

the

# Twig

Supporting and Strengthening  
Youth, Young Adults and Families



Omaha  
Home for Boys

*As the twig is bent, so grows the tree*

Winter 2016  
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## Inside:

- Omaha Home for Boys is rated 4 Stars by Charity Navigator... Page 2
- Home Happenings... Page 3
- Making the Transition to Success...Page 4
- Why We Support OHB...Page 5
- Alumni Donor...Page 6
- Thoughts from the Archives...Page 7
- Did You Receive Your 2016 OHB Calendar?... Page 8

# Future's So Bright

*Isidro found success in the Omaha Home for Boys' Residential and Branching Out<sup>®</sup> programs and now is working toward becoming more independent at the Home's Jacobs' Place Transitional Living campus.*

It didn't take long for Isidro to learn to read, write and speak English despite having moved to the United States from Mexico just five years ago.

That's the kind of guy he is — a quick learner despite refusing to go to school a couple of years ago.

His truancy landed him at the Omaha Home for Boys, and with educational direction and the assistance of tutoring at the Home, he made up his credit hours, graduated high school this spring and now intends to go to college to become a medical translator.

This was a life he couldn't foresee before his family emigrated to the United States.

Now, he sees a bright path toward living his version of the American Dream.

And he credits the Omaha Home for Boys and support of his parents as the reason his future's so bright.

"I didn't want to go to school, and I didn't care much about education at that time," he said. "Once I was removed (from his home) and placed at OHB, I started growing up, and getting an education became important to me."

Having completed the Residential



Isidro was recognized at the 2015 OHB Picnic with the Bromley Award, given to the most outstanding youth in Residential Care.

Care program earlier this summer, Isidro became involved with the Home's Branching Out Independent Living program temporarily and now lives at Jacobs' Place, the Home's transitional living campus.

There, he's becoming more independent and self-sufficient as he continues to work toward his career goals.

"Because I speak Spanish and English, being a medical translator is a great fit for me," he said. "I needed to be more independent, and now I feel like I have the discipline I need to do that."



**Jeff Moran**  
President, Omaha Home for Boys

# President's Corner

**W**e found out some very good news this fall that I'm excited to share with you all.

It's something you've always trusted us to do, something you've always known about us — otherwise, you wouldn't have been a supporter of ours for so many years.

Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator, has rated the Omaha Home for Boys as a Four-Star Charity.

It's an honor we've been working to achieve for many years, and the designation is a testament to the dedication of our staff to work efficiently and responsibly.

We received the recognition because of our sound fiscal management practices and commitment to accountability and transparency.

Using objective, data-driven analysis, Charity Navigator awards only the most fiscally responsible organizations a 4-star rating, so it's quite an honor.

According to Charity Navigator President & CEO Michael Thatcher, "Out of the thousands of nonprofits Charity Navigator evaluates, only one out of four

earns 4 stars — a rating that demands rigor, responsibility and commitment to openness."

It's important that you — **our donors and friends** — trust that we're using our funding wisely to fulfill our mission of supporting and strengthening youth, young adults and families. This rating demonstrates that we take our fiduciary and governance responsibilities very seriously.

I encourage you to learn more about the Omaha Home for Boys' rating and other information about charitable giving at [www.charitynavigator.com](http://www.charitynavigator.com) and

[www.omahahomeforboys.org](http://www.omahahomeforboys.org).

## HAVE YOU CHECKED OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE?

Members of our staff redesigned the **OHB website** (*see below*) earlier this spring to be more interactive and mobile-phone friendly, and they did a fantastic job!

If you haven't taken a look through the new pages and information, I strongly encourage you to do so. I hope you find it as easy to use and navigate as we have. If you have any thoughts or suggestions, please let us know!

Here's to a great 2016!

Jeff Moran  
President and CEO



Scan these codes to **LIKE** the Omaha Home for Boys on Facebook and **FOLLOW** us on Twitter!



