

the

# Twig

Supporting and Strengthening  
Youth, Young Adults and Families



Omaha  
Home for Boys



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

Fall 2016  
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## Inside:

- President's Message:  
...Page 2
- Home Happenings  
...Page 3
- Sarah is Hitting Her  
Stride ...Page 4
- The Home is Always  
Home for Ken Hargis  
...Page 5
- Shopping for Charity  
...Page 6
- Thoughts from the  
Archives ...Page 7
- Remember Our Kids  
During End-of-Year  
Planning ...Page 8

# All About Family

Mark and Tonya Wulff epitomize what it means to be house parents at the Omaha Home for Boys.

During their years with the Home, they have opened their minds, hearts and life experiences at every opportunity to teach our young men about what it means to be independent and responsible.

It's their goal to be a guiding resource — listeners, teachers, counselors, friends.

Family.

"We have kids of our own, but we see our young men as our family when they are here with us," Mark said.

Tonya agrees, acknowledging they understand the life paths of most of the youth who come through their doors. They know what they've gone through and what they are feeling — even when they struggle to express it themselves.

"Mark and I have a blended family, so we understand what it means to accept kids from the outside as your own," Tonya said. "We want every one of the young



*During their years at the Omaha Home for Boys, Mark and Tonya Wulff have been mentors to many youth. Avid campers, they take the young men camping at least once a season to experience a part of life many never get the opportunity to enjoy.*

men we work with to understand that we care about them.

"We have many youth who come back after they've left to tell us what an impact we made in their lives. It might take a few months and sometimes years, but we love catching up with them."

Both Mark and Tonya say they can't imagine doing anything else except working with the youth at the Home.

"We have our tough days, no doubt, but we love making a difference in their lives," Mark said.



**Jeff Moran**  
President & CEO  
Omaha Home for Boys

# President's Corner

I've been thinking a lot lately about all the great partnerships we have that benefit our youth in a variety of ways.

Some were established years ago and continue to flourish and evolve. Others are brand new, and we're so excited to call them friends.

Of course, we have our partnerships with you — *our friends and donors* — and we are so grateful for your support.

But we also have some really great relationships within, as well as outside, our community that have developed and grown over time.

Without both of these groups, we couldn't provide the amount and level of services we do for the many youth we care for every day.

One of these new partnerships resulted in the restoration of our beloved baseball field and scoreboard on our north Omaha campus this summer.

Thanks to a Legacy Restoration grant from the NCAA and Lowe's, the labor in the heat of summer from numerous Lowe's employees and gifts from the College World Series Foundation and Gregg Young Chevrolet in the name of his father and former boy, Ed, we were able to do many upgrades to the field, dugouts, stands and scoreboard.

While this is a project we probably could have done over time, thanks to our many partners, we didn't have to.

Because of people and organizations who donated time and expertise to aerate the field, paint and build new seats for the dugouts, sand and paint the bleachers and update the scoreboard among other things, we were able to spend our time doing what we do best: changing and saving lives.

We didn't have to do it alone.

We did it with friends.

The legacy that Ed Young started

decades ago as an alumni of the Home has been embraced by his son, Gregg, and his family. They continue to be very supportive of our mission and our youth by hosting an annual golf tournament as well as sponsoring many of our events.

Gregg's wife, Ashley, has been an active board member since joining earlier this year, and we are so happy and proud to call them family — just as Ed did.

These are just a few of the many examples we have of the dedicated supporters — *including YOU* — who help us provide life-changing services every day for our youth.

Thank you to them and thank you to you for your support and friendship.

Sincerely,

Jeff Moran  
President & CEO  
Omaha Home for Boys

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• FOUNDED IN 1920 •

The Twig is a publication of the Omaha Home for Boys  
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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).



## Send Us Your Recipes!

We're currently working on the 2017 edition of our very popular OHB Calendar, and we'd love to include your favorite recipes inside its pages!

