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Frontline

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



Chris "Ludacris" Bridges and The Ludacris Foundation will be honored for their work with runaway and at-risk youth.



Frontline is a publication of the National Runaway Switchboard

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Website: www.1800RUNAWAY.org
Maureen Blaha • Executive Director

LIGHT IT UP FOR YOUTH

By Jennifer Benoit-Bryan

The Green Light Project is a great way to get a community involved in National Runaway Prevention Month. Porch lights in communities across the country will glow green during November to raise awareness and show support for runaway youth during National Runaway Prevention Month.

Become a part of the Green Light Project by distributing green lights in your community. The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) has created light bulb labels and posters which are customizable for your organization. These tools are available at www.1800RUNAWAY.org, click on *Runaway Prevention Month*.

How to start a Green Light Project in your community:

- 1 Purchase green light bulbs, available at most local hardware stores. For those interested in distributing in bulk (over 1,000 bulbs) please contact NRS at 773.880.9860 X718 for more information.
- 2 Label the bulbs - general and customizable light bulb labels are available to download. Purchase 2"x4" labels (for example, Avery 5163 / 8163 Template) and print the labels on a color printer or at a copy shop.
- 3 Distribute the bulbs - general and customizable posters are available for distribution with the light bulbs.



- 4 Tell NRS about your Project - NRS wants to hear about your Green Light Project! Enter our Community Contest at www.1800RUNAWAY.org, click on *Runaway Prevention Month* to share your green light goals, successes, set-backs, and results.

By doing something small, like turning on a porch light, you can show runaway youth in your community that you support them, raise awareness in your community, and generate discussion about the issues facing runaway youth.

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- Help Youth Battle Rejection
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From the National Runaway Switchboard

With over 16,000 nationwide resources in the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) database, our callers may conclude NRS is geographically located in their community. In fact, we handled over 150,000 calls last fiscal year from NRS headquarters here in Chicago. With a staff of 22, a volunteer corps of 150+ and 20 members on the Board of Directors, NRS relies heavily on collaborative efforts with other social service agencies, educators, the media and others to ensure every youth knows 1-800-RUNAWAY is a call to help.

National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM) in November is a perfect example of how NRS' collaborations extend our outreach across the United States. NRS and the National Network for Youth (NN4Y) are co-sponsoring NRPM to 1) raise awareness of the issues facing runaway youth; and, 2) educate the public about solutions and the role they can play in preventing youth from running. In addition, NRS has the support of several national organizations, including: National Assembly on School-based Healthcare, National Association of School Psychologists, National Safe Place, American School Health Association, National Association of School Nurses, School Social Work Association of America, and YWCA USA. With the strength of these national partners, National Runaway Prevention Month 2007 materials will be distributed to nearly 50,000 individuals.

Spirit of Youth 2006 award recipient, Lifetime TV, continues to connect families with NRS by focusing on National Runaway Prevention Month 2007. Last year, the successful

original Lifetime TV movie *Augusta, Gone*, dramatizing Martha Tod Dudman's experience with her teenager running away, promoted NRS' services, 1-800-RUNAWAY, and was immediately followed by a Public Service Announcement. This November, Lifetime TV will re-air *Augusta, Gone*, feature NRS in two different e-newsletters sent to 128,000 subscribers, text a 1-800-RUNAWAY message to their text message service users, and feature NRS on five different places at www.lifetimetv.com.

November provides an opportunity for social service agencies, educators, the media and YOU to show your support in runaway prevention...flip the switch on your green porch light. NRS knows how important a nationwide collaborative effort is to keeping America's runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.



Stephen C. Mack
Board Chair

Maureen Blaha
Executive Director

STATS CORNER: NRS Media Source Book Provides Answers to Questions about Runaway Youth

By Jennifer Benoit-Bryan

The *Media Source Book* (MSB) is a new resource that will be available on the NRS website this fall. It contains statistics about runaway youth in a user-friendly question and answer format. In addition, the source book provides side-by-side comparisons of third party statistics with NRS caller statistics on the dimensions of age and duration of runaway episode. The source book contains statistics compiled from federal reports, journal articles, and crisis calls to the National Runaway Switchboard. The source book is geared toward a media audience because of the enormous potential impact the media has to inform the public about runaway youth. It is also a useful tool for anyone who is interested in learning more about runaway youth.