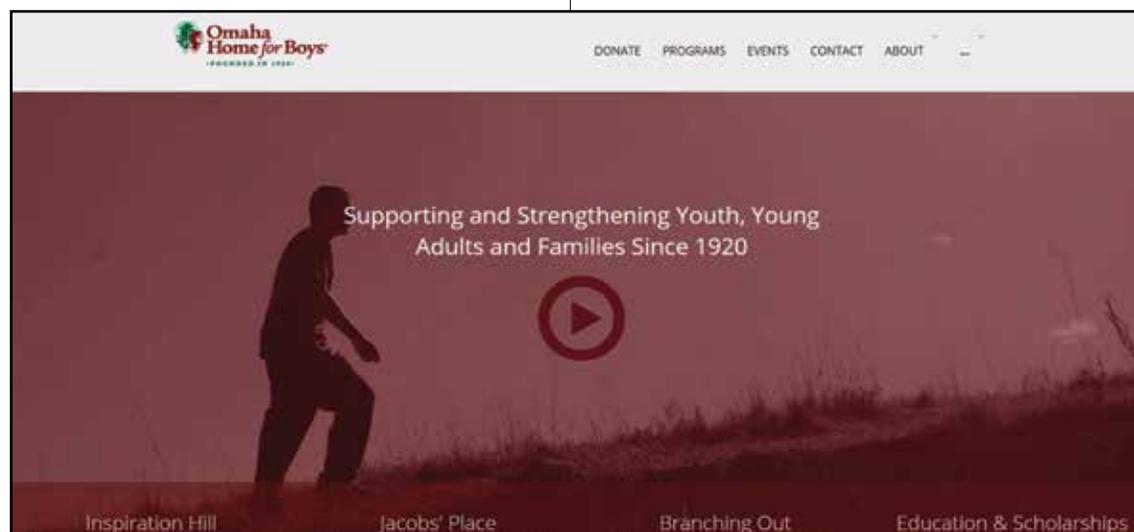
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The Omaha Home for Boys is a member of the National Fellowship of Child Care Executives, the Alliance for Children and Families and the Nebraska Association of Homes and Services for Children.

Founded in 1920, the Omaha Home for Boys is a certified 501(c)(3) nonprofit, non-sectarian organization, licensed by the state of Nebraska and nationally accredited by the Council on Accreditation Services for Families and Children.

If you would like more information about the Omaha Home for Boys, please call us at our toll-free number, 800-408-4663, email us at [giving@omahahomeforboys.org](mailto:giving@omahahomeforboys.org) or visit our website, [www.omahahomeforboys.org](http://www.omahahomeforboys.org).



# Home Happenings

## Day of Caring Brings Businesses to OHB

During the United Way of the Midlands' Day of Caring Oct. 9, corporate partners representing **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska, Central States Omaha, Lincoln Financial Group** and **United Way Young Professionals** volunteered their time to the Home's Residential and Jacobs' Place campuses. They baked, pulled weeds and did other yard work, cleaned out and organized storage rooms, helped tend to the OHB garden and performed a myriad of other tasks, including delivering snacks they made to each cottage.



## OHB Select Teams Impact Youth Lives

Athletics are a great way for Omaha Home for Boys youth to not only exercise but to channel their natural competitiveness positively and learn about teamwork. Twice a year (winter and fall), youth try out for two Select basketball teams that then compete against each other as well as teams from other organizations. The Red/Black team (pictured) went 6-1 during fall play and won the league title in November. Our Rec staff does a great job overseeing and coaching the teams.

## Corporate Partners Decorate Cottages

Friends from **Cox Communications, Stephanie Moss Salon, Home Depot, Lutz, Spartan Staffing** and **Labor Ready** braved cold temperatures and wind November 19 to help staff and youth decorate the campus for the holiday season. Weeks before, each team met with a cottage to plan out the look of their design, bought and donated decorations and then worked together to decorate. Each cottage as well as the rest of the campus was lit to loud applause at the conclusion of the Dec. 3 "Home" for the Holidays Open House.



## Nebraska Senators Learn About Home

Nebraska State Senators **Laura Ebke** and **Tyson Larson** visited the Omaha Home for Boys Residential campus in November and December, respectively, to learn more about the continuing need for residential programs in the state. While both said they were somewhat familiar with the Home, they agreed that it wasn't until their time on campus that they truly began to understand the incredible, life-changing work being done. During their visits, they toured cottages and spoke with house parents and youth.

