



Making the Connection



2011 ANNUAL REPORT



40

NATIONAL RUNAWAY SWITCHBOARD 40 Years ago

1971: On the streets of Chicago, a desperate young man dialed a variety of telephone numbers to try to get help. Randomly, he connected to the personal line of a local businessman. Inspired by the boy's dire situation, the businessman's foundation established a hotline for Chicago youth to connect to community resources. Metro Help was so successful that in 1974 it was designated the national communication system for runaway and homeless youth and has held that distinction to present day.

Since its inception, the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) has made the connection to an ever-changing population. In forty years, NRS has handled over 3 million calls fulfilling its mission to keep America's runaway, homeless and at-risk youth safe and off the streets. Even in the early years, the focus was how to make the most effective connection to youth. In the seventies, a single household telephone was not always an intimate way to connect to help. On the streets, youth would have struggled to find a pay phone. At NRS, the crisis intervention specialist would have leafed through large national directories to connect the caller to local help. Today, NRS has incorporated modern equipment to be more accessible, efficient and impactful. Hotline and online services utilize state-of-the-art technology to provide crisis intervention. Not only are youth and family members able to call for support, NRS is also available electronically through live chat, crisis emails and a bulletin board.

2011: Times have changed! In 2011, youth have different types of family challenges and school pressures than their 1971 counterparts. What hasn't changed? Youth need support. Families have crises. And NRS is accessible 24-hours a day, 365 days a year. Over the decades, research has advised NRS how to better make the connection. Even though forty years has radically changed how NRS technically provides services, our values and delivery remain the same. NRS is committed to providing solution-focused interventions for youth and their families in crisis. A caller or chatter connects to NRS in despair. NRS is dedicated to connecting with hope. The tradition continues through 2011.



JAMES D. CRINER
Board Chair



MAUREEN BLAHA
Executive Director

CRISIS INTERVENTION: NRS operates a crisis hotline and online services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. All hotline calls or online chats, crisis emails and bulletin board postings are anonymous and confidential. The frontline team of staff and volunteers receive 40 hours of training to provide non-judgmental and non-directive support.

and Today

“ I need a place to go to, because I can't stay where I am anymore and I can't go home right now, because my mom kicked me out. I just need some place to go to let my mom cool off. ”

— Alexa, 17 year-old, First connected to NRS calling its hotline

MESSAGE SERVICE: NRS maintains a message service for youth who want to relay a message but are not ready to communicate directly with their parent.