The *Media Source Book* covers the following questions:

- What is the definition of a runaway? Throwaway?
- How many runaway and throwaway youth are there in the United States?
- How do youth survive when they run away, or are thrown away?
- What are the demographics of runaway/throwaway youth?
- What are the impacts of running away or being thrown away on youth?
- What can a parent do to prevent their child from running away?
- Why do youth run away?

View the answers to these questions in the *Media Source Book* at www.1800RUNAWAY.org, click on **Research**.

Adults received a disappointing report card from the nation's youth this year according to the ninth annual UCAN Teen Report Card, co-sponsored by the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS). Results were reported at a press conference this past summer and are available for review at www.1800RUNAWAY.org/about_nrs/June2007UCAN.
Left to right: Arne Duncan, CEO of Chicago Public Schools, youth presenter Jose Gonzalez, and NRS youth volunteer and presenter Rebecca Landman.



UCAN Teen Report Card 2007 Grades at a Glance

Stopping teens from running away	C
Understanding why teens leave home	C-
Providing young people a safe place to live	B

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Visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org, click on **About NRS** to view a 2007-2008 board list.

Lydia's Story: Going Home...Free

By Jasleen Jaswal

Lydia was hysterical when NRS frontline team member Marisa took her phone call. "I could feel her shaking through the phone line," recalls Marisa. It took a few minutes, but by building rapport and listening carefully, Marisa was able to get Lydia to open up.

Lydia explained that she was 17 years old and a recovering heroin addict. At a rehabilitation center, she met an older woman who took her under her wing. "Yolanda was like a mom to me," she said. After a few days, Yolanda convinced Lydia that neither of them needed formal treatment anymore and should leave.

"She made it sound like us being off heroin was enough and staying wasn't necessary, so we left," cried Lydia. "She lied to me and is doing drugs again. I'm this close to using again and that scares me. I don't know what to do. I want to go home, but I don't think my mom will let me. I think she's going to be really mad at me for screwing up."

During their conversation, Lydia decided that she wanted to talk to her mom to see if going home was even possible. Marisa said that she could arrange a conference call to explore the subject with Lydia's mom and then bring Lydia on the phone so that they could work out a plan together. Marisa assured Lydia that she would keep the call positive and constructive, and then dialed Lydia's mom.

First, Marisa spoke to Lydia's mother alone explaining the current situation. Lydia's mother had already been called by the rehabilitation center, and while she was relieved to hear that Lydia was ok, she was very upset and angry with her daughter for leaving.

Finally, Marisa opened up the call so that both mom and daughter could talk about their situation. "I was so proud of you for getting into rehab, but running away was just plain stupid," said her mom. Lydia explained that she knew it was wrong, but wanted her mom to know that she hadn't used and was trying very hard not to. "Lydia, you can come home," her mom said, "but on one condition: find another rehabilitation program and check yourself in immediately."

Using the NRS database, Marisa was quickly able to find a program near Lydia's mother. "It sounds great, and I like that it's close to here so maybe we can work together on this problem," said Lydia's mom.

The only other problem left was getting Lydia home to Arizona. Marisa arranged a bus ticket through NRS' Home Free program administered in collaboration with Greyhound Lines, Inc. Within 24 hours, Lydia's mother called to say that she had met the bus and took Lydia directly to the rehabilitation center in their area. "Thanks to you, we have another chance."



Turning Rejection Into Redemption

By Jasleen Jaswal

Peer rejection can trigger a downward spiral of bad grades and acting out, especially during adolescence. Without adequate reinforcement, a rejected child can look for support in all the wrong places by hanging out with a dangerous crowd, dabbling in drugs or alcohol, or running away to what might seem like a better situation. Feelings of peer inadequacy can generate loneliness and even a lifelong tendency to depression. Parents of children who've experienced rejection may feel helpless – what can they do or say to reassure their child and put the situation in perspective? Here are a few tips:

- **Pay Attention -listen!**
Don't just nod your head while you're watching television, reading the paper, or using your computer. Don't pretend to listen to them. Kids know the difference!
- **Help children gain a sense of self-confidence.**
Give your child opportunities to learn skills and gain confidence. Offer praise for jobs well done, accentuate the positive, and emphasize the things your child does right. If they fall short, suggest ways to improve; don't criticize. Affection and respect will reinforce good behavior more successfully than fear or embarrassment.
- **Encourage your teens to get involved in fun, safe, fulfilling activities.**
Help your child identify strengths, talents, and interests, and then find opportunities in which these assets can be developed. Consider volunteering in the

community, joining a youth group, or participating in arts or sports. It will give the child a sense of accomplishment, connect him or her to positive peers and adult leaders, and – not least of all – keep them busy.

