



# Frontline

FALL/WINTER  
**2012**  
NEWSLETTER

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

## COMING SOON: National Runaway Safeline

## National Runaway Safeline

In 1971, one kid's crisis launched the Chicago hotline, MetroHelp. Three years later, the organization began serving the entire country as the federally-designated national communication system for runaway and homeless youth. In the 80's, the name changed to the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS). In 2004, NRS acquired 1-800-RUNAWAY as its official number. These were all historic moments of significance in our long legacy of service to youth and their families in crisis. And in January 2013, NRS will have another major transformation.

In its five year Strategic Plan (2011-2015), NRS identified four main areas to emphasize. One of the priority focuses is developing and implementing an effective branding strategy to better connect with a larger percent of NRS' target market. By securing funding, NRS contracted a firm specializing in non-profit branding to assess NRS' current identity in developing a new branding expression. The firm launched the five month project in early 2012. After a comprehensive evaluation, including discussions with NRS stakeholders and focus groups with youth, it was recommended that NRS adopt a new brand expression that includes National Runaway Safeline as its primary identification.

The National Runaway Safeline, also known as the National Runaway Switchboard, will begin to roll out in January 2013. Updates in online media and verbal identification on the hotline will happen immediately. NRS will ensure that youth can access help without any kind of service disruption. Search engine optimization will point internet users to NRS' website regardless of either name googled. The majority of the branding expression transformation is funding dependent. NRS needs *\*you\** to *put your name on our name*. (See page 7 for details.)

NRS' position: the National Runaway Safeline is the go-to resource for America's runaway, homeless and at-risk youth and their families, providing solution-focused support.

"The **National Runaway Safeline**, also known as the **National Runaway Switchboard**, will begin to roll out in January 2013."

## INSIDE

- 2012: An Exciting Year!
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# 2012: An Exciting Year!

## 2012 has been an exciting year for the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS).

NRS was again chosen as the federally-designated communication system for runaway and homeless youth. Not only has NRS held this distinction since 1974, we are the only organization that has been bestowed this designation. On August 1, 2012, NRS began a new five year grant cycle funded by the Family & Youth Services Bureau in The Administration for Children, Youth & Families; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to continue to provide services for youth and their families in crisis.

NRS was also chosen for two national video projects. The Laura and John Arnold Foundation invited NRS to be in an online video in their Giving Library database. The project connects philanthropists with non-profits. It empowers philanthropists to more deeply explore giving opportunities through meaningful, one-on-one dialogue without the traditional pressures of initiating such conversations. In addition, the soon to be launched website, kidsinthehouse.com, invited NRS to be part of their 'ultimate parent resource.' The online resource provides parents with questions and answers by national experts. The website will be the platform for multiple parenting topics and resources for assistance.

NRS also conducted a five month extensive assessment of its brand expression. From this initiative, NRS has decided to roll-out a new name as its primary identification. Beginning in January 2013, the National Runaway Switchboard will execute a new brand strategy as the National Runaway Safeline.

**National Runaway Safeline will be the go-to resource for America's runaway, homeless and at-risk youth and their families providing solution-focused support.**



**Maureen Blaha**  
*Executive Director*

**Anne Schankin**  
*Board chair*

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# National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM)