# Omaha Home for Boys Helps Youth Make the Transition to Success

**T**ransition to Success™ is a progressive, evidence-based model that addresses the issue of poverty — and the Omaha Home for Boys Jacobs' Place Transitional and Branching Out® Independent living programs are creating ways to use it to help our youth succeed.

Over a period of two weeks, transitional and independent living specialists at the Home went through intense training with certified trainers Brandy Gustoff and Tierra O'Neal, and were able to invest in the TTS™ model as a solution to the needs of the clients we serve. Brandy oversees Jacobs' Place, and Tierra manages Branching Out.

In both programs, specialists work with clients who deal with poverty, homelessness, lack of employment, struggles to buy food, lack of engagement in the community and the inability to meet their medical, dental, mental health and substance abuse issues every day.

"In February 2014, I had the privilege of hearing Dr. Marcella Wilson speak at the Alliance Senior Leadership Conference in Georgia," Brandy said. "Dr. Wilson's presentation over TTS was a program model that I had been looking for since taking over the Jacobs' Place Transitional Living program in 2012.

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*"The specialists were highly engaged in the training and could immediately see the benefits to the clients we serve using this model."*

— **Brandy Gustoff**

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"Both Jacobs' Place and Branching Out programs were in dire need of an established, evidence-based program that could address the issues that many of our clients face."

After hearing Dr. Wilson's presentation, Brandy began to work with an expert in TTS to find out more information about the program and discuss options for training it to staff at the Omaha Home for Boys.

In November 2014, she and Tierra traveled to Detroit to become certified trainers. Upon returning to Omaha,



Transitional and Independent Living Specialists proudly show off their certificates after finishing Transition to Success Training from certified trainers Brandy Gustoff and Tierra O'Neal this past June. From left are: Jim, Troy, Bailey, Curtisa, Tiffany, Jordan and Keenan.

they worked diligently to align the program as well as client needs with the TTS model to ensure that Home transitional and independent living specialists were ready to begin training with open minds and hearts.

"When training completed on June 12, work was then put into creating admission and self-sufficiency assessments, as well as some minor changes to the forms that we use," Brandy said. "The specialists were highly engaged in the training and could immediately see the benefits to the clients we serve using this model."

In July, both Jacobs' Place and Branching Out staff began implementing TTS with each client in their respective programs, completing an Intake and Self-Sufficiency Assessments for each client.

Because of how much Brandy and Tierra have shared about TTS in the community, they already have received requests from numerous community partners to train their staffs.

"We couldn't be more excited for our clients to receive the benefits of using TTS and the lifelong change that will occur," Tierra said.

# Why We Support OHB

*Don and Elaine Kemper have supported the Omaha Home for Boys since the Nixon Presidency — and they've enjoyed every minute of it.*

While he was fighting in Europe during World War II, Don Kemper came upon a disturbing scene that has become a lasting memory.

It's a memory that's also largely been the impetus for him and wife of 62 years, Elaine, to become long-time supporters of children and youth like those served for the past 95 years by the Omaha Home for Boys.

"We were in Germany, and we came upon a brick house, and in the basement, we found a crib," he said. "Inside the crib was an 8- or 9-month-old little girl, dressed very well, but who had passed away. We didn't know what happened to her, but that's something that will always stay with me."

Don, who is originally from Valley,

Neb., returned to Nebraska after the war, and while attending Omaha University (now UNO), he spotted a pretty co-ed who caught his eye.

It didn't take long for him to meet and marry Elaine, and together, they had two children.

Don went on to serve in the reserves for another 20 years while working full-time at Northwestern Bell, retiring in 1982 after 37 years.

Despite having family of their own, Don never forgot about that baby in the crib.

Together, he and Elaine decided to do whatever they could to help kids in need — and through his Masonic (Mizpah Lodge 302 and Scottish Rite) background, they became supporters of the Omaha Home for Boys.

"Some of the kids at the Home have grown up with terrible lives, and we want to do whatever we can to help them realize there are people out there who care about them no matter what," said Elaine, who hails from Ute, Iowa.

While they both have



*A longtime Mason, Don Kemper and wife, Elaine, became involved with the Omaha Home for Boys in the 1970s and continue to support the Home and youth.*

been long-time members of the Home's annual maintenance campaign, in the past, Elaine was a member of the Home's Sewing Ladies.