- **Be around for them.**
It doesn't have to be anything formal - just be available. Give them an opening to discuss feelings by engaging in discussions about sports, current events, and other interests. Open-ended questions like, "What makes your coach so good?" or "What do you think the point of the movie was?" help them formulate values that make life lessons easier to understand.
- **Plan some parent/child time.**
Stop by the local coffee shop, just the two of you. Nothing formal, no cross-examining them about their life – just a friendly chat. Be open and responsive to what they're saying. Let them set the tone. Remember to ask open-ended questions, and most important, listen to their answers.

The *Parents and Adults* section at www.1800RUNAWAY.org is a great resource to help parents build a healthy relationship with their child. Parents can also encourage their child to visit NRS' website or call the hotline at 1-800-RUNAWAY. As always, the NRS front line team is available to help parents support their children by generating options and offering referrals.



Meet NRS' Running for Runaways Team!

By Jasleen Jaswal

The Chicago Marathon is only days away – and for the third year in a row, National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) is sponsoring a marathon team. This year, twenty dedicated runners committed to raise funds for the NRS while training for the marathon – our biggest team yet!

Each runner is invited to a pasta dinner on Marathon Eve, hosted by the executive director and her husband, for an opportunity to tour the call center. In addition, each runner has been paired with a marathon buddy who is either an NRS staff or volunteer. Buddies encourage their runners as they fundraise and train for the big day. Buddies will also cheer on their runners from the sidelines on October 7th, as the marathoners run a 26.2 mile course that makes its way through 12 Chicago neighborhoods, including the Loop, Wrigleyville, Little Italy, Pilsen, and Bronzeville.

Here are some facts about this year's runners:

- Rich Malone just started his 3rd year on NRS' Board of Directors, and recruited his friends Brad Rumsky and Adolfo Sotil to join the team.
- Elizabeth Montalvo has been a volunteer liner on the NRS front line team AND on the marathon team for the past 3 years.

- Colleen Stiles-Shields recently completed an internship at NRS. Colleen's father, Lloyd Shields, is running his second marathon for NRS.
- Jim Kauffman is a former volunteer liner on the NRS front line team.
- Emily Zipser, Jill Orlikowski, and Julie Macintosh-Levin are close friends with NRS volunteer coordinator Molly (Billette) Silverman.
- Brett Kring is friends with NRS board member and Spirit of Youth co-chair Rick Stoneham.
- Kelly Gant joined the team after reading some of the comments on the message board and being moved by the stories of youth looking for help.
- Tim Lewis is the team leader of a training group in his hometown of Miami, Florida.
- Joshua Katcher is a teacher in Iowa – and a huge Ultimate Fighting fan!
- Denise Erickson, Kieron Crampsey, Kim McKernan, Mari Panovich, Rhonda Tepen, and Tiffany Battle are running their very first marathon ever!

NRS' Running for Runaways Team member Kelly Gant was the first to hit and surpass her fund raising goal.

Online Holiday Shopping = Donation to NRS!

Visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org, click on **Holiday Cards & Gifts** and utilize the links for your on-line shopping. A percentage of all your purchases will be given to the National Runaway Switchboard. Thank you and Happy Holidays!

NRS staff and board members joined together for a day of strategic planning.

Photos by Sharri Bryan



NRS board members Joan Steltmann, Matt Feldman and Bonnie Wheeler enjoy the day's camaraderie.



NRS staff member Alishia Davis discusses her perspective with NRS board member Crystal Marchigiani.



NRS staff members Luis Salas and Jim Lucchesi work in a small group with NRS board member Frank Tortorella.

Because our donors, partners and sponsors have been there for NRS, we have been there to handle over 150,000 calls in Fiscal Year 2007!

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In honor of NRS Board Member Rich Malone's birthday
Rick Stoneham

In honor of NRS Board Member Rick Stoneham
Alicia Mullen

In honor of NRS Executive Director Maureen Blaha
Barbara and Greg Vaughan

It is possible that we have omitted someone who wished to remain anonymous. Please inform Katy Walsh if any error has occurred at 773.289.1727.