Writing on the Wall
Youth Inspired by Dr. D’s Charting System

Outside Dr. Anthony Dancer’s office in the Wurdeman Learning Center on the Omaha Home for Boys’ campus is what some may consider just writing on the wall. To the young men seated in the classrooms across the hall, it’s motivation to study harder. “Dr. D,” as he’s known throughout campus, recognizes the young men who’ve earned a school credit during the previous week by writing their names in colorful marker on his office window. He also keeps a running tally of all credits earned throughout the semester. Thanks in part to this recognition, the young men studying in Omaha Home for Boys’ on-campus school are knocking it out of the park. During the 2015-2016 school year, 174 total credits were earned. Only halfway through this school year students have already earned an impressive 89 credits.

It’s not only apparent that the recognition from Dr. D has students taking their studies more seriously, but the system way through this school year.

About OHB’s Education Program
Omaha Home for Boys’ School opened in August 2014 with six students and has grown to include all new students once they arrive at OHB. Certified teachers oversee the day-to-day teaching responsibilities of the school, conducting class and holding the students accountable for attendance, participation, homework and tests – all the same expectations of a public school classroom. The school’s goals are to develop character traits and provide educational programming that leads to school success, graduation, employment and/or higher education.
2016 was a banner year for the Omaha Home for Boys. The Home served more than 300 at-risk young men and women through our three core programs: Inspiration Hill Residential Care, Jacobs’ Place Transitional Living and Branching Out Independent Living.

Several program improvements took place in 2016, one of which included the expanded program content at Jacobs’ Place. The transitional living program now offers 54 classes in four categories: employability, life skills, personal development and electives. All classes are designed to help young adults make progressive steps toward leading independent and productive lives. Another addition to Jacobs’ Place and Branching Out programming in 2016 was the Smiley Face Dental program. This program provides the young adults with dental exams, preventive and treatment measures, and oral health education. Additionally, youth in all three programs were offered driver’s education courses through a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska and the National Safety Council, Nebraska.

Another highlight in 2016 occurred when the Home was awarded a two-year grant from the United Way of the Midlands. Thanks to the generosity of United Way donors, this grant will provide educational support, workforce readiness and basic needs, such as housing, food and access to medical care, to the youth in our programs.

In 2016 we were once again fortunate to have a team playing in the College World Series visit the Home. One of the two newcomers to the College World Series, the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), visited campus. Players and coaches had lunch with the youth, joined them for a basketball game and participated in other activities in the Recreation Center. The youth also heard an inspirational and motivating speech by UCSB’s coach.

In conjunction with the College World Series, the Home received a Legacy Field Restoration grant from NCAA Teamworks and Lowe’s. Lowe’s volunteers donated their time and expertise to aerate the field and add new base paths, sand and paint the bleachers, update the public address system and much more. The Home now has a beautiful field to share with the Omaha community.

The successes of 2016 continued into the fall when nearly 400 people gathered for the annual fundraising celebration, Imagine Our Youth, in September. The event raised $160,000 for the Home’s programs. Ken Carter, the man behind the movie Coach Carter starring Samuel L. Jackson, was the featured speaker. More details about the event and Coach Carter’s impactful visit to campus can be found on page five.

Throughout 2016 an area of focus was improving the data collection and reporting for the Home’s programs. The Home implemented the Transition to Success Self-Sufficiency Matrix in the Residential Care program. Now, all core programs at the Home utilize this measurement tool that assesses the impact of programming on the clients we serve. Expanding even further with our data collection efforts, we implemented Quarterly Data Days which brings managers together to review and analyze outcome reports. The collective analysis and discussion of outcome reports is moving OHB forward in new positive directions.

All in all, it was an abundant year for the Omaha Home for Boys. I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead in 2017 and beyond, and I welcome you to join us in making the most of them.

