Children who come to Boys Town are often neglected and abused, and most are primarily concerned about their own well-being and safety. Understandably, they don’t arrive with much to be thankful for. Time, care and teaching help fill this void.

It’s remarkable to see the resilience in our kids, their capacity to forgive and their desire to give back to others. Most of our children have never been shown how to positively impact their communities. Boys Town takes great pride in teaching them how to become good citizens by helping others and giving back for all the blessings they have received.

One of the first ways Family-Teachers® help our children grow is by teaching them to say, “Thank you.” It seems simple, but our kids aren’t used to doing this since many of them have learned through poor examples and environments to focus solely on themselves and their needs because nobody else has or will. By learning to express thankfulness, they begin to experience and develop an attitude of gratitude.

Once that occurs, our kids want to feel like they can make a difference in their community. At Boys Town, this is accomplished by providing them with many different opportunities where they can experience the joy of giving back.

One opportunity to give back involves serving meals at local homeless shelters or making food and delivering it to them. This helps remind many of our kids where they came from, and helps them appreciate what they now have at Boys Town.

Children can also volunteer to help run activities at a Special Olympics event held at Boys Town each year. They make sure athletes get to the right spot on time and cheer on and encourage them to do their best.

The “Crop Walk for Hunger” is another annual event that children participate in. They can choose to run or walk one, three or five miles. This is an organized community-wide event that helps raise funds to end hunger in the U.S. and around the world. It’s a great family-oriented event that our youth do with their Family-Teachers and other kids from their Boys Town home.
For Boys Town Children, Thanksgiving is an Everyday Celebration

Dear Friend,

When our boys and girls bow their heads at the dinner table for grace this Thanksgiving, they will have so much more to be thankful for than just the roast turkey, dressing and pumpkin pie they’re about to enjoy.

Susan is thankful she’s finally part of a family that really loves her and cares about her.

Andre is thankful he no longer has to take three doses of three different medications every day to control his behavior because he’s learning more positive ways to do that.

Brittany is thankful that her dream of becoming a doctor is alive because she is receiving a quality education that will prepare her for the demands of college.

And Robert is thankful he is in a safe place, where he won’t be beaten or locked in his room for days at a time like he was before coming to Boys Town.

On this wonderful Thanksgiving holiday, which marks the start of the joyous Christmas season, every one of our kids has something to be grateful for. In their minds and in their hearts, they know they are in a special place where they can turn their lives around and make changes that will help them grow to be good citizens.

We help them do that every day by teaching them the same values Father Flanagan taught the children who came to him when he founded Boys Town more than 95 years ago. These consist of values like responsibility, self-respect, determination, getting along with others, solving problems calmly, as well as other life skills that will enable our boys and girls to accomplish their goals and contribute to society in positive ways.

Our boys and girls also understand that none of the good things they are experiencing would be possible without your gracious generosity and unwavering support. Be assured our kids will be praying for you, and thinking about all you do for them and Boys Town.

May you and your family be abundantly blessed this Thanksgiving.

God’s Blessings,

Father Steven E. Boes
Boys Town National Executive Director

I'm Thankful For...

Thanksgiving is a wonderful time for Boys Town youth to reflect on their blessings and express their gratitude for the good things that are happening in their lives. Here are some Thanksgiving thoughts from our boys and girls.

I am grateful to God for giving me this time to be at Boys Town, so that I could realize what life really is and having my supportive family always there for me.

— Donte

I am grateful for my Family-Teacher’s smile. It seems very small, but not to me. Her smile helps reassure me that everything will be OK. It is like a sense of comfort.

— Sasha

I thought I knew a lot before I came here, but I was wrong. My Family-Teachers opened my eyes to a different world. If not for Boys Town, I might not be in school. I might not have sobriety and I definitely would not be the person that I am now. I am grateful.

— Jenny

I’m thankful for waking up every morning and having a family that cares about me.

— Elijah
Couple Embraces Siblings with Love in “Forever Family”

Ben and Patty Valdez really weren’t planning to adopt children when they decided to become Boys Town Texas Foster Parents in 2013. But when 3-year-old Sunny and 18-month-old Robert — siblings who were victims of severe neglect — arrived at the couple’s home as their first foster children, there was an immediate bond. “It was almost like they had belonged in our family forever,” Patty said. “Sunny walked into our house and she covered her little mouth. She was crying; she was so happy to be here. It didn’t even take a few days before they began calling us Mom and Dad.”

