ECONOMIC SHIFT

By Judienc Jurwai

There’s no doubt that the faltering U.S. economy has affected most, if not all, Americans. The secondary effects, however, may last longer, specifically for youth whose parents have been directly affected by the recession.

Let’s take the following scenario: a job loss shifts the family balance, and leaves one parent feeling the burden of figuring out how to do more with less. A stagnant job market stirs the unemployed parent’s efforts to find new work. The family’s health care disappears with the foot stub, and a trip to the emergency room costs more than ever. A small nest egg vanishes, as the family strives to keep up with payments. The mortgage is dangerously close to slipping into default. One of the children was supposed to start college next year but has to reconsider post-graduate plans.

Whereas this would have seemed far-fetched—a Dukkeman, even—ten years ago, it’s now a reality for many families across the country. In 2008, crisis callers reported family dynamics as the number one reason for calling. It’s not a stretch to imagine how the recession plays a role in family dynamics. Stress can lead to shorter tempers. A shift in family schedules may mean that one of the children has to start helping out more with the younger users, a duty that may feel burdensome for older youth. While there are many possibilities, there’s no one solution for how to return the family balance to what it was before.

What can families do in this situation?

• Be honest. Sitting down with your whole family—not just your spouse—and explaining what is happening and how it affects everyone is a positive first step. By giving your kids responsibility early on, you can promote confidence and an ingrained understanding of the money cycle.

• Avoid the blame game. Staying solution-focused keeps the discussion from bogging down into who spent too much where. Focus on how budgeting and saving can help the family in the future.

• Explain that everyone has a role in helping the family return to its version of normal. Sacrifices have to be made, and that may mean extra chores, an after-school job, or a new plan for college. Find a way for everyone in the family to make a small change to help for family strengthen its financial situation.

As always, the National Runaway Switchboard is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as a resource for families trying to navigate any difficult family situation.
From the National Runaway Switchboard

Not only did NRS handle over 114,000 calls in 2008, here are some of our other accomplishments last year:

**January:** NRS produced a seven-year trend report on crisis calls to the hotline utilizing its comprehensive data tracking system.

**February:** NRS received $125,000, its largest privately funded grant, from the Chicago Community Trust to launch a comprehensive research study on at-risk youth in Chicago and Los Angeles. The study is also being funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Family & Youth Services Bureau, the Administration for Children, Youth & Families, DHHS.

**March:** Recognized as an expert, NRS begins to provide fee-based training on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC).

**April:** On April 7th, an AP wire story on NRS drove a record-breaking number of visitors to www.1800RUNAWAY.org.

**May:** Implemented a three-year Strategic Plan to continue to 1) build the infrastructure and capacity to deliver services for youth and 2) strengthen, deepen, and broaden NRS programs.

**June:** The John R. Boydston Foundation and STEP Fund funded a new Street Team initiative utilizing ambassadors in Chicago and across the country to build awareness of 1-800-RUNAWAY.

**July:** A newly created Youth Task Force became the new voice for youth-centric social media outlets, including the Switched-On e-mail and blog, MySpace and other outlets.

**August:** NRS presented at the Child Trafficking International (CBI) Child Trafficking Conference in Mexico City for hotline service providers from North and South America.

**September:** NRS launched a new television Public Service Announcement, featuring award-winning entertainer Chris “Ludacris” Bridges promoting the Home Free program. The PSA was made possible by the generous support of Greyhound Lines, Inc. and The Ludacris Foundation.

**October:** Greyhound Lines, Inc. expanded its partnership with NRS to include Home Free kits, with food vouchers and toiletries, to be provided to runaway youth traveling the bus home.

**November:** Spirit of Youth 2008 raised a record-breaking $150,000 and honored the Chicago Cubs for their ongoing support of NRS and at-risk youth.

**December:** Chef Charlie Trotter hosted an intimate evening with friends to build awareness of 1-800-RUNAWAY and NRS’ services and raised over $14,000. Thank you for your role last year and this upcoming year in supporting NRS’ mission of keeping America’s runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.

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NRS Offers Fee-Based Training

By Lashawnda M. Carter

The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) is now offering comprehensive training on a variety of topics for a fee.

Since 2008, NRS’ Training and Education Department provided training to Team Hope in Philadelphia, the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Education in Denver, as well as several social service agencies and churches in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

The trainings are tailored to meet the host agency’s needs and range in length from two hours to five days. All trainings include an overview of NRS’ services and philosophy.

The following fee-based trainings are available:

- The NRS Solution-Focused Crisis Intervention Model
- Youth Running from Care
- The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)
- Let’s Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum
- Effective Volunteer Program Development and Management

The National Runaway Switchboard is licensed to provide social work CEUs (Continuing Education Units) in Illinois. For more information on the fee-based trainings or to arrange a training session, visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org and click on Fee-Based Training.

An Evening with Charlie Trotter

The evening featured small plates paired with wine graciously donated for the event, sponsored entirely by Chef Charlie Trotter.

NRS Board Chair Maureen Bultock and Staff Director Jennifer McShane present to the audience. BBQ 2 Chicago News anchor Jon Hansen. The evening raised over $218,000 for NRS.

