

# the Connection

fall 2011



## National Safe Place says 'farewell' to second-year AmeriCorps VISTA members



*Second-year VISTA member Allison Barnett assisting with the 'Don't Get Boxed In' campaign*

Another year has passed and National Safe Place has to say farewell to second-year AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) members Jessica Guyet, Jonathan Aerne, Allison Barrett and Andrea Mariategui.

Jessica and Jonathan served at Seton Youth Shelters in Virginia Beach, Va., and were instrumental in bringing on the local fire department and area schools as Safe Place sites and partners.

Allison Barrett served at YMCA Safe Place Services in Louisville, Ky., transferring part-way through her VISTA term and made valuable contributions to the agency through site re-training, youth outreach and volunteer re-engagement. She was also a significant help to the National Safe Place office in formulating the process for the next texting project steps (stay tuned!)

Andrea Mariategui served at LINK House in Kingsport, Tenn., and made significant contributions in program growth, building community support and increasing youth

awareness. "Andi has been an awesome asset to our team this year! Not only is she a self motivated, organized and hard working individual, she was always volunteering to help in any way she could while she was here," said Cindy Jenkins, LINK House site supervisor. "Andi has been a pure joy to have around and she will be truly missed by us all here."

These four young people worked tirelessly to meet the goals of the VISTA project and build the capacity of the Safe Place program at the local level. From March 2010 to February 2011, the second grant year, youth and adult outreach increased significantly; well over the targeted 10 percent. Through these outreach efforts, youth awareness of Safe Place and how to get help when needed increased 29.5 percent in the local service areas.

Additionally, the overall quality of services to youth increased significantly. Employees at local Safe Place sites can respond appropriately and these locations are easily identified as "safe places" by youth. The VISTA members recruited or re-engaged volunteers so that 147 individuals across the four agencies stand ready to respond to a youth in need. Monetary contributions garnered in the second year across the agencies totaled \$222, 293 dollars and in-kind contributions were valued at \$43,109 dollars. In all cases, the VISTA members leave the agencies with more resources, more partnerships and increased awareness among the community of the Safe Place program.

National Safe Place sends the second-year VISTAs off with our gratitude, our admiration and our very best wishes.

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## Laurie's Corner

Recently, I was at a lunch meeting where an acquaintance relayed a story about a 15-year-old girl who had run away due to difficulties at home. While she made the difficult decision to leave her house, she remained committed to her education and her involvement in extracurricular activities. She continued to attend school and was a starter on one of the fall athletic teams. Her parents, not knowing where she was, reported her as a runaway. They called the school and informed them that she had run, but the school explained to the parents the girl was at school. Because she was technically a runaway, the school made the decision that she could not participate in her sport, even though she was regularly attending school and practice. This circumstance was certainly a detriment to her teammates, the school and the young lady herself.

This story highlights the importance of the Safe Place program and the need for implementation in as many cities and commu-

nities as possible. If this young woman had the opportunity to go to a Safe Place site in her area when she left home, she could have been connected, not only to safety, but to additional services that would have allowed her to work with counselors, other professionals and her family to facilitate reunification. Her ability to continue school and participate in athletics would have been preserved while she and her family worked on their issues.

National Safe Place continues to work to increase the number of states and communities that offer the Safe Place program so young people are not forced to end up on the streets or in dangerous situations when struggling with issues that keep them from being able to be at home. The staff and our member agencies are working hard to educate youth across the country about Safe Place, the importance of the sign and the TXT 4 HELP program. I want to thank all of you for your efforts and encourage you to share your stories of success. I would love to share them in our newsletter.

*Laurie Jackson*

## National Safe Place

**Mission** Safe Place provides access to immediate help and supportive resources for all young people in crisis through a network of sites sustained by qualified agencies, trained volunteers and businesses.

**Vision** Safe Place will be universally recognized and used by youth who need immediate help and safety.

## Board of Directors

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PepsiCo  
Tulsa, OK

## Safe Place site testimonial from Denison Karate



Owners Sam & Alicea Perez

"My husband Sam and I own and operate a business in which a majority of our clients are children. Part of our program teaches 'Stranger Danger' as well as 'Bully Avoidance.' Many times we expect children will face these types of situations with strangers or acquaintances. However, there are times when a close family member or another loved one is the source of difficulty in a child's life. What is a child to do then? Who do they turn to at that point? Safe Place is there for those children in need of help in that or any other circumstance.

I am proud our business has been a Safe Place site for many years. I am also proud to say we had a young man, about age 12, come in to our place of business and ask for help. The young man's mother had passed away a few months earlier. He was living with his father, who seemed to have many issues of his own, and at times, said and did things to this young man that were hurtful. When the young man felt he could take no more, he left his home on foot, walked about five miles and sat

on the sidewalk near our business. A parent of one of our clients noticed he was disheveled and appeared upset. She asked him if he needed help. With a look of fear in his eyes, he shook his head yes. She brought him in and he asked us for help. We followed the simple steps on the Safe Place Procedure chart and the counselor arrived at our business in a short amount of time. The young man looked relieved when the counselor arrived. It appeared to us that he understood he made a good decision to ask for help. He left a few minutes later with the counselor and we knew he was placed in very good hands. I am sure he is doing much better than the day he appeared at our place looking for help. I am sure he has gained some new tools to better manage and resolve those obstacles that came into his path. I am glad Safe Place helps children and parents to learn how to better manage those obstacles we all experience during the course of our lives.

