



Frontline

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

FALL/WINTER
2006
NEWSLETTER

NRS Announces Fifth Annual National Runaway Prevention Month

by Jennifer Benoit

The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) and the National Network for Youth in partnership with other prominent national organizations; the National Assembly on School-based Health Care, the National Association of School Psychologists, School Social Work Association of America, National Safe Place; and Circle of Parents announce the fifth annual National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM) for November, 2006, to build awareness of resources that support youth and families in crisis.

The goals of NRPM are to raise awareness of the issues facing America's at risk youth and to educate the public about solutions and the role they can play in preventing youth from running. The theme for NRPM 2006 is On the Streets. This year's theme was inspired by the release of the NRS' new "On the Streets" prevention and educational DVD which is available at www.1800RUNAWAY.org.

Also new this year, NRS is sponsoring the first annual National Runaway Prevention Month Community Contest to encourage every community across the nation to participate in runaway prevention. This November, the top three entries will be awarded prizes. To assist communities in promoting NRPM, the National Runaway Switchboard also has a newly revised Community Action Kit which offers a step by step guide to

planning a NRPM activity. Visit NRS' website www.1800RUNAWAY.org/November to download the updated Community Action Kit, view contest rules and get involved in runaway prevention today!

Why does the National Runaway Switchboard spearhead a National Runaway Prevention Month? Youth under the age of 18 are at higher risk for homelessness than adults. Young people who have made the choice to leave their homes are at an elevated risk for pregnancy, suicide attempts and substance dependency. 1.6 million youth ran away from home in 2002. Please visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org for above source citations.

National Runaway Prevention Month 2006 will formally kick off on November 3rd with the annual Spirit of Youth benefit dinner. Throughout the month of November, communities across the nation will implement prevention and education activities to build awareness of resources that support youth and families in crisis.

INSIDE

- Letter from the Board Chair and Executive Director
- UCAN Teen Report card
- Roberto's Story
- Running for Runaways Team 2006
- Spirit of Youth 2006
- Turn on Your GREEN Porch Light
- Targeting Children on the Internet



From the National Runaway Switchboard

Because the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) has over 17,000 resources in its database, a youth calling from Red Lodge, Montana or an upset parent calling from Elkhart, Indiana may think they have called a local chapter. In fact, NRS' call center and administrative offices are located in the Lakeview neighborhood in Chicago, Illinois. Twenty staff members work alongside 100+ volunteers to handle calls 24 hours a day, 365 days a year from across the country. Twenty board members provide governance to actualize the priorities we've established in our 2005- 2007 strategic plan. Our #1 objective is to **make National Runaway Switchboard a household name!**

We rely heavily on our supporters to ensure every youth knows 1-800-RUNAWAY is a call to help! Here are just a few ways our supporters are extending our outreach across the country....

- National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth produced 1-800-RUNAWAY fluorescent orange toothbrushes to distribute to youth on the streets.
- The band Stereo Fuse will be featuring 1-800-RUNAWAY at the end of their new video *Like I Do* and distribute NRS materials during their concert tour.

- Greyhound Lines will produce 6,000 posters to promote the Home Free program.
- Tim Matheson and Lifetime TV will receive awards for the production of the movie *Augusta, Gone*. NRS' call volume multiplied by seven times immediately following its premiere.

They say it takes a village... we think it takes a country. We need everyone's help to reach out to youth on the street and youth at risk of running away. Today, commit to telling three youth that 1-800-RUNAWAY is a call to help!

1-800-RUNAWAY



Stephen Mack
Chair



Maureen Blaha
Executive Director

Board of Directors September 2006 – September 2007


Maree Bullock, *Vice-Chair*
Greg Buseman
Matt Feldman
Yale Gordon, *Secretary*
Peter Gottlieb
Amanda Hetherington
Mike Kiser
Stephen Mack, *Chair*
Rich Malone
Crystal Marchigiani
Kelly Mead

Luke Palese
Ron Richter
Joan M. Steltmann, *Vice-Chair*
Rick Stoneham
Philip Thomas
Frank Tortorella
Ernie Toth
Bonnie Wheeler
Tom Wilkas, *Treasurer*

Maureen Blaha, *Executive Director*



The eighth annual UCAN (Uhlich Children's Advantage Network) Teen Report Card, in partnership with National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) and Child Welfare League of America, revealed more "F" grades for adults across the board than ever before, with only two of the 24 "life subjects" included in the survey showing improvement. The press conference was attended by (left to right) NRS Board Members Rich Malone and Ernie Toth, NRS youth volunteer Sophie Patterson, Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan, NRS youth volunteer Joe Rubin, and UCAN Executive Director Tom Vandenberg. Visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org for more information.



