We are excited to announce that Jeff DeWispelare has been named President and CEO of Omaha Home for Boys. DeWispelare began his time as the new leader of the Home on January 1.

DeWispelare took over the role of President and CEO as a result of the pending retirement of current President and CEO, Jeff Moran. Moran will act as President Emeritus at the Home through May 2019. He will play a vital role in helping DeWispelare cultivate relationships with existing donors, foundations and other friends of the Home as well as continue his efforts to strengthen community awareness and build government relations.

DeWispelare is no stranger to Omaha Home for Boys. He has been with the Home since April 2012 acting as Chief Operating Officer where he was responsible for the oversight of daily operations. Among DeWispelare’s accomplishments as COO are the successful completion of an agency-wide accreditation where the Home was awarded the highest overall ranking as well as the creation of a new programming and funding diversification plan that will ensure the Home’s relevance for years to come.

Before his time at Omaha Home for Boys, DeWispelare served as the Group Vice President with the YMCA of Greater Omaha where he led the operations, programming and administration of four YMCA facilities. He brings 25 years of experience in the nonprofit sector to the role of President and CEO.

“I am truly honored to begin serving as President and CEO of Omaha Home for Boys. We have such a rich history of helping youth and families in our community and I’m excited to build upon that tradition,” said DeWispelare. “I see a great future for Omaha Home for Boys as we continue to adapt to the changing landscape of youth residential care and innovate to bring new programs and services to vulnerable youth.”

DeWispelare’s appointment as President and CEO comes after the Omaha Home for Boys’ Board of Directors approved a succession and transition plan to replace Moran in November 2016.

“As we move into the next century of service, I can think of no one better equipped than Jeff to lead the Home,” stated Moran. “Even more impressive than the experience that Jeff brings to the table is his true passion for helping youth. I have seen what Jeff can accomplish first hand and I wholeheartedly endorse his selection as my successor.”

If you would like to send your congratulations to either Jeff Moran or Jeff DeWispelare during this time of transition, please email them at jmoran@omahahomeforboys.org or jeffd@omahahomeforboys.org.
President’s Corner

Happy 2018! I’m thrilled to have the opportunity to bring you my first edition of the President’s Corner as the 9th President of our wonderful Omaha Home for Boys.

During a time of transition, there always seems to be some reflection as well as anticipation by all involved so it seemed like perfect timing when I ran across the following recently:

There are two dates on every tombstone. There’s a birth date and there is a date of death and every human being is guaranteed those two dates. But that little dash that lies between those two numbers is what defines our lives. So make your dash count.

This saying got me thinking. How will we make the Home’s dash really count?

First, the greatest ally we have to the success of the Home is our staff. As President and CEO, I will strive to continue to build a culture of accountability and excellence where every staff member truly believes in and practices our mission.

Second, in order for the Home to remain relevant and successful, we must focus on program diversification. While our mission to support and strengthen youth, young adults and families will always be the heart of the Home, we must seek innovative ways to expand and increase our impact.

It was my passion for helping youth that originally brought me to Omaha Home for Boys five and a half years ago. I vow to bring this same passion to the role of President and CEO and I thank you, our loyal and generous supporters, for joining me in making our dash count!

Sincerely,

Jeff DeWispelare
President & CEO
Omaha Home for Boys

Getting to Know Jeff DeWispelare

What is your most treasured memory? As a child, every Sunday we went to my grandma’s house and we would eat, hang out and enjoy time as a family. All of my cousins would be there and we are all still close today. They are like my brothers and sisters.

When you were five, what did you want to be when you grew up? I wanted to be a professional football player. I would watch football on TV. Then I would put on my little helmet and go out in the yard and play.

Tell us about your family and what you enjoy doing together. I have been blessed with my wonderful wife Macy. Together we have five wonderful kids ages 16, 17, 19, 21 and 23. We enjoy spending time as a family, especially boating. It’s not so much what we do but more about spending time together.

What would most people be surprised to learn about you? I’m a reality TV junkie. I watch all of them, but I’m especially into the Bachelor and Bachelorette series. I’m usually one of the only guys in the conversation about these programs, but I don’t care!

What makes you laugh the most? I love blooper videos, especially the montages of people falling down. I don’t know why, but I laugh every time!

Jeff is pictured with his wife, Macy, and their five children enjoying a day at the lake, one of their favorite pastimes.
Home Happenings

New Partnership Connects Clients with Cars

Omaha Home for Boys recently formed a new partnership with Chariots4Hope that will help pair youth with reliable, affordable transportation. Chariots4Hope is an Omaha-based nonprofit that collects and restores donated vehicles and awards them to low income families and individuals. Omaha Home for Boys is now an official referring organization, connecting young men and women from the Home’s Branching Out Independent Living Program with Chariots4Hope.

