

the Connection

winter 2011



National Safe Place and Southwest Airlines Announce 2011 HEROES for Youth Award Recipient



National Safe Place and Southwest Airlines announce Harry Wilson, Senior Fellow at ICF International, as the 2011 *HEROES for Youth* award recipient. Southwest Airlines sponsors this annual award, established by National Safe Place, to recognize individuals who have made extraordinary contributions nationally to services provided to at-risk youth.

“Southwest Airlines is honored to sponsor the *HEROES for Youth* award, and we salute and recognize the work of Harry Wilson as noble and inspiring,” said Linda Rutherford, Southwest’s Vice President for Communication and Strategic Outreach. “Creating a safety net for

our youth is our collective communities’ most important task. They are our future.”

With more than 30 years of experience serving youth and communities, Wilson has pioneered new and innovative programs to better serve at-risk youth. As associate commissioner of the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), he led and participated in important initiatives of the past decade, including the Mentoring Children of Prisoners program, National Youth Summit, Runaway and Homeless Youth program, First Lady’s Helping America’s Youth Initiative and others.

Prior to his role at the FYSB, Wilson worked as a consultant to HHS in federal and youth grant positions, served as dean of students for the Montcalm School, was the assistant director of Starr Commonwealth Schools and worked as a training consultant for the Michigan Association of Children’s Alliances in Lansing.

Wilson has received many awards for his work, including a Juvenile Justice Award for Service to Children and Families and a National Youth Impact Award.

“Mr. Wilson is a dedicated youth advocate and his history in working to promote the rights and services of young people is outstanding,” said Laurie Jackson, National Safe Place Executive Director. “We are truly honored to recognize him as this year’s Hero for Youth.”

National Safe Place based the HEROES for Youth award on the following criteria:

- H** Hear the voices of at-risk youth
- E** Engage in the discussion
- R** Respond to the call
- O** Observe the need for change and take action
- E** Educate and encourage key stakeholders to make a positive difference
- S** Significantly change the lives of at-risk youth for the better

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Laurie's Corner

It is hard to believe the holiday season is upon us. This year has brought National Safe Place many things for which to be thankful. We have expanded our staff, moved into new geographic areas and provided awareness and services, both on site and via TXT 4 HELP. In November, National Safe Place honored National Runaway Prevention Month along with our member agencies and collaborating partner, National Runaway Switchboard. During the month, agencies worked diligently to create awareness of the issues facing teens and youth and the perils they confront when they leave home. They held runaway prevention events and educated the public about how to get involved in prevention efforts. The Safe Place program was incorporated into several National Runaway Prevention Month messages.

As we celebrate this season, it is likely that we will read news headlines and stories about abuse, neglect, bullying and crisis situations that impact children and youth. Now, more than ever, we must continue to create opportunities for connecting teens in crisis to safety and assistance. It is up to all of us to stand up and say, "This is unacceptable" and offer solutions, places where youth voices can be heard. National Safe Place

is moving toward one such solution. In this edition, you will learn more about the TXT 4 HELP Interactive service. Texting is a popular communication strategy among teens and, beginning in 2012, they will be able to text interactively with mental health professionals. Help is now just a text away.

In October, National Safe Place and Southwest Airlines announced Harry Wilson as the 2011 HEROS for Youth award recipient. Harry has shown a commitment and dedication to youth and the issues they face throughout his career. He is a passionate advocate for youth and an inspiration to all of us wishing to follow his lead.

Finally, during this holiday season, we at National Safe Place want to thank all you for your belief in the work of our organization and your on-going commitment to promote its success. Our mission to provide access to immediate help and supportive resources for young people in crisis continues to drive us every day to bring Safe Place to more communities and awareness to all children and youth. This cannot be done without your assistance and support, so again, we thank you!

Happy Holidays!

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

Howard "Skip" Elliott, Board Chair
CSX
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Sammy Moon
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Jackson, MS

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Linda Rutherford
Southwest Airlines
Dallas, TX

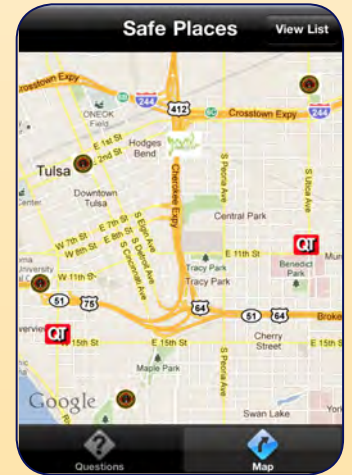
David Thieman
PepsiCo
Tulsa, OK

Safe Place agencies honor National Runaway Prevention Month

National Runaway Prevention Month is co-sponsored each November by the National Runaway Switchboard and the National Network for Youth. The goals of the month are to raise awareness about the issues that runaways and homeless youth face and to educate the public about solutions to preventing youth from running away from home.

