



# Frontline

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

FALL/WINTER  
2010  
NEWSLETTER

## STRIFE AT HOME: Family Dynamics The #1 Reason for Calls to NRS

By: Jasleen Jaswal Vines

The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) handles over 100,000 calls a year from runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth around the country. On average, a third of callers cite family dynamics as the reason for their distress. In some cases, a parent has insisted the youth leave. In other circumstances, home may seem so dire, the only answer is to leave. Sometimes it's a lack of communication with parents... and youth are seeking a trusted person with whom they can talk. No matter the reason, NRS answers the call by listening and discussing viable options.

*Kylie's mother is a drunk, leaving Kylie to take care of her younger siblings – getting them to school, making sure they get fed. Last night, her mother went on another bender and spent the last of the food money. Kylie desperately wants to run away and make a new life for herself away from her mother but she's afraid to leave her siblings.*

NRS is a resource for these youth, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, all over the country. All it takes is one toll-free call and youth can talk about their situation confidentially without fear of judgment. Calls are handled by staff and more than 150 volunteers, who have completed a 40-hour training program before taking their first call.

*Jamal is living on the street and has been there for nearly a week. He came out to his parents and they threw him out. He has no one to turn to but the street. Jamal is calling because he's tired of sleeping in alleys and tired of being hungry, but he also knows he can't go home. At this point his only prospect is selling drugs or prostitution, but he's afraid to go down that road.*

For youth already on the street, NRS offers resources like a conference call home, a message service, and referrals to shelters and other social service agencies. If a youth wants

to go home, NRS offers a bus ticket through the Home Free program in collaboration with Greyhound Lines, Inc.

*Tiffany has what seems like a perfect life: nice house, nice car, good grades, great boyfriend. What no one knows is that her parents are struggling to pay the bills after her dad lost his job – they might lose the house, the car, everything. Her parents fight every day and now they're putting her in the middle, asking her to choose sides. She wants to leave for a few days to clear her head but she's afraid that she'll get in trouble. She needs some time away from the fighting.*

For youth stuck in a difficult situation at home, NRS explores options available to the youth—friends, other family, school counselors, and resources in the community that can help.

NRS relies on donors and volunteers to answer the call and support its mission to keep America's runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the streets. To learn about the agency and how you can help, turn the page and read about how the economy is affecting our youth and our work, the courageous volunteers on the front lines talking to youth and their families, and the services we offer to youth and families in crisis.



INSIDE

- Sean's Story
- Free bus ticket home
- Win United Airline Tickets!
- National Runaway Prevention Month

# Help NRS answer the call!

*"My mom is working two jobs to pay the rent. She brings home leftovers for my brother and me to eat. She hardly touches the food. She's exhausted all the time. Yesterday, the car broke down. I think it might be easier for her if I left."*

Crisis calls to the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) citing the economy as a problem have increased by 494%.<sup>1</sup> In the past year, crisis callers reporting financial difficulties went up 35%. Families struggle to clothe and feed their kids. Money pressures mount. Parents argue over finances. Kids react to the strain. The country's economic recession has made its way to the dinner table. In these stressful times, NRS continues to be available for youth and families in crisis, 24-hours a day, 365 days a year.

In 2009, NRS handled 117,602 calls. The NRS phone bill for 2009 was \$59,896. That's about 50 cents a call. In most places, fifty cents won't buy much. Not a soda. Not a pack of gum. Not a roll of Lifesavers. How ironic that a youth can connect to a potential lifesaver at the National Runaway Switchboard because of a donation as small as fifty cents. Calls to 1-800-RUNAWAY are confidential, anonymous and free to the person in crisis. To continue to provide service during this recession, NRS asks you to help us answer the call for help. *A gift of \$5 helps us answer 10 calls. A donation of \$50 provides 100 callers with assistance. A contribution of \$500 will reach 1,000 callers with the resources needed for their emergency situation.*

The end of the year is quickly approaching. Please consider supporting the National Runaway Switchboard to continue providing help. Whether it is \$5 or \$500, your contribution will help NRS keep America's runaway and at-risk youth safe and off the street.