## NUMBERS TELL THE STORY

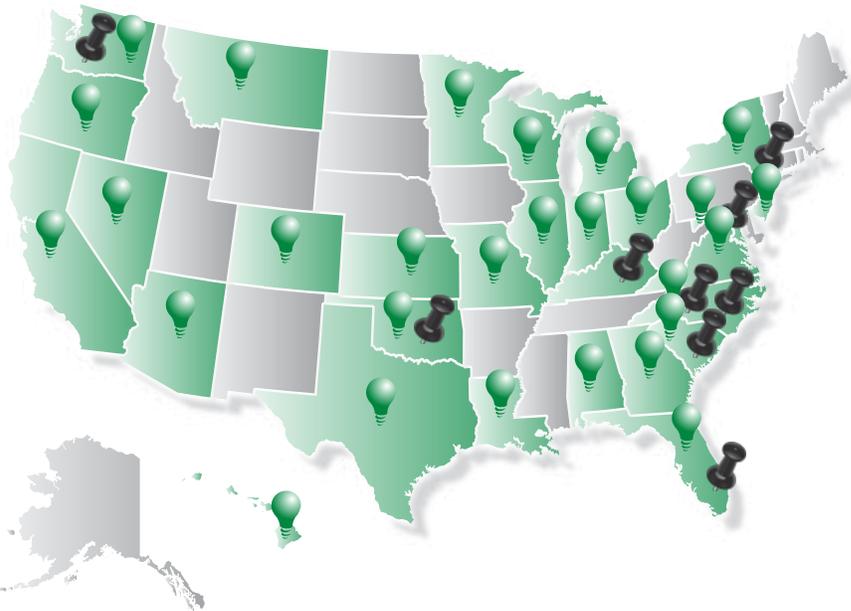
THE NUMBER OF PARTNERS INVOLVED IN NRPM HELPS NRS TELL THE STORY:

**81** COMMUNITY PARTNERS 

**29** STATES WITH NRPM ACTIVITIES 

**16** NATIONAL NRPM PARTNERS 

### Who's telling the story?



### 2012 NATIONAL NRPM PARTNERS

American Association of School Administrators  
Boys and Girls Clubs of America  
Girls Inc.  
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers  
Concerned Black Men - National Organization  
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth  
National Association of Hispanic Firefighters  
National Association of Police Organizations  
National Assembly on School-Based Healthcare  
National Association of School Nurses  
National Association of School Resource Officers  
National Center for Homeless Education  
National Network for Youth  
National Resource Center for Youth Services  
National Safe Place  
School Social Workers Association of America

## 5 EASY WAYS YOU CAN GET INVOLVED WITH NRPM

**1**

### SOCIAL MEDIA DAY

Participate in Social Media Day of Action on November 1st.



**2**

### STREET TEAM

Join NRS' Street Team and help distribute free promotional materials into the community.



**3**

### GREEN SOCK DAY

Pick any day in November as Green Sock Day for you and a group of employees, friends, or classmates to wear green socks, take a picture and send to NRS.



**4**

### PROCLAMATION SIGNED

Get a city or state proclamation signed declaring November as NRPM.



**5**

### RUNAWAY DISPLAY

Develop a "runaway" display for the lobby of your local library or business.



Visit [www.1800RUNAWAY.org/national-runaway-prevention-month](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org/national-runaway-prevention-month) for additional information on NRPM.

# Gwen's Story

“Gwen said she was very grateful NRS was always there to listen...”

Fourteen year old Gwen called the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) in tears.

“I don’t have anywhere to go. Nobody loves me. I don’t know what to do,” sobbed Gwen.

“Are you in a safe place right now?” asked NRS liner Margaret.

Gwen was calling from a McDonalds. She explained that she ran away from her foster home two months ago. She met a guy who said he would take care of her. He forced her into prostitution. She escaped him, but was now living on the streets of Atlanta. Gwen spent her last dollar on a cheeseburger and had no idea what to do next.

Margaret encouraged Gwen to tell her story. And Gwen opened up. If she returned to her hometown, the police would take her to a special psychiatric lock-down facility. Gwen had anxiety about confinement. Her parents used to lock her in a closet for hours so she wouldn’t see them making and doing drugs. After the meth lab exploded in their home, her father was sent to prison. And her missing mother had an outstanding warrant for her arrest. Gwen had been in three different foster care placements. None had worked out.

“Before I ran, I tried to get help,” explained Gwen.

She left four messages for her social worker but he never responded. She tried talking to two teachers and a guidance counselor at school, but they did nothing to help her.

“Is there someone in your life that you trust?” asked Margaret.

“Sarah,” mumbled Gwen. “Sarah has my back.”

