Christmas traditions create memories that last a lifetime. The best family traditions give us a sense of identity and belonging. They evoke feelings of love and nostalgia. Holiday traditions, especially, can create lasting memories that strengthen family bonds.

Sadly, for many of our kids, Christmas is memorable for all the wrong reasons. They never shared a holiday meal with their families... never opened presents under the tree... and, most disheartening, never experienced the true meaning of Christmas.

At Boys Town, we try very hard to provide Christmas traditions and holiday memories that will replace the sad, painful ones our girls and boys remember. We teach our children that Christmas is a special time for faith, hope and family. This is especially important during the holidays when all children want to know they are loved and valued.

This Christmas, many of our kids are just beginning to understand the joy and wonder of the season while the boys and girls who have been with us for a while are bursting with excitement and anticipation. Much of their enthusiasm comes from being able to teach our new kids about all the Boys Town traditions that are hallmarks of the holiday — stringing lights on Family Homes, picking out and decorating Christmas trees, writing “wish lists” to Santa, baking cookies, wrapping gifts, singing Christmas carols, going ice skating and playing games.

Another tradition they are quick to embrace is being able to create the menu for Christmas dinner in their Family Homes. Because our kids come from every region of the country with different culinary traditions, they can pick a dish that is meaningful to them — whether it’s a favorite entrée (honeyed ham) or dessert (pumpkin pudding cake), or a dish that reminds them of home (Cajun cornbread) — and then help their Family-Teachers prepare and serve it.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! May your hearts be blessed by the joy and love of family and friends this holiday season.

For many of us, this is a joyous time of year. Santas in store windows and carolers on street corners can brighten the dreariest of winter days. Yet for many of the children and families we serve, Christmastime can be one of the saddest seasons.

Some children have never experienced the magic of the holiday... scribbling wishes to Santa or finding brightly wrapped presents under the tree on Christmas morning. Some families have never felt the warmth of the season... laughing with loved ones or delighting in a special meal. For them, the holidays were more worry than wonder.

At Boys Town, we turn this sadness into hope and healing, not just at Christmas, but every day. We provide children with a sense of family and belonging, bringing them into the light of kindness, love and warmth they have been missing. We save and strengthen families, bringing them the compassion and understanding they desperately seek.

Christmas, Hanukkah and other religious celebrations of the season are special times at Boys Town because they remind us that enjoying family, embracing faith and following traditions are among life’s greatest pleasures.

The best holidays are the ones that renew the spirit with hope, faith and love. So again this year, we’ve created a festive atmosphere with special outings and activities. Our boys and girls will sing carols, drink hot chocolate and just enjoy being part of a family where each person is loved and respected. On Christmas morning, they will wake up to open gifts and then go to their place of worship to celebrate and honor their faith.

When they come home, they’ll gather around the table for a special dinner they all helped prepare.

Happy and sacred holiday traditions have been part of Boys Town’s Christmas celebrations for nearly 100 years. We fill our kids’ lives with cherished memories that will remain with them forever, memories that lighten their troubles and strengthen their souls.

For myself and all of our children and families, I wish you the happiest of holiday seasons and thank you for your heartfelt prayers and generosity in everything you do to bring hope, faith and love into the lives of children. May you and your loved ones enjoy good health and good cheer this holiday season and all through the New Year!

God’s Blessings and Merry Christmas,

Father Steven E. Boes
Boys Town National Executive Director
Family Regains Footing with Boys Town’s Help

Children should never have to watch their parents hit each other. Unfortunately, it happens far too often and children suffer the trauma twice: once when they witness the fight and again when they’re eventually removed from the home and placed with strangers because it’s not safe for them to stay.

That’s what happened to the Wheaton family. When Marjorie and Craig got into an argument one night after they’d had too many drinks, the yelling quickly led to pushing, shoving and punching. The couple’s three children — Jeremy, Tasha and Pete — saw it all, and ended up in foster care after the police arrived and arrested Marjorie and Craig.

This wasn’t the first time domestic abuse had upset the Wheaton family. When Marjorie and Craig got into an argument one night after they’d had too many drinks, the yelling quickly led to pushing, shoving and punching. The couple’s three children — Jeremy, Tasha and Pete — saw it all, and ended up in foster care after the police arrived and arrested Marjorie and Craig.

That wasn’t the first time domestic abuse had upset the Wheaton family. But this latest arrest was a wake-up call for two parents who had let their money and marital problems get out of hand at the emotional expense of their kids.

When Social Services referred the Wheatons for an intervention through Boys Town Iowa’s In-Home Family Services, they welcomed the opportunity to make a real change in their lives and the lives of their kids.

A Boys Town Family Consultant began working with Marjorie and Craig, teaching them ways to cope with their challenges without violence. That included enrolling in a domestic violence prevention course. The couple also started attending Alcoholic Anonymous meetings and completed Boys Town’s Common Sense Parenting® program.

After several months of progress, Marjorie and Craig were reunited with their children. The family continues to attend family therapy together at Boys Town, and each child receives individual counseling for various emotional issues.

The Wheatons still have a long way to go to get where they want to be. But they are working together as a family, and Boys Town Iowa will be with them every step.

Broken families find healing and a brighter future through Boys Town In-Home Family Services®.
On Christmas Eve, a quiet calm will descend on our little Village and the Family Homes at our sites around the country. Our boys and girls enjoy being part of a family where each person is loved and respected. On Christmas morning, they will wake up to open gifts and then go to their place of worship to celebrate. When they come home, they’ll gather around the table for the special Christmas dinner they all helped prepare.