What a wonderful feeling it is for us knowing we helped open the door to bring this young man to Safe Place, where he may get help with the overwhelming obstacles that appeared in his young life."

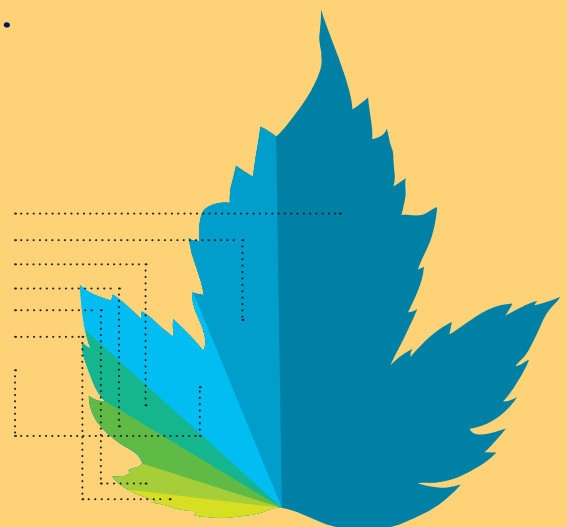
Sam & Alicea Perez  
Denison Karate  
Denison, Texas

## A Year of Changes

2010 was a time of changes and adjustments. National Safe Place experienced changes in leadership at the national office, on the Advisory Board and on the Board of Directors. Although these changes were challenging, they did not detract us from our goal to work with agencies and communities across the country to provide young people with access to help, safety and additional resources. Last year's highlights, stories and contributions are featured in National Safe Place's 2010 annual report, now online at [www.nationalsafeplace.org](http://www.nationalsafeplace.org).

### What happens after Safe Place

Stayed at Shelter	67%
Returned Home	13%
Referred to another agency	4%
Friend / Relative	4%
Transitional Living/Host Home	2%
Foster care	1%
Other	9%





## New Faces at National Safe Place

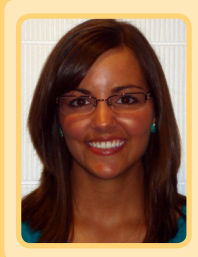


**Danielle White** is a 2011 graduate of Bellarmine University in Louisville, Ky. While at Bellarmine, she studied English and communication with an emphasis in digital media and photography. White was an editor of *The Concord*, Bellarmine's student newspaper and was the president and co-founder of the creative writing club. She also served as the VP of PR for the Bellarmine Communication Association and was inducted into Lambda Pi Eta national communication honor society. After graduation, White made the decision to serve as an AmeriCorps VISTA at National Safe Place. Previously, White served as a Resident Assistant at Bellarmine, as well as a writing center consultant in Bellarmine's Academic Resource Center. She is from Columbus, Ind.



**Toni Marie Upchurch** was born in Connecticut, but lived in Orlando, Fla., until 2008 when she gave up the hot weather and moved to New Albany, Ind., with her husband. She has two children, Devon, 14 and Judah, 20 months. Upchurch received her BA in Humanities with a minor in English from Rollins College in Winter Park, Fla.,

in 2008 and a MS in Business Communications from Spalding University in 2011. Her love for service led her to join the AmeriCorps VISTA program and to work to fight poverty through organizational capacity building at National Safe Place. She hopes that, upon completing her year of service, she will have gained invaluable experience in the field of non-profit work and will have assisted National Safe Place in its vision to help youth.



**Hillary Bond** is the new Communications Coordinator for National Safe Place, providing public relations and communications support for the organization and its 140+ member agencies. She joined National Safe Place in July 2011 and is responsible for communicating with the media, coordinating publications, such as the annual report, newsletter and eNews, writing press releases, managing social media accounts and more. In addition, she serves as the lead staff member on the National Safe Place advisory board's Awareness committee. Prior to joining the organization, Bond spent two years as a publicist for an independent book publishing company. She was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Public Relations from Belmont University in Nashville, Tenn.

## Safe Place launches in Seattle



*Laurie Jackson addressing the public and the media at the Seattle Safe Place launch.*

On any given night in Seattle, more than 1,000 young people may find themselves without a safe place to go. Some are abandoned, some are abused and few know where to get help. Within 48 hours on the street, one in three

runaways will be approached by a predator.

On August 31st, the Safe Place program launched in King County, making it the largest community in Washington to commit to the program. National Safe Place partnered with King County and local service agencies—YouthCare, Friends of Youth and Auburn Youth Resources—to provide youth in Seattle access to immediate help and safety.

