On our independent living campus (located just three miles south of our main campus) stand two apartment buildings buzzing with excitement. These apartment buildings and the neighboring Combs Learning Center are home to our Supportive Housing Program that has already proven to be a significant asset to the community since its opening in late 2018.

Our Supportive Housing Program provides affordable, stable housing to young adults and offers on-site support services to help them advance their careers and achieve their educational goals. Last year the program served 15 young adults, eight of which had their children living with them. The program has had a waitlist since May 2019.

While the Supportive Housing Program provides affordable rent, a safe environment and a roof over head, it’s the support and encouragement of the staff that proved to be so beneficial to Damon, a resident of the program.

Before connecting with OHB’s Supportive Housing Program, Damon bounced around from house to house never really having a place to call home. He had a substance abuse problem that led to issues with gaining and maintaining employment. Damon says he was evicted at least four times since moving out on his own at the age of 17.

“Life was erratic and crazy,” said Damon.

After seeing him struggle for a number of years, Damon’s sister recommended that he connect with Omaha Home for Boys. Taking her advice to heart and on the verge of losing his three young sons, Damon entered our Independent Living Program in July 2019 and moved into our Supportive Housing Program shortly after in October 2019, just shy of his 25th birthday.

In the Supportive Housing Program, Damon pays a reduced rent and reduced initial deposit. His rent will increase every six months. He is required to set goals and work with one of our Independent Living Specialists to learn the skills needed to live independently.

Damon says that while having reduced rent is a wonderful perk of the program, it’s the additional support of the staff that’s proven to be an even bigger blessing.

“Having them next door has been really nice because they’ve been a big part of me advancing in my life,” says Damon. “Pretty much anything I’ve needed they’ve helped me one way or another.” (Continued on page 3)
President’s Corner

I recently had the opportunity to review our 2019 Impact Report and it really hit me more than ever what a blessing it is to have all of you as such faithful, generous supporters of OHB. The Impact Report highlights many of the achievements that we celebrated in 2019 and I know these accomplishments would not have been possible without your support and your investment in the youth and families we serve. We’re in this together!

One of the most exciting accomplishments you helped us realize at Omaha Home for Boys in 2019 was actually a first for us. For the first time in OHB’s 100-year history we have a program that allows the entire family to live together on our campus while they work towards self-sufficiency. Our Supportive Housing Program keeps young parents with their children so that the whole family can begin to thrive. I’m excited that you get to meet Damon and his family in this newsletter and learn how our Supportive Housing Program helped him in so many ways.

I also want to thank you for standing with us in 2019 as we celebrated the launch of our new OHB brand. It was a big undertaking but certainly one that was needed in order to take us into our next century of service. As I’ve said before, our new look is just that, a fresh visual appearance. We remain committed to our mission to support and strengthen youth, young adults and families and thank you for believing in and supporting what we do.

While both of these achievements and the many others presented within our 2019 Impact Report are certainly notable, it’s the transformations of the youth served by OHB that are the most telling examples of the power of your support. You’ll get to meet some of these remarkable youth in this newsletter and I invite you to meet even more of them on our website at OHB.org where you’ll find our 2019 Impact Report.

Thank you for believing in our mission and for helping over 1,300 youth, young adults, children and families last year alone. The successes of our organization and those of the youth here at OHB are possible because of friends like you. Together, let’s make 2020 even better yet!

Sincerely,

Jeff DeWispelare
President & CEO

Omaha Home for Boys is a member of the National Fellowship of Child Care Executives and the Nebraska Association of Homes and Services for Children. Founded in 1920, 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 Omaha Home for Boys, please call us at our toll-free number, 800-408-4663, email us at giving@omahahomeforboys.org or visit our website, www.ohb.org.

We inadvertently forgot to include Michael Hooper’s last name in an article about him in the Winter 2020 newsletter. Michael Hooper is proud of his name, grateful he lived at Omaha Home for Boys and is very proud of his life and accomplishments.

Michael Hooper is pictured here with his family (L to R) son Reid, wife Heather, Michael, and daughter Hannah.
**Cruising on 18 Wheels**

Would having a semi parked in your driveway frustrate you? Yeah, normally it would frustrate us too but it sure didn’t on this particular day!

The semi pictured here belongs to one of the young adults in our Supportive Housing Program. He recently completed classes to obtain his commercial driver’s license (CDL), was offered a job and has been on the road for a few weeks now. This young man came to OHB almost a year ago and has faced many obstacles since then. Fast forward to today and this young man has maintained his housing longer than anyone in the program thus far. He is thriving in life!

Our Supportive Housing Program Manager said, “He came to us with two shaky legs and is now finishing on 18 wheels!”