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

22/2009
Youth search for help through MySpace

By Lashawndra M. Carter

“I want to get somewhere that I can get help,”

writes 17-year-old Joan* in a message to NRS’ MySpace page. “I am in Texas and I need to get to California where there is a youth program that can help me get into a transitional living home. I have been a runaway for four years and have hitchhiked across the country four times. I just want to get myself ready for what’s ahead. I don’t want to turn into my parents who are homeless drug addicts, and that’s the reason I ran away in the first place,” she states.

Since its launch on MySpace in 2007, NRS has received weekly crisis messages from youth like Joan looking for resources or just someone to talk to. Most of the youth who message NRS on MySpace are reluctant to call the 1-800-RUNAWAY hotline and feel more comfortable communicating online.

Sixteen-year-old Tina* also wanted help but was afraid. “I want to call the number you guys have on your website, but I’m scared that the cops are going to get called,” she states.

When NRS’ MySpace administrators receive crisis messages, they always encourage each youth to call 1-800-RUNAWAY so that a crisis intervention specialist can help them sort out their issues and find the best resources available for them. The administrators also reassure them that 1-800-RUNAWAY is available 24-hours a day, it is free, confidential, and anonymous. The Frontline team of staff and volunteers who answer calls do not call the police.

NRS’ efforts to reach out to more youth and let them know about services has proved to be successful. By connecting with more than 100 youth at least three times a week through its MySpace profile, NRS is proud of its efforts to expand outreach to youth.

“Thanks for giving me the 1-800-RUNAWAY number. Your hotline helped me from running off to find drugs,” comments Candice* on MySpace.

You can find NRS on MySpace at www.myspace.com/1800RUNAWAY

*Names have been changed to protect identities of youth sending messages.

Missing People UK visit the National Runaway Switchboard

As the United Kingdom’s only charity that works with young runaways, missing and unidentified people, their families and others who care for them, Missing People UK visited NRS on October 28, 2008 to learn how the US responds to the runaway crisis and NRS’ role in crisis intervention, family reunification and connecting youth to local resources.

The visit included showing the 1-800-RUNAWAY film, a tour of the call center and a youth panel, where Frontline team members talked about their experiences handling hotline calls.

(from left to right) Bill Claire, ACF/FYEB; Lucy Holmes and Jo Youle, Missing People; Brandon Zollan, NRS Youth Volunteer; Maureen Stahla, NRS Executive Director; Ruth Mulyne, Missing People; Ruben Acuara, NRS Youth Board Representative and Youth Volunteer; Isabel del Camo and Bernadette Ponsarrás, NRS Youth Volunteers

STAY CONNECTED WITH THE NATIONAL RUNAWAY SWITCHBOARD

www.myspace.com/1800RUNAWAY

http://www.facebook.com/home.php?/pages/Chicago-IL/1-800-RUNAWAY/9962751186

www.twitter.com/1800RUNAWAY

www.switchedonmag.org
NOVEMBER National Runaway Prevention Month

To celebrate National Runaway Prevention Month (November), NRS Street Team members distribute green light bulbs in downtown Chicago.

Join the Running for Runway Team!

The Chair thinking about running the Chicago Marathon, the Chicago Half-Marathon, or any other race for a good cause? Join the Running For Runway team, and you can support NRS while training for the big day!

In addition to the Bank of America Chicago Marathon, NRS has had runners in Chicago’s Shamrock Shuffle, the Minneapolis Half-Marathon, the Philadelphia Marathon, and the Chicago Half-Marathon. NRS will pay for your race entry (as long as entries are available) as well as the following perks:

- Free 2019 CARA membership and marathon training (Chicago-area runners only)
- A race day running singlet
- An incentive technical running singlet for achieving goal two months prior to race

Weekly training and fundraising tips from Coach Jaelson, a personal NRS marathon buddy to encourage you throughout your training.

Pasta Dinner on October 10th, 2009, with a call center tour hosted by NRS Executive Director and her husband!

What are you waiting for? Join the team! Contact Coach Jaelson at 773-289-7217 or jjsawadj@1800RUNAWAY.org for details.

In Memoriam: Ora Mae Turner

August 12, 1914 – March 1, 2009

Ms. Turner named the National Runway Switchboard as a beneficiary in her life insurance policy.

“Ora Mae was a remarkable woman who devoted her life to helping people, retiring after working 35 years as a social worker. She was a faithful member of the Church of the Three Crosses, in Chicago, and every Sunday passed out hymn books and greeted visitors and members with her bright smile.”

Beverly G. Urauch, NRS supporter

Because our donors, partners, and sponsors have been there for NRS, we have been there to handle over 114,000 calls in 2008! We have been there to handle over 114,000 calls in 2008!

NRS calls center expansion and Marathon Buckles Buckle and Underwear Plant on the cover of the 2009 Book of America Chicago Marathon.

Our Services are FREE, CONFIDENTIAL, and AVAILABLE 24 HOURS A DAY 365 DAYS A YEAR.

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400RANAWAY.org for details.

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