



## Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission

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### **Flip a Switch: Local Businesses Bring Light to National Runaway Prevention Awareness Month**

*- Green light bulbs designate Safe Place sites throughout Fresno County -*

**(Fresno, CA)** – In a sign of solidarity, Safe Place partners throughout Fresno County will be glowing green in November, bringing awareness to National Runaway Prevention Awareness Month. A green light bulb – provided by Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission’s (EOC) Sanctuary Youth Services – will shine bright at approximately 58 of the 260 Safe Place partner sites.

“Our goal is to make these Safe Place locations uniquely visible,” says Michelle L. Tutunjian, Director of EOC Sanctuary Youth Services. “Sites that have both a green light bulb and a yellow and black diamond-shaped Safe Place sign are places where runaway youth can receive help.”

According to data from the Fresno Police and Fresno County Sheriff’s departments, approximately 4,500 youth and young adults in Fresno County were identified as runaways in 2008. In a one-year period, it is estimated that between 1.6 and 2.8 million youth run away nationwide.

Safe Place – a national youth outreach program that educates 11 – 17 year-olds about the dangers of running away or trying to resolve difficult, threatening situations on their own – was established in Fresno by Fresno County EOC in 1999. Sites include all Fresno Unified schools, WalMart, Circle K, Boys and Girls Clubs, Holy Cross Women’s Center, Poverello House, City of Fresno Parks and Recreation Centers, Fresno Area Express (FAX buses), United Way, and other youth-friendly sites. These specially designated sites provide youth in crisis immediate interventions, supportive services, and professional referrals to EOC Sanctuary Youth Services; there, they may receive specialized services including counseling, residential assistance, and case management.

#### **About Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC)**

For over 44 years, Fresno County EOC – a private, nonprofit agency – has helped low-income Fresno County residents become self-sufficient. EOC offers over 30 comprehensive community-based programs that develop an individual’s capabilities and places them on the path toward financial independence.

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