Sarah was Gwen’s therapist. She had always been supportive.

By talking with Margaret, Gwen realized Sarah would help her think of ways to avoid the psychiatric facility if she turned herself in. With Margaret’s help, Gwen came up with a plan of action. Margaret found a place for Gwen to sleep for the night. And Gwen planned to call Sarah in the morning and talk about a different foster care placement.

Gwen had been on her own for some time. She was scared and exhausted. Her situation had seemed hopeless but something changed for Gwen during her conversation with Margaret. By the end of the call, she was calm, not crying, and even made some jokes. Gwen said she was very grateful NRS was always there to listen which allowed her to gather her thoughts and figure out what she could do without someone telling her what to do.

*\*Name, images and locations have been changed to respect anonymity.*

# Research Happenings

The National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) continues to analyze studies relating to runaway youth to help better serve them. Over the summer, NRS released two studies 1) the trend and findings from NRS' Home Free program and 2) a study on the correlation between school characteristics and adolescent runaway behavior.

Jennifer Benoit-Bryan, a PhD candidate at the University of Illinois in Chicago, analyzed the call data that NRS obtained from youth looking to return home through the Home Free program and found the following trends:

- Since 2005, more Home Free bus tickets have been issued in summer months.
- Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of youth reported family conflict as a significant issue in 2011, which is an increase of 8 percent over the last six years.
- The average age increased from 16 ½ to 17 ½ years old over the past five years.
- Most of the youth crossed state lines (88 percent in 2005 and 91 percent in 2011).

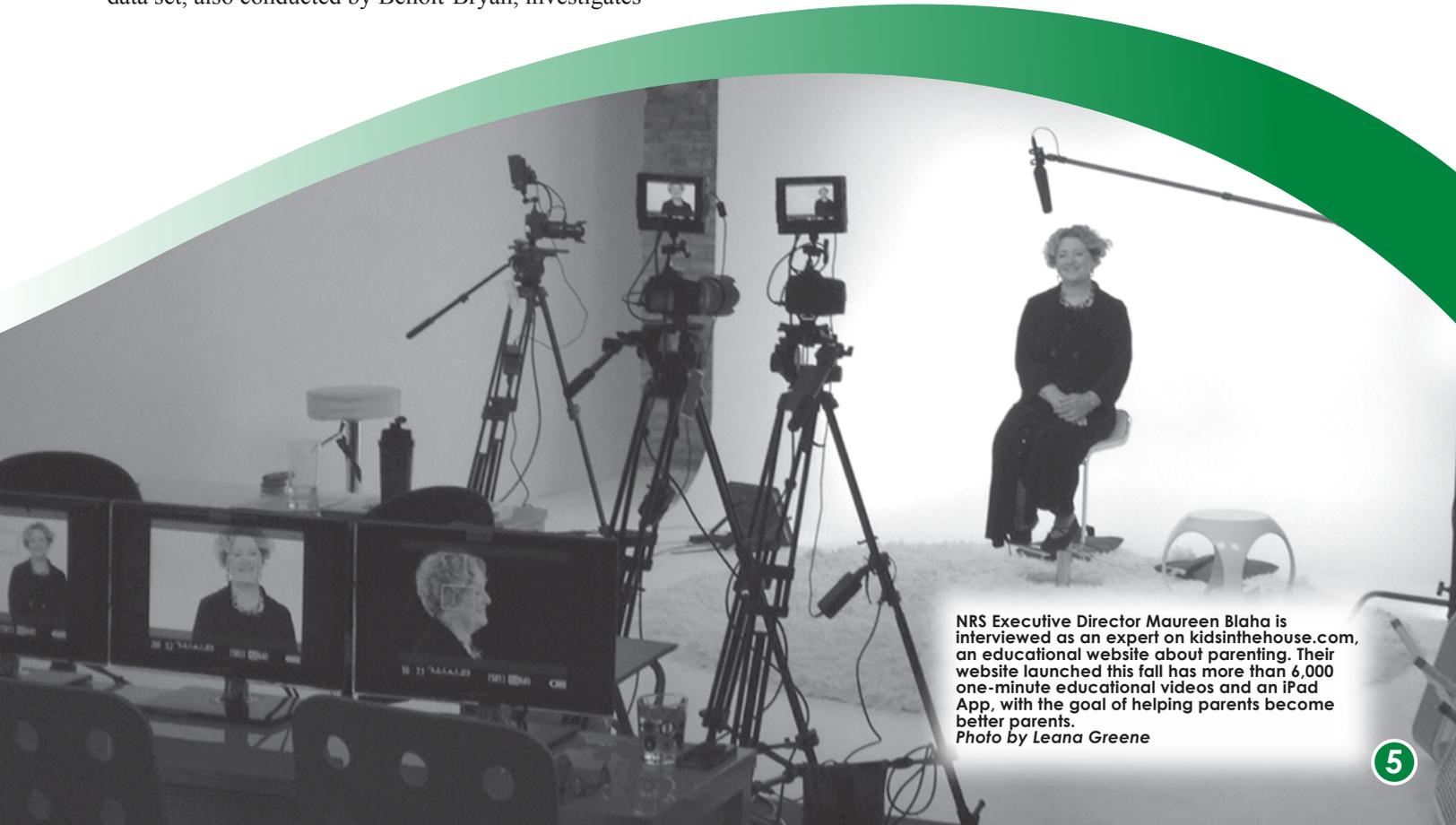
Home Free is one of NRS' services done in collaboration with Greyhound Lines, Inc. where youth can obtain a free ticket home to their families or an alternative living arrangement. NRS has reunited more than 14,000 youth with their families since the program's inception.