Sincerely,

Jeff Moran
President & CEO
Omaha Home for Boys
Community Volunteers Come Together To Bring Holiday Cheer to Campus

On a lovely November afternoon, volunteers from several Omaha metro businesses and Omaha Home for Boys’ staff and youth worked together to decorate the cottages for the holidays. The afternoon included erecting exterior holiday lights and decorations and concluded with chili and cinnamon rolls in the Dining Hall. Thanks to Cox Communications, Lutz, Kiewit Building Group and Home Depot for their help in bringing the spirit of the holidays to youth on the OHB campus!

Ag Days Brings Local Elementary Students to Cooper Farm

Educators from the University of Nebraska Extension Program and students from several Omaha metro elementary schools gathered at Cooper Farm on October 19 and 20 for Ag Days. The event was aimed at giving youth an inside look at agriculture today through several hands-on activities. Ag Days is typically held at the University of Nebraska research farm near Mead, Nebraska. However, some schools faced budget limitations that would not allow for transportation of students on the 70 mile round trip. As a result, the Extension Program was seeking a location closer to the Omaha metro area, and Cooper Farm proved to be the perfect fit.

Halloween Party Gives Youth and Staff Opportunity to Bond

House parents, Mark and Tonya Wulff, with the help of other house parents and OHB staff hosted a Halloween party for youth on October 31. Youth enjoyed a pizza party, homemade caramel apples and other goodies. A costume contest was held and youth participated in several fun, team building games. “It was great to see our little community come together to give the boys a great way to interact with others and just enjoy being boys,” remarked Mark and Tonya.

Youth Hit the Hardwood and Build Character

Young men on the Omaha Home for Boys campus once again had the opportunity to hit the hardwood during the select basketball season this fall. OHB fielded two basketball teams that took on each other as well as opponents from other community schools. Athletics play a vital role in the well-rounded approach to develop the Pillars of Character - responsibility, respect, trustworthiness, caring, citizenship and fairness – among youth at OHB.
Finding Joy

When you’re a typical 19 year old and a recent high school graduate, finding joy in life often comes easy. There’s the anticipation of heading off to college, the excitement of choosing a career path and the adventure of striking out on your own. Unfortunately, this wasn’t the case for Joy Renfrow.

As a teenager, Joy faced many obstacles. She had little support and was working two jobs to make ends meet on her own. After she graduated from high school, Joy was living with her boyfriend’s parents with no solid plan for her future. She was struggling to find her own path and wanted to dictate something new for herself. That’s when she was introduced to Jacobs’ Place, the Omaha Home for Boys’ Transitional Living program.

Joy moved into Jacobs’ Place in the fall and it was immediately clear that she was there to achieve her goals of securing stable employment and moving into her own apartment. While Joy was extremely focused on her own aspirations, she also found time to impact those around her. “Joy was an excellent role model for other residents and set the bar very high,” said Brandy Gustoff, Transitional Living Program Manager. “I would often hear residents say ‘Joy told me that’ or ‘That’s how Joy did it’ when asked about making a positive change in their own life.”

While working through the three phases of the Jacobs’ Place program, Joy completed over 100 hours of volunteer work, attended all required training classes and worked with a therapist. After her first month of employment, rent at her Jacobs’ Place apartment was established for the remainder of her stay. As with other residents, Joy had the capability to earn back a maximum of 80% of her rent upon completion of the program. Not only did Joy graduate and earn back all 80% of her rent, but she was also able to purchase a vehicle with her savings and secure a full-time job at a local communications company.

Now living in her own apartment utilizing the self-sufficiency skills learned during her time at Jacobs’ Place, Joy can truly appreciate all of the typical joys of other young adults her age.

Q&A with Joy

We sat down to visit with Joy about her experience at Jacobs’ Place and how she’s doing now that she’s graduated the program.

Q: How have you changed because of your experience at Jacobs’ Place?
Joy: I feel like I am stable and everything is in order. I have a much better job. Being at Jacobs’ Place opened doors for me that otherwise wouldn’t have been possible.

Q: What did you learn at Jacobs’ Place?
Joy: I learned how important it is to keep track of what you need to do on a daily basis. Jacobs’ Place taught me to rely on myself, not to depend on others to reach my goals. I also learned how to make backup plans. I got a lot of support at Jacobs’ Place.