Please send your recipes to: OHB Calendar, c/o Angie Hicks, Omaha Home for Boys, 4343 N. 52nd Street, Omaha, NE 68104.

**Watch for your 2017 calendar in the mail later this year...maybe your recipe will be inside!**

# Home Happenings

## Friends Help Raise Money for Omaha Gives!

Thanks to warm temperatures and dry skies, our Dunk Tank as part of Omaha Gives! May 25 was a tremendous success. During the day, 17 brave souls sat in the tank and helped raise money to support our youth and programs. Among the dunkees were OHB President & CEO Jeff Moran, COO Jeff DeWispelare and board members Gary Unger and Earl Redrick. Thanks to Shawn Ilg of Nebraska Realty for returning as our dunk tank sponsor and to everyone who supported the Home.



## UC Santa Barbara Visits Youth During CWS

During their visit to Omaha for the College World Series, the University of California Santa Barbara baseball team stopped by to tour the campus, have lunch and play games with Home youth in June. As has been the tradition for more than 20 years, the morning stopover gave the players an opportunity to interact with youth, hear their individual stories and learn more about the Omaha Home for Boys. At the same time, Home youth were able to learn about the players and their lives.

## Ball Park Restored Thanks to NCAA, Lowe's

If you restore it, they will come — and that's what happened June 16 when representatives from the City of Omaha, Omaha Home for Boys, the NCAA, local baseball teams and Lowe's gathered to dedicate improvements to the Omaha Home for Boys' baseball field. Thanks to a Legacy Restoration grant from the NCAA, gifts from the College World Series Foundation and Gregg Young Chevrolet and hard work from Lowe's Heros, the field renovation and scoreboard update started in May and continued through June.



## Home Historian Awarded Statewide Honor

Omaha Home for Boys Historian and former Development Director and Assistant Executive Director John Carter (second from left) was honored July 23 with the Good Neighbor Award during the Douglas County Fair in Omaha. The award, given annually by the Aksarben Foundation, pays tribute to the neighbors and friends statewide who go above and beyond to make the Heartland a better place. John started with the Home in 1980 and retired in the mid-90s but still comes in each week to archive photos and maintain the Home's history.

# Hitting Her Stride

*Sarah uses volleyball, academics and skills she learned in Branching Out to overcome life's obstacles.*

Sarah is the first to admit her life thus far has been anything but a fairytale.

She's also the first to admit some of the poor choices she made along the way didn't exactly help.

But once she came to the realization that there are always going to be downs in life, she decided to focus on the bright spots and let them lead her out of darkness and into the light.

Now, that light is taking her to college — and she's letting volleyball and academics be her guides.

A participant in the Home's Branching Out Independent Living program, Sarah will take her outside hitting skills to Yankton, S.D., and Mount Marty College to play volleyball while she pursues a degree in nursing.

It's a path she started while she was at Central High School in Omaha before moving over to finish at Boys Town earlier this spring.

"When my mom passed away when I was 11, I started doing some dumb things," she said. "Then, my dad moved to Washington during the middle of my sophomore year, and that's when I went to Boys Town."

It was there that Sarah made a commitment to turning her life around.

Not only did she excel at volleyball, but she also played forward and guard on the basketball team and participated in track and field.

Before graduating with academic honors, she became a certified nursing assistant, and now she's just a few weeks away from starting her



*Above: Sarah with her house parents at Boys Town the day she signed with Mount Marty. Right: Sarah hits the ball during a volleyball match.*

freshman year at college.

Sarah said working with Omaha Home for Boys Branching Out Independent Living Specialist Troy for the past six months has impacted her life in a positive way — more than she ever expected.

"Working with Troy has helped my self-esteem so much," Sarah said. "She believed in me when I didn't, and that made me realize I could go to college, and it motivated me to want more from my life."