The School Characteristics Study, which is an analysis of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health data set, also conducted by Benoit-Bryan, investigates

the correlation between school characteristics and adolescent runaway behavior, which includes spending the night away from home without parental permission. The study consists of interviewing a nationally representative sample of 12,105 American adolescents in grades 7 through 12 at two different points in their school career. Key findings from the study show:

- Both runaway episodes and nights away without permission are more common for students in schools with average class sizes over 30.
- Parent involvement matters; in schools with more than 10 percent of parents involved in the school's parent teacher association, the night away rate is 2.1 percent lower than in schools with lower levels of involvement.
- Students from schools in the South are the least likely to both run away (3.3 percent) and spend a night away (11.2 percent) from home. Students from schools in the West are the most likely to run away (5.2 percent) and spend a night away from home (16.2 percent).
- Students from schools in urban areas are less likely to spend a night away from home (12.4 percent) than students in either the suburbs or in rural areas (14.6 percent each).

For more information on these studies or additional research on runaway and homeless youth issues visit [www.1800RUNAWAY.org/learn/research](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org/learn/research).



NRS Executive Director Maureen Blaha is interviewed as an expert on [kidsinthehouse.com](http://kidsinthehouse.com), an educational website about parenting. Their website launched this fall has more than 6,000 one-minute educational videos and an iPad App, with the goal of helping parents become better parents.  
Photo by Leana Greene



Liner Caitlin Bergh organized and hosted "Making the Comedy Connection," a stand-up comedy fundraiser to benefit NRS. The event raised over \$500 to support the agency's mission. Poster by Matt Lane