**OHB Guild Forms, Holds Inaugural Meeting**

In January of this year a group of individuals dedicated to supporting Omaha Home for Boys’ mission and youth met for an inaugural meeting of the OHB Guild. Members of the guild donate their time, talents and expertise to OHB by assisting with fundraising, helping at community events, serving on our annual gala planning committee and building awareness about OHB.

So far guild members have been focusing on brainstorming ideas to enhance our guests’ experience at our annual golf tournament and gala. They have come up with some really original ideas!

The OHB Guild is looking to expand its membership. If you have a creative mind and compassionate heart and are looking for a way to make a meaningful impact on a struggling youth or family, please consider joining the OHB Guild. Contact Allison Brown-Corson at abrowncorson@ohb.org or 402.457.7110 for more information or visit our website at OHB.org.

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**A Family Together** *(Continued from page 1)*

One of the most unique aspects of our Supportive Housing Program is that it offers young families the opportunity to live together while working towards self-sufficiency. Many other supportive housing programs in the Omaha area provide help to single parents and their children. Our program is one of the only that allows the entire family unit, including both parents, to live together with their children and receive assistance.

Damon has made some remarkable strides during his time at Omaha Home for Boys. He has maintained steady employment, took the initiative to obtain his birth certificate and social security card, and attended several classes on cooking, budgeting and resume writing. Damon has also maintained his sobriety.

One of the biggest motivators behind all of Damon’s accomplishments has been the opportunity to walk this journey with his girlfriend and sons by his side.

“There’s not a lot of places you can all be together so it’s definitely big,” said Damon.
Young Joseph Blair was in trouble. He was using and selling drugs and found himself in and out of jail. He hadn’t seen the inside of a classroom in months. He lacked guidance from positive adults during a time in his life when he needed it most.

After one of his stints in jail, his parents had had enough. They decided they didn’t want him anymore. Thankfully there was another place for Joseph to go. He moved to Omaha Home for Boys.

“At first I didn’t like it but within the first month or so I became really grateful for what it had to offer,” says 25-year-old Joseph as he recalls his teenage years at OHB.

One of the biggest things that Omaha Home for Boys offered Joseph was a sense of family. He quickly formed a strong bond with his house parents, Dick and Phyllis Mendenhall. Phyllis would often take him garage sale shopping. They would go through the newspaper to find the best sales and then hit the road in search of their treasures. Joseph found these trips with Phyllis to be especially comforting because they reminded him of time spent with his dad going to thrift stores.

Dick also proved to be a positive, supportive mentor, helping break down Joseph’s walls and hard exterior. He and Joseph sat under the Friday night lights on many occasions as they cheered on other OHB youth who were playing football. Joseph also recalls several nights sitting on the floor of the Neef Cottage living room next to Dick as they played his favorite Playstation 2 game, Need for Speed.

“I finally got the structure of a family,” said Joseph. “Dick and Phyllis were very comforting and always by my side.”

Under the direction of Dick, Phyllis and other caring staff at Omaha Home for Boys, Joseph began to turn his life around. He started to attend school regularly, replaced time spent mindlessly wandering the streets for study.
time in the library, and even began to set goals for his future. With the help of therapy and family counseling, he got sober and became the first of his peers to successfully graduate from the OHB Residential Care Program, accomplishing this feat in just 10 months.

Life wasn’t all smooth sailing after Joseph left Omaha Home for Boys but he held tight to the skills he had learned while in the program and today he is a thriving young adult. Joseph is the sous chef at Le Bouillon, a casual French restaurant in Omaha, and will become the first person in his family to graduate from college when he proudly walks across the stage this May to receive his culinary arts degree.

Joseph credits much of his success today to OHB and to the compassionate, supportive adults who taught him morals and respect. He still recalls lessons about not interrupting and learning how to properly accept “no” for an answer.

“Just those basic things really stuck with me,” Joseph said. “All of those lessons definitely help in the professional atmosphere I’m in now. My mom still to this day is impressed that I hold the door open for her.”

Joseph has overcome many trials and tribulations to be the successful sous chef and college graduate that he is today, but he’s still striving for more. In a few years he hopes to head to New York City to broaden his culinary skills and wants to become a traveling chef, eventually settling down in Oregon to own a casual dining café.

A special thanks from Joseph to you...

“When you support OHB, you’re giving a child a chance to be who they can be. I really found myself at OHB and if it wasn’t for the donors...” Joseph’s voice trails off as tears well in his eyes. “OHB created that spark. They lit the flame. I’m just really grateful.”

Can you help other youth like Joseph turn their lives around?

