many they have helped, a monumental first step.



Founder of Horizons for Young Women:
Jacqueline Danforth

Greyhound and
Chris "Ludacris" Bridges
produced a new television
Public Service Announcement
promoting the Home Free program
to be released Fall 2008.



Because our donors, partners and sponsors
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handle over 175,000 calls in 2007!

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NRS and CHI work together

NRS presented at a workshop at the Child Helpline International (CHI) Child Trafficking Conference in Mexico City August 2008 for helpline service providers from North and South America (left to right) Jennifer Di Nicola, NRS Call Center Manager; Leen Decadt, CHI Head of Programmes; Gordon Vance, NRS Director of Programs; and Magdalena Aguilar, CHI Programme Manager for Americas and Caribbean.



NRS received a visit from Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands (Left to Right) NRS Call Center Manager, Jennifer Di Nicola; Director, St. Croix Teen Hotline, Laurie Christian; NRS Director of Programs, Gordon Vance; and NRS Volunteer Coordinator, Michelle Vos.

Spirit of Youth 2008

Friday, November 7th
The Drake Hotel; 6PM–11PM

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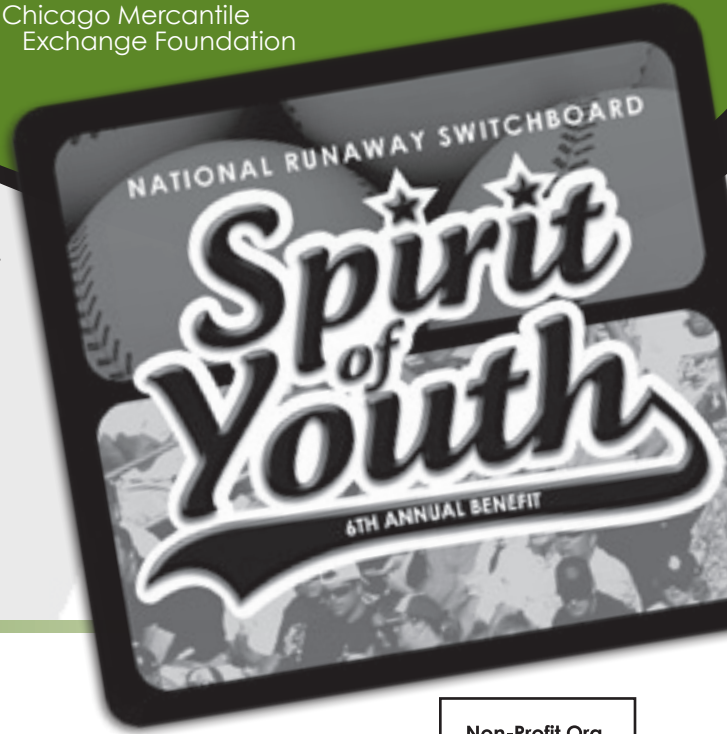
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Every year it gets better and better – and this is truly our best year yet! On November 7, 2008, the National Runaway Switchboard will honor the Chicago Cubs for their support of our services and programs. The goal is to raise \$150,000 to keep youth safe and off the streets.

To discuss sponsorship, please contact Katy Walsh, Director of Development and Communications, at 773.289.1727, or at kwalsh@1800RUNAWAY.org.

Frontline is a publication of the National Runaway Switchboard

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