Eventually, the siblings’ birth parents surrendered their parental rights and the Valdezes were able to move forward with adoption proceedings. In January 2014, six months after that emotional first meeting, Ben and Patty welcomed Sunny and Robert home for good. Patty said she and Ben couldn’t believe how quickly the adoption occurred, especially since they had originally only planned to be Foster Parents. Even making that commitment had required a lot of thought and prayer, she said. But there had been earlier signs that pointed to a larger Valdez family. When Ben and Patty were house-hunting after moving to San Antonio in 2011, they inexplicably ended up buying a four-bedroom home, even though they had no children of their own. “At the time, we looked at each other and said, ‘How are we going to fill this big old house?’” Patty said.

Then there was the night Ben and Patty went out to eat at a Chinese restaurant. It was right around the time they were exploring the idea of becoming foster parents. “My fortune cookie said, ‘Open your doors, you have new people coming,’ and Ben’s said, ‘Your house is going to be full of laughter and joy very soon,’” Patty recalled.

A short time later, Patty visited a local library and was told by a staff member that some books were on sale for a dollar each. All of the books were about adopting kids.

And when the couple made the decision to become Boys Town Foster Parents, they went through the site’s foster-to-adopt training rather than the regular foster care training. Patty said all of these events helped her and Ben warm up to the idea of adopting. But, she said, they both already had what children who were looking for a forever family needed. “We had a love for kids in our hearts.”

— PATTY VALDEZ
BOYS TOWN TEXAS FOSTER-TO-ADOPT PARENTS

See “Forever Family”: Page 7
Yahoo exemplifies a bighearted, giving company that helps make the world a better place. Their support of Boys Town and its mission is special and wide-ranging.

Susan Stratta, Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations at Boys Town, said, “What I especially appreciate about our relationship with Yahoo is that it is multifaceted and longstanding.”

Boys Town’s relationship with Yahoo started in 2010 when Kevin Kush, Boys Town’s Football Coach and nationally recognized speaker and author on sportsmanship and character, spoke to more than 1,000 Yahoo employees (or “Yahoos”) at a national conference in Phoenix, AZ.

A key theme in Kush’s talk revolved around looking at challenges as opportunities for success.

“His talk was well-received and inspirational to the Yahoos who attended,” Stratta said. “And it has had a lasting impact. Even today, when faced with challenges, the Yahoos still use his saying, ‘What an opportunity!’”

Kush later spoke to a management team about teamwork and gave them his book, “A Piece of the Puzzle.” He is also scheduled to talk with another Yahoo employee group in the fall of 2015.

Shortly after Kush’s first presentation, two Yahoo employees volunteered to be Boys Town’s Yahoo Champions — or advocates within the company for Boys Town. “They alerted us to the Yahoo Employee Foundation Grant Program and helped us through the application process,” Stratta said. Since then, the Boys Town National Hotline® has received two Yahoo Employee Foundation (YEF) Impact Grants to establish and grow an innovative mobile texting service for teens to communicate with a counselor for help.

This new service has proven popular. In 2014, Boys Town Hotline counselors had almost 3,400 text conversations with troubled teens. Thanks in part to an online streaming campaign funded by the YEF grant this spring, Hotline counselors had 3,063 text conversations from January through June 2015 — which is more than halfway to Boys Town’s goal of 5,000 for the year.

Boys Town also received a YEF Choice Grant in 2014 that helped with the purchase of Boys Town National Hotline wallet cards and posters to distribute to schools across the country.

“Choice Grants start with a nomination by a Yahoo employee and then employees at all Yahoo sites across the country vote for their favorite charity project,” Stratta said. “It’s really an honor to have the support of so many employees from such a great company.”

Boys Town has also received Choice Awards for school supplies for Wegner Middle School and to support Boys Town National Research Hospital’s® Camp Abilities for children with vision loss.

Yahoo’s office in Omaha is located directly across the street from Boys Town’s Home Campus in the Village of Boys Town, NE.

“We have Yahoo employees come over during their lunch hour at noon to witness the weekly Boys Town Citizenship Ceremonies for young people who are coming to live at Boys Town,” Stratta said. “And the Yahoos also serve as mentors for students in Boys Town’s middle school and high school.”