Q: What can the community do to help people who are experiencing homelessness?
Joy: I would encourage anyone, anywhere to share their success stories with young people and be mentors.

Q: What are your future plans?
Joy: I’m going to keep working and start college. I want to study interior design and real estate.
When we imagine what the youth who complete programs at Omaha Home for Boys will become, we see thriving members of the community. We imagine youth who will go on to raise their own families and understand the values of citizenship and giving back. We imagine youth who will make a difference every day.

The “Imagine Our Youth” fundraising gala held on September 15 was a night to bring together those who share our vision and aspirations for the youth we serve. The evening included a reception, live and silent auctions, and dinner. Former Omaha Mayor and business leader Hal Daub and wife, Mary, served as Event Chairs.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation by featured speaker Ken “Coach” Carter. Carter is a former coach, businessman and author who has won several honors for entrepreneurship and citizenship. He may be most well known for the time he spent coaching at a Richmond, California high school in the 1990s. Carter sent a powerful message when he locked his undefeated, state-play-off-bound basketball team out of the gym and forced them to hit the books. While the community was outraged at first, public opinion eventually changed, and Carter was praised for his emphasis on prioritizing education. Aside from his presentation at the gala, Carter also visited the Omaha Home for Boys’ campus and interacted with youth.

“The Imagine Our Youth fundraising gala provided a great way to share the Omaha Home for Boys’ mission of supporting and strengthening youth, young adults and families,” said Lori Bechtold, Director of Development at OHB. “We are thankful to all of the sponsors, donors, staff and volunteers who came together in support of the youth we serve.”

Thanks to the support of many, we can help turn what we imagine our youth to be into what they will be.

Left: Ken “Coach” Carter shared his inspiring story at the Imagine our Youth gala and praised the work that Omaha Home for Boys is doing to help at-risk youth. Right: During his visit to the OHB campus, Coach Carter encouraged an attentive crowd of youth to focus on their education because it opens doors that are otherwise closed.

Imagine Our Youth
Gala brings supporters together for an evening of inspiration and action

Continued from page 1

has also boosted morale. “If I don’t get the students’ names written on my window promptly, they sure do let me know about it!” said Dr. D. “The students are eager to be recognized because for some it’s the first time they’ve been in an environment where they’re receiving positive reinforcement.”

Dr. D is quick to note that it’s not only his credit recognition chart that has students motivated. “The teachers, house parents and other Omaha Home for Boys’ staff play a vital role in helping students succeed,” said Dr. D. The use of a new non-Internet based curriculum this school year has also helped the students gain a stronger focus on their school work.

To learn more about the education and scholarship programs at Omaha Home for Boys, visit www.OmahaHomeForBoys.org/Programs.
They’re My Boys
Administrator retiring from Omaha Home for Boys remains close to those she’s guide

The following article was written by Reece Ristau and appeared in the Omaha World-Herald on August 5, 2016. Since the time of publication, Ruth Roose has retired from Omaha Home for Boys and is enjoying time with her family.

After nearly two decades working at the Omaha Home for Boys, Ruth Roose has held many former students’ babies and celebrated just as many weddings. She also has written letters to former pupils in prison and grieved at the funerals of others.

Roose, education administrator at the Omaha Home for Boys, cares as much about the thousands of youth she has guided as she does her own children.

“I sometimes call myself ‘the other mother,’” she said, laughing.

In the hallways, Roose is the kind of mother who expects proper behavior — no argument. Groups of students are always “gentlemen,” hats are prohibited inside the buildings, and students must greet people they don’t know, including visiting journalists, with eye contact, a handshake and a “Nice to meet you.”

On Aug. 12, Roose, 67, will retire from the school five days shy of an 18-year career.

The Omaha Home for Boys, near 52nd Street and Ames Avenue, is an educational service and support system for at-risk youths. The home, which will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2020, provides a residential service that offers family-style living to 64 boys and young men who are behind in school credit, have truancy issues or have problems at home. Most stay four to six months before transferring back to their original schools and homes.

Roose said the young people who come to the Omaha Home for Boys have often never had an advocate, someone in their corner.

“It’s about knowing the whole kid,” she said. “It’s not just reading a piece of paper.”

