Friends,

Like most everyone, I am eager to ring in 2021. This past year was fraught with the unexpected and the surreal. We endured seemingly unending challenges and each of us has survived 2020 in our own way - both personally and professionally.

I am typing this from my car (as a passenger), returning to Chicago from one of the more heartbreaking moments of 2020 for me. Yesterday I attended the funeral of a friend's 14-year-old son. Days earlier he had taken his own life. Although his journey was fraught with his own challenges, he was a staunch advocate for those who were different, those who didn't fit in, those who were often feeling alone, isolated and with little hope.

Standing with a small group of family and friends under dark skies, I wondered how we got to this point and how to change the story for other children. I recognized how fortunate I am to lead the National Runaway Safeline (NRS), an organization that offers just that: a chance to change the ending - and maybe even the beginning - of the story.

At NRS we have seen firsthand how the global pandemic has affected the thousands of youth and families who have reached out to us throughout the year. Family strife, abuse, neglect, violence, poverty, substance abuse and mental illness all increased in 2020. And yes, suicide and the imminent risk of suicide are also on the rise.

NRS ensures this country's young people are safe and off the streets. We serve as a lifeline for any young person who needs us, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. As we head
into 2021, our focus remains steadfast. We recently unveiled a new, national engagement campaign, *Let’s Step Forward Together*. This theme suggests action, a better path, brighter days, collaboration and support. It’s remarkably fitting for 2021.

How can you help?

- Make a financial contribution, helping us reach our $40,000 goal by the end of the holiday season. Click here or on the blue button below to support NRS today!
- Spread the word about our *Let’s Step Forward Together* campaign on social media. Click here to see our campaign messages and consider downloading and sharing these with family and friends on your social media channels. When posting, remember to always use the campaign hashtag, #HereToHelpYou247.
- Show your support by adding the campaign frame to your Facebook profile. Click here and search for the *Let’s Step Forward Together* frame.

Tonight there are thousands of homeless youth who remain on the streets and in need of help. Tonight there is someone reaching out to NRS for advice, support, resources or a simple human connection. As we look forward to 2021, we will continue to be innovative, strategic and visionary as we strive to reach new heights for those who need us every day.

Thank you for being part of the NRS family and for helping us reach our goals. Wishing you a healthy, safe and Happy New Year!

Susan Frankel
Chief Executive Officer
National Runaway Safeline

Click here to donate today!

For more information please contact Jeff Stern, NRS Chief Engagement Officer, jstern@1800RUNAWAY.org.