



Hi. My name is Chuck Paul and I'm the Director of Outreach and CST Services at Roy Maas Youth Alternatives, in San Antonio, Texas. I am also the recipient of this year's National Safe Place Coordinator of the Year Award. I am really appreciative of this award. Safe Place is a fantastic program. It gives young people an opportunity to find a safe place to get help and resources. When young people are out on the streets by themselves, they can't necessarily take care of themselves. They can't do simple things like get a bank account, or rent an apartment or a car. They can't do most of the things that adults do to take care of themselves and have independence. Unfortunately, young people, on the streets without resources like Safe Place, become vulnerable to predators and people who will take advantage of them or harm them physically—I am standing here today in Roy Maas Youth Alternatives Centro Seguro Drop-In Center, which is our 24-hour drop-in center for trafficked and homeless youth. It is our Safe Place here in San Antonio. It is the place where our young people are brought or come to on their own. The butterfly mural behind me represents a new beginning. That new beginning might take 4, 5 or 7 times, because many young people we encounter don't leave the streets the first time they come to us. But every single time young people leave us, they know that yellow and black sign outside says Safe Place, and they can come back, or go to one of our community partners, and find help.

It's my honor to work with the National Safe Place Network as the Safe Place Coordinator for our area. I have the honor of working with Roy Maas Youth Alternatives. We go out every day and look for young people and serve young people in our shelters, our drop-in center, in our long-term residential care facility, and in our counseling center. We even have a transitional living program for homeless young people that are 18 to 24. All of this is a full care continuum to serve our youth who are out there on the streets, who have nobody else to take care of them, who are struggling with the pandemic and more and more resources being diminished throughout our nation and here in the state of Texas.

Each and every one of us still standing out there on the front lines offering a safe place for young people to come in and get the resources they need, so they don't have to be out there on their own, every single one of you are heroes. Thank you for honoring me today with this award. Thank you for honoring my organization. Please know that I am so proud to be able to serve, as a fellow champion for kids, with each and every one of you Safe Place Coordinators out there serving those who need so much. Thank you!

Respectfully,



Charles "Chuck" Paul

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