

1-800-RUNAWAY MAKES MEDIA SPLASH

Launch of the National Runaway Switchboard's (NRS) new 800 number, 1-800-RUNAWAY, struck a chord with media on April 18th attracting television and radio coverage of the press conference announcing the number. Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) joined NRS Executive Director, Maureen Blaha and NRS youth volunteer, Ari Jadwin at NRS headquarters to unveil 1-800-RUNAWAY to the American public. NRS also announced the establishment of a new url, www.1800RUNAWAY.org to match its new signature 800 number. "More than 1,200 youth in the United States run away from home each day," said Schakowsky. "Without organizations such as the National Runaway Switchboard, over a million youth each year would have nowhere to turn during a time of crisis."



Cameras zoom in at NRS' April 18th press conference.



NRS youth volunteer, Ari Jadwin, fields questions at the 1-800-RUNAWAY press conference. Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) looks on.

Intended to provide vulnerable and at-risk youth with an easy name and number to remember when they are experiencing crisis and looking for help, the National Runaway Switchboard hopes to offer its services to more and more youth with the rollout of 1-800-RUNAWAY.

Coinciding with the announcement of the new number, NRS released its latest TV and radio Public Service Announcements (PSA) nationwide which also publicize the new number.

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From the National Runaway Switchboard

The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) recently celebrated several historic moments in our quest to keep America's runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.

NRS Enjoys Media Frenzy! Our recent press conference to launch 1-800-RUNAWAY and www.1800RUNAWAY.org received major attention. Simultaneously, we distributed our new 30-second television public service announcement (PSA) to 800 TV stations across the country. In addition, we sent an audio version of the PSA to 1,200 radio stations from coast to coast.

NRS Goes Global! Gordon Vance, NRS director of programs, attended Child Helpline International's (CHI) second global conference in Amsterdam, March 20 - 24. CHI, launched in 2003 and closely aligned with UNICEF and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, is a global network of child helplines in 61 countries. Because of NRS' role as the oldest hotline in the world, CHI provided a scholarship for Vance to participate in a forum to improve and expand services to vulnerable youth around the world. Professor Dock, Chairman of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, talked about the importance of child rights and the role child helplines play in assisting children realize those rights. We were proud to be the only representative from the United States among such distinguished programs and presenters.

NRS Retreats! In preparation to initiate our three-year strategic plan, the NRS board of directors held a winter retreat. Among their charges, the board discussed ways it can help NRS achieve the fund raising effort of nearly \$300,000 this fiscal year. NRS has embraced this record fund raising goal to provide funding for technological enhancements, runaway prevention curriculum development, and increased outreach efforts. We encourage our Frontline subscribers to invest in these efforts.

For nearly thirty-five years, NRS has been answering the call for help. It is our hope that we will continue to make history in our commitment to youth and their families. Thank you for your continued support in this endeavor.



MATT FELDMAN
Board Chair



MAUREEN BLAHA
Executive Director

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2005-2008

1. Diversify and Expand Revenue Sources
2. Generate Greater Awareness of NRS
3. Build a Powerful and Prominent National Board
4. Expand/Establish Strategic Partnerships
5. Modernize Facilities and Technology
6. Develop, Retain, and Reward Staff and Volunteers
7. Maximize, Optimize and Sustain Our High Quality Services

The new strategic plan challenges NRS to increase visibility, diversify its funding base, build capacity to provide more prevention services, collaborate with additional partners, build the human capital and technology infrastructures, and recruit a powerful board with greater national presence. NRS is striving to become a household name and wants to engage individuals, foundations and businesses to help make that happen.

NRS Program Director Attends Global Hotline Conference in Amsterdam

NRS received a scholarship to attend the second Child Helpline International conference in Amsterdam held to provide hotline providers worldwide an opportunity to network. NRS was the sole representative of the hotline providers within the United States. NRS' www.1-800RUN-AWAY.org proved a model for delivering up-to-date and comprehensive information, including downloadable education and prevention materials. "It was a great honor not only to be recognized internationally as the oldest hotline in the world; but also to share the knowledge, resources and skills NRS has gained as a mature and respected hotline with such a diverse group of committed hotline professionals," declared Vance.



Makmur Sunusi (Indonesia), Gordon Vance (US) Lyphat Vien Linh (Vietnam) John Cole (Antigua)

Being Out...and Safe

NRS Extends Outreach to GLBTQ Youth

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning (GLBTQ) teens often represent the most vulnerable and least protected segment of the at-risk youth population. Statistics chronicling the difficulties they face as they battle to come of age make it clear GLBTQ youth need allies even in a culture that's embraced *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *L*. Suicide is their leading cause of death, they make up 40% of the homeless youth population and half of them report their parents reject them due to their sexual orientation.* Despite the American Psychiatric Association removing homosexuality from its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders over 30 years ago, the practical reality of GLBTQ youth does not always reflect significant advances in cultural perceptions.