Yahoo employees have also participated in a career exploration project with Boys Town students, invited them to take a guided tour of the Yahoo Data Center in La Vista, NE, and visited youth at Boys Town to talk about careers and job skills.
In addition, many Yahoo employees have volunteered their time to Boys Town’s annual Easter Egg Hunt for children with vision loss, and they have conducted a back-to-school drive for Boys Town youth where they collected enough school supplies to fill up three large delivery vehicles.

One of the Yahoo employees who originally volunteered to be a Boys Town Yahoo Champion moved out of town to another Yahoo location but has returned for Boys Town’s annual Booster Banquet. Another Yahoo employee recently volunteered to serve on the Boys Town NE/IA Fundraising Advisory Board.

“It has been a real privilege and honor to be able to help such a wonderful organization that impacts children’s lives in numerous ways,” said Christine Stell-Strong, Senior Director of Inside Sales at Yahoo. “I’m continually impressed by the Boys Town staff and more importantly by the children. This organization is making a real difference in children’s lives; many of them would have gone down very different paths had it not been for Boys Town. I have had the opportunity to hear several stories via my experiences at Boys Town and many are heartbreaking and unbelievable; but through love, structure and environmental change, lives are forever changed at Boys Town.”

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**131,959 Hotline Calls* Received in 2014**

* Calls only; does not include emails, texts or chats

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**BOYS TOWN NATIONAL HOTLINE**

**Boys Town Reaches Out to Children and Families in Numerous Ways**

Boys Town’s National Hotline was created so children and parents could speak immediately with trained counselors who can offer valuable assistance and referrals 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year long. Our Hotline offers help with issues ranging from parenting problems to suicide prevention.

Last year, Boys Town received 131,959 calls from all over the United States.

With more and more children and teens on the Internet these days, Boys Town is working hard to reach out to them through their means of communication. These days, that’s by texting or through the Internet.

Our innovative web site — [yourlifeyourvoice.org](http://yourlifeyourvoice.org) and our new mobile texting service is designed to do just that.

If you know a parent or child who needs help, please share our information with them.

**Boys Town National Hotline:**

1-800-448-3000

or visit

[yourlifeyourvoice.org](http://yourlifeyourvoice.org)

or text the word “Voice” to 20121
Giving Thanks, Giving Back

Continued from Page 1

“Jump Rope for Heart” is a fun event that helps raise money for the American Heart Association.

“Honey Sunday” is an event held during the year that raises money for an organization called the Ollie Webb Center, Inc. This organization offers help for children, adolescents and adults with developmental disabilities and their families.

One of the most impactful opportunities children have to be of service is by helping and visiting the elderly. Kids and their Boys Town families regularly visit nursing and retirement homes to spend time with the residents. Kids visit with them and even help run events like “Bingo Night.” During the holidays, children come to sing Christmas carols. And they even plan and organize special events like “Senior Citizen Prom Night,” where the girls and boys get dressed up for an evening filled with refreshments, dancing and talking with the residents. Many children are surprised at how much joy these simple acts of kindness bring to the elderly. And many wonder who gets more out of it — the residents or themselves!

These are just a few of the many service opportunities kids at Boys Town experience. But we don’t stop there. We expand our teaching to include valuable lessons about good citizenship, respect, caring, responsibility and trustworthiness.

These lessons combined with the experiences of giving thanks by giving back help move our kids from being only concerned about themselves to focused on how they can help others.

None of this work is easy. Miracles of the heart take commitment and patience. And we can’t do it alone. Kids need our help every day, all year round, and we need your prayers, generous donations and loyal support so we can help even more children and families.

In this season when we give thanks for blessings big and small, we are grateful that you and all our donors believe in the future of our children. Your generous support of Boys Town ensures we can send once-hurting children into the world as caring, productive citizens.

From our family to yours,
Happy Thanksgiving!

To watch a short video from a local news affiliate of our kids at “Senior Citizen Prom Night,” visit boystown.org/giving-back.
Couple Embraces Siblings with Love in “Forever Family”

Continued from Page 3

Today, the Valdez house is a busy, active place where a brother and sister are safe and happy, and their mom is familiar with every children’s cartoon character that appears on TV.

Both Sunny and Robert have grown and thrived over the past year and a half. Sunny is five now and attends pre-kindergarten. Ben, who owns a scrap metal recycling business, takes his daughter to school every morning. Ben and Robert are “best friends,” and Robert cries when Dad has to leave for work. (Sometimes, Ben is able to take Robert to work with him.)

Patty is a stay-at-home mom and loves every minute of it.

“...and it doesn’t bother me one bit,” Patty said. “Before, my house was really quiet. Now it’s full of laughter.”