The partnership has already proven to be a success. The first Omaha Home for Boys’ client, seventeen-year-old Maurionte, received a Chariots4Hope car during a surprise ceremony this fall. Maurionte’s car will allow him to safely get to school, work and critical medical appointments, opening doors that he once thought were impossible to unlock.

What’s New at School?

Young men attending the Omaha Home for Boys’ School are once again seeing great success this school year. Part of this success can be attributed to a new behavioral incentive program that has students eager to earn rewards for displaying proper behavior.

Students at the Omaha Home for Boys’ School are divided into three groups. A monthly prize is awarded to the group that earns the fewest number of office referrals. Prizes are also awarded on an individual basis.

“The group incentives have done wonders for correcting improper behaviors,” said Dr. Anthony Dancer, Education Manager at Omaha Home for Boys. “The guys are using positive peer pressure to encourage their friends to behave in a way that will earn the group a reward. It’s really a win for everyone. If we’re spending less time correcting behaviors, we can spend more time focusing on academics.”

It’s evident that the new behavioral incentive program is having a positive impact. Students have earned a record number of school credits so far this school year and the OHB school celebrated the high school graduation of three students in December.

Building Character on the Court

This winter the Home is once again offering residential care youth the opportunity to play select basketball. The fall season tipped off in October with the team playing area opponents each Monday evening. The OHB team hopes to build on its 2-6 record going into the winter season in February.

“Select basketball provides an opportunity for our youth to play a team sport, something they might not experience outside of OHB,” said Mike Henderson, the Home’s Recreation Center Manager. “This helps them learn sportsmanship, teamwork and responsibility. These skills can help the youth succeed in other parts of their lives.”
Nearly all of his thoughts led back to one common thread: the people.

“During my time at the Home, I have had the privilege of seeing the passion of our staff and its impact on the youth we serve on a daily basis,” said Jeff. “There have been numerous times when staff have put the mission of the Home before themselves. When I sat down and tried to make a list of accomplishments during my time serving as president, most all of it is a direct reflection of our staff.”

Jeff’s leadership and the Home’s dedicated staff have proven to be a winning combination as evidenced through the many accomplishments during Jeff’s tenure since April 2011.

One of those accomplishments includes improving the efficiencies of the Home’s operation. Jeff successfully improved the staffing model while the Home continued to serve the same number of youth at the same or even higher quality. He also worked to modernize some of the Home’s direct mail processes in order to improve donor relations and timeliness and made improvements to the Home’s record keeping policies and procedures.

Additionally, Jeff is very proud of what has transpired in regards to the education of the Home’s residential care youth. “Moving all of the boys from public schools to attending the OHB school has had a tremendously positive impact on their self-esteem and academic achievements,” said Jeff. “I played a vital role in making that initial decision, but the real credit goes to the staff who guide our youth every day.”

Jeff transitioned into his role as president emeritus at the Home on January 1. He knows that when his final day at the office comes on his 67th birthday in May 2019 it’s the people he will miss most. He hopes to be remembered as a fair, caring leader who worked to build excellence into everything the Home did.

As for all of the free time that he’ll have in retirement, Jeff jokes, “My wife worries about that! She said ‘you can retire when you get a hobby.’” Jeff hopes to hit the fairways a bit more often for a round of golf and travel to a few of the places on his bucket list, including the Grand Canyon, the Pacific Northwest and Alaska.
They wake early for breakfast and soon after they’re off to school followed by part-time jobs and therapy. Evenings are a flurry of dinner, homework and time with their Life Skills Teachers and peers.

With such busy schedules, it can be challenging for the young men to find time to focus on their health, but a new wellness program at Omaha Home for Boys has youth excited to make exercise a part of their daily routine.

The new wellness program is an incentive based program that encourages youth to spend more time at the Home’s Recreation Center exercising or participating in group activities. Basketball, ultimate Frisbee, kickball and football are a few of the group activities offered to youth or they have the option to do weight training or cardio workouts individually.

Recreation Center staff log the time that each youth spends at the facility with the goal being a minimum of five hours per week. Then the boys’ names are entered into a weekly drawing for prizes. Youth can win anything from healthy snacks, water bottles and sports drinks to workout gear, socks and shorts. The youth that logs the most time at the Recreation Center each month wins a gift card.

Youth are typically very excited about the wellness program and the opportunity to participate in activities at the Rec Center when they first come to Omaha Home for Boys,” said Mike Henderson, Omaha Home for Boys’ Recreation Center Manager. “To keep the youth engaged and excited about wellness throughout their stay, we increase their incentives as they progress through the program.”

