

June 4 Readers' letters

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Runaway children need our help

As the Mercury News story on missing children reported, most youths who run away will return home within a day or two. On the other hand, youths who leave home without a place to go and who do not quickly return home face the danger of victimization while on the run. Most runaways are not equipped to live on the streets with the more experienced homeless population and become victims of robbery, sexual exploitation and violence.

At Bill Wilson Center, we focus on providing crisis housing, counseling, and support to runaway and homeless youth. Our goal is to reunite youths with their families and teach families the skills to prevent future crises.

Runaways often text or call someone they trust to let them know they are safe. Parents often ask me how they can keep their children safe if they run away. If you are the parent of a teen, consider programming our 24-hour teen line number, 888-247-7717, into your child's cellphone.

While every parent hopes their children will never need our help, many do. By connecting with youths through the cellphones they always carry, we can take a small step to keep our kids out of harm's way.

Sparky Harlan

CEO, Bill Wilson Center