But as busy as they are, Ben and Patty still have room in their home and their hearts for more children.

Since adopting Sunny and Robert, the couple has continued to serve as Boys Town Texas Foster Parents. In fact, they are now fostering twin baby girls with thoughts of possibly growing their family again.

Patty said that from the beginning, Boys Town Texas has been there for her and Ben, both as Foster Parents and adoptive parents.

“...opened this door to our hearts and then filled it with beautiful colors,” Patty said. “They’ve been very helpful and supportive, and I wouldn’t trade them for the world.”

Patty also has a message for others who might be thinking about being Boys Town Foster Parents. She has already shared it with a family member and friends who are now fostering for the site.

“You don’t know what you’re missing,” she said. “If you think you can open your home and be loving parents, you should do it.”

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FATHER BOES’ MAILBAG

We get many letters and phone calls from donors asking questions. Here are a couple of them...

**Can I visit while driving through Nebraska?**

**Reply:** Certainly! There is no greater way to feel the hope Boys Town provides, than by visiting our historic village. As one of Nebraska’s top attractions, our beautiful campus shares the history of Father Flanagan’s dream. For further information on visiting Boys Town, please call the Visitor Center at 1-888-556-5121 or visit us online at boystown.org

**From a donor in Nevada:**

**How is Boys Town growing?**

**Reply:** Boys Town is always looking for the best way to help children and families. Boys Town’s long history of providing effective treatment for children with a wide range of disorders and Boys Town National Research Hospital’s® successful history of research over the past 40 years, position the Center for Neurobehavioral Research to become a state-of-the-art collaborative research effort that will offer evidence-based solutions for treatment to the larger mental health community. Boys Town is also an international leader in research on childhood deafness, vision and speech disorders and related communication disorders.

**From a donor in Minnesota:**

**What is a typical day like for the children at Boys Town?**

**Reply:** A day at BT starts like many other families with kids getting up and eating breakfast together before heading off to school. After school our children participate in sports and other activities, with some even having part-time jobs. Then our families eat dinner together, enjoy family time and do household chores.
Benefits of an IRA Bequest

One type of bequest to consider is a bequest from your IRA. If you leave your IRA to your children, your heirs could face a significant tax. Talk with your estate planner about the types of assets to leave to your family that can produce little or no tax. Then consider making a bequest of your IRA to Boys Town. We will receive the full proceeds free of tax and can use this gift to help the children and families in our care. Please consider us as a beneficiary of your IRA.

Your Donations at Work

Boys Town has received accreditation from the Better Business Bureau as a Wise Giving Alliance Charity. In addition, Boys Town has received a high rating for efficiently managing and growing its finances from Charity Navigator, a premier charity evaluator.

With more than 90 percent of the organization’s expenses going directly to its life-changing youth care and health care programs across the United States, Boys Town is committed to its children and donors through sound fiscal management and quality programs.

The Benefits of a Charitable Bequest

A bequest is a wonderful way for you to help further the mission of Boys Town. Here are some of the benefits of designating Boys Town in your will or trust:

» It costs you nothing today to make a bequest
» A bequest is free of federal estate tax
» Your bequest can be changed down the road
» You can still benefit your heirs with specific gifts
» A bequest may produce estate tax savings
» You can leave a legacy through a bequest

How to Make a Bequest

A bequest is one of the easiest gifts you can make to significantly impact our work. Your estate planning attorney can include a provision in your will that leaves a lasting gift to Boys Town. Your bequest could be a gift of specific assets, a dollar amount ($1,000, $10,000 or even $100,000) or a percentage of your estate (5%, 25% or up to 100%). A bequest could also be made from the residue of your estate or what is left after all gifts have been made to your heirs.

Sample Bequest Language

“I give to Father Flanagan’s Boys’ Home, PO Box 145, Boys Town, Nebraska, 68010, Tax ID Number 47-0376606, the sum of $________ or ________% (percent) of the rest, residue and remainder of my estate, for its general purposes.”

For more information on the benefits of making a charitable bequest to Boys Town or for sample bequest language to complete your charitable plan, please visit our website at boystowngift.org or contact our Gift and Estate Planning office today at 888-332-3219 or giftplanning@boystown.org.

The information contained in this briefing does not constitute legal or tax advice, and it is recommended that you seek the advice of your attorney, professional tax advisor and/or financial planner prior to making arrangements for a planned gift.

INQUIRE TODAY!