<sup>1</sup> The National Runaway Switchboard Trend Analysis 2000-2009 available at [www.1800RUNAWAY.org](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org).



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# Volunteers are the HEART of NRS!

What keeps frontline team members, aka 'liners', coming back to answer the call for NRS?

"I feel like I'm making a contribution to young people and their families."  
Morris, liner for 7 years



"It's hard work, but you have staff and other volunteers around you to help—there's always someone there to help you through those difficult calls."  
Alicia, liner for 2 years



"When you're taking calls that result in positive outcomes, you really feel like you're making a difference."  
AnnMarie, liner for 3 months



"It's cool to be around so many people who come from all over to help take calls, and from so many different backgrounds and professions, whether it's social work or business."  
Megan, liner for 3 years

call center photos courtesy of Jasleen Jaswal Vines



above left: Liners gathered at an ice cream social to celebrate perfect attendance during the summer months. -photo courtesy of Lashawnda M. Carter



**Volunteer of the Year: Jenny Moore**  
at the 2010 Volunteer Appreciation event at Mrs. Murphy and Sons in Chicago  
- photo courtesy of Sharri Bryan

# Sean's Story

By: Lashawnda M. Carter

Sean, a 17-year-old male from Gary, Indiana, called the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) after running away from home three months ago. He explained that he had been kicked out of the house because his mom caught him using drugs. He originally started using drugs as a way to cope with his family problems after his father lost his job, which led to a lot of tension in the household between his parents.

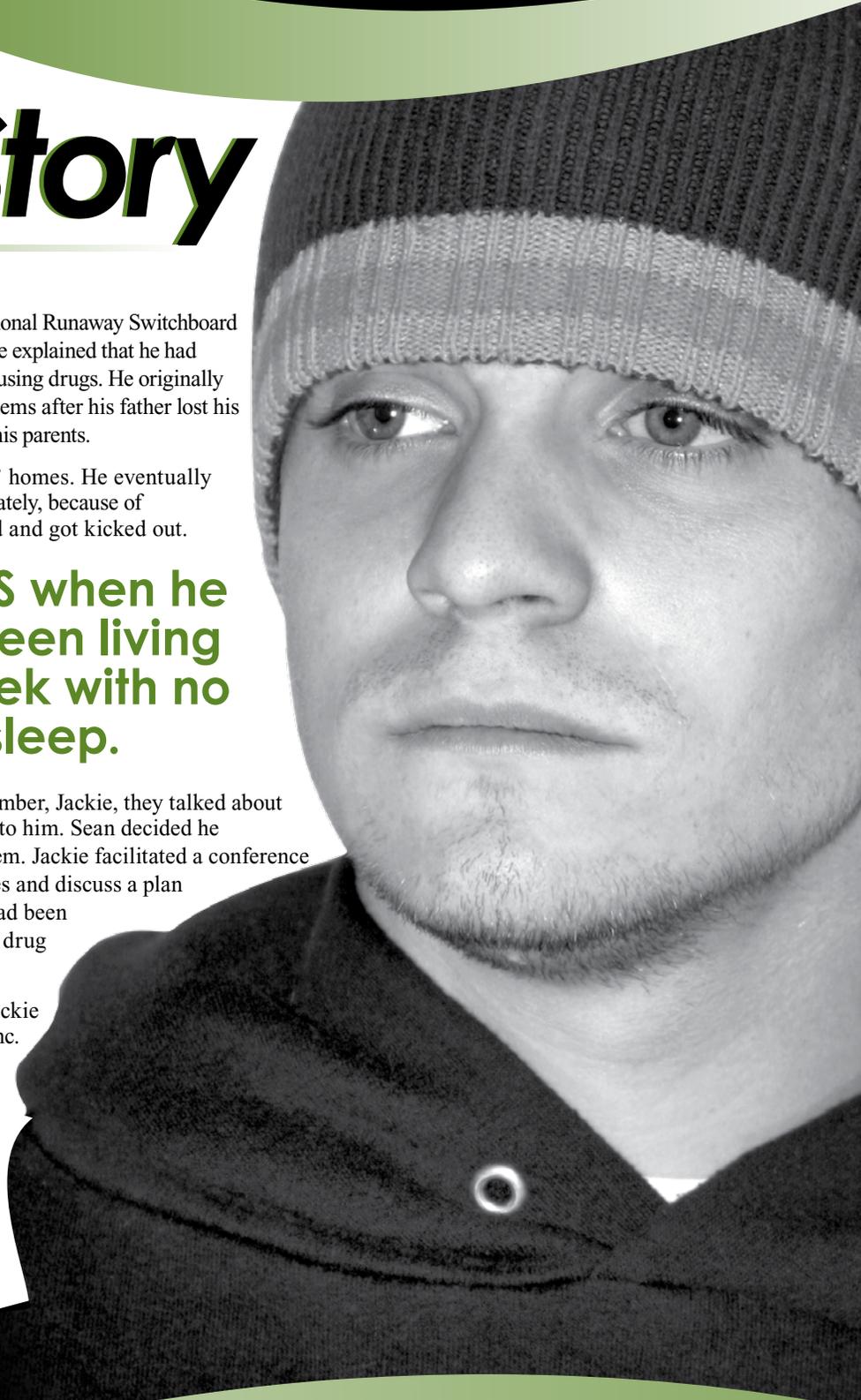
In the beginning, Sean couch-surfed at several friends' homes. He eventually ended up at a buddy's home in Cleveland, Ohio. Unfortunately, because of Sean's drug problem, he began stealing from his friend and got kicked out.

