

November is National Homeless Youth Prevention Month (#NHYPM), a public awareness campaign designed to “shine a light” on the experiences of homeless youth that too often remain invisible. It is also an opportunity to spotlight the resources available to support youth in crisis throughout the nation. Youth MOVE Colorado will join national efforts to increase awareness and promote solutions to prevent and end youth homelessness. We believe every one of us can make an impact. Use this toolkit for ideas about how you can increase awareness, learn and provide support.



## ABOUT THE ISSUE:

In the United States, approximately 4.2 million youth ages 13 to 25 experience homelessness every year. This crisis was exacerbated by the pandemic. Since March 2020, youth have endured crises stemming from being out of school, losing access to regular connections and supports, extreme isolation and escalating tensions at home. Homeless youth faced increasingly dangerous conditions on the streets. According to Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, one in 10 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25, and at least one in 30 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17 experience some form of homelessness over the course of a year. They may be couch surfing, sleeping on the streets, or staying in shelters.

## FROM THE YOUTH PERSPECTIVE:

Youth MOVE CO is trying to increase awareness and we believe it starts with having more conversations involving youth and young adults. We hosted Speak Up events in the summer of 2021 to learn from youth about youth homelessness in Colorado. What we found is the community response in Colorado is varied and there is a lack of understanding about why young people might be homeless. Many youth shared they lived in communities where the issue of youth homelessness is not discussed and if it is there is a lot of stigma if a youth is homeless. Most youth felt there was a general lack of easily available information about how youth can help themselves if they are homeless, and generally not enough support available for them.





Young people we talked to believe the better programs work together to help youth become self-sustaining adults the better results we will get. Addiction, trafficking and harmful relationships are big issues for youth. These are things all systems and partners need to work on together. No matter what system, whether foster care, mental health or other youth system, having services end at 18 did not make sense to most youth and they felt youth are still very much in need of help beyond 18. Most adult programs do not understand how to work with youth. When programs like these end, youth are often dropped and forgotten.

There are not a lot of youth shelters or programs and some of the homeless centers are crowded so they can't provide proper resources for youth and young adults. Many places set up emergency shelters for the colder months but not many allow youth ESPECIALLY those in cold places. So, youth end up remaining outside in very cold weather. Youth also thought that youth may struggle more if they experienced homeless as a child with their family. Many youth shared that they struggle with moves between schools and not feeling connected to one place. We think that the isolation of homeless youth in small communities makes them vulnerable and they are either taken advantage of or disregarded. Youth often are abused or manipulated when they are on their own and homeless. Many youth worried about talking to adults to get help or report abuse because they were not sure what would happen next. They thought that educating staff and volunteers in places that help youth on how not to stigmatize or criminalize their situation is essential. Also helping youth to know their rights and providing information on available resources is important. Too often people think that we simply need clothes and a meal. We need good people and safe places to stay to be successful. We are extremely deserving of this help and by supplying us with a case worker, and therapist/psychiatrist for those who need one, we will provide not just a temporary fix, but set us up to succeed in the world.



**Here are a few ideas Youth MOVE CO leaders came up with to address youth homelessness:**

- Increase resources and improve facilities serving youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.
- Developing a more efficient way of distributing resources to ensure small rural communities can support homeless youth.
- Create a campaign created with youth, state partners and community organizations, that includes a plan to address youth homelessness with a clear agenda. Having those plans ratified and committed to.
- Making sure there are resources across the state of Colorado, so youth feel less anxious about being forced to leave a place they love to find a home.
- Set up a hotline for homeless youth with youth helping answer questions and connect youth to resources.
- Dedicated resources to pay for therapists, case workers, and the basic needs of homeless youths.
- Create a plan that is beyond decreasing youth homelessness as a statistic. If youth homelessness decreases in one year, what is actually being done to insure young people continue to thrive and grow under the resources provided to them. Our true goal should be to look at what happens when we are older than 25.

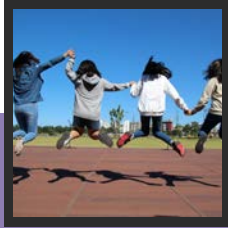


# TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



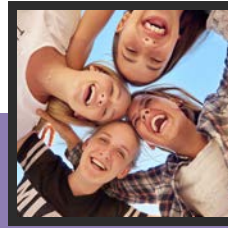
## **PARTICIPATE**

Host or join events focusing on homeless youth.