Between 1.6 and 2.8 million youth run away each year and the impact is felt in communities across the country. It is up to all of us - individuals, businesses, community groups, educators, elected officials, human service agencies - to work together and identify helpful resources for youth in need.

Several Safe Place agencies honored National Runaway Prevention Month. Here are a few highlights:

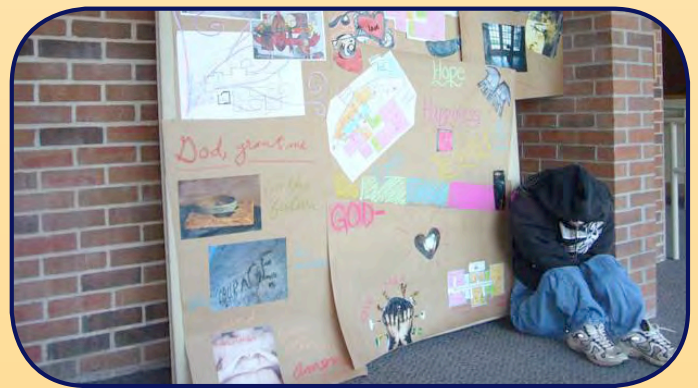


"Safe Place Tulsa" phone app



Wheeling, West Virginia - Youth Services System, Inc. (YSS) and Wheeling Jesuit University co-hosted the inaugural Wheeling SleepOut, an overnight event that raised awareness of runaway and homeless youth in the Ohio Valley. The event, held

on the university's soccer field, attracted more than 170 students, volunteers and residents from the area who built cardboard shelters to simulate the difficulties that runaway and homeless youth face. The Wheeling SleepOut raised more than \$26,000 to support the programs and services YSS offers for runaway and homeless youth.



Synergy Services "One Homeless Night" exhibit



The ladies of YSS kicked off National Runaway Prevention Month by showing off their socks on "Green Sock Day." Pictured from L to R: Lori Timmer, Sondra Jackson, Lori Bresnahan, Brenda Howell, Holly Fox and Kelly Davis.

Tulsa, Oklahoma - To honor National Runaway Prevention Month, Youth Services of Tulsa (YST) launched the nation's first Safe Place phone app: Safe Place Tulsa. YST joined forces with developer MacroSolve to create the app for smartphones, which provides an up-to-the-minute list of available Safe Place sites and the closest Safe Place site to the user's current location (for phones with GPS capabilities). It is now available in the iTunes store for free.



Young people participated in an indoor "sleep out" at Synergy's Youth Resiliency Center.

TXT 4 HELP Interactive

National Safe Place is pleased to announce the interactive texting option is now live and available to young people. Any youth texting to 69866 will receive a response that includes the option to reply with “2chat” for more help, which will then link them to the interactive texting center to chat with a trained mental health professional.

National Safe Place is planning a major media campaign to publicly announce the option in early 2012. In the meantime, staff will

continue to assess the system and work to fix any difficulties we may encounter.

In January, Safe Place member agencies will receive media and marketing materials to coincide with the official launch. Keep an eye on your email inbox for more details about the TXT 4 HELP Interactive launch.



National Safe Place to launch new website

In January, we will unveil the new and improved National Safe Place website, developed by Kentucky-based agency CurrentMarketing.

“Our website serves as the primary source of information for individuals interested in learning more about Safe Place,” said Laurie Jackson, Executive Director of National Safe Place. “CurrentMarketing has done tremendous work and we believe the new site will communicate the Safe Place mission and message more effectively.”

The updated website will be user-friendly, organized and will include a dynamic window of photo and video elements. Most of the copy has been rewritten with an eye toward search engine optimization (SEO).

“We encourage individuals to share comments with us after viewing the new website,” said Jackson. “User feedback is vital to the development and success of the National Safe Place website.”

National Safe Place Honors...



November 18, 2011 - Maureen Blaha, NRS Executive Director, and Laurie Jackson, NSP Executive Director, at NRS' annual "Spirit of Youth" benefit in Chicago.

Alloy Media + Marketing, Inc. supported National Safe Place with a recent gift of \$5,000. Alloy has been a valuable partner in National Safe Place's mission to provide

access to immediate help and supportive resources for all young people in crisis.

National Safe Place would like to recognize the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) and the University of Oklahoma's Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Centers (RHYTTAC) for leading the 2011 FYSB Grantee Conference in Portland, Oregon. National Safe Place participated as an exhibitor and our very own Robin E. Donaldson led a workshop on incorporating adolescent brain research in youth programming.

National Runaway Prevention Month was a great success thanks to the hard work and dedication of the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS). In November, they tirelessly took the lead in raising awareness of the issues facing runaway and homeless youth and encouraged others to do the same. National Safe Place is honored to stand with NRS to support and protect young people.