One of the main goals of the new wellness program is to encourage more participation from the youth in fitness activities and it seems to be working. “Since the new wellness program began, we’ve seen quite an increase in the number of youth who are visiting the Rec Center each week and we’re seeing a lot of new faces,” said Mike. “What’s even more encouraging is that all the youth are getting some form of exercise, whether it be during P.E. class or during the evening recreation time. In the past, we had some youth at the Home who chose not to participate in recreation activities. Those are the youth we worry about and need to motivate to exercise.”

Recreation Center staff also hope that the program is helping the youth learn the importance of making wellness a part of their daily routine. “One of the most positive aspects of the new program is that these young men are developing healthy habits that will hopefully stick with them long after their time at the Home,” said Mike.

Dalton, a resident at Omaha Home for Boys, has found particular success from the wellness program. He is a regular participant in daily P.E. class and most evenings you can find him playing basketball with his peers at the Recreation Center. During the month of September, Dalton logged more than 25 hours participating in recreation activities, the most of any youth. As a reward for his efforts, he was recognized as the Rec Youth of the Month and was awarded a $25 gift card.

Invest in a Healthy Future

Your gift to Omaha Home for Boys today can help guide our youth in developing lifelong healthy habits.

• Just $25 can provide an incentive prize or gift card that will encourage a young man to participate in daily exercise.

• Your $100 donation can purchase trophies to award at the Home’s Annual Youth Winter Olympics.

• A $250 gift can support the OHB Select Basketball Team by providing jerseys and basketballs.

Scan here to donate online at OmahaHomeForBoys.org/Donate. Thank you!
It was a chilly, dreary November day with a brisk breeze that made it feel much colder than the thermometer read. It was the kind of fall day in Nebraska that sends a chill through your body just by looking out the window at the gray sky and bare trees. But despite the gloomy weather outside, there was one place on the Omaha Home for Boys' campus that was exuding warmth, love and laughter.

Gathered in the Home’s Dining Hall were 11 women who were sewing, conversing and laughing, delighted to be in each other’s company. They were nestled up to their sewing machines surrounded by colorful fabric in an array of holiday prints. These women, members of the Omaha Quilters’ Guild and volunteers, were joyfully sewing Christmas stockings for the youth at Omaha Home for Boys.

Santa’s Sweatshop, as the group calls the annual stocking project, began 25 years ago when Pat Sears received a newsletter from a quilter’s guild in Dallas, Texas. The Dallas guild undertook a sewing project every year to create beautiful holiday stockings for needy youth in their area. Pat thought it sounded like a neat project and being a middle school teacher, Pat knew the need existed in the Omaha community.

Later when Pat found herself in a leadership role in the Omaha Quilters’ Guild, she sent a survey to members to gauge their interest in a service project. It was clear that the group’s sewers were particularly attracted to helping children. That’s when Pat recalled the Dallas stocking project and brought it to Omaha.

Since then, the Omaha Quilters’ Guild has sewn an average of 350 stockings every year. The stockings are distributed to less fortunate youth in the area through several different agencies. This was the first year that Omaha Home for Boys hosted Santa’s Sweatshop and the Home received over 100 stockings for our youth.

“Many of the registrations for holiday giving programs through various community organizations are very early in the season,” said Jan Fry, a member of the Omaha Quilters’ Guild and Omaha Home for Boys’ Grants Manager. “Our stockings are provided to kids who enter the social welfare system after these other gift giving deadlines have passed. We saw there was a gap, so we decided to fill that void.”

The group’s desire to help area youth began with the stocking sewing project, but they soon realized that giving an empty stocking wasn’t any better than no stocking at all. The guild decided to take on the task of filling the stockings. Today when case workers come to pick up stockings for the youth in their care, they are filled with essentials, small gifts, holiday goodies and gift cards for the kids and teens who may otherwise go without on Christmas morning. The guild raises more than $10,000 annually in order to fill the stockings.

“Some of the stories we hear from case workers about the children who receive these stockings are truly heartbreaking and it makes you so glad that you took the time to sew something special,” said Jan. “The stocking is a little thing that says somebody cared enough about you to make this. It’s small, but it can mean so much to these kids.”

The Christmas stockings that were stitched for the Omaha Home for Boys’ youth were given to the young men and women in the Residential Care, Transitional Living and Independent Living programs and they serve as a true testament to the favorite saying of the Santa’s Sweatshop founder, “You can’t take away from the dark, but you can be a part of the light.”
Solomon specialized in raising harness horses, Shetland ponies and pureblood Jersey cattle in a 100 foot barn. He built a three story brick home on the highest point on the property. A half mile oval race track was carved out of the rolling terrain, calling for cuts 12 feet deep and 30 feet wide to level the land for the track (possibly in the area of today’s traffic circle and to the west).

N. I. Solomon died in 1889. His family eventually divided the land, sold the southern half and turned their remaining interest into a 25 acre grape vineyard. The farm became one of the largest locally owned winemakers around. Two fine wine cellars were built.

