

November is Runaway Prevention Month

Montreal, November 1, 2017. For the seventh consecutive year, the Missing Children's Network is dedicating the month of November to raising awareness about the plight of runaway youth in our province and what families and educators can do to prevent this.

Every year on average, there are over 5,000 cases of missing children reported to law enforcement in Quebec. Runaways account for nearly 90% of all these cases and involve youth between the ages of 12-17. The reasons why youth run away are complex, but are generally associated with them attempting to gain some control over their lives. While most runaways return home within a few days, a smaller number of youth may spend periods of time on the street, in shelters or other unfamiliar environments.

Throughout the month, the Missing Children's Network will post a number of safety tips on Facebook and encourage the public to like and share the information. As well, the organization will visit several high schools in the Greater Montreal area to sensitize students about the dangers of running away, and provide them with alternatives. In our sessions, we address issues that include sexual exploitation, setting boundaries, healthy relationships, recognizing adults that groom youth for exploitation, navigating safely in today's wireless world and being a good digital citizen. At the end of each presentation, students receive a resource card that contains the coordinates of several community organizations that they can turn to for support in times of need.

Following are some suggestions that may help parents stay connected with their teens:

- ✓ Establish healthy communication with your child - remain open and honest;
- ✓ Invite your child's new friends to the house and get to know his social network;
- ✓ Talk to your child about the dangers of running away from home;
- ✓ Look into enrolling your child in an extra-curricular activity of his choice - this helps build self-confidence;
- ✓ Try to get conversations going every day. Ask questions like, "How was your day?" "What did you do?" "Tell me about your new math teacher";
- ✓ Get to know your child's teachers - attend school meetings and special events such as plays and holiday shows;
- ✓ Reinforce the message that family is important. You can do this in several ways ... attend events in your child's life, share a meal together, plan a family vacation, etc.;
- ✓ Try not to overreact when your teen makes a mistake. Making mistakes is part of being a young adolescent. If you over-react, he'll soon learn not to come to you with problems.

About the Missing Children's Network

Founded in 1985, the Missing Children's Network is the only non-profit organization in Quebec that is dedicated to the search for missing children and to the prevention of their disappearance. Regardless of the motive for the disappearance, from running away to a parental abduction or criminal abduction, the Missing Children's Network's team supports, accompanies and counsels these families.

The Missing Children's Network works closely with law enforcement, government and child welfare agencies and the media to recover missing children and bring them home safely. Since its creation, the Missing Children's Network has assisted law enforcement in recovering 1,314 children and has educated over 200,000 students on how to stay safe in their day-to-day lives, both on and offline.

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