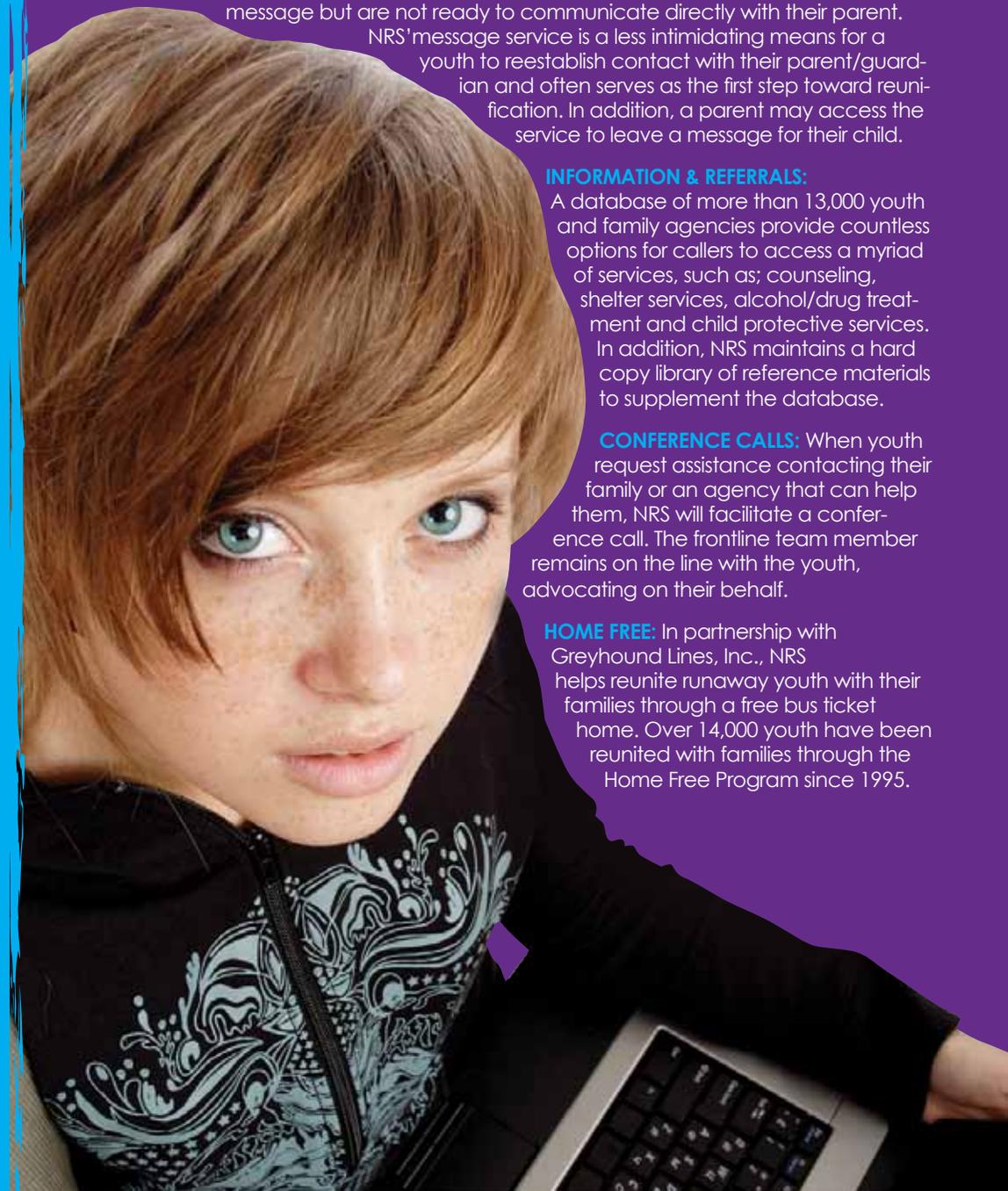
NRS' message service is a less intimidating means for a youth to reestablish contact with their parent/guardian and often serves as the first step toward reunification. In addition, a parent may access the service to leave a message for their child.

INFORMATION & REFERRALS:

A database of more than 13,000 youth and family agencies provide countless options for callers to access a myriad of services, such as; counseling, shelter services, alcohol/drug treatment and child protective services. In addition, NRS maintains a hard copy library of reference materials to supplement the database.

CONFERENCE CALLS: When youth request assistance contacting their family or an agency that can help them, NRS will facilitate a conference call. The frontline team member remains on the line with the youth, advocating on their behalf.

HOME FREE: In partnership with Greyhound Lines, Inc., NRS helps reunite runaway youth with their families through a free bus ticket home. Over 14,000 youth have been reunited with families through the Home Free Program since 1995.



LET'S TALK: RUNAWAY PREVENTION CURRICULUM: NRS produced a 14-module curriculum for youth to develop life skills. Complete with an eight-minute film, 1-800-RUNAWAY, this free curriculum is available in English and Spanish on a CD-Rom or for download at www.1800RUNAWAY.org

“Let's Talk provides kids with resources out here to help them deal with all the issues that they deal with growing up. 1-800-RUNAWAY is a place that deals with runaways. Also, in the midst of all of this I have had 3 or 4 kids that came to me and said that 'I do want to runaway' or 'I don't want to be in my house anymore.'”

—Liz Johnson, Herbert Hoover Boys & Girls Club, St. Louis, MO,
Let's Talk: Runaway Away Curriculum facilitator, First connection to NRS, 2010

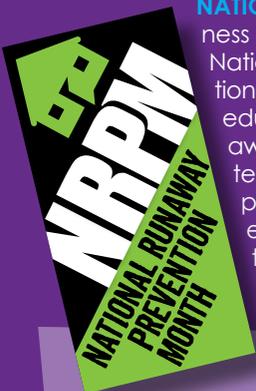
PREVENTION AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS: NRS provides educational and promotional material free of charge to individuals, schools and organizations to distribute within their community.

KIDS CALL: Through this innovative program, teens and pre-teens can openly discuss issues and challenges of youth. Kids Call provides trained NRS staff via teleconference to talk about alternatives to running away.

STREET TEAM: The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) worked with Richter Studios to produce a public service announcement (PSA) promoting NRS' Street Team. The PSA focuses on recruiting ambassadors who will raise awareness about help available to runaway, homeless and at-risk youth who call 1-800-RUNAWAY. The PSA shows how an NRS Street Team member makes the connection between a runaway youth and a volunteer in the 1-800-RUNAWAY call center by hanging posters throughout his community. A runaway youth sees the poster and calls for help. Street Team members, currently in thirty-seven states, connect local communities to NRS as a resource.