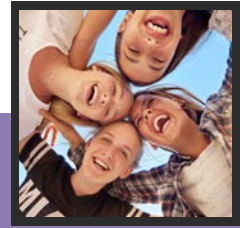
## **BUILD AWARENESS**

Share our posts on your social media account.



## **EXPRESS THROUGH ART**

Create a spoken word video, picture or poem to share your experiences.



## **PROVIDE SUPPORT**

Join with others in your community to create care packages or host a food drive.

## **PARTICIPATE: HOST OR JOIN EVENTS FOCUSING ON HOMELESS YOUTH.**

### **Ideas to get you started:**

#### **OPPORTUNITY ONE:**

Use the events calendar included in this toolkit to spread the word. Sign up and support #homelessyouthawareness by inviting other youth to join you at events.

#### **OPPORTUNITY TWO:**

Reach out and invite your schools McKinney Vento Liaison, a homeless youth provider or member or your local homeless coalition to come and share about youth homelessness and provide information about resources in the community that can support youth.

### OPPORTUNITY THREE:

Host a Powerful Conversation. A powerful conversation provides a safe place for people to come together to talk. These conversations are a chance for people to become more familiar with the youth experience, hear different perspectives, learn and think about how we want our community to move forward. This could be hosted virtually or in in-person. Here are a few tips to help you with your event.

- STEP 1:** Bring together a small group to confirm the date, time and location for your event. Determine who will help facilitate the conversation.
- STEP 2:** After your group has confirmed the event details, spread the word by posting flyers in your community, at school, libraries, churches and other popular places. Be sure to also post on your social media.
- STEP 3:** Develop your agenda including some data worth attention or a short video to start the conversation. Come up with 2 or 3 powerful questions that you will use to help guide the conversation.
- STEP 4:** Host your Powerful Conversation and then share back with Youth MOVE CO at [youthmoveco@gmail.com](mailto:youthmoveco@gmail.com) a blog or short post about your event.

### OPPORTUNITY FOUR:

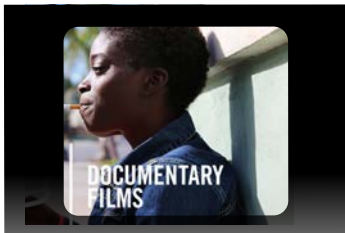
Host a movie night. Bring a group together to watch a movie about youth homelessness. Movies are a powerful way to understand the realities of this issue. This event can be hosted as virtual or in person. Here are some tips from 1800Runaway for hosting a successful movie night:

- STEP 1:** Form a small “planning committee.” The group should discuss potential movies, possible dates and times, how you will spread the word and recruit attendees, and event logistics, such as where you will host the screening/discussion.
- STEP 2:** After your group has confirmed the event details, spread the word by posting flyers in your community, at school, libraries, churches and other popular places.

**STEP 3:** Post about the movie night on social media and create a Facebook event.

**STEP 4:** Create discussion questions ahead of time and determine who will lead this part of the program.

**Here are a few suggested movies:**



**SHELTER**

<https://youtu.be/KUfNbNBFwRI>

A compelling story of a youth in an emergency shelter.



**LOST IN AMERICA**

<https://youtu.be/c6yRQ2ElotE>

Profiles several homeless youth while exploring the issues that have contributed to the crisis.



**AMERICAN STREET KID**

<https://www.americanstreetkid.com>

Follows several young people, who reveal how they became homeless and discusses their daily struggle to survive on the streets of Los Angeles.



**HOMESTRETCH**

<https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/documentaries/homestretch/>

Follows three homeless teens as they fight to stay in school, graduate, and create a new life.



## **BUILD AWARENESS: CREATE A POST OR SHARE OUR POSTS ON YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT.**

An important part of National Homeless Youth Awareness Month is sharing information, experiences and what you and your network are doing.