Every gift helps a young adult or family connect with life-changing resources, such as housing assistance, education, transportation, employment and therapy. Please use the enclosed envelope to mail your gift today or give online at OHB.org.
When teens in Omaha find themselves in a crisis situation, they now have a new place to turn for help. They can be referred by local juvenile probation to Omaha Home for Boys’ new Crisis Stabilization Program.

Our Crisis Stabilization Program opened this spring and serves as a short-term program that provides immediate help to youth ages 12 to 18 who are in the midst of a crisis situation. The program provides therapy, support, skill building and education and addresses the needs of the entire family unit. Crisis stabilization serves as an alternative to placing youth in a detention center.

“The objective of our program is to provide services that assist with de-escalating the severity of a young person’s level of distress or need for urgent care, needs that often lead to being placed in detention,” said Brandy Gustoff, Chief Program Officer at OHB. “We aim to disrupt that cycle.”

Our Crisis Stabilization Program is taking a unique approach to care by immediately putting family support services in place that address the needs of the entire family unit, not just the youth. The program provides numerous opportunities to safely and therapeutically stabilize the family unit and provides teens with access to individual, group and family therapy.

Crisis Stabilization is staffed 24/7 and helps clients build independent living skills and develop social skills. The program also provides access to recreation and many educational opportunities.

While there are other crisis stabilization programs and shelters in the area, the demand for such programs far outweighs the availability to youth and families. This is one factor that led to the launch of the new program at OHB.

“We are excited to bring this new program to the Omaha community,” said Jeff DeWispelare, President & CEO at Omaha Home for Boys. “There is a great need in the community for a program that offers immediate, short-term, therapeutic help for teens and I’m thrilled that OHB can be a place for these kids to turn when they’re facing a crisis.”

The Crisis Stabilization Program is housed on OHB’s main campus and has a goal to serve 42 young people during its first year in the pilot.
With Mother’s Day being celebrated in May, we thought it would be the perfect time to take a look back at one of the most memorable house mothers at Omaha Home for Boys. The following account is taken from our Omaha Home for Boys history book that was written 25 years ago in celebration of our 75th anniversary. The full history book is available on our website OHB.org.

Mabel Stoft was Up to the Task

“There are four corners on my bed. There are four angels overhead. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Please bless the bed that I lay on. Now I lay me down to sleep.”

It was a ritual in the Buck Cottage as Mabel Stoft went from room to room to lead her boys in their nightly prayers. Many people, boys and staff alike, have fond memories of this special lady who touched a lot of lives at our Home.

At 60 years of age, Mrs. Stoft lived in her comfortable home in the Minne Lusa section of North Omaha when she became an employee of the Masonic Home (later known as Omaha Home for Boys) on August 1, 1943.

Mrs. Stoft used her experience raising children to good effect in the Megeath House, where there were almost 60 boys of all ages at any given time. She was the matron but one of her additional duties was a breakfast cook as well.

One young fellow with special memories recalls being chosen quite often by Mrs. Stoft to make the toast for the day by placing sliced bread on flat pans which were headed into the oven. No elaborate toaster for the Megeath House!

Then came the move to the new campus in July 1945 and Mrs. Stoft was placed in charge of the Buck Cottage. All alone she was the housemother for our 16 youngest boys! She was up to the task.

Mrs. Stoft was made a relief housemother in 1955 and placed in charge of the clothing program. She continued to work for the Home until October 1968, an almost unheard of 25 years in direct child care. She retired at the age of 85.

On her departure, the Board honored her with a written proclamation and funded a trip for her to visit relatives.

Mabel Stoft was a mother to hundreds, remembered by all who knew her. She was indeed up to the task.
Michael Oher to Be Keynote Speaker at OHB 100 Year Anniversary Luncheon

Omaha Home for Boys is celebrating 100 years of transforming lives and strengthening communities! Please join us to celebrate this milestone anniversary and support the youth, young adults and families served by OHB.

October 8, 2020 • 11:30 a.m. • CHI Health Center Omaha

We are excited to announce that Michael Oher will be our keynote speaker! Oher is a Super Bowl Champion, New York Times Best Selling Author and the subject of the Academy Award nominated film *The Blind Side*. Please join us as Oher shares his inspirational message about his journey from the streets of Memphis to the NFL and beyond.

Purchase tickets at OHB.org

Golf Tournaments Slated for 2020

What’s better than a day of golf with friends? A day of golf that supports a good cause, of course! We are fortunate to have three golf tournaments this summer where proceeds will benefit the youth, young adults and families at OHB.

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<th>OHB Golf Classic</th>
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<th>OHB/Nebraska Greats Tournament</th>
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<td>June 10</td>
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Grab your clubs, gather some buddies and come golf for a good cause!

More information and the opportunity to register can be found at OHB.org.