And Roose has taken great care to get to know a lot of kids in her tenure.

Her daughter, who went to Benson High, dated someone at the home for a while. Five years ago, Roose flew to Dallas for his wedding.

Another is a student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha who will soon follow in her footsteps as a teacher.

There’s the nuclear engineer for the Navy. The arborist.

“Many more successes than sad stories,” she said.

Jeffrey Landholt has known Roose for a decade. He arrived at the Omaha Home for Boys in 2006, after a rocky start with his single adoptive mother. He said he’s thankful to Roose for helping him during a tough period in his life.

“She was the one I could always go to,” he said.

Landholt loved to read and spent a lot of time in the home’s library. That’s where Roose would be, always willing to teach, to talk through his problems, to listen.

“She was like a second mother,” he said.

Landholt, whose second son is due in December, will soon work full time for the National Guard. He sees Roose often, as he speaks at Omaha Home for Boys events.

Roose started at the home as a part-time tutor for two years. Before that she worked as a paraprofessional in Omaha Public Schools, teaching reading at Mount View and Fontenelle Elementary Schools.

She grew up in Nebraska City and moved to Omaha after marrying. Roose has two adult children.

Similar to many of the young men she has guided, Roose didn’t follow a traditional educational path. She received her teaching degree from UNO when she was 40, taking summer night classes. She then got her master’s degree from Doane University in Crete, Nebraska.

One morning last week a staff member popped her head in Roose’s office with the news that Mike, a student one credit short of high school graduation, got a B-plus in economics. He’ll graduate Aug. 12, the day she retires.

“To see them graduate from so far behind ... Mike had worked so hard,” she said.

“I wrote on his card he’s my retirement present.”

Once retired, Roose plans to travel in her camper. She’ll also spend time with her son and his family, who recently moved to Omaha from Portland, Oregon.
She knows she won’t be able to stay away from the school. “I’m sure I’ll be up here,” Roose said. “The kids I have now, I’m going to be checking on them.”

In the hallway outside her office, one of Roose’s students, Chris, approached her. “Don’t go,” Chris said. The news of her retirement had begun to spread around the school. When he first came to the Omaha Home for Boys in December, Chris wouldn’t speak. “You’ll be OK,” Roose said as the two hugged, violating a rule of the facility that no one cares to enforce.

For all the school’s rules, Roose isn’t afraid to break one now and again. After all: “They’re my boys,” she said.

Thoughts from the Archives

Visitors...visitors...visitors. Everyone loves a visitor (at least most of the time). Here at the Home we have been fortunate enough to welcome many visitors through the years, some famous and some not as well known.

In 1928 cowboy western star Tom Mix came to see us and posed with the boys on the front steps of our Megeath House located on South 33rd Street from 1923 to 1945. We proudly display a picture of the film star’s visit in our museum.

Then in 1950 our Home hosted another well-known movie star, Nebraska born Harold Lloyd. Mr. Lloyd was featured in more comedy films in the 1920s and 1930s than the renowned Charlie Chaplin. By 1950 Mr. Lloyd was the Imperial Potentate of the Shrine and, of course, always wore his traditional black framed glasses.

Assistant Superintendent Cal Reichart had an idea, and with the help of the boys in 4-H they put it into play. When Harold Lloyd’s car pulled up to our front gate he was greeted by several boys with their 4-H calves, and each calf had been equipped with models of Mr. Lloyd’s black framed glasses. Harold Lloyd thought it was hilarious!

Look closely at the picture printed here. The youngster in the light colored coat and stocking cap holding the calf’s halter was 13-year-old David Laughlin. A few months ago in September, David visited us from his home in Arkansas and enjoyed sharing in the memory of 66 years ago.

Through the years our residents have welcomed many varied guests, including a movie star, politicians, a Hall of Famer and other sports stars. A children’s favorite in the 1950s, Bob Smith, the actor who starred as “Buffalo Bob” on the popular children’s TV show “Howdy Doody” was a Home visitor as well as former President Gerald Ford. Sports stars visiting the Home included Hall of Fame quarterback Johnny Unitas and Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Rodgers. The Cal State-Fullerton squad with its National Coach of the Year, Augie Garrido, and its National Player of the Year, Phil Nevins, were also visitors at the Home.

