

Almost Home: Helping Kids Move from Homelessness to Hope

By Kevin Ryan, Tina Kelley

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Inside the lives of homeless teens--moving stories of pain and hope from Covenant House
Almost Home tells the stories of six remarkable young people from across the United States and Canada as they confront life alone on the streets. Each eventually finds his or her way to Covenant House, the largest charity serving homeless and runaway youth in North America. From the son of a crack addict who fights his own descent into drug addiction to a teen mother reaching for a new life, their stories veer between devastating and inspiring as they each struggle to find a place called home.

- Includes a foreword by Newark Mayor Cory Booker
- Shares the personal stories of six homeless youths grappling with issues such as drug addiction, family violence, prostitution, rejection based on sexual orientation, teen parenthood, and aging out of foster care into a future with limited skills and no support system
- Gives voice to the estimated 1.6 million young people in the United States and Canada who run away or are kicked out of their homes each year
- Includes striking photographs, stories of firsthand experiences mentoring and working with homeless and troubled youth, and practical suggestions on how to get involved
- Discusses the root causes of homelessness among young people, and policy recommendations to address them
- Provides action steps readers can take to fight youth homelessness and assist individual homeless young people
- Written by Kevin Ryan, president of Covenant House, and Pulitzer Prize winner and former *New York Times* writer Tina Kelley

Inviting us to get to know homeless teens as more than an accumulation of statistics and societal issues, this book gives a human face to a huge but largely invisible problem and offers practical insights into how to prevent homelessness and help homeless youth move to a hopeful future. For instance, one kid in the book goes on to become a college football player and counselor to at-risk adolescents and another becomes a state kickboxing champion. All the stories inspire us with victories of the human spirit, large and small. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of each book will help support kids who benefit from

Covenant House's shelter and outreach services.

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Editorial Review

Review

* With narrative precision and journalistic detail, the heartbreaking trajectory from abandonment and abuse to teen homelessness is laid bare in this book by Covenant House president Ryan and staff member Kelley, a former New York Times reporter. Telling the story of six young people who came to a Covenant House, the nationwide network of faith-based homes for homeless and runaway youth, Ryan and Kelley uncover their dire circumstances as well as efforts by Covenant House staff, and the kids themselves, to get off the streets. In addition, the authors highlight such issues as human trafficking, the shortcomings of the foster care system, and the financial cost of not caring for homeless youth, as well as providing suggestions and resources for mentoring, helping teen parents, and supporting LGBTQ youth. The compassionately told stories of survival are almost miraculous: a young man who had been abandoned and abused by his adoptive parents proudly returns to Covenant House to cook and serve a gourmet meal; another, bearing physical scars, walks the halls as an at-risk coordinator for a high school; and in the epilogue, we learn that a young woman who had survived drug addiction and prostitution has been accepted to college to study juvenile justice. (*Publishers Weekly*, October 2012)

From the Back Cover

"*Almost Home* is that rare and special book that inspires us to make a difference."

—**Cory Booker**, mayor of Newark, New Jersey

Almost Home tells the remarkable true stories of six young people as they struggle to find home, stopping along the way at Covenant House, the largest charity serving homeless, trafficked, and runaway youth in the Americas. This book offers a glimpse into the lives of the 1.6 million young people in North America who run away or are kicked out of their homes each year, grappling with issues such as family violence, prostitution, teen parenthood, rejection based on sexual orientation, and aging out of foster care without a family. Full of hope, compassion, and practical suggestions on how to fight youth homelessness, *Almost Home* shows us how to help young people attain the bright futures they deserve.

"With narrative precision and journalistic detail, the heartbreaking trajectory from abandonment and abuse to teen homelessness is laid bare in this book. . . . The compassionately told stories of survival are almost miraculous."

—***Publishers Weekly***

"The trick of engaging readers on public policy matters is to tell human stories. Suddenly, the person we dismiss, fear, or even judge is alive before us and utterly familiar, and we learn, as we do in this powerful and inspirational book, the true meaning of courage, grace, and hope."

—**Steve Lopez**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Soloist*

"The moving stories here offer a sense of promise, a belief that with guidance, empathy, and some semblance of home even the most wounded teens can thrive."

—**Alex Kotlowitz**, bestselling author of *There Are No Children Here*

"*Almost Home* accomplishes something very rare in a book about the homeless—it is both descriptive and prescriptive. A vital read for anyone who cares about the future of our society."

—**Dale Maharidge**, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *And Their Children After Them*

About the Author

KEVIN RYAN is President of Covenant House International, which reaches 56,000 at-risk and street youth in more than twenty cities across six countries. Ryan is one of the country's most respected child advocates and his work has been covered by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. He has appeared on *Today*, *Good Morning America*, *60 Minutes*, *Anderson Cooper 360*, and other national media.

TINA KELLEY was a staff writer for the *New York Times* for ten years and shared in a Pulitzer Prize for the paper's coverage of the September 11 attacks. She wrote 121 "Portraits of Grief" profiles of the victims and is the author of two books of poetry, *The Gospel of Galore* and *Precise*.

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Theodore Rios:

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