

Opinion: Time to understand why youth run away

By Laura Salinas

Homeless youth are living on the streets in thousands of communities nationwide, including ours. However, often we don't stop to think about what led them to find refuge on the streets. Many of these adolescents are runaway and throwaway youth.

Tahoe Youth & Family Services is proud to be participating in honoring National Runaway Prevention Month this November. This national awareness campaign operates in conjunction with many national and local nonprofits including the National Runaway Switchboard and California Coalition for Youth.



Laura Salinas

The goal of this campaign is to promote awareness and to educate the public about solutions to prevent youth from running away. There are many factors that lead youth to run away or to be thrown out of their home. Some of the most common factors include: family conflict, abuse, sexual orientation, drug/alcohol related issues or escaping state care, such as foster care services.

For whatever reason youth choose to run away, life on the streets further exposes them to life threatening risks such as pregnancy, suicide attempts, substance abuse, sexual

exploitation, or participating in criminal activity. This way of life may seem unimaginable to many of us; but the truth is that there are many youth in our community sleeping in the wilderness, wandering the streets and trying to find the means to survive.

Tahoe Youth & Family Services' Drop In Centers strive to provide information, resources and supportive services to all youth who are homeless, couch surfing, living in poverty or who may be at risk of becoming homeless. Our Drop In Centers offer food, clothes, showers, laundry services, hygiene essentials, and help in obtaining proper identification.

Besides offering basic necessities, our Drop In Centers are a great place to relax and get off the streets. TYFS also offers a 24-hour crisis line: 800.870.8937.

Our current "wish list" for our Drop In Centers includes: socks, boxer shorts, disposable razors, blankets, sleeping bags, tents and backpacks. For more information on how you can help provide for our homeless youth, please contact Outreach Coordinator Cheyanne Lane at our South Lake Tahoe office (530) 541.2445 or email cheyanne@tahoeyouth.org. You may also contact Communications Coordinator Julie Franklin at our Gardnerville office at (775) 782.4202 or email her at julie@tahoeyouth.org. Our South Lake Tahoe Drop In Center is open 1-5pm Tuesday-Saturday. Our Gardnerville Ranchos Drop In Center is open Tuesday-Friday 3-7pm and Saturdays 2-7pm. Please "Like us" and Follow us on Facebook.

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." – Anne Frank

Laura Salinas is a youth advocate with Tahoe Youth & Family Services.