UCAN Teen Report Card

Stopping teens from running away	C+
Understanding why teens leave home	C
Really listening to – and understanding young people	C-

NRS marches in support of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered youth at Chicago's annual Pride Parade (left to right) Josh Bryan, Geoff Vines, and NRS Board Member Rick Stoneham.



Roberto's Story: A Mother's False Threats

by Jasleen Jaswal

When Winnie, an NRS front line team member, initially took Roberto's call earlier this summer, she was concerned. Roberto was having trouble telling his story. After reassuring Roberto she was there to help, and promising him that NRS was a confidential hotline, the 15-year-old relaxed enough to start telling his story.

Roberto had just left his home after a fight with his mom. He'd walked home from summer school with a friend, and was saying his goodbyes at the door when his mother came out, enraged that Roberto brought a friend home when he was grounded.

"Did you explain to her that your friend was only walking home with you, and was leaving when your mom came outside?" asked Winnie.

"Yeah," Roberto said softly. "But she didn't really listen."

"That sounds pretty unfair," replied Winnie.

"That isn't even the worst of it," Roberto said.

After going inside, Roberto's mom started yelling at him. As was the pattern at home, she called him names and said he was stupid for having to be in summer school. She said if he'd listen to her and do what she said, he might be able to pass, but she doubted it. She said he was worthless and had ruined her life.

Roberto yelled back that it was her emotional and physical abuse that forced him to fail school.

That's when his mom punched him in the mouth.

Scared, Roberto ran for the door. His mom reminded him of what happened the last time she hit him, when he raised his hand to keep the belt from coming down, when she had the cops called, when they took him away because he'd raised his hand to her. She reminded him that as far as the police were

concerned, she could hit him as much as she wanted, and they wouldn't do anything about it. In fact, she said, if they came now, she'd have him arrested.

"Are you safe now, Roberto?" Winnie asked, pulling the conversation back to the present.

"Yeah. I'm at a friend's. He's seen me be abused by her. He knows I'm not lying."

Winnie reassured him that she believed him and started discussing options with him. He didn't have any other family in the area, except for a younger brother who lived with him and his mom. Roberto asked if Winnie could find a shelter, and within minutes, an intake worker from a local shelter was on the line, asking Roberto what had happened. Roberto repeated his story. She asked if he had any marks on his body.

He paused. "My mouth has stopped bleeding."

The shelter worker explained that in order to take him in, the shelter would have to file an abuse report. Roberto got nervous again, saying that he didn't want to be at home while social services investigated the case. He feared retribution at the hands of his mother for involving social services.

Winnie and the intake worker assured him that once social services got involved, he would be allowed to stay at the shelter until a decision was made. After a few minutes, Roberto's fears were allayed. He took the address to the shelter and said his friend would accompany him to the shelter. After the intake worker hung up, Winnie stayed on the line with Roberto to remind him that NRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in case he needed help again.

That evening, Winnie's friends asked if she'd gotten to help anyone during her shift. Winnie smiled.

"Of course I did. That's what we do everyday."

NRS has over 17,000 resources in its database, ranging from shelters to counseling services to legal advocates, to help keep at-risk youth safe and off the streets. In addition, NRS uses the five-step crisis intervention model to make sure each caller has developed a plan of action before hanging up. Although this story is based on an actual telephone call to the National Runaway Switchboard, names have been changed to protect confidentiality.



blogs
weblogs
instant
messaging



Targeting Children on the Internet – How Parents Can Protect Their Children

By Jasleen Jaswal

In recent months, two issues relating to the safety of youth online garnered a considerable amount of media attention. The first, the threat of online predators targeting youth on the internet, has attracted the greatest amount of coverage. Although it is estimated that internet sex crimes make up 1-2% of all sex crimes against children,¹ the growing popularity of sites like MySpace and Facebook means the risk of that statistic rising is real.

According to the FBI's handbook "A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety", sexual predators on the internet can use chat rooms and online communities to reach children. Some spend time and money gradually seducing children by offering gifts, empathizing with their problems, or relating to current teenage popular culture. Over time, conversations via email or in chat rooms begin turning more sexually explicit. Others are more direct, and online conversations turn sexual immediately. The goal of either approach can be to procure sexually explicit images of children, or arrange a one-on-one meeting with a child.²

If a parent suspects his or her child is at risk online, the FBI recommends talking openly with the child, as well as reviewing the child's computer for evidence of pornography or sexual communication with another person.² Also, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) offers an online tool called NetSmartz that teaches parents and youth how to be safer online.³

The second issue, online bullying, represents a threat from other youth. No longer limited to the schoolyard, online bullying can refer to taunting, name calling, or spreading rumors about a child through an online journal called a weblog, or blog, or through online chats (IMs) and emails. In some instances, youth have started websites or circulated online petitions entirely devoted to mocking or bullying a youth.

