



Youth Oasis Celebrates National Safe Place Week

In celebration of National Safe Place week, Youth Oasis opened the doors of the Emergency Shelter on Friday, March 16, from 12-1pm, to welcome community members for an Open House. Designated by Congress as National Safe Place Week, the third week of March offers Safe Place programs and supporting organizations the opportunity to showcase to the nation and to local communities the year-long efforts to provide immediate support for youth in crisis. Programs nationwide are encouraged to hold public events to promote program awareness and to advocate about the need to address youth issues.

While at the Open House, community members were educated about Youth Oasis' programs and services, as well as to the need for community

support for the new Safe Place program. Those in attendance were encouraged to consider becoming First Responders, those volunteers who help to respond to the needs of the youth visiting the designated Safe Place sites. Attendees were also encouraged to be-

come community "liaisons," helping to spread the word about the new program. Staff were available to answer questions and to give insight into the plight of homeless and runaway youth. Following the presentation, community members were also given a guided tour of the facility, offering an inside look at shelter life. Attendees also participated in the judging of the first ever Safe Place poster contest (see page 2).

Overall, the event was seen as a great success! Youth Oasis would like to thank all who were in attendance, as well as those who contributed to the success of the event. A special thanks to the Alternative Spring Break Students who volunteered through the week to paint and clean the shelter in preparation of the event (see page 2). Another special thanks goes out to Whole Foods Market, Dominos Pizza and Coca-Cola of Baton Rouge for helping to provide a great lunch for all!



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Alternative Spring Break	2
Contest Winners	2
Volunteer Update	3
April Training	3
Capital City Comments	4

Safe Place Welcomes A New Site!



Safe Place would like to officially welcome the staff of the A.C. Lewis YMCA on Foster Drive to the Safe Place Team! The staff completed the necessary Site Training on Wednesday, March 28, designating the branch as the first YMCA Safe Place Site in Baton Rouge. A special thanks goes to Mike Comeaux, Executive Director, and his staff at the A.C. Lewis branch for their commitment to the youth of Baton Rouge. More Site Trainings are scheduled for the month of April, so stay tuned !

Spring Breakers Help with YO Spring Cleaning!



During the week of March 11-16, Youth Oasis played host to some very special visitors with a very special mission. Volunteering to help with our Spring Cleaning! Eleven students of Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, Texas, spent the week at Youth Oasis helping to renovate the Shelter. The students were



participating in an Alternative Spring Break trip, designed to give student volunteers a much different Spring Break experience. Rather than spend their time lounging on sandy beaches, these special students chose to spend the week helping to ensure that our Shelter is not only a Safe Place for youth, but also a nice place to call home, even if only for a short while!

Marisa Espinoza, Student Director of the Alternative Spring Break Program, explains that team members become involved to be “immersed in diverse environments,” enabling them to “experience, discuss, and understand social issues in a significant way.” Espinoza says she would like Baton Rouge to know that “Youth Oasis helps open doors of opportunity and a better future for these youth.” She also reminds local volunteers that “no matter what you are doing...you ARE making a difference.” To conclude their work at Youth Oasis, the students donated magnet boards and handmade magnets for each of the rooms in the Shelter to give youth the opportunity to display personal mementos. Youth Oasis would like to thank all of the students for their commitment to volunteering! ☺



If you are interested in becoming a Safe Place site, please contact Youth Oasis at 225-343-6300.

Congratulations!

Safe Place would like to say Congratulations to the members of the Boys & Girls Club of Baton Rouge who participated in our first ever Safe Place Poster Contest. Over



40 youth submitted Safe Place themed posters. All participants received a Free game of bowling from Circle Bowl. Our two Grand Prize winners received a Free Bowling Party for 5 at Circle Bowl. We want to congratulate Eunice Koomson, age 9, and Paul Robinson, age 11, for their Grand Prize winning submissions. Students were instructed to creatively display a “Safe Place” scene. Thanks again to all of the Boys & Girls Club members who participated! We think you are all WINNERS! ☺



An Intern's Perspective

On Saturday, March 24, 2007, the staff of Safe Place conducted a Community Orientation open to the public. Community members were informed about Youth Oasis programs and services, including the Safe Place program. Attendees were also given a snapshot of the plight of runaway and homeless youth. The purpose of the community orientation was to introduce the need for Safe Place First Responders. Attendees were invited to stay for First Responder training that immediately followed the Community Orientation.

First Response Volunteers are those caring and concerned adults who provide immediate assistance to youth in crisis at a Safe Place site. These volunteers are the liaisons between Youth Oasis and youth in need. Training consisted of Youth Oasis and Safe Place policies and procedures, responsibilities of First Response Volunteers, and crisis intervention skills. The day ended with three trained and eager First Response Volunteers.