VISTA View: MLK Day Safe Place Site Check Project

Danielle White, AmeriCorps VISTA



Each year, the third Monday in January is celebrated across the United States as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

In 1983, MLK Day was established as a federal holiday by President Ronald Reagan to celebrate the birth of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The holiday was first observed in 1986. Eight years later, President Clinton designated the holiday as a day of service and charged the Corporation for National and Community Service with leading the effort. Seventeen years later, the United States continues to honor Dr. King's commitment to service through his holiday. Dr. King is the only non-president to have a national holiday in his honor and MLK Day is the only federal holiday that has been designated as a day of service.

The goal of the MLK Day of Service is to celebrate with a "day on" instead of a "day off." The reasoning behind this choice is best explained by Dr. King's wife, Coretta Scott King:

"The greatest birthday gift my husband could receive is if people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds celebrated the holiday by performing individual acts of kindness through service to others." National Safe Place is celebrating the MLK Day of Service by encouraging member agencies to participate in a Safe Place site check project on January 16, 2012. The MLK Day of Service project will benefit Safe Place programs and the communities they serve by engaging volunteers, celebrating Dr. King's legacy and ensuring that Safe Place sites are ready to assist youth in crisis.

The Safe Place site check project will allow all Safe Place supporters to engage with the local agencies. Safe Place coordinators can organize the project in their community while local staff, board members, and others can serve as volunteers. Volunteers in each community will receive a brief training before being dispatched to local Safe Place sites to check for appropriate signage and ensure that employees are aware of the steps to take if a youth asks for assistance.

A site check project guide was sent to all Safe Place coordinators in early November. The guide includes information on recruiting volunteers, organizing the site checks and raising media awareness. A copy of the guide can be found on the in the agency support center on the National Safe Place website.

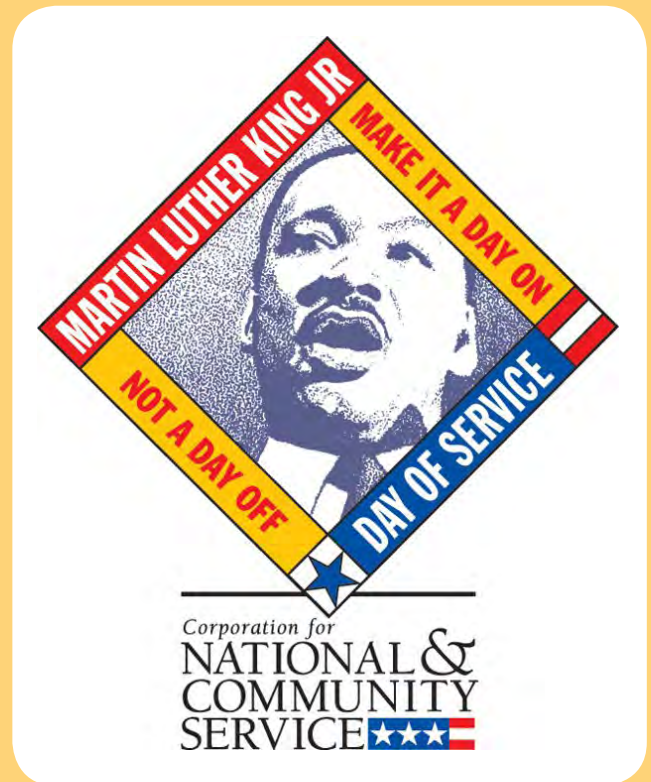
More information on the MLK Day of Service can be found on the official website, mlkday.gov. Resources available on the webpage include action guides, media tools, webinars and free promotional items such as bookmarks and stickers.

As Dr. King said in his Nobel acceptance speech, "I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits."

Safe Place is committed to helping youth achieve these goals. By participating in the 2012 MLK Day of Service, local agencies can help to preserve Dr. King's legacy while continuing to provide a valuable service to the communities they serve.

Mrs. Coretta Scott King is quoted as saying:

"Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is not only for celebration and remembrance, education and tribute, but above all a day of service. All across America on the Holiday, his followers perform service in hospitals and shelters and prisons and wherever people need some help. It is a day of volunteering to feed the hungry, rehabilitate housing, tutoring those who can't read, mentoring at-risk youngsters, consoling the broken-hearted and a thousand other projects for building the beloved community of his dream."



National Safe Place, Inc.
2411 Bowman Ave.
Louisville, Kentucky 40217

www.nationalsafeplace.org



Save The Date!



YFSN
Youth & Family
Services Network

National Conference

Co-Sponsored by National Safe Place & Youth and Family Services Network

September 26-28, 2012

InterContinental Hotel
New Orleans, Louisiana

*More information coming soon—watch for details on the National Safe Place website

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