**About Branching Out** The Home's Branching Out Independent Living program helps current and former foster care and some private placement youth transition from dependent living to becoming self-sufficient adults. Founded in part by the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFE), Branching Out offers unique service options to young men and women ages 14-24. It fills service gaps, creating much-needed structure and skill development as well as increasing success rates for foster care and former foster care youth.

*Pictured right: A teenage Kenneth shakes paws with Sandy, the Home's pet dog.*

*Pictured below: A very photogenic Kenneth was the face of the Omaha Home for Boys along with look-a-like brother, Donald, for many years during their time at the Home.*



## *Kenneth Hargis*

**Loving Staff at Omaha Home for Boys Gave Him and His Brother Somewhere to Call Home**

When Ken Hargis arrived at the Omaha Home for Boys as a 4-year-old in 1944, he didn't fully understand the circumstances that brought him here.

All he knew was he was no longer staying with his parents, but he still had his older brother, Donald, to depend upon no matter what happened.

Now, almost 60 years since he graduated from Benson High School and left the Home to start the next chapter of his life, Hargis looks back fondly on his 14 years as a "Home" boy — the only home and family he ever knew growing up in Nebraska.

"Every Sunday, parents could come and visit us at the Home, but it only took me 3 or 4 weeks of waiting on the curb to realize they weren't ever coming to see us," he said.

"I never had a relationship with them from that point forward. I later found out that my dad came to see me play football when I was a student at UNO (the University of Nebraska at Omaha, then known as Omaha University), but

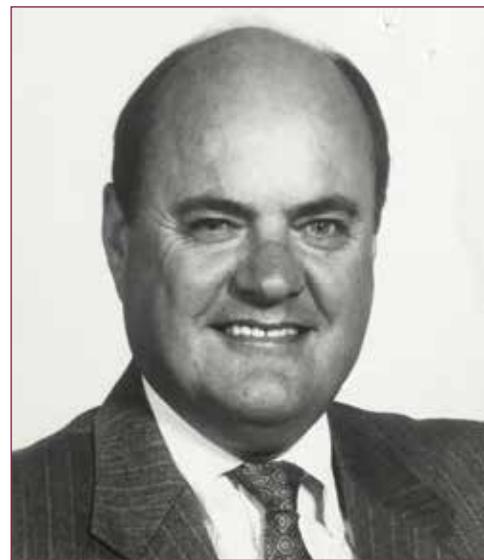
he never let me know he was there. My Home was the Omaha Home for Boys, and my family was the house mothers and staff at the Home."

He and Don arrived here after they were taken by the Douglas County court system from their parents, who were non-speaking and non-hearing.

During his years at the Home, Kenneth excelled at athletics as a member of the Home's tumbling team ("we traveled all over to perform in small towns; it was a great way to meet girls."), played quarterback and halfback on offense and free safety on defense in football and ran track while at Benson. He also was a member of the school's student council.

"I was very involved with everything at Benson so I stayed at the main campus while Don went to live at the (Cooper Memorial) farm," Ken said. "It was better for me to be closer for all the different things I was involved with."

He also became very attached to one particular house mother while he was at the Home — Mrs. Stoft, who was his



*Kenneth is now the owner of his own consulting firm, Search Technology Inc.*

house mother during his formative years at the Buck Cottage.

Even after he graduated from Benson in 1958 and left the Home to attend UNO on scholarship (he played four years of football and ran track), he kept in touch with Mrs. Stoft for many years.

"She was the only mother I ever had, I

*continued on page 6*

# Shopping for Charity

*Provides Many Convenient Ways to Support the Home*

Did you know you can donate to the Omaha Home for Boys simply by shopping online?

Several businesses and organizations offer opportunities for you to designate the Home as the recipient of your giving when you make purchases you would most likely make anyway.

A few of these include Amazon, the world's largest online retailer. By signing up for its *Amazon Smile* ([www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com)) campaign, a percentage of your purchases can be given regularly to the Home.