NATIONAL RUNAWAY PREVENTION MONTH (NRPM): The national awareness campaign is held each November, spearheaded by NRS and the National Network for Youth (NN4Y). Other prominent national organizations join the campaign to increase awareness of issues facing youth and educate the public about solutions in preventing youth from running away. From May through November, NRS leads a monthly task force via teleconference and webinar focused on providing resources and campaign strategies to help community service and national partners plan effective awareness and prevention activities. Representatives on the task force, in 29 states, educate and mobilize the general public to prevent youth from running away.



“I decided to expand my connection with NRS because I believe in the organization and the mission. My current position has taken me out of the call center and into the training room to ensure that each and every one of our new volunteers thoroughly develops the skill set necessary to become a successful frontline team member. I may not answer the phone as often as I once did, but when I do, I am reminded of the importance of the work that I am doing.”

—Amy Dondanville
NRS trainer, former volunteer, former intern, First connection to NRS, 2009



Studio head Jeremy Richter reviews the script with Chris "Ludacris" Bridges. Richter first connected with NRS in 2008 by donating the filming of a Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum module. —photos courtesy of Richter Studios



Richter Studios filmed both the Street Team and Live Chat television public service announcements. Cinematographer Marcel Morin, Actor Joshua Volkens, and Director Joe Martinez. —photo courtesy of Richter Studios

“ I'm fortunate I'm in a position where I can help the National Runaway Switchboard reach out to runaway, homeless and at-risk youth. I want young people to know they don't have to face their problems alone, and this new live chat service will provide another way to get the help they need.”

—Chris "Ludacris" Bridges, NRS spokesperson and 2008 Spirit of Youth Award recipient, First connection to NRS, 2007

NEW! LIVE CHAT SERVICE: NRS offers a live chat service for youth who want to access NRS services on-line. The service is available during peak hours and allows an immediate response followed by an uninterrupted dialogue with a frontline team member.

To promote the new live chat service, NRS teamed up with award-winning entertainer and NRS ambassador Chris "Ludacris" Bridges to film a new public service announcement (PSA). Since 2007 and the release of his award-winning single *Runaway Love*, Bridges and The Ludacris Foundation have been instrumental in connecting youth to NRS. This is NRS' third PSA featuring Bridges. All three can be viewed by visiting www.1800RUNAWAY.org.

Help us spread the word about live chat and other vital services! Follow NRS on Twitter @1800RUNAWAY
Like NRS on Facebook at 1-800-RUNAWAY



Financial Information

FISCAL YEAR 2011: May 1, 2010 through April 30, 2011

Program service revenue—Federal government agency grant	\$2,000,000
Contributed services	\$73,660
Contributions and special events	\$240,189
State agency grant	\$6,000
Work-study programs	\$9,608
Income on investments	\$3,815
Net gain on investments	\$16,454
Miscellaneous	\$7,296

TOTAL REVENUE **\$2,357,022**

Program services	\$1,977,000
Management and general	\$265,769
Fundraising	\$106,518

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$2,349,287**

Net assets, beginning of year	\$230,038
Net assets, end of year	\$237,773

INCREASE IN NET ASSETS **\$7,735**



Cubs Care, A McCormick Foundation Fund, sponsored and volunteered at the 11th Annual Thanksgiving Dinner to feed homeless youth. —photo courtesy of Nathan Luecking



Board Chair, Jim Criner, with 2010 Spirit of Youth award recipient, Fran Broude on behalf of Coldwell Banker Charitable Foundation and NRS' Executive Director, Maureen Blaha. —photo courtesy of Chicago Social