Because the National Runaway Switchboard is committed to keeping *all* of America's runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets, we are reinvigorating our outreach to the GLBTQ youth community. A redesigned brochure targeting queer youth, *Being Out...and Safe*, will be released in June and should prove a popular outreach vehicle for service providers and educators alike. Featuring the iconic rainbow symbol of the gay community, the brochure will act as a beacon for GLBTQ youth who may be looking for a place to turn in times of crisis. Emphasizing areas of concern for GLBTQ teens, the brochure's content assures them that NRS is that place.

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Youth Suicide." 1989*

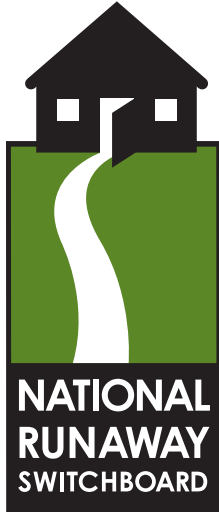


Poster carried at Day of Silence/Night of Noise celebration rally held around the country.

NRS co-sponsored the 29th Convening and 3rd Annual Collaborative Crisis Center conference. At this national conference, NRS presented findings on an extensive research project examining *best practices* of hotlines across the country. The research project was done in collaboration with DePaul University with a grant NRS received from the Circle of Service Foundation.

Community Outreach

NRS and the Chicago Public Schools Team Up for Youth



An important step was taken toward improving the future of at-risk youth attending Chicago Public Schools (CPS) when NRS Executive Director, Maureen Blaha, Mitch Oldham, NRS Communications Specialist and Phillip Hampton, CPS Director of Community Relations developed a collaboration between the two organizations. Intended to promote the safety of Chicago's at-risk student population, NRS will provide support for CPS' on-going efforts to provide community focused services to their students.

Joyce Brown, a CPS administrator representing Chicago public high schools is the newest member of the collaboration. Brown, who has spent much of her career in direct student contact as a highly respected guidance counselor, provided valuable suggestions for connecting NRS' message to school staff and students. Brown also committed to actively advocate for NRS' participation at upcoming school sponsored conferences and endorsed NRS' plan to roll out an outreach campaign to a select set of high schools referred to as demonstration schools. There are between 12 and 16 demonstration schools in Chicago that are also staffed with coaches; school person-

nel who provide tutoring and counseling services to students in the school. Outreach conducted at the demonstration high schools would then lead to outreach throughout the Chicago public high school system and eventually in schools across the country.

On May 25, NRS Training and Education Coordinator, Natalie Smith delivered a presentation on NRS' mission and services to the Thirtieth Annual All-City School Counselors' Conference held at Chicago's Hyatt Regency Hotel.

The National Runaway Switchboard is also a partner in the annual release of the 2005 Teen Report Card, an annual initiative spearheaded by Uhlich Children's Advantage Network (UCAN) that allows youth across the United States to grade adults on how well they mentor, guide and protect young people. As the collaboration develops, more activities are planned. NRS will promote utilization of the Report Card results and companion discussion guide to schools and youth providers across the country. For more details visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org.



She Knew What She Had To Do

by Amber Javed

Alexa was 15 and although she presented herself well on the phone, agitation and the slightest hint of distress could be detected in her voice. She told NRS' frontline team member that she had no one else to confide in and felt very alone.

As Alexa began to relax and tell her story, she told Halle, NRS' frontline team member, that she believed her problems could bring severe consequences if she made a mistake in handling them.

Alexa confessed she had an eating disorder. It was serious enough for her doctor to recommend that she be admitted to the hospital after the weekend. Despite the implications of her doctor's request, Alexa confided she secretly wished to continue her dieting because she wanted to become a successful dancer and all dancers were very thin. She also said that her family agreed with the doctor and promoted the doctor's suggestion that Alexa be hospitalized.

The more they talked, the more Halle realized that something else beyond the eating disorder was dramatically affecting Alexa's life. It centered on Alexa's relationship with her family.

Alexa's voice almost became strident when she declared, "I know I don't have a problem but everyone tells me that I do. They don't even know what I want!" She then began to cry. NRS volunteer, Halle, reassured Alexa that she was there to help.

It had been an hour since they began talking.

Halle asked Alexa why she felt her family didn't understand her, Alexa began to cry again and said, "Because they don't know I'm a lesbian." Alexa went on to say that her family knew nothing of her sexuality. Even though her older sister was gay as well, Alexa was certain that her parents would not welcome an announcement that she was a lesbian and had a girlfriend named, Heather.

Alexa planned to run away to Mexico with Heather. This way

her parents wouldn't force her to start eating properly and she wouldn't have to explain her relationship with Heather. Halle asked Alexa if she knew what she'd do in Mexico, Alexa became quiet. She said that she had never been to Mexico and had no idea what she would do there. She then said, "But if I don't go, Heather won't like me anymore and I might lose her."

Although Alexa did not want to jeopardize her relationship



The more they talked, the more Halle realized that something else beyond the eating disorder was dramatically affecting Alexa's life.

with Heather, she began to realize something she had been ignoring for quite some time. Alexa realized her passion to become and remain slim started when she met Heather. Heather also told her not to go to the hospital because the staff would force feed her until

she became fat. Halle asked Alexa to talk about her relationship with Heather. "Sometimes she's nice to me when we're alone," Alexa said, "but ignores me when we're with her friends". Heather and her friends were in their twenties.