That's also the case with *Together A Greater Good*, or *TAGG* ([www.togetheragreatergood.com](http://www.togetheragreatergood.com)), *Proseeds* ([www.giveproseeds.com](http://www.giveproseeds.com)), *Good Search* ([www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com)) and



*Thrivent's Simply Giving Program* ([www.thriventcu.com](http://www.thriventcu.com)), which all allow you to support nonprofits without spending extra money.

These are just a few of many

examples of online giving that exist.

Don't forget to look into whether or not your company offers matching gift opportunities that also can benefit the Omaha Home for Boys.

## Alumni Profile: Kenneth Hargis Still Calls OHB 'Home'

*(continued from page 5)*

ever knew," he said. "She carried an 8-foot willow stick, which was almost twice as tall as she was, with her, and she'd raise it in the air when we were naughty, but she never used it. It definitely made me a lot faster and quicker for sports from running away."

After graduating from UNO with a degree in education, Ken joined the officer candidate school (OCS) program in the Army and went through the basic and advanced infantry training before deciding not to re-up.

He opted out and then worked as a marketing executive for IBM for 11 years before becoming a regional manager for ITT Corporation for another 11 years.

While raising kids Kimberly, Kristian and Heather with wife, Mary, they

eventually decided to go into business for themselves.

Together, they run Search Technology Inc. — a business consulting firm — out of their home in Bend, Ore.

Because they have a long-time client in the Omaha area, Ken makes the journey back to Omaha often.

But in the many times he's returned over the years, he's never come back to the Home for a visit.

With the Omaha Home for Boys' 100th anniversary coming up in a few years, he said he intends to come visit



*Ken sits on Mrs. Stoft's lap surrounded by the other boys in the Buck Cottage. His brother, Don, is far left.*

one of the next times he returns.

And while he knows it has changed since he left, he said the Home will always be the home he loved as a boy.

"Coming to the Home was the best thing that could have happened to me," he said. "It will always be home."

# Thoughts

## from the Archives

Previously, we discussed Cooper Memorial Farm and the many uses of its land through the years.

Now, let's look at our Inspiration Hill campus.

In the late 1930s, the decision was made to move from a mansion in south central Omaha to a much larger property with room for expansion.

The Solomon Farm containing an orchard, a few crumbling building foundations and the remnants of a small racing track for horses was obtained.

In 1941 — 75 years ago — an architect was employed to draw up a campus plan built around a sweeping driveway with a traffic circle.

A few years later, several small boys sat on a hillside seemingly looking at animals in a pen (pictured right).

The campus grew to include residential cottages, an administration building, a dining hall and a recreation center with a full-size swimming pool. Almost 100 boys lived here at one time.

The land sloping to the east remained agricultural for decades, and in the 1950s, a softball diamond was squeezed among the trees at the top of the hill.

In 1999, the beautiful Tomlinson Arboretum with 120 plantings, a winding walkway and a rocky runoff creek bed was placed along the hill to the north.

An alfalfa field on the hillside was leveled, and a full-size baseball field for area high school teams started games in 2000.

And the eastern 15 acres at the bottom of the hill, too far downhill to be integrated into the buildings atop Inspiration Hill, were leased to the



North Star Foundation, whose program is to aid in the development of the area's minority youth.

A challenging rope course, an administration build and gymnasium and soccer field now stand on the former cropland.

Truly, the last, best use of the Solomon Farm has been achieved.

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Back to the picture above. Enlarging it revealed a whole new story.

The "hillside" where the boys sat was actually the Home's farm truck, its right side lowered so the boys could throw corn into the makeshift corn crib, which had appeared to be an animal pen.

Look closely. That's Felix Carpenter (known as "Carp") square behind the pole in the middle of this 1940s picture.

"Look, that boy is Hargis," we noted,

and this sent us into the photo files for more pictures to send to brothers Donald and Kenneth Hargis. This led to phone calls, letters and much more information on the history of the Home.

And more than we bargained for, too! In an earlier column, we stated — as did a community newspaper of that era — that the Home's first grand champion calf had been in 1959.