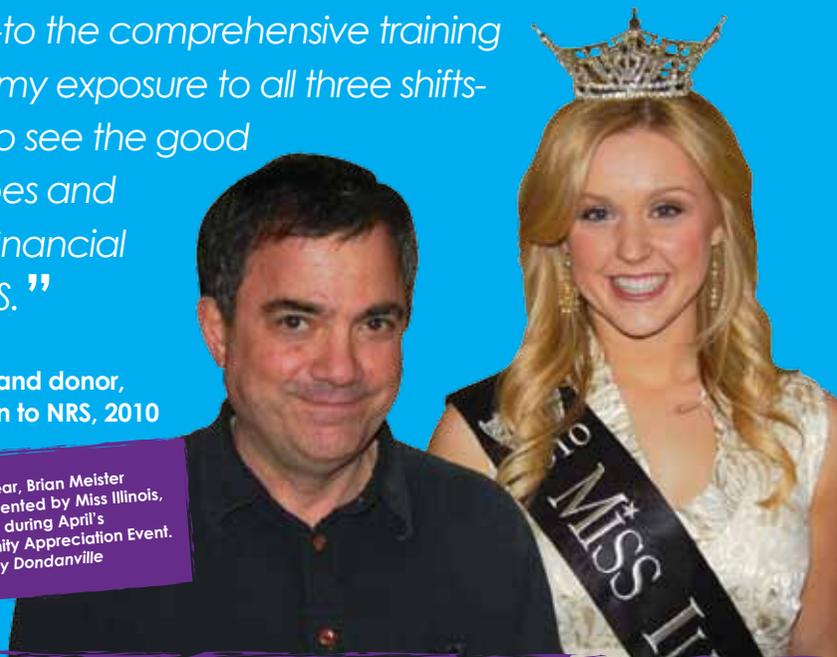


In October, NRS Executive Director, Maureen Blaha received the 2010 Court Appointed Special Advocates of Cook County Spirit Award. NRS volunteer Kelvin Kakazu nominated Blaha for the award for making a difference in the lives of children. —photo courtesy of Casa of Cook County

“ I was fortunate to find a great fit in NRS as I awaited the start of graduate school training in marital and family counseling. From my initial interview with the volunteer coordinator-to the comprehensive training program-to my exposure to all three shifts-it was easy to see the good work NRS does and become a financial donor to NRS. ”

— Brian Meister
NRS volunteer and donor,
First connection to NRS, 2010

2011 Volunteer of the Year, Brian Meister received his honor presented by Miss Illinois, Whitney Thorpe-Klinsky, during April's Volunteer and Community Appreciation Event.
—photo courtesy of Amy Dondanville



Making Connections Across the Globe

Beyond providing hotline and online services, NRS continually makes connections across the globe to the plight of the runaway. Seen as knowledgeable leaders and experts in the runaway and homeless youth arena, NRS is sought to present at conferences, quoted in national media outlets, and accessed for its intellectual property. Each year, over 100,000 people visit www.1800RUNAWAY.org to access program information, prevention materials and national statistics.

In Fiscal Year 2011, the National Runaway Switchboard completed the second and third parts of a three-part comprehensive research study on runaway and homeless youth conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). The three-part study focused on findings of youth's knowledge and access of services by interviewing youth in Chicago and Los Angeles on the streets and in shelters, surveys of youth in high school and in foster care. From the study, NRS released the report *Why They Run: An in-depth look at America's runaway youth* to shed new light on the runaway problem in America and begin to fill in the gaps of what is already known and what can be done. All three parts of the report, *Why They Run*, and other research statistics are available for download at www.1800RUNAWAY.org.

NRS continues to connect to other service providers by sharing its expertise through comprehensive trainings on a variety of topics tailored to meet the host agency's needs including: NRS Solution-focused Crisis Intervention Model; Youth Running from Care; Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC); *Let's Talk: Runaway Prevention Curriculum*; and Effective Volunteer Program Development and Management.

“ I worked for many years in social services, but for the past 8 have been in the financial/ technology industry. I felt a need to serve in a not-for-profit board to still contribute directly to improving people’s lives—and NRS was a logical next step since my husband and I have been “liners” for over two years. I appreciate our two hours of weekly volunteering very much, but also NRS’ mission and services, the quality, nimbleness and professionalism of the organization. It has been a joy and an honor to serve on our board for the past 11 months! ”

— Anne Schankin
NRS board member, volunteer and donor
First connection to NRS, 2008



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2010-2011 NRS Board of Directors: (back left to right) Jim Williams, Richard Malone, James D. Criner, Michele Lehman, Gary W. Harper, Randall Royer, Jack Philbin, Ronald Richter (front left to right) Bonnie Wheeler, Anne Schankin, Christina Van Pelt, Brienne Gruszka, Joan M. Steltmann, NRS Executive Director, Maureen Blaha, and William Schreiber-Stainthorp. Not pictured: Akeshia Craven, Kelly Mead, Luke Palese and David Wells. —photo courtesy of Chicago Social