And then there are some more recent “visitors.” Officials in the Wurdeman Learning Center, our newest building on campus, tell us about other worldly noises and images roaming the hallways and rooms of the Wurdeman. Included in the events as reported are bodiless heads flying through the air of the library, the sounds of dishes being washed coming from the kitchen where nobody was seen to be present, and an office door mysteriously opening halfway to reveal a small child in a crouched position.

You be the judge and reach your own conclusions. I’m just reporting the tales told to me of recent visitors.

Personally, I like the story of Harold Lloyd, Dave Laughlin and the other boys, and the bespectacled calves of those many years ago.

John E. Carter
OHB Acknowledges 2016 Grant Awards

The Omaha Home for Boys gratefully acknowledges the following foundations and organizations for their support in 2016 with grant awards:

- **The Hawks Foundation** to support youth in our Jacobs’ Place and Branching Out programs
- **Richard Brooke Foundation** for the Aftercare program to reunify families
- **Lozier Foundation** to support youth aging out of foster care
- **CWS Omaha, Inc.** for baseball field and scoreboard renovation
- **Union Pacific Foundation** for the Cloud for Good Technology Platform
- **Whole Kids Foundation** for the Healing Garden
- **Papio-Missouri Rivers NRD** for trees for the main campus
- **Nebraska Cattlemen Foundation** to support the 4-H Cattle Program
- **Mutual of Omaha Foundation** for Youth Mart and other Jacobs’ Place needs
- **Gilbert M. and Martha H. Hitchcock Foundation** to support our Jacobs’ Place and Branching Out Programs

Adah and Leon Millard Foundation for the Road to Ready Program for driver’s education

**Friends of Extension & 4-H Foundation** for 4-H chickens

**United Way of the Midlands** for education, basic needs and workforce readiness

**Oliver and Ferrol Barklage Foundation** to support our Jacobs’ Place and Branching Out Programs

**Walmart State Grant** for workforce readiness

**Anonymous Foundation**

**Farm Credit Services of America Working Here Fund** for the 2017 Garden

**Dr. C.C. and Mabel L. Criss Foundation** for oral healthcare for Jacobs' Place and Branching Out youth

**Lincoln Financial Foundation** for RGH Education Support Services

**Kars4Kids** for supportive educational services

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Did you receive your 2017 OHB Calendar?

If you haven’t received your 2017 Omaha Home for Boys calendar, please give us a call! We would love to send a calendar to you, complete with tasty recipes, Home facts and information and important dates, of course. Call toll-free, 1-800-408-4663 or email Tani at t.baker@omahahomeforboys.org for more information. And don’t forget to use four beaten eggs in the Zucchini Quiche recipe for July. We forgot to tell you that the first time around! Thank you for celebrating 2017 with all of us at Omaha Home for Boys.

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Gifting Retirement Account Assets Has Tax Benefits

Do you plan to gift your retirement account (IRA, 401K, 403B) assets to the Omaha Home for Boys upon your passing? It’s a great way to save on income and estate taxes. Instead of gifting your retirement assets to a charity during your lifetime, designate the Omaha Home for Boys as the beneficiary of your retirement account. The Home will receive the distribution; therefore, neither you nor your estate will owe income taxes on the amount. While the amount will be included in your taxable estate, your estate will receive a deduction for the amount inherited by the charity, resulting in an offset of the estate taxes. Because charities do not pay income taxes on the donations they receive, the distribution will avoid being taxed as income.

Simply designate the Omaha Home for Boys to receive all or a portion of the balance of your retirement account upon your death. Please check with the plan administrator or financial institution to determine whether there are any restrictions on designating charities as beneficiaries for retirement accounts. If you are married, check with your plan administrator to determine if you need spousal consent for the designation. And, make sure that the plan administrator receives a copy of your beneficiary designation by requesting a written confirmation of receipt.

For additional information, please contact the Development office at 402-457-7165.