This was the first time Alexa had talked with anyone about Heather and their relationship. At the end of the call, Alexa still wasn't sure if she would go to the hospital; however, she did know that Heather would likely not remain her girlfriend anymore. During the call Alexa seemed to realize that she could meet another girl and that respect was not too much to hope for or expect from those we care about.

Halle felt good that she was able to help Alexa develop a plan of action, which is paramount to the NRS model of crisis intervention.

NRS Hosts Second City Outing During Volunteer Appreciation Month

NRS volunteers took a break from handling crisis calls to share laughter and camaraderie.

Top row l to r: Friend of NRS, Sam, and NRS liner, Marla Sands; Natalie Smith, NRS Training and Education Coordinator and liner, Rob Putnam.



Second row: Friend of NRS, Jenny, and NRS liner, Mustafa Hersi.



Last row l to r: NRS intern, Rachel Ambrozewski and fiancé, Chris; David Fang-Yen, NRS liner and guest; NRS liner, Tom Simon and wife, Lisa.



99% of the National Runaway Switchboard's volunteers would recommend volunteering at NRS to their friends!

—Volunteer Satisfaction Survey, Winter 2005

NRS Director of Programs Honored at 2005 NN4Y Symposium

Gordon Vance, ACSW, LCSW and director of programs at NRS, was honored February 9th at the National Network for Youth's annual symposium in Washington, DC.

Selected as the winner of the Donna Valle Distinguished Networking Award, Mr. Vance was acknowledged for his exemplary leadership and participation in networking. The award also recognizes collaboration, resource-sharing and partnership-building in order to improve conditions for youth and their families.

Mr. Vance's passion for working on behalf of youth extends back to his own youth when he was in high school and served as a peer counselor in drop-in centers. His entire professional career, from occupational therapist aid at Mercy Center Hospital Adolescent Psychiatric Unit to NRS has been devoted to at-risk youth.



OUR SERVICES ARE FREE, CONFIDENTIAL, AND AVAILABLE 24 HOURS A DAY, 365 DAYS A YEAR.

More First Time Callers and Greater Caller Satisfaction Found in 2004 Hotline Evaluation Survey

Providing runaway and at-risk youth with crisis intervention and supplying the information and resources they need to make positive decisions in times of crisis is a constant NRS goal. Prior to their calling the National Runaway Switchboard, many youth simply don't realize resources and services exist all across the country that can provide them shelter, food, safety, counseling and a myriad of other support options. Most are in a state of crisis when they place their call. The 2004 Hotline Evaluation Survey shows how effectively NRS helps youth identify needed services and handle the crisis they are experiencing. In doing so, NRS ensures the fulfillment of its mission to keep America's runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets.

Survey results were gathered within a one week period by the NRS frontline team of crisisline staff and volunteers.

Representative results of the survey follows:

How comfortable did you feel with your own situation before making this call?

2002	2003	2004	
75%	74%	67%	not at all – somewhat
25%	26%	33%	somewhat – very much

How comfortable do you feel now?

2002	2003	2004	
75%	77%	78%	somewhat – very much
25%	23%	22%	not at all – somewhat

2004 saw a 3% increase in first time callers to NRS' crisis hotline. The 2004 survey also recorded 91% of respondents declaring they were helped by the services NRS provided them.

October 9th, 2005

Be on the...

**Running For
Runaways Team or**

support a runner at

www.1800RUNAWAY.org



Thank You to Our Supporters

We wish to acknowledge the following individuals, foundations, corporations and government agencies for their generosity and support from March 1, 2005 through May 5, 2005.

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Family & Youth Services Bureau in the Administration for Children, Youth and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Illinois Department of Aging

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Mary Noble
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In Memory of Ernie Toth, Sr.
Joey Grattan
Sandy Mason

We apologize for any omissions. If an error has occurred, please report it to Katy Walsh, Director of Development & Communications at 773.880.9860 x223.

Save these Dates!

Spirit of Youth 2005

The goal is to raise \$75,000 to keep youth safe and off the streets.

November 3, 2005 • 6-10 p.m. • Chicago Cultural Center

Spirit of Youth 2005 promises to be the **biggest and best event yet!** Christie Hefner, CEO of Playboy will present the Spirit of Youth 2005 Award to Alex Kotlowitz, author of several books including *There Are No Children Here*, *Savage Inequalities*, and *Never a City So Real*, for his commitment to disadvantaged youth. CBS' Steve Baskerville will again be the Master of Ceremonies of the evening festivities. We've already secured exciting auction items including a week stay in Paris, a Radio Flyer rocking horse and a multitude of gift certificates.

Sponsors to date: Radio Flyer, Inc. and Rick Stoneham

**Be a Sponsor, Table Captain, Guest, Early Auction Bidder at www.1800RUNAWAY.org*



2004 guests enjoy the festivities at Spirit of Youth 2004.

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