NRS is committed to ensuring that children are safe on the internet. If parents call in to ask questions about internet safety, the front line team members, "liners", are trained to define unfamiliar terms, definitions and features of the internet for parents, as well as guide them to online resources. NRS is also developing a runaway prevention curriculum with a section that directly addresses online safety.

In addition, NRS's website www.1800RUNAWAY.org offers message boards and the parent chat program where parents can discuss their concerns about internet safety with a trained NRS staff member and other concerned parents. As always, 1-800-RUNAWAY is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to ensure that youth and families can call anytime.

Sources outside NRS:

- 1 Sex crimes statistic - David Finkelhor, director of the Crimes against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire, quoted in "Adults question MySpace safety", USA Today, January 8, 2006
- 2 "A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety", FBI - <http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm>
- 3 NetSmartz, NCMEC - <http://www.netsmartz.org>

Show Your Support for Runaway Youth, Turn on Your **GREEN** Porch Light

Green lights glow from thousands of porches in Columbus, Ohio during November in a unique campaign to involve community members in voicing their support and concern for runaway youth. Kyra Crockett, the community educator at Huckleberry House states that the goal of this program is to create awareness and to show Columbus, Ohio residents and the rest of the country the issues youth are facing.

Huckleberry House started the Green Light Project in 2004 and distributed more than 5,000 green light bulbs. In 2005, the development team at Huckleberry House pitched the project to the quarterly meeting of Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter Directors in the state. Shelters in Dayton, Toledo, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Canton all got involved in the greenlight project, leading to green porch-lights across the state of Ohio numbering over twenty thousand.

You can show support for runaway youth by bringing the green light project to your community in 2006. Ms. Crockett suggests the following tips for a successful green light project:

1. Collaborate with local companies for donations or in-kind support (electric company, your local bank, etc.).

2. Get the word out – send out emails, pass the word along at every opportunity, get volunteers involved in the greenlight project.

3. Create distribution sites – this is a great opportunity for local businesses to help

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.



Holiday Card Crisis?!

Not to worry, NRS has an easy solution for your holiday card needs. Visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org and click on “**Order Holiday Cards**”. 10% of your purchase will be donated to NRS! Pass the word onto your employer, family and friends!



Stereo Fuse Features NRS in New Video *Like I Do*

“Like I Do” writer and Stereo Fuse lead singer Colin Hill gave himself the difficult task of walking in the shoes of both teenagers and parents when composing the song. While not a parent himself, he realizes the enormity of the responsibility, and “on some level, maybe I’m afraid of having to deal with these scary issues.” It was a little easier to illustrate the negative forces impacting teenagers. Says Colin, “I’ve had very dark moments myself, and had to find strength to make the best choices.” The song, then, offers the hope of support, better choices to make, and love being available. The video featuring 1-800-RUNAWAY is the first initiative in a collaborative effort between NRS and Stereo Fuse to reach out to youth.

Running for Runaways Team 2006

Many thanks to the NRS LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon team for running 26.2 miles on October 22nd to raise money to keep America's runaway and at risk youth safe and off the streets.

Jay Baldridge
Mustafa Hersi
Carol Kiley
Dan Klenkar

Tom Kusisto
Carlos Loyo
Ruben Loyo
Elizabeth Montalvo

Ben Nelson
Allison Nelson
Kristina Pierpont
Lloyd Shields

Bree Sutherland
Rosalind Williams

Also thank you to the hundreds of supporters of this year's team that raised a record-breaking \$11,000!!

Because our donors, partners and sponsors have been there for NRS, we have been there to handle over 100,000 calls annually!

