

Hip Hop Artist Ludacris to be Honored

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Hip Hop artist and actor Ludacris, aka Chris "Ludacris" Bridges, and his foundation, The Ludacris Foundation, are being honored with the 2007 National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) "Spirit of Youth" award for their work and dedication in helping America's youth.

Hip Hop artist Ludacris' recent Grammy for Best Rap Album, "Release Therapy," includes a song titled "Runaway Love," which addresses situations many youth in this country face that often times lead them to running away. When the song was released this past fall, it was a natural fit to form a partnership among Ludacris, The Ludacris Foundation and NRS.

"The timing could not have been better with November's National Runaway Prevention Month," said Maureen Blaha, NRS executive director. "Since the release of "Runaway Love" Ludacris" and The Foundation's commitment to helping runaway youth and letting people know about the help they can receive by calling 1-800-RUNAWAY has only increased."

And it shows. NRS experienced a 17 percent increase in calls to its hotline in 2006, and the number of visitors to its website has nearly doubled from a year ago this month, with significant increases occurring since the partnership formed.

Hip hop notable Ludacris and Roberta Shields, president of The Ludacris Foundation, will be presented with the Spirit of Youth awards on Thursday, November 1, 2007, in Chicago.

The National Runaway Switchboard, established in 1971, serves as the federally-designated national communication system for homeless and runaway youth. Recognized as the oldest hotline of its kind in the world, NRS, with the support of more than 150 volunteers, handles an average of 100,000 calls annually -- more than 3 million calls since the organization's inception. NRS provides crisis intervention, referrals to local resources, and education and prevention services to youth, families and community members throughout the country 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Over 10,000 youth have been reunited with their families through NRS' Home Free program done in collaboration with Greyhound Lines, Inc. The NRS crisis hotline is 1-800-RUNAWAY. For more information, visit <http://www.1800runaway.org/>