National Safe Place Launches New Safety Program

“Txt 4 Help” to Get Immediate Help to Youth in Crisis

New program will connect youth with a Safe Place via text message

National Safe Place (NSP) recently launched its “Txt 4 Help” program, a 24-hour text-for-support service for youth in crisis. The “Txt 4 Help” program will make getting help for teens easier. Youth in crisis can text the word SAFE and their current address to the number 69866, (e.g. safe 101 Main St., St. Louis, MO), and they will receive an address for the closest Safe Place site and contact number for the local youth shelter. In cities that don’t yet have a Safe Place program, the youth will receive the name and number of the local youth shelter. If there is not a Safe Place program or youth shelter, the youth will receive the number for the National Runaway Switchboard.

The new “Txt 4 Help” program has the ability to reach even more youth in crisis than NSP has reached by traditional means.

Almost 90 percent of teens have regular access to a mobile phone, and 66 percent of those teens prefer text-messaging to calling. NSP believes the “Txt 4 Help” program will change lives. “We strongly believe that by communicating to youth in a way that they’re comfortable with, we will reach thousands more youth needing help than we have in the past,” said Linda Rutherford, chair, of the National Safe Place board of directors. “We are hopeful that this program will encourage teens to ask for help and discourage them from running away.”

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2010 National Safe Place Week

Communities across the country will celebrate National Safe Place Week, March 14-20. To commemorate the occasion, Youth In Need will enlist the help of young people by inviting students in grades K-12 to participate in the third annual National Safe Place Week Poster Contest. The contest is open to students residing in the St. Louis metro area. Three winners will be chosen and their designs will be used throughout the year to educate young people on the resources available to them, to celebrate and honor our community partners who give their time, resources and energy to make our communities safer places for young people and in promoting Safe Place throughout the community.

Show Us Your Safe Place

In addition to sponsoring the contest, Youth In Need invites participating Safe Place sites to join us in commemorating National Safe Place Week by mentioning Safe Place on your marquee, Web site or in your newsletter; schedule a Safe Place presentation or training; and/or send us a photo of your business, your employees and your Safe Place sign. Photos will be published in upcoming issues of the Safe Place newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you!

Help Us Spread the Word About Safe Place

Safe Place aims to raise awareness about its programs through youth and community presentations, which can include:

- A video
- Age-appropriate activities
- Project Safe Place promotional items
- Discussion of the importance of the program and how children and teens can access and use it

If you are aware of any summer camps, programs or groups where a presentation would be ideal, please contact Karen Sieve.

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Each year an estimated 1.5 million youth run away. Most young people do not run away to experience additional freedoms but are running away from a problem that they cannot solve. These are youth who are responding to difficulties at home or at school, with friends or within themselves. A Department of Justice study from 2002 indicates that 21 percent of runaway youth had been either physically or sexually abused within their homes within the year prior to their leaving.

Safe Place was created as a community collaboration that provides easy access to help for young people in dangerous, threatening or vulnerable situations. There are close to 17,000 designated businesses and community buildings displaying the Safe Place sign nationwide and more than 315 in the St. Louis region.

Since 1983, more than 240,000 youth have accessed help at a Safe Place site or contacted their local youth shelter after learning about Safe Place at a school presentation. Since 2006, when Youth In Need became the local provider of Safe Place, more than 47 young people have accessed Safe Place help in the St. Louis metro area.

Become a Fan on Facebook

You can now follow us on Facebook. It’s easy!

If you are not already a registered user, set up a free account at facebook.com. Then, search the Facebook site for “Youth In Need” and “Become a Fan” to stay up-to-date on all the great things happening at Youth In Need.
Safe Places Participate in Holiday Drive

In a time when the downturn economy affects everyone in some capacity, we are especially grateful for the support received from Safe Place partners this holiday season. Overall, 131 businesses, individuals and community organizations “adopted” Youth In Need. Your generosity ensured that all of our young clients had a new present to enjoy and improved the homes and classrooms at Youth In Need. The community’s generosity ensures that children and families at Youth In Need have warm memories.

**Highlights included:**

- **Central County Fire Department** delivered several truckloads (including a fire truck) of toys collected in the community.
- **Dr. Beth Burns** adopted the Transitional Living Program and supplied the program with funds to ensure each teen had a happy holiday.
- **Kathryn Linnemann Library** staff adopted the Emergency Shelter and supplied Wii accessories and games as well as household goods.

12 Months of Giving

Adopt Youth In Need at your Safe Place site for one month and provide small items that make a big difference in the lives of homeless children and teens.

**The following items are needed:**

- Bottled water
- New blankets
- Paper towels
- Deodorant
- New socks & underwear
- Toilet paper

Make a difference and encourage a culture of philanthropy and teamwork in your office, classroom, congregation and beyond.

**Contact Lucy Schuering at 636-757-9334 or lschuering@youthinneed.org**

Procedure Guidelines

**What To Do When A Child Needs Safe Place Help**

**Step 1:** Get a general idea of what is wrong. Ask if the child or teen came in to your location because it is a “safe place.”

**Step 2:** Do not try to go into detail about the problem. Take the young person to the quiet area designated for Safe Place visits.

**Step 3:** Call Youth In Need’s 24-Hour Help Line at 636-946-3771, and tell them you are calling from a Safe Place site.

**Step 4:** Tell the youth that someone will be there shortly.

**Step 5:** Check in on the child every few minutes and show support without getting into the specifics of the situation.

**Step 6:** Make sure the youth waits inside the building in the designated area.

**Step 7:** When the Safe Place representative arrives, ask to see Youth In Need identification.

**Step 8:** After the young person has been escorted from your Safe Place site, record the staff member’s name you spoke with, your name and the date and time of the incident.

Safe Place Checklist

- [ ] Is your Safe Place sign securely attached and visible?
- [ ] Is your Safe Place manual easily accessible to all employees?
- [ ] Are all employees familiar with the Safe Place program?
- [ ] Is your “If Closed Call” decal posted on the front door?
- [ ] Is your yellow Safe Place procedure sheet posted?
2009 Safe Place Year In Review

Central County Fire & Rescue received the 2009 Distinguished Group Volunteer Service Award from Youth In Need Board President Carolyn Koenig.

Safe Place 2009 Poster Contest Winner Dominique Hyde received recognition at her school.

Staff members from Youth In Need’s Emergency Shelter, Street Outreach Program and Safe Place Program pose for a group photo before guests arrive.

QuikTrip employees wear their Safe Place bracelets to raise awareness during National Safe Place Week.

Safe Place Manager Karen Sieve provides training for employees of St. Andrews Cinema (Photos by Michael Schlueter, Courtesy of StreetScape Magazine).

Cottleville Fire Protection District kicks off Youth In Need’s golf tournament in style! (Photos by Michael Schlueter, Courtesy of StreetScape Magazine).