King County Metro Transit has joined the program as the first Safe Place site. Thanks to this commitment, help is just a bus away.

"We are thrilled to bring this Safe Place program to King County and the Seattle Metropolitan area," said Laurie Jackson, Executive Director of National Safe Place. "As a community with a large number of homeless and street youth, having Safe Place as an option presents a great opportunity to connect these young people in need to available resources. Utilizing King County Metro buses as Safe Place sites make accessing safety as close as the nearest bus."



*King County Councilmember Kathy Lambert joined by King County Executive Dow Constantine, Laurie Jackson and other government and youth service representatives at the Seattle press conference.*

## VISTA View

*Danielle White, AmeriCorps VISTA*



The AmeriCorps VISTA program at National Safe Place is entering the final year of the three-year grant with a new set of VISTAs. Starting July 25th, following a pre-service orientation in Atlanta, the four new VISTAs began their year of service. Toni Upchurch and Danielle White are serving in the national office, while Jaclyn McDole and Tavonna Harper serve at YMCA

Safe Place Services in Louisville, Ky., and Seton Youth Shelter in Virginia Beach, Va., respectively.

Each of the VISTAs has made a year-long commitment to serve with the goal of building capacity in the Safe Place programs. The VISTA training binder defines capacity building as “Tasks and activities to create, expand or strengthen systems or processes in order to increase an organization’s ability to function effectively and meet its mission.”

Projects being undertaken by Upchurch and White include developing a protocol to be distributed to Safe Place sites detailing the steps to be taken when faced with younger children who would not typically be served by member agencies, assisting with grant and expansion research and gathering compelling stories of youth helped through Safe Place agencies to be video recorded and used in future public relations and awareness efforts. White and Upchurch are also developing Youth Volunteer and Street Outreach guides, which will include a collection of resources and tips to help

member agencies in developing their own programs. These projects were sparked by a recent webinar on Engaging Youth Volunteers.

McDole is working with Safe Place sites in Louisville to create a Development Plan, which will be put into effect in 2012. The plan’s purpose is to maximize established relationships with Safe Place sites by recognizing those organizations which have demonstrated a superior commitment to the Safe Place program. This will be done through a series of recognition activities, such as banners, PSAs and luncheons, which will demonstrate to the community the organizations’ commitment to Safe Place Services. The successful implementation of the plan will then be translated to a guide, which will be distributed to member agencies across the country in hopes that they, too, will implement similar projects.

In Virginia Beach, Harper is hard at work recruiting fire stations, schools and libraries in Norfolk to act as Safe Place sites after successfully getting the fire stations in Virginia Beach on board. The Norfolk expansion is set to begin as early as September.

As Matt Reed, executive director of YMCA Safe Place Services, said in a recent board meeting, “What’s so great about the VISTAs is their energy and enthusiasm. Walking into a room with them, it’s like they’ve just had espressos.”



**VISTA**  
Volunteers In Service To America

## National Safe Place Staff

**Laurie Jackson** – Executive Director

**Robin Donaldson** – Program Development &  
Research Director/VISTA Project Supervisor

**Sherry Casey** – Program Coordinator

**Susan Harmon** – Organizational Advancement Director

**Hillary Bond** – Communications Coordinator

**Julie Arney** – Office Manager

**Toni Upchurch** – AmeriCorps VISTA Program Assistant

**Danielle White** – AmeriCorps VISTA Program Assistant

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[www.nationalsafeplace.org](http://www.nationalsafeplace.org)

## National Safe Place Honors...

National Safe Place is pleased to recognize the contributions of Maria Hughes, who recently resigned from the National Safe Place Board of Directors after more than two years of service. Maria's talent and insight will be missed. National Safe Place and the Board of Directors are grateful for her service.

CSX Corporation and QuikTrip Corporation supported National Safe Place with recent donations of \$200,000 and \$145,000 respectively. CSX and QuikTrip are valuable partners in National Safe Place's mission to providing access to immediate help and supportive resources for all young people in crisis. National Safe Place is thankful for their ongoing commitment and support.

Kiwanis International is a global organization that brings people together around the world to work together to meet community needs, particularly the needs of children and youth. The Metrobon Kiwanis Club in Louisville, Ky., has faithfully supported National Safe Place for several years.

National Safe Place is pleased to welcome two new members to the Board of Directors:



- Gary Colen is CEO and President of AMP Agency. He guides the strategic development of all sales and marketing initiatives and is responsible for longstanding partnerships with high profile clients such as U.S. Cellular, The Food Bank for New York City and Maybelline New York. AMP Agency currently offers public relations and marketing support for National Safe Place.



- Tom Patania is CEO and President of Youth Crisis Center Foundation. Tom had served as Vice Chair of the Board of Directors for National Safe Place, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Florida Network of Youth & Family services and has received several awards including Presidential Commendation by President Reagan for developing public-private partnerships.