Once a week, she would bring her sewing machine out to the Home and darn clothes or hem jeans — do whatever was needed for the boys to have clothes that fit and looked nice.

"We have always enjoyed supporting the Home as far back as when Harry Bruner was in charge," Don said.

"The boys made a great impression on us back when we first started, and they continue to do the same today. That's what keeps us involved."



*Elaine, front row, second from the left, was a longtime member of the Home's Sewing Ladies, who came in weekly to perform alterations and repair damaged clothes.*

## Ways You Can Help our Youth

- Make regular donations to the Omaha Home for Boys by mail or at [www.omahahomeforboys.org](http://www.omahahomeforboys.org).
- Remember the Omaha Home for Boys in your estate planning.
- Make a Gift Annuity that not only helps the Home but also provides a guaranteed income to you for life.
- Remember someone in a Memorial or Honorarium.

*Please contact Lori at 402-457-7014 or [giving@omahahomeforboys.org](mailto:giving@omahahomeforboys.org) for more information about any of these.*

# Education is his to Success

When he was living at the Omaha Home for Boys several years ago, John Walz never really considered a future that involved college and career.

A big part of that came from having no support or encouragement at home. He grew up not believing in his own self worth and potential — and then he came to the Omaha Home for Boys.

That's when everything changed.

As a student at nearby Benson High School, he started taking more of an interest in his studies, and with the encouragement and guidance of Home staff like Education Coordinator Ruth Roose, he built up his confidence to believe that he could achieve anything.

Now a student in the College of Education Teacher Prep program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, John is focused on his future more than ever before.

“When I was at OHB, I was one of two youth who never went home on weekends, so I spent a lot of time at the Wurdeman (Learning Center) and also with (former boy and Dean of Boys) Kevin Orr,” John said. “There are so many good people here at OHB who really showed me that they cared about me, and that was all I needed to believe more in myself.”

Born in the Cincinnati, Ohio, area, John and his family moved around a lot when he was younger.

When he was 12, they moved to Beatrice, Neb., and it didn't take long for him and his mom to start arguing about what he could and couldn't do.

His mom learned about the Home, and halfway through his junior year, she sent him to live here.

“I was a good kid; I didn't do anything wrong to be placed here except disagree with my mom,” John said. “I always knew I didn't need to be here, so when I arrived, I decided to make the best of the situation and take advantage of what was being offered to me.”

In addition to embracing his education, John became involved with acting at Benson, appearing in the play *Harvey*.

After he graduated in 2008 (he was at OHB from March 2007 to August 2008), John left the Home to live with his dad, who hadn't really been a part of his life up to that point.

John lived with his dad, who gained custody of him, for a year until he moved into the Home's Jacobs' Place campus while he attended UNO on the Kevin Orr Scholarship.

And despite a hiccup in his education due to financial



**Above:** Now a sophomore at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, John credits his confidence — and motivation — to go to college and finish his degree to longtime Omaha Home for Boys educator Ruth Roose (pictured) and the Omaha Home for Boys' scholarship program.

**Right:** John is congratulated by former Dean of Boys and former boy himself, Kevin Orr, at his 2008 high school graduation. Orr became a good friend to John when he was part of the Residential Care program.



issues, John is now back on scholarship at UNO and working toward his chosen profession.

“Educators like Mrs. Roose and my wife, Brenda, a substitute teacher, made me want to do the same for other kids as a teacher myself,” said John, who intends to teach high school biology. “Ruth definitely influenced me and made me believe that I could do anything I wanted. Now I am.”

# Thoughts from the Archives

As the twig is bent, so....  
well, you know the rest.  
Or do you?  
Read on for the rest of the  
story.

In 1945, the Home moved to its new campus at 52nd and Ames, and that move made Benson — and not the now-defunct Tech High — our “Home school.”