**He decided to call NRS when he realized that he had been living on the streets for a week with no food and nowhere to sleep.**

When Sean called and talked to NRS frontline team member, Jackie, they talked about his current situation and the options that were available to him. Sean decided he wanted to go back home and get help for his drug problem. Jackie facilitated a conference call between Sean and his parents to talk about his issues and discuss a plan of action for his return home. His father stated that he had been worried since Sean left home and wanted him to enter a drug rehabilitation program.

After Sean and his parents discussed his action plan, Jackie booked his Home Free ticket through Greyhound Lines, Inc. Afterwards, Jackie connected him with a rehabilitation center in his hometown so that he could begin outpatient treatment. Sean and his parents thanked Jackie for her help. Jackie told them that NRS would contact them in a few days to make sure that Sean made it home safely, and assured them that they could contact NRS for additional support.

*\* The names and location have been changed to protect anonymity of the caller.*



# HOME FREE

Through our Home Free program, in collaboration with Greyhound Lines, Inc., more than 13,000 youth have been reunited with their families, free of charge. The first step to getting Home Free is calling 1-800-RUNAWAY.

## WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS?

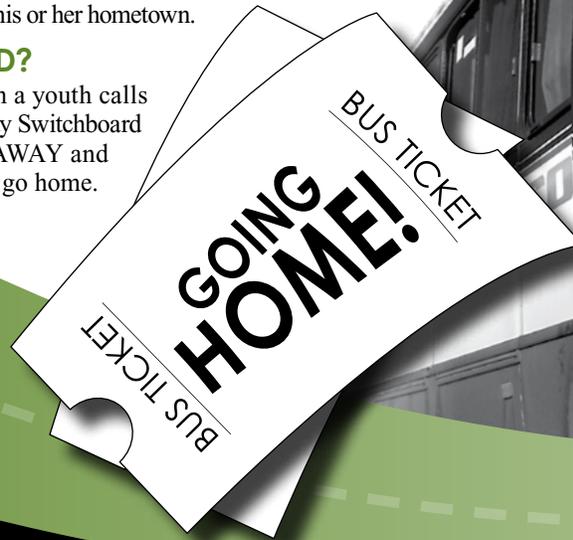
Youth must be between the ages of 12 and 20. NRS must verify a missing person's report has been filed in the youth's hometown for anyone under 18.

## DESTINATION CHOICES?

Youth up to age 18 must be returning to a parent or legal guardian. If the youth is 19 or 20 and not returning to a parent's home, NRS can make arrangements for a ticket to an independent living facility in, or near, his or her hometown.

## HOW TO GET STARTED?

The process starts when a youth calls the National Runaway Switchboard at 1-800-RUNAWAY and wants to go home.