"Oh, no" wrote back Ken Hargis from Oregon. "I won with 'Big John' and 'Walter' in 1953 and 1954...we were in the *Omaha World-Herald*, too."

And that's what makes the archives for the Omaha Home for Boys so interesting. Anyone looking for a research project?

John E. Carter

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STRONG**  
unitedwaymidlands.org



## Tell Us Why You Support the Home

We love telling the stories of our donors and why you support the Omaha Home for Boys! If you'd like to tell your story in a future issue of The Twig, contact Tani at 402-457-7015 or [tbaker@omahahomeforboys.org](mailto:tbaker@omahahomeforboys.org). Thank you!

## Home Receives Grant from United Way of the Midlands

The Omaha Home for Boys is proud to announce it was recently awarded a two-year grant from the United Way of the Midlands.

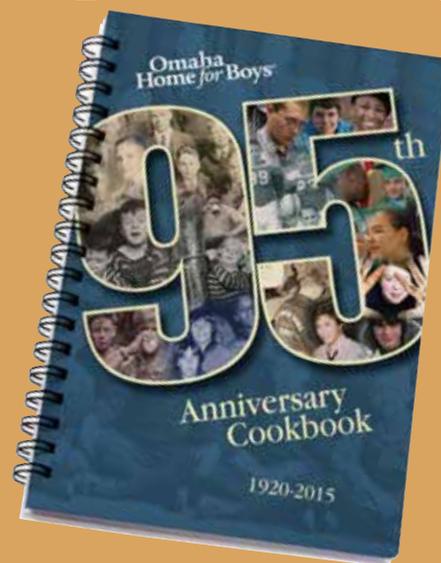
Thanks to the generosity of United Way donors, the Omaha Home for Boys will be able to fund a workforce readiness program and provide basic needs (housing, food, access to medical care and basic safety) for youth in our **Jacobs' Place Transitional Living** and **Branching Out Independent Living** programs and provide education support services for youth in our **Inspiration Hill Residential Care** program.

## Give the Gift that Keeps on Cooking!

The giving season isn't far off, so why not give the gift that keeps on giving...*and cooking?*

In honor of our 95th anniversary last year, the Omaha Home for Boys updated its very popular cookbook, and it makes a great stocking stuffer or gift for friends and family!

To order your copy of this **308-page cookbook full of 560 scrumptious recipes**, send your check or money order for **\$20 per book** (includes shipping and handling) to: OHB 95th Anniversary Cookbook, Omaha Home for Boys, 4343 N. 52nd



Street, Omaha, NE 68104.

Please allow a minimum of three weeks from receipt of money for delivery.

## Remember Our Kids in Your End-of-Year Tax Planning

As we approach the season of giving, please remember the Omaha Home for Boys in your year-end plans.

Your gift strengthens youth and families by providing a safe, nurturing environment; restoring the bonds between youth and their families; improving academic performance; helping youth become successful, independent members of society; and teaching improved social and behavioral skills.

Charitable contributions to qualified organizations may help lower your tax bill, too, if you itemize.

To deduct a contribution of cash, check or other monetary gift, in any amount, you must have a bank record, payroll deduction records or a written communication from the



organization containing the name of the organization, the date, and amount of the contribution.

Please be aware that not all donations are tax-deductible. Ensure that the contribution you are planning to make is to a qualified organization.

Donations made to individuals and political campaigns are not tax deductible.

Sometimes donors do not realize that making a bequest to the Omaha Home for Boys in their estate plan is one of the easiest and most popular ways to make a difference in the lives of our youth.

Leaving the Omaha Home for Boys a bequest in your will is easy. Charitable bequests are a wonderful way for you to give to your favorite charity through your estate and can be added to your will at any time. Bequests can come in many different forms.

The Home encourages you to work with your estate planning professional to determine the best course of action for your particular needs.

Please contact Lori in Development at 402-457-7014 to discuss options.