Over time the Solomons left the land and rented it out. The buildings deteriorated, especially after a windstorm tore the roof off the house, and were leveled one by one.

In the 1930s the University of Omaha was looking to move west from its 24th Street location. The 60 acre Solomon farm was briefly considered before the decision was made to build at 60th and Dodge Streets. Lucky that was for the Masonic Home for Children as it left the “high and sightly” site at 52nd and Ames Streets for a new campus for the Home.

In an elaborate ceremony with hundreds present a flag was erected at the highest point on the property on June 22, 1941. A local architectural firm – George B. Prinz and Noel Wallace – was engaged to draw up a campus plan built around ten residential cottages and a winding boulevard with a traffic circle in it. A maintenance building (today’s Carriage House) was built in 1941-42 to serve as development headquarters.

In June 1944 a grader started work to level the last vestiges of the Springview Farm racing track and to slope the land for the new campus with its winding boulevard. Masonic cornerstones were laid for the first three cottages in October 1944 and two additional cottages came shortly after. Boys were moved here in the summer of 1945.

In 1953 some board members sat in the lounge of the Shrine Cottage and admired the view to the east over the Missouri River Valley. The term “Inspiration Hill,” a name still used today for our Residential Care Program, was born.

From Springview Farm to Inspiration Hill...quite a 73 years! There’s much more to tell but this never ending story will have to wait for a later date.

John E. Carter
OHB Acknowledges 2017 Grant Awards

*Omaha Home for Boys gratefully acknowledges the following foundations and organizations for their support in 2017 with grant awards:*

- **Aksarben Foundation** for youth homelessness
- **Anonymous Foundation** for general operating support
- **Anonymous Foundation** to support a trauma focused model of care
- **Archer-Daniel Midlands Foundation** for 4-H
- **Oliver and Ferrol Barklage Foundation** for Jacobs’ Place and Branching Out general operating support
- **Clifton B. and Anne S. Batchelder Foundation** for Jacobs’ Place general operating support
- **Bed, Bath & Beyond/Goodies 360** for Youth Mart
- **The Fred and Sally Bekins Foundation** for the Native Plants Healing Garden
- **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska** for the mental health needs of Jacobs’ Place youth
- **Richard Brooke Foundation** to support a trauma focused model of care and education
- **Dillon Foundation** for Salesforce technology upgrades
- **Farm Credit Working Here Grant** for the garden at the Home’s school
- **Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation** for AED’s and safety equipment
- **First National Bank of Omaha** to support the Residential Care Program educated workforce
- **Friends of 4-H & Extension Douglas-Sarpy County** to support the 4-H Cattle Program
- **Paul & Oscar Giger Foundation** for the Native Plants Healing Garden
- **The Hawks Foundation** for general operating support
- **Todd and Mary Heistand Family Foundation** for Jacobs’ Place general operating support
- **Gilbert M. & Martha H. Hitchcock Foundation** for Jacobs’ Place and Branching Out general operating support
- **Lincoln Financial Foundation** to support education
- **The Lozier Foundation** for Jacobs’ Place and Branching Out general operating support
- **Matthews Children’s Foundation** (formerly York Children’s Fund) to support education
- **Maximus Foundation** to support mental, dental and medical needs of Jacobs’ Place youth
- **Mutual of Omaha Foundation** for Jacobs’ Place general operating support
- **Nebraska Cattlemen Foundation** to support the 4-H Cattle Program
- **Nebraska Children & Families Foundation** to support Branching Out and Youth Mart
- **Leland J. and Dorothy H. Olson Charitable Foundation** to support education
- **Omaha Downtown Rotary Club Foundation** to support education
- **Pacific Life Foundation** for Jacobs’ Place and Branching Out general operating support
- **Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources** for trees on main campus
- **PayPal** for Jacobs’ Place general operating support
- **QuikTrip Foundation** for Branching Out transportation needs
- **RBC USA, Inc.** to support the Residential Care Program educated workforce
- **William and Ruth Scott Family Foundation** for Jacobs’ Place and Branching Out general operating support
- **State Farm Good Neighbor Grant** for Jacobs’ Place general operating support
- **TJX Foundation** for Jacobs’ Place and youth homelessness
- **United Way of the Midlands** for workforce readiness, basic needs and education
- **US Bank Foundation** for Jacobs’ Place and Branching Out workforce readiness
- **Yelp Foundation** for general operating support

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Join Our Team

Don’t simply earn a paycheck.
Engage in a career that truly makes a difference.
Omaha Home for Boys is seeking dedicated, caring individuals to join our team. Find a new, rewarding career and learn about the Home’s extensive benefits at OmahaHomeForBoys.org/careers.