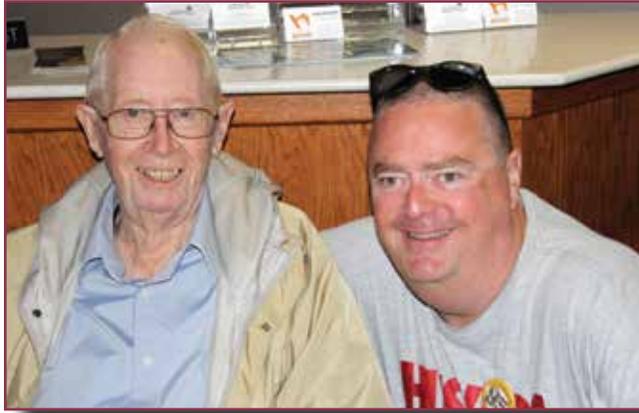
Among the most interesting materials in the Archives are (most of) the Benson High yearbooks from 1945 on.

A few of the earliest students stand out for the recognition they earned at Benson and for their actions afterward to help repay the Home for what it did for them.

Let’s look at Wallace Bierman, Benson Class of 1954. Wally was on the student council every year, an early resident of Cooper Farm and a senior class officer. Ten years after he left us, he returned to serve on the Board of Trustees.

Then there’s Ed Young, one of three brothers at the Home. He started out on the Home’s tumbling team entertaining visitors in the basement of the Smith building — and he went on to compete successfully for Benson’s gymnastics team (pictured above).

In the real estate business, he worked his way up to the chairmanship of the board of Omaha’s largest residential real estate firm. When asked to narrate our “A Time for Pride” video about the 4-H program in the 80s, he was glad to oblige. Later, he was instrumental in getting College World Series teams to visit our



Pictured (above), Charlie Amidon and Rod Neiman at the 95th Anniversary party; right, Wally Bierman; left, top row, far left, Ed Young.

youth each year (and they still do).

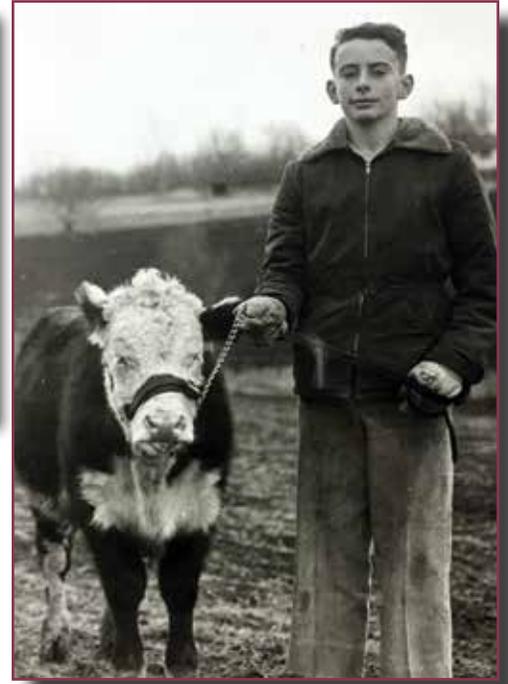
Following Ed’s death in 2013, his son, Gregg, started to sponsor an annual golf outing which benefits the Home.

Rod Nieman’s 11 years at the Home ended in the Class of 1977, but his career here was impressive enough for Executive Director Charles Amidon and other Home officials to go to bat for him to help secure a Congressional page position in Washington, D.C.

Almost 40 years later, he returned with his Benson High jacket, wonderfully stitched by our sewing ladies of the 1970s with Rod’s name, Benson No. 1 and even an orange carrot to fortify the Benson Bunnies mascot.

The jacket hangs in our museum today, and the meeting between Rod and Charlie (pictured above) at our 95th anniversary reunion this past summer was something to see.

Let’s hear the story about “As the twig is bent...” you may be saying.



You need look no further than the second page of the 1951 Benson yearbook. There, under a picture of Benson High School, is Alexander Pope’s quote: *“Tis education forms the common in mind; just as the twig is bent the tree’s inclined.”*

A few years later, the Home expanded its administration building to handle the direct mail fundraising program which had taken off.

A local sculptor fashioned a 12-foot by 7 1/2-foot series of panels with the slightly altered motto on it. Board minutes are silent with regard to this event. In 1996, the panels were removed and placed in the Home’s Rec Center.

