



Community Concerns

Helping Young People Rebuild Their Lives

Helping Homeless Youths Rebuild Their Lives

by *Sister Patricia Cruise*

(NAPSA)—You can make a difference in millions of fragile young lives.

Every night on streets throughout the Americas, an army of nameless, faceless young people fights to survive. They are homeless youths, driven to the streets by situations including physical,

emotional or sexual abuse, parental drug or alcohol abuse or discharge from foster care.



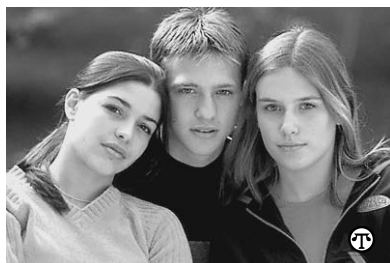
Sister Cruise

There are approximately 3.5 million people who experience homelessness every year and 12 percent of them are unaccompanied young people under age 24. More than half say they have been beaten up while on the street. Many also report being robbed, stabbed, even shot.

The complications of life on the street cause many of these young people to lose hope, making it difficult—if not impossible—to transition into adulthood as happy, productive members of society. Covenant House provides the support and guidance necessary for these young people to rebuild their lives.

Covenant House is the largest, privately funded child welfare agency in the Americas. Since its inception in New York City in the early 1970s, it has grown to include sites in 21 cities in six countries. Through the generous support of donors, the organization provides shelter to an average of 1,700 young people a night. In addition, it provides food, clothing and crisis care, along with such other services as:

- health care;



More than 70,000 homeless and at-risk youths in 21 cities are cared for by Covenant House.

- educational programs and vocational preparation;
- drug abuse treatment and prevention programs;
- mother/child programs;
- transitional living programs; and more.

The Covenant House Nineline—(800) 999-9999 or Nineline.org—operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It gets crisis calls from youths in all 50 states. Last year, it helped more than 50,000.

For more than 30 years, Covenant House has been restoring hope and providing a loving and respectful home for young people who otherwise would face the dangers and injustices of life on the street.

For more information, visit www.covenanthouse.org.

Sister Patricia A. Cruise, SC is the president of Covenant House. She is responsible for the overall management and long-term strategic planning of the agency, which has an annual operating budget near \$120 million. She oversees Covenant House facilities in 21 cities as well as the Covenant House Nineline, all of which were created to carry out the Covenant House mission to serve suffering children of the street with absolute respect and unconditional love.