2010 Spirit of Youth co-chairs and board members Michele Lehman and Christina Van Pelt led the efforts to raise over \$108,000 for NRS. —photo courtesy of Chicago Social



Board members Jim Williams and Jack Philbin enjoy the 8th annual Spirit of Youth benefit celebration along with Lindsay Philbin. —photo courtesy of Chicago Social

“ I continue to connect with NRS for primarily two reasons. The dedicated, selfless staff that really cares about the mission and clients. The work that the volunteers do to empower some of our most powerless citizens to make decisions and improve their lives. ”

— Rick Stoneham
NRS donor, former volunteer, former board member
First connection to NRS, 2001

2011 Wrigley Start Early Run/Walk Running for Runaways team raised over \$13,000 for runaway and at-risk youth.
—photo courtesy of Michelle Vos



Ten premier restaurant partners provided small plates for 2010 Spirit of Youth at the Merchandise Mart. The restaurants donating their best cuisine allowed NRS to reduce expenses and generate over \$96,000 in recording-breaking net revenue. —photo courtesy of Chicago Social



(Left to right) Sjaak Blaauw, Patricia “Cookie” Dominguez, Rick Stoneham, Vicky DiProva at the 8th annual Spirit of Youth event. —photo courtesy of Chicago Social

Connect with NRS online—
make your financial contribution at
www.1800RUNAWAY.org/Donate.

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NRS wishes to acknowledge the following foundations, corporations, and individuals for their generosity. The donors listed below provided gifts between May 1, 2010, and April 30, 2011.

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 773.289.1727.



bbb.org/charity



NRS and the True Colors Fund teamed up to raise awareness of runaway and homeless youth issues. In March, the True Colors Fund Executive Director, Gregory Lewis and The Palette Fund President and Executive Director, Terrence Meck visited NRS to meet with staff and learn more about NRS. —photo courtesy of Jasleen Jaswal Vines



The call center staff bond at a summer picnic. (left to right front) Dyanne Moore, Amelia Garcia, Diana Delia, (left to right back) Clara Villasenor, Lindsey Shelton, Matt Garman, Froilan Landeros, Gwen Clancy, Malcom Joyles. —photo courtesy of Shari Bryan

Staff

- Larry Bechdol**, Data & Technology Coordinator
- Shari Bryan**, Administrative Assistant
- Lashawnda Carter**, Outreach Coordinator
- Gwen Clancy**, Call Center Supervisor
- Diana Delia**, Call Center Supervisor
- Jennifer Di Nicola**, Call Center Manager
- Amy Dondanville**, Trainer
- Amelia Garcia**, Lead Call Center Supervisor
- Matt Garman**, Call Center Supervisor
- Jasleen Jaswal Vines**, Development & Communications Associate
- Malcolm Joyles**, Call Center Supervisor
- Froilan Landeros**, Call Center Supervisor
- James Lucchesi**, Director of Finance
- Larry Miller**, Call Center Supervisor

- Dyanne Moore**, Call Center Supervisor
- Lee Osipchak**, Training & Education Manager
- Lindsey Shelton**, Call Center Supervisor
- Gordon Vance**, Director of Programs
- Clara Villasenor**, Call Center Supervisor
- Michelle Vos**, Volunteer Coordinator
- Katy Walsh**, Director of Development & Communications
- Katrina Wyss**, Prevention Specialist

National Runaway Switchboard
 3080 N. Lincoln Avenue
 Chicago, Illinois 60657
 773.880.9860 – administrative office
 1.800.RUNAWAY – hotline
www.1800RUNAWAY.org

Nancy Mahon, Executive Director, MAC Aids Fund; Cyndi Lauper, artist and civil rights activist; Maureen Blaha, Executive Director, NRS; and Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav for the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development collaborated to get the Empire State Building lit green in recognition of National Runaway Prevention Month. —photo courtesy of Bryan Smith



“As a phone crisis counselor you may not understand it with every call, but over time you are truly making a big difference in the world and improving the lives of kids across the country who have few, if any other places to which to turn. I truly think that all of you should be very content and happy with the work you do, because you are so desperately needed in a dangerous and somewhat uncaring world. I think NRS employees and volunteers should feel no less useful and important than doctors, nurses, paramedics, police, firefighters, youth counselors or anyone else who enters desperate situations with a brave sense of rescue and mission.”

— Guest on NRS bulletin board
First connection to NRS, 2010





National Runaway Switchboard
3080 N. Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60657

1.800.RUNAWAY
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