Imagine a football stadium on a Saturday afternoon, filled to capacity—80,000 people cheering on their college or hometown team. Sadly, the same number of people who pack such a stadium are the number of youth who run away from home in the United States every month.

Every year, more than one million youth run away from home. Some estimates predict that the number of youth living on the streets is as high as 1.6 million. According to a report in the American Journal of Family Therapy, researchers found that youth who run away come from families marked by marital instability, alcohol abuse, parental incompetence, financial problems, and physical and sexual abuse.

Several dangers and risk factors face the youth once they leave home. Many youths in search of money and shelter turn to prostitution. Some engage in petty theft, while others sell drugs and are involved in abusing these drugs. These deviant behaviors often lead to street-related violence.

Youths who run away feel that there is a better world outside of their families. Many are reunited with their parents, only to run away again. If the issues that caused the youth to run away the first time are not resolved, they are likely to run again. Friends or parents who are concerned about children who may be at risk of running should contact the National Runaway Switchboard at 1-800-621-4000 or go to http://www.1800runaway.org or your local crisis center for professional help.
Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life. “Family Album” is a co-production of University of Florida IFAS Extension, the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, and of WUFT-FM. If you'd like to learn more, please visit our website at http://www.familyalbumradio.org.

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