### **Ideas to get you started:**

#### **OPPORTUNITY ONE:**

Add the #NRPM2021 frame to your Facebook profile picture. To do this, visit [facebook.com/ profilepicframes](https://facebook.com/profilepicframes), search for NRPM, and upload your new profile picture with the frame. Encourage your friends and family to do this as well. You can share the edited picture on other social media accounts for extra impact.

#### **OPPORTUNITY TWO:**

Post an Instagram or Facebook story. Use a caption or record yourself talking about the impact of youth homelessness and your ideas for what individuals, organizations, or policy makers can do to prevent and end youth homelessness. To keep the conversation going, take a screen capture of your story and post it directly to your feed! Be sure to use #NHYPM, #youthhomelessawareness, #YMCO.

#### **OPPORTUNITY THREE:**

Share your commitment to end youth homelessness by completing a commitment card and posting a photo of it on social media for all to see. Include a message that lets friends and followers know how you plan to support runaway and homeless youth and using the hashtag #NHYPM, #youthhomelessawareness, # YMCO.



## OPPORTUNITY FOUR:

Follow @youthmoveco on Instagram and @youthMOVECO on facebook and share our post. In our November Youth MOVE Newsletter we will be sharing sample post and visuals you can use. You can sign up for our newsletter here:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/P8R8Y6M>

## EXPRESS THROUGH ART: CREATE A SPOKEN WORD VIDEO, PICTURE OR POEM TO SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES.

Youth MOVE CO is hosting a youth expressions contest. We are asking youth and young adults between the ages of 14 and 24 to create a piece of art, a 30 second to 1 1/2 minute digital story or spoken word about youth homelessness. The top three submissions selected will receive a \$50.00 gift card. For any video submissions upload them to youtube and send the link. Please send all submissions to [youthmoveco@gmail.com](mailto:youthmoveco@gmail.com). Submission must be received by November 25th.

## PROVIDE SUPPORT: JOIN WITH OTHER IN YOUR COMMUNITY TO CREATE CARE PACKAGES OR HOST A FOOD DRIVE.

Care packages are a great way to support youth experiencing homelessness. You might create basic human need packages that include basic toiletries, socks, money for public transportation and other necessities. With winter coming you could have a mitten and hat drive. You could create self-care packages. You could help create meal packages to help make sure that food pantries have food for youth. Start by research what local programs need and where you can donate your care packages you might give them to a shelter or leave with your schools McKinney Vento Liaison

- STEP 1:** Determine what items you want to include in your care packages and research costs. If donating to a shelter, reach out to them to find out what they need most.
- STEP 2:** Raise money to purchase the care package items. Contact local sports teams, religious organizations, or nearby businesses to see if they would like to support the fundraiser. Alternatively, host a supply drive where members of your community donate items for the packages.
- STEP 3:** Assemble the care packages. You might include a short handwritten note or sheet of stickers. These simple, personal touches can really lift someone's spirits. Once the packages are complete, deliver them.
- STEP 4:** Share a picture of your completed packages on social media and tag @youthmoveco and use the month's hashtags #NHYPM, #youthhomelessawareness, #YMCO.