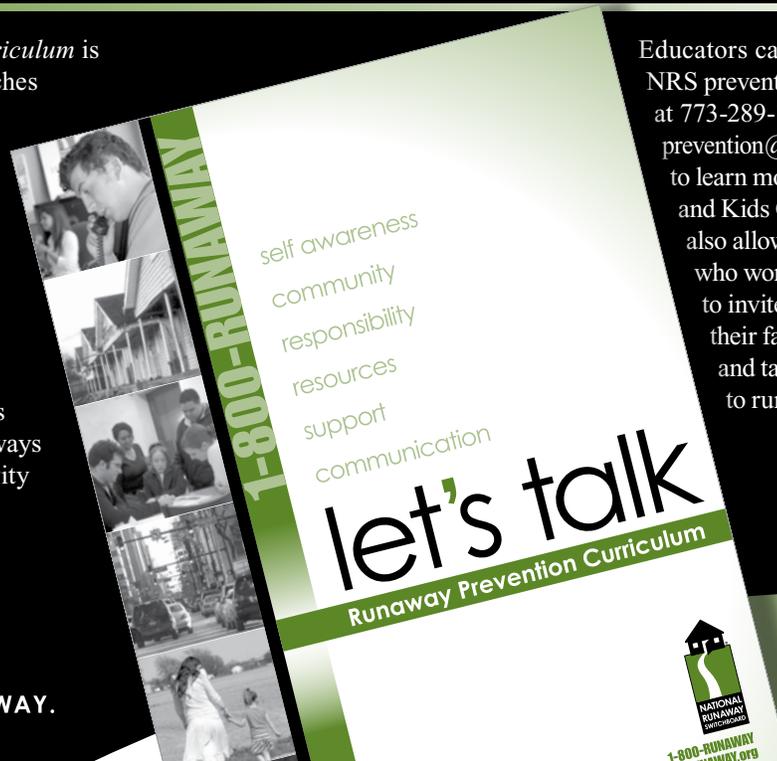


## Teaching Youth Alternatives to Running Away

NRS' *Let's Talk Runaway Prevention Curriculum* is an interactive 14-module program that teaches youth how to build life skills, alternatives to running away, and resources they can turn to when they need help. It is free and available for download on NRS' website at [www.1800RUNAWAY.org](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org).

The curriculum includes an activity that allows youth to speak with a staff member at NRS and ask questions about runaway youth. These can range from "What makes someone run away?" to "How do runaways survive on the street?" to "What can runaways do when they want to go home?" The activity ends with a mock phone call to the agency so youth can learn more about how crisis situations are handled by NRS.

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



Educators can contact the NRS prevention specialist at 773-289-1723 or [prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org](mailto:prevention@1800RUNAWAY.org) to learn more about *Let's Talk* and Kids Call. Kids Call also allows service providers who work directly with youth to invite trained staff into their facility by telephone and talk about alternatives to running away.

# Planning a Legacy Gift

Many donors tell the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) that they 'wish they could do more,' especially in these economic uncertain times. It is possible to do more now to help NRS in the future. Planned giving enables a donor to provide a legacy gift that will benefit youth and families in crisis.

**BEQUEST:** Give to the National Runaway Switchboard without affecting your cashflow during your lifetime.

**CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY—IMMEDIATE:** Receive a fixed payout and significant tax benefits.

**CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY—DEFERRED:** Recommended for younger donors to build retirement earnings for the future.

**CHARITABLE LEAD TRUST:** Discover an innovative way to pass appreciating assets on to family members while making gifts in the interim.

**POOLED INCOME FUND:** Give cash or securities, receive an income tax deduction, avoid capital gains tax on the transfer and secure lifetime income.

**LIFE INSURANCE BENEFICIARY:** Name the National Runaway Switchboard as a recipient of a life insurance policy.

For information on planned giving or becoming a donor, please contact Katy Walsh, Director of Development & Communications, at 773.289.1727 or [kwalsh@1800RUNAWAY.org](mailto:kwalsh@1800RUNAWAY.org).