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

Family & Youth Services Bureau; The Administration for Children, Youth & Families;
U.S. Department Health and Human Services
Illinois Department on Aging

May 1st through July 31st, 2006

CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS

Central Federal Savings
Coldwell Banker
Ernst & Young, LLP.
Circle of Service Foundation
Heartfelt Charity Cards
Hugh Hefner Foundation
Mall Graphics/
United Letter Service
Miller Cooper & Co., Ltd.
Professional Women's Club of Chicago
STEP, Inc.
WellPoint Foundation

DONORS

Elizabeth Ahmed
Linda Alexander
Jimmie Alford &
Maree Bullock
Kari Augustine

Rick Barkan
Keith & Joan Bauman
Donna Beranek
Lowell Berman
Dennis Biggerstaff
Molly Billette
Wes Bishop
Jeffrey & Melissa Bleiweis
Sandra Borgman
Bill Breisch
Linda Briggs
Greg Buseman
Jason Cafer
Kimberley Callander
Suzanne Campbell
Lee Capps
Emily Chatterjee
Winifred Clark
Catherine Constable
Cowboy Troy
Tom & Molly Crooks
Steven & Judith Durley
Virginia & Joseph Durocher
S. Marie Erline
Josh & Angie Fassi
Daniel & Mary Filipski
Jacqueline Francis
Gail Frank
Dave Galatte
Lionel Go
Kelly Govrik
Allen Groner
Jeffrey Grossman
Kathryn Melodie Guerrera
Daniel Harris
Robert & Trish Hattan
Jo Hedges
Valerie Hedrick
Takeya Hersi
Thomas & Susan Howe

Brenda Jackman
Alistair Jacques
Krista Kahle
T.J. Kijowski
Carol Kiley
Susan Kim
Donald Klein
Dan Klenkar
Erin Kurimay
Colleen Kusisto
Tom Kusisto
Loren & Grace Kylo
Lennette Lee
Joan Linton
Berta Lopez
Mary Lostarakos
Carole Lukens
Dennis Lynn
Stephen & Rosemary Mack
Reinhard & Pamela Magel
Rich Malone
Brian & Alice McGinley
Randall & Hilary Meulenberg
DeAnna Milligan
Wendy Mingin
Mary Lee Montague &
Bruce Matthews
Antonio Montalvo
Larry Moston
Karen Mudre
Virginia Norris
Derek Oberholtzer
Jeanne Orris
David Pavletich
Tristen Petecca
Scott Peters
Amy Riley
Emily & David Roe
David Romei

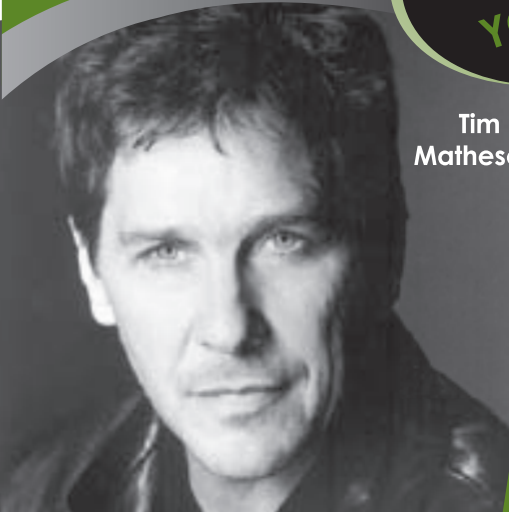
Elizabeth Ruske
Jeff Shields
Lloyd Shields
Mark Shields
Jim Shropshire
Kim Siciliano
David Del Signore
Betsy Sobiech
David & Jeannine Spencer
Joan Steltmann
Sherwin & Margo Stern
Laura Stewart
Rick Stoneham
Aaron Tarnutzer
John Tester
Mainline Tickets
Frank Tortorella
Ernie & Katy Toth
Truely Turner
Aura Vega
Cristine Vesely
Leon Ware
Michael Willey
Joost Wouters

It is possible that we have omitted someone inadvertently or printed someone who wished to remain anonymous. Please inform Katy Walsh if any error has occurred at 773.880.9860 x223.

2006 spirit of Youth BENEFIT

November 3rd
320 S. Plymouth
Chicago, Illinois

**THIS EVENT
WILL SELL OUT
SECURE
YOUR TICKETS
EARLY!**



Tim
Matheson

PLATINUM SPONSORS



It's time to fly.®

GOLD SPONSORS

Carlton Technologies
Coldwell Banker
Greyhound Lines
Radio Flyer

2006 SOY AWARD RECIPIENT

Tim Matheson
Producer, Director and Actor
Lifetime TV movie:
Augusta, Gone

For more information, visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org and purchase event tickets, raffle tickets and bid on over 100 spectacular online auction packages!

**Frontline
is a publication
of the National Runaway Switchboard**

3080 North Lincoln Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60657
Tel: 773.880.9860 • Fax: 773.929.5150 • TDD: 800.621.0394
Website: www.1800RUNAWAY.org
Maureen Blaha • Executive Director



National Runaway Switchboard
3080 North Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60657

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage

PAID

Permit NO. 7622
Chicago, IL

Return Service Requested