As a Co-facilitator & Social Work Intern, it was a great experience because it provided me the opportunity to advocate for our community's youth. It allowed me to witness dedicated members of the community volunteering their time to benefit the youth of Baton Rouge. **Continued on page 5...**



April Volunteer Trainings

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a Safe Place First Responder, we invite you to attend one of our scheduled trainings during the month of April. All the scheduled trainings will be held at the Emergency Shelter at 260 South Acadian. See you there!

For more information about volunteer opportunities, please call us or visit us on the web!

- Tuesday, April 10, 6-8pm
Training Part A
- Tuesday, April 17, 6-8pm
Training Part B
- Sunday, April 15, 1-5pm
Complete Training
- Saturday, April 28, 10am-2pm
Complete Training

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." Mahatma Ghandi

Capital City Comments

A necessary part of the evolution of Safe Place is community organization and advocacy; so, as a result, a role frequently played by Youth Oasis staff is that of the town criers, spreading the word of youth issues far and wide. When I began my career at Youth Oasis, I must say that I had my work cut out for me; little did I know that Youth Oasis and runaway & homeless youth issues were not a common topic of discussion in the Capital City area. It has been a challenge to begin to raise awareness, but slowly more and more people are hearing about our organization and the need for our services. Advocacy lies at the center of all of my Safe Place duties, as well as those of all of my co-workers.

Youth Oasis is here to demonstrate the need for youth centered prevention and intervention programs to the Capital City area. The following information was compiled by Youth Oasis staff for the purpose of doing just that! The data was collected from a variety of sources and subject to human error, but I hope you get the point!

- Each day between **1.3 and 2.8 million** runaway and homeless youth live on the streets of America (National Runaway Switchboard, 2006).
- **1 in 7** youth will run away before the age of **18** (NRS, 2006)
- Each year approximately **5,000** runaway and homeless youth die because they commit suicide, lack medical care, or become victims of abduction or murder (NRS, 2006).
- **48%** of youth runaway due to family problems, such as violence or divorce (NRS, 2006).

Continued on page 5...



Thanks to Our Supporters This Month!



Come and join us in helping the YMCA of Baton Rouge to celebrate Healthy Kids Month

@

Healthy Kids Day
Saturday, April 28th
9am until 1pm

LSU indoor football facility
FREE ADMISSION

*door prizes *obstacle courses *face painting
*health information
*health screenings *and more!

For more information, call the
C.B. Pennington Jr. YMCA
225-272-9622



Youth Oasis

If your **DOOR** closes,
ours **OPENS**.



**260 South Acadian
Thruway
P.O. Box 66437
Baton Rouge, LA 70896
225-343-6300
225-343-6303 fax
www.youthoasis.org
safeplace@youthoasis.org**

An Intern's Perspective, contd...

Safe Place is a much needed program within the community. It allows youth who find themselves in confusing or dangerous situations to obtain immediate help. The program encourages youth in crisis to seek supportive and critical services on their own. Safe Place also acts in a preventative method by educating youth about the dangers of running away and of making important decisions without the support of caring adults.

The Community Orientation and Volunteer Training was vital because it educated community members about available services that will continue to grow. As a trained volunteer stated, "I wish a program like this had existed before", when she knew a youth who could have "benefited". Members in attendance are doing their part to provide youth a better chance of accessing help when they need it the most! ☺

written by Trina Johnson, LSU MSW Intern

Capital City Comments, contd...

- Youth Oasis helped to provide residential services to **172** youth in Baton Rouge in 2005. In 2006, that number increased to **210** youth served.
- Over **1,000** students were enrolled as homeless in EBR schools prior to Hurricane Katrina. Following the storm, more than **4,000** students were identified and enrolled as homeless (Carolyn Coleman, EBRPS System's Homeless Liaison).
- In, 2006, the National Runaway Switchboard handled **113,916** calls from throughout the nation. **76%** of the calls received to NRS are females (NRS, 2006). **57%** of callers have been on the streets for one week or less (NRS, 2006).
- Although the NRS is not well known in Louisiana, **1,096** of those calls were made from our state with **24%** of those calls coming from area code **225** (NRS, 2006).
- In 2006, **520** runaway youth were reported to Baton Rouge City Police.

As you can tell, the streets are never a "safe place." This is why Youth Oasis was founded in 1998 and continues to grow every day! If you were impacted by what you have just read, we challenge you to forward this newsletter on to your friends and family in the Capital City area. Together, we CAN make a difference, one youth at a time!

Sincerely,

Carlie Galloway, GSW

Look for the Capital City Comments section in upcoming newsletters. If you have anything you wish to contribute to this section, please call or email Safe Place at 225-343-6300 or safeplace@youthoasis.org. ☺