# Support NRS' Annual Benefit!

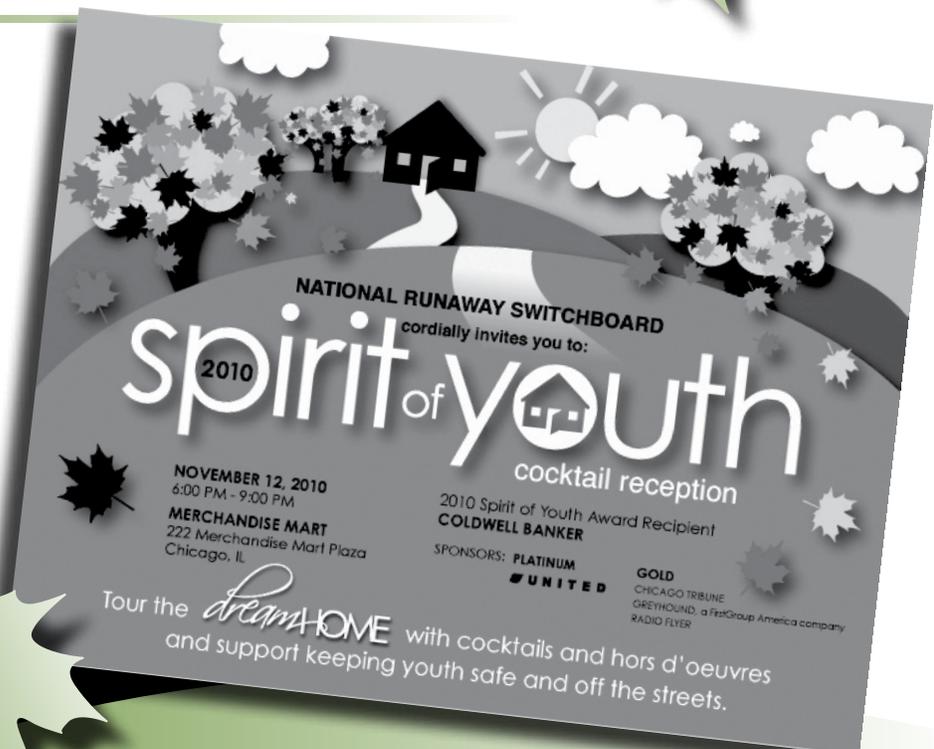
## RAFFLE SALE:

- Drawing November 12th
- Win United Airline Tickets for \$20!

## ONLINE AUCTION:

- Until November 30th
- Travel Packages, Sports Memorabilia, Furniture, Restaurant Certificates, Designer Apparel, and More!

For information, visit [www.1800RUNAWAY.org](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org)



# Because our donors, partners and sponsors have been there for NRS, we have been there to handle over 117,602 calls in 2009!

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volunteer service  
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*In Honor of George Harper  
Dr. Gary W. Harper and  
Dr. Herek L. Clack*

*In Memory of Pearl Oehme  
Maureen Blaha and  
Joe Morris*

*In Memory of Eloise Park  
Marvin and Kay Zelkin*

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.

# 4 EASY TIPS FOR PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL RUNAWAY PREVENTION MONTH CAMPAIGN:

This November, the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) and National Network for Youth (NN4Y) announce the 9th annual National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM), *Running in the Shadows*. Planning a successful campaign doesn't have to involve a huge campaign budget or a major national organization. Here are four easy activities to raise awareness in your community:

## 1. BECOME AN NRS STREET TEAM MEMBER:

Distribute NRS materials in the community.

## 2. NATIONAL RUNAWAY PREVENTION MONTH PROCLAMATION:

Work with an elected official for a NRPM proclamation or resolution for the city or state.

## 3. DEVELOP A "RUNAWAY" DISPLAY:

Develop an exhibit in a public location to educate about runaway prevention and NRPM.

## 4. CREATE AN E-CAMPAIGN:

Add NRPM information to an e-mail signature, change a Facebook status or tweet on Twitter during November.



Street Team member, Eric, posts 1-800-RUNAWAY posters around the city of Chicago.

For more activities and resources to help plan an NRPM campaign visit [www.1800RUNAWAY.org](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org) to download the Community Action Toolkit or contact Lashawnda Carter, outreach coordinator at 773-289-1718.

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

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