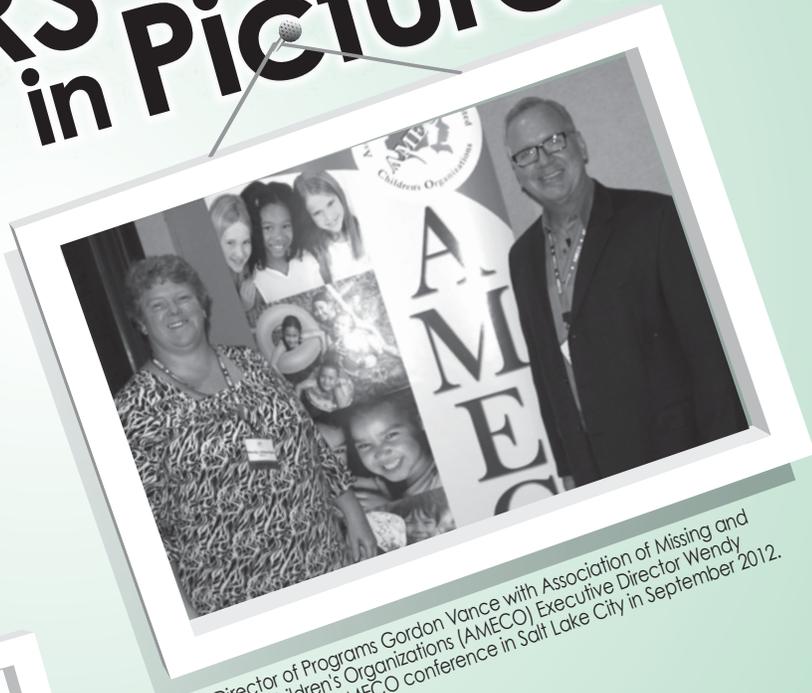


Current, departing, and new members of the NRS' Board of Directors at the annual meeting in September 2012. Photo by Jasleen Jaswal Vines

# NRS in Pictures



Sammie Carter, Sue and Jim Walsh, Cindy Carter at Sue's 75th birthday party at Club Landing in South Bend, Indiana. In lieu of gifts, Sue asked her 75 guests to make donations to support NRS. The party raised nearly \$1,000, and guests went home with green socks to raise awareness of NRS' mission. Photo by Katy Walsh



NRS Director of Programs Gordon Vance with Association of Missing and Exploited Children's Organizations (AMECO) Executive Director Wendy Jolley-Kabi at the AMECO conference in Salt Lake City in September 2012.



NRS was a finalist for the Classy Awards, the largest philanthropic award ceremony in the country. Over 2,400 nominations were submitted. Pictured: NRS Executive Director Maureen Blaha and husband Joe Morris on the red carpet at the awards ceremony in September 2012.



NRS Call Center Supervisor Froilan Landeros was one of three finalists for Chicago Latino Network's Latino Professional of the Year. Here, he is interviewed for his nomination video. Photo by Jasleen Jaswal Vines

# Because our donors, partners and sponsors have been there for NRS, we were there to handle over 100,000 calls in 2011!

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Family and Youth Services Bureau in the Administration for Children and Families; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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## Put **\*YOUR\*** Name on Our Name



Two donors at \$10,000



Five donors at \$5,000



Ten donors at \$2,500



Thirty donors at \$1,000



Forty donors at \$500

NRS invites **\*YOU\*** to be a part of an historic moment. 87 people will help NRS raise \$120,000. NRS has a multi-faceted plan to publicize and promote the name change. NRS intends to roll-out the new name and logo on traditional media, social media, promotional materials and educational materials. NRS is kicking off this major gift initiative to help fund the transition. Please consider putting your name on our name with a donation. In return, NRS will put your name, literally, on our call center. The outside window of our call center will serve as a donor recognition wall. This is an opportunity to list your name in support of National Runaway Safeline. Here to listen. Here to help. Visit [www.1800RUNAWAY.org](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org) for more information.



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3080 North Lincoln Avenue  
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# SPIRIT OF YOUTH 2012

November 2, 2012  
6pm to 9pm

The Palmer House  
Red Lacquer Room  
17 E. Monroe  
Chicago, IL

Visit our online auction at [www.1800RUNAWAY.org](http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org)  
until November 30th!

Sponsorship levels from \$2,500 through \$25,000; contact Katy Walsh at  
[kwalsh@1800RUNAWAY.org](mailto:kwalsh@1800RUNAWAY.org)  
for more information.

Spirit of Youth Award Recipients – Maree Bullock and Jimmie Alford

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