# NOVEMBER

## YOUTH AWARENESS MONTH EVENTS

### NOVEMBER 1ST

#### SOCIAL MEDIA BLAST

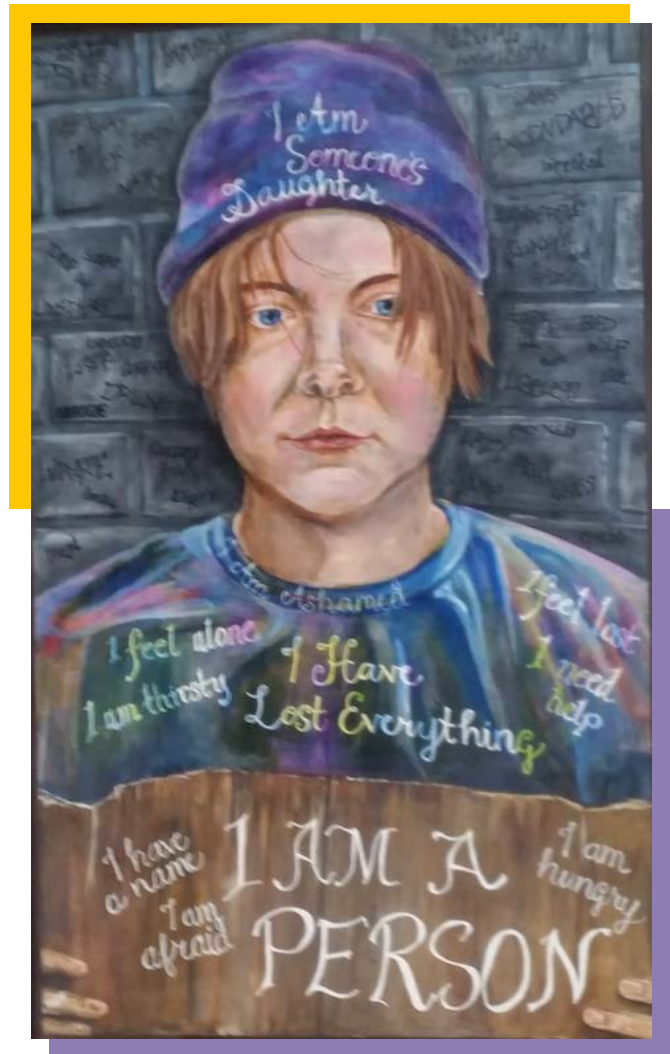
Add the “Shine a Light” filter to your Facebook profile picture, or post with the Instagram and TikTok filters to show your support of runaway and homeless youth for the entire month.

#### LUNCH AND LEARN

Building Strong Collaborative Relationships to End Youth Homelessness: Driving Systemic Change at the Local Level  
November 1, 2021 @ 12:30pm – 1:30pm EST Join leaders from the National Network for Youth (NN4Y) to learn strategies that you can apply in your community regarding local, coordinated approaches to preventing and ending youth and young adult homelessness.

**Click here to RSVP**

**<https://www.1800runaway.org/nrpm-lunch-learn-1-rsvp>**



# NOVEMBER YOUTH AWARENESS MONTH EVENTS

## NOVEMBER 1ST – 5TH EDUCATION WEEK

### NATIONAL RUNAWAY SAFELINE (NRS)

The National Runaway Safeline (NRS) will lead an online educational series about a variety of runaway and homeless youth issues. They will provide current statistics, explore existing issues, offer resources and touch upon the challenges of navigating different systems. Connect with them on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram ahead of time to join the conversation.

|              |                         |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| November 1st | Mental Health           |
| November 2nd | Race and Discrimination |
| November 3rd | Prevention Strategies   |
| November 4th | Human Trafficking       |
| November 5th | LGBTQ                   |

## NOVEMBER 8TH

### YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Join Youth MOVE National for a special offering of Youth Mental Health First Aid. Youth Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders in youth. The course will be offered from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

**Click here to RSVP**

**[https://youthmovenational.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/YMN-MHFA-Flyer-10.7.21-V1.2-1.pdf?mc\\_cid=e067223876&mc\\_eid=f8f547e13d](https://youthmovenational.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/YMN-MHFA-Flyer-10.7.21-V1.2-1.pdf?mc_cid=e067223876&mc_eid=f8f547e13d)**





# NOVEMBER YOUTH AWARENESS MONTH EVENTS

## NOVEMBER 10TH

### WEAR GREEN DAY!

This is the day youth service agencies, community groups, and individuals across the country will host events to “shine a light” on the issues. Consider hosting a powerful conversation or movie night in your community. Share what you did on social media and include the hashtags #NHYPM, #youthhomelessawareness, # YMCO.

## NOVEMBER 17TH

### LIGHT THE NIGHT

This is the day youth service agencies, community groups, and individuals across the country will host events to “shine a light” on the issues. Consider hosting a powerful conversation or movie night in your community. Share what you did on social media and include the hashtags #NHYPM, #youthhomelessawareness, # YMCO.

## NOVEMBER 18TH AND 19TH

### THE PLACE

During National Homeless Youth Awareness Month, The PLACE holds the Night Out project, and educational and fundraising initiative to help end youth homelessness in the Colorado Springs Area.

**Click here to RSVP**

**<https://theplacecos.org/night-out-2021/>**

