



## GREETINGS FROM NRS

Dear Friends,

April has been a great month for the National Runaway Safeline. In addition to operating our Crisis Center 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, we participated in regional meetings with other youth-serving organizations, selected a group of young adults with lived experience representing many parts of the country to join our Youth Advisory Board (please see more details below), hosted hundreds of supporters at the Celebrating the Spirit of Youth event and more.

At the recent event, it was wonderful to meet many people who were joining us for the first time and introduce them to our work. As the need for our services continues to increase, it is encouraging to see more people concerned with and committed to combatting the youth mental health and homelessness crises.

I am hopeful about all that lies ahead for NRS and appreciate your interest and support. You can always find more information about our organization and the ways to get involved by visiting us online at [1800RUNAWAY.org](http://1800RUNAWAY.org) and [NationalRunawaySafeline.org](http://NationalRunawaySafeline.org).

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Frankel".

Susan Frankel  
Chief Executive Officer

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT NRS

### CELEBRATING THE SPIRIT OF YOUTH: WRITING THE NEXT CHAPTER

On April 22, 2023, more than 200 guests helped make our signature event,



Celebrating the Spirit of Youth: Writing the Next Chapter, a huge success! It was a memorable evening full of inspiration, entertainment and hope. Sponsors and individual donors helped us raise critical funds for crisis services, prevention initiatives and educational programs.

NRS CEO Susan Frankel had the honor of presenting the Spotlight Award to [Rachel Litchman](#), an advocate whose personal experiences fuel her passion for creating social change. As a member of the NRS Youth Advisory Board, Dane County Youth Action Board, Youth Catalyst Team at Youth Collaboratory and True Colors

United's Youth Forum, Rachel uses her voice locally and nationally to help and inspire other young people.

As a child, Rachel endured sexual abuse, and later, homelessness. She couch-surfed at friends' and strangers' homes and stayed in a shelter while trying to create stability for herself among systems that continually failed her. She shared during her award acceptance speech, "I realized if I wanted anything to change for myself, and for other young people, I didn't have a choice except to advocate for larger systems changes. Being an advocate helped connect me with community. It's the only reason I am not homeless today."

The event featured three original performances by youth from [Center on Halsted](#). Marcellus Diggs-Dallas and Zelda Cohen moved the audience with their soulful musical talents and Lucian Foster read a deeply personal and raw poem.

NRS presented [David Ambroz](#), child welfare expert and award-winning author, with the Spirit of Youth Award. In his best-selling memoir, *A Place Called Home*, David writes about growing up homeless on the streets of New York with a mother suffering from severe mental illness and his subsequent years in foster care.

David shares his story with a hope that others will be motivated to do something. He encouraged everyone in the room to vote, volunteer, donate, become a foster parent -- whatever it takes to improve the lives of youth experiencing crises.

And while guests were treated to David's insightful words during his award acceptance speech, anyone can listen to his compelling messages by tuning in to the "Let's Talk" podcast episodes featuring David. To listen to the two-part series, visit the [NRS website](#) or download the episodes on Spotify, Apple Podcasts or Google Podcasts.

We are grateful to Natalie Martinez, reporter with NBC 5 Chicago, and Mia Sostrin, NRS Youth Advisory Board member, for serving as the event emcees. With passion and authenticity, they guided us through the evening's program.

As NRS Board Chair Bill Hine said in his speech, "preventing and ending youth homelessness takes all of us. Together, we help write a new chapter for youth. A new chapter that supports them and empowers them to thrive."

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## APRIL IS NATIONAL VOLUNTEER MONTH

April is National Volunteer Month, a time to celebrate the individuals who give their time and talents to help nonprofits fulfill their missions. At the National Runaway Safeline, we depend on nearly 100 trained volunteers in the NRS Crisis Center to respond to individuals who reach out for help.

“We are grateful to all of our Crisis Center volunteers who help ensure young people feel safe and supported,” said Jessica Jasurda, Director of Crisis Services. “At all hours of the day, our committed and compassionate volunteers make a measurable impact in the lives of young people and their families.”

NRS also relies on young professionals to volunteer with the Associate Board, a dedicated group of people who raise awareness of NRS and youth homelessness and also fundraise to support our services and programs.

Additionally, the NRS Youth Advisory Board (YAB) is comprised of volunteers with lived experience. They contribute their perspectives and ideas to ensure the youth voice is incorporated in all that we do. Stay tuned for new initiatives from the Youth Advisory Board, including a podcast series.

During National Volunteer Month, and



## MEET OUR NEW YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Our Advisory Board (YAB) is growing!

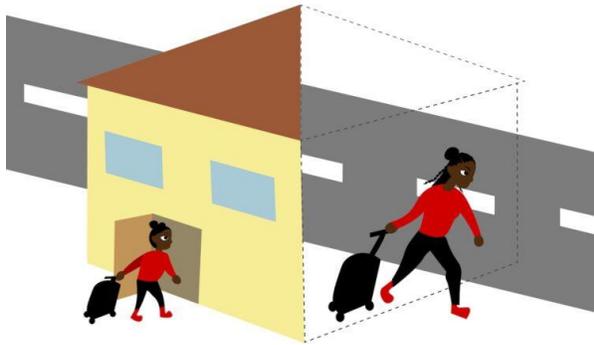
We are excited to share that eight new members joined the NRS YAB this month. They provide valuable perspective to inform and improve our work and help elevate the national discussion about the impact of runaway incidents and homelessness among young people. The new members are young people ages 16 -23 with lived experience with running away, housing instability, being expelled from home and/or homelessness.

“We were thrilled with the responses to our most recent recruitment efforts,” said Em deCordova, Prevention and Youth Engagement Coordinator. “While each new member brings a unique perspective, skill and experience to the Board, all share a genuine interest in helping to shape NRS’s work. I’m excited about where the YAB is headed.”

We encourage you to check out the latest YAB activities and meet the newest board members [here](#).

always, we extend a giant thank you to our volunteers! They are the heart of our organization and we could not accomplish our goals without them. Learn more about our volunteer opportunities [here](#).

## YOUTH IN THE NEWS



### YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING FOSTER CARE FACE HOMELESSNESS. DC ISN'T GIVING THEM AVAILABLE VOUCHERS

**The DC Line** | When Ronnie Harris first entered foster care at 12 years old, she was certain she would be adopted. But, in what felt like no time at all, foster care swallowed her teenage years. The system jerked Harris across the city. Each time she moved, she hoped the next house would hold adoptive parents and her own room. But it never did.

After leaving a particularly neglectful placement, Harris became homeless at 20. She was still experiencing homelessness when she turned 21, the milestone that marks the date young people age out of the foster care system in DC. At the time, the District had dozens of housing vouchers available for young people in foster care who turn 21 without the resources to rent their own apartment. Yet, in the nine years she had spent in care, agency staff never told Harris, now 22, that such vouchers existed.



### KIDS SLEEPING IN SHELTERS, HOTELS: NC DESPERATE TO HELP 12,000 CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

**WRAL News** | More than 12,000 children are in currently in North Carolina's foster care system; however, the actual need is even greater.

The Children's Home Society of North Carolina receives about 300 requests from the state Department of Social Services (NCDSS) every month to help children in immediate need. A shortage of licensed foster families means many children cannot currently be placed.

[Read the Full Article](#)

Read the Full Article



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



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Here to HELP

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