So now you know the rest of the story, and how three “twigs” were “inclined” years later to remember the Home that had raised them.

*John E Carter*

John Carter

# Friends Come 'Home' for the Holidays

For the third year, the Omaha Home for Boys welcomed friends from the community to its "Home" for the Holidays Open House Dec. 3.

Along with pictures with Santa, guests enjoyed food and festivities, tours of the cottages and hayrack rides through campus.

The day's events concluded with the ceremonial lighting of the large evergreen tree in Cottage Circle as well as each individual cottage and the rest of the campus.

President & CEO Jeff Moran and youth from the Residential and Branching Out programs flipped the switch together to officially kick-off the 2015 holiday season.

We hope everyone had as good a time as we did! Thanks for coming!



# OHB Acknowledges 2015 Grant Awards

The Omaha Home for Boys gratefully acknowledges the following foundations and organizations for their support in 2015 with grant awards:

- **Mutual of Omaha** to reduce youth homelessness.
- **The Nebraska Cattlemen's Foundation** for Cooper Farm and Valley View 4-H Club.
- **The Governor's Ag Excellence Award** in recognition of the Valley View 4-H Club.
- **The Kinder Morgan Foundation** to improve literacy.
- **OPPD** for trees.
- **The Shopko Foundation** for literacy in our education program.
- **Cox Community Impact** for wellness programming.
- **Friends of Extension & 4-H Douglas/Sarpy County Foundation.**
- **United Way of the Midlands** to help youth earn economic stability.
- **The Dollar General Youth Literacy Grant.**
- **The Midlands Community Foundation** to support our youth from Sarpy and Cass counties.
- **The MAXIMUS Foundation** to fund a Road Ready Program for driver's education.
- **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska** for Life Skills programming in concert with the **National Safety Council Nebraska.**
- **RBC Foundation -USA.**
- **Anonymous foundation.**
- **Pacific Life Foundation** for general support.
- **The Ash Grove Charitable Foundation** to restore the Rec Center basketball court floor.
- **The Dillon Foundation** for the internal Relias Learning Management System.
- **Quik Trip Corp.** to support youth in our Branching Out program.

## Feb. 29 is OHB Golf Classic Early Birdie Deadline

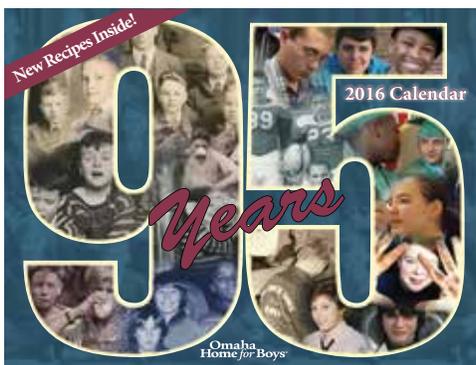
February 29 is the deadline to get your foursome entered in the **2016 OHB Golf Classic** at the discounted Early Birdie price! Registering by this date saves \$100 per foursome/\$25 per player.

For the second year, the annual Golf Classic will be held at Indian Creek Golf Club in Elkhorn **Wednesday, June 8.** Registration starts at 11 with play beginning with a shot-gun start at noon.

The course is Omaha's premiere 27-hole public golf course with 37 acres of fairway, 65-plus well-placed bunkers and 15 holes with the threat of water.

**Early Birdie Fees:** \$500 per foursome or \$125 for individual players. Includes green and cart fees, lunch and dinner. **Must be paid or postmarked by Feb. 29, 2016, to get this discounted price.**

Contact Travis at [tpayne@omahahomeforboys.org](mailto:tpayne@omahahomeforboys.org) or 402-457-7005 for more information about signing up your foursome or about **Sponsorship** opportunities!



## Did You Receive Your 2016 OHB Calendar?

If you haven't received your **2016 Omaha Home for Boys calendar**, please give us a call!

We would love to send a calendar to you, complete with tasty recipes, nostalgic and current photos, Home facts and information and important dates, of course.

Call toll-free, 1-800-408-4663, or email Tani at [tbaker@omahahomeforboys.org](mailto:tbaker@omahahomeforboys.org) for more information.

Thank you for celebrating 2016 with all of us at the Omaha Home for Boys.