Boys Town Traditions Provide Kids with Happy Holiday Memories

On Christmas Eve, a quiet calm will descend on our little Village and the Family Homes at our sites around the country. Our boys and girls enjoy being part of a family where each person is loved and respected. On Christmas morning, they will wake up to open gifts and then go to their place of worship to celebrate. When they come home, they’ll gather around the table for the special Christmas dinner they all helped prepare.

A Boys Town Christmas is full of happy and sacred traditions that celebrate faith and family. The memories our children make are memories they will cherish throughout their lives. Best of all, as adults they will be able to share the traditions they learned at Boys Town with their own children and families. Their holidays will be about love and laughter, not pain or sorrow.

As families across our great nation follow their cherished traditions this Christmas, we hope they will say a prayer for all the kids at Boys Town who are just beginning theirs.

CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS

Christmas is such a joyous time of year for our kids! Here are some of their reflections on the season to warm your heart.

If I could give a gift to someone, I would give my Family-Teachers enough money to take a nice vacation far away. They work so hard. They care so much. I would do this for them.
— Devon, 17

The best Christmas I ever experienced was last year. It was my first year at Boys Town. I was scared of how it was going to be. My Family-Teachers planned the best activities and everyone got along. I was the happiest I’d been in a long, long time. I thank God for this experience.
— Tiffany, 11

My best Christmas was last year at Boys Town. It was filled with so many fun things. We were so excited. I remember all the girls in my house just caring for one another, having fun, eating a good dinner and going to church.
— Marsha, 13

I felt like a Princess...

“I felt like a princess. I’d never had presents just for me,” Mackenzie reflected on her Christmas at Boys Town. For those children who are at Boys Town for Christmas, it is magical.

Become a part of the memories by being a Family Sponsor.
Join a family: call 1-800-547-0093 or e-mail boystownkids@boystown.org.
For more than 25 years, the Boys Town National Hotline® and its extended services have answered the calls of children and parents who need immediate, professional and compassionate guidance and support.

Our 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.

Your gifts enabled Boys Town to answer and provide immediate help to 20,041 suicide-related calls last year!

Elizabeth was one of those callers. Here is a message she recently sent to the Hotline thanking us for helping her through times of crisis and getting her life back on track.

I want to thank you for all you have done for me. I remember learning of the Your Life Your Voice website when I was around 18, and I used it often between the ages of 18 and 20.

I have struggled with self-harm for about four and a half years. I remember at my lowest points I was self-harming multiple times a day, and I’ve had suicide attempts.

I started using the website for the online chats. I would speak with someone through chat who would listen to me and help me come up with some coping mechanisms I could try for the night.

I remember one chat in particular when I was self-harming while chatting. I knew I shouldn’t, so I asked if the counselor could call me on the phone. I gave the person my number, and the counselor talked with me on the phone while I cried. The counselor calmed me down and reassured me that what I was going through was a lot.

I was given a few things I could try. At the time, coping mechanisms to me were small things I could do to help me not self-harm for just five, ten, thirty minutes or so, but those minutes I spent doing something else were crucial in my beginning steps toward recovery.

I wish I remembered the name of the counselor I spoke with on the phone; she made a difference that night. I felt cared for, and I felt like someone wanted to help me.

I mainly used the chats, but after the experience on the phone, I realized, because of my own struggle, that the phone was probably the best and safest option for me; when I was on the phone I couldn’t focus on self-harming at the same time.

I couldn’t have done all this without the help of many people, and this includes Your Life Your Voice and the Boys Town National Hotline. I know how much these websites have helped me, and I know they have helped countless other people in whatever they are going through.

Thank you for helping us reach out to children and families in distress through our Boys Town National Hotline®. It truly makes a difference!
Preparing Young People for a Lifetime of Productivity and Success

Teaching our youth valuable skills that will help them find a job and thrive as adults after they leave our residential program is nothing new for Boys Town. Throughout our nearly 100-year history, we have prided ourselves on preparing our students to make their mark in the real world as productive, hard-working citizens.

Our Career Readiness Center is an intensive, close-knit set of programs in which high school students can find their passion, learn specific workplace skills and build connections with potential employers and mentors while completing their required academic courses for graduation. Combined with the life skills and relationship-building strategies they learn as part of their Family Home families, these boys and girls are receiving the care they need to make huge strides toward a better life.

Expanding Youth Opportunities to Meet a Growing Need

In recent years, Boys Town has closely followed workplace trends that indicate an increasing demand for workers who have been trained in the trades and skilled-labor fields. Part of this process has involved exploring how to enhance the abilities of our students so they match what employers are looking for in prospective employees.

As a result, Boys Town has started an extensive remodeling and expansion project in the Career Readiness Center on our Home Campus. The project will include adding a number of courses designed to give students the foundational skills and direction they need to enter a career field. These courses include welding, small-engine repair, manufacturing, horticulture, the culinary arts, auto mechanics and auto body repair, sports medicine and landscape design.

These will join our current Career Readiness Center offerings in Health Occupations, construction-related careers (plumbing, electrical, framing and roofing), and communication and media sciences (journalism).
Outside the classroom, students will gain valuable experience working with Boys Town maintenance staff during the summer. The Boys Town Career Readiness Center is also working with local businesses and companies to place students in internships and shadowing experiences during our Youth Summer Work Program.

With your help, Boys Town is investing in these classes and internships because they provide our students their best opportunity for success after high school. Next year, we expect as many as 150 of our current students to be enrolled in a career-readiness course.

In addition to providing a quality academic education and career opportunities, Boys Town also ensures that boys and girls have the workplace tools they need to succeed as young adults. We teach our youth how to look for and interview for jobs, and provide opportunities for them to gain real-life employment experience by working at part-time jobs in the Omaha community or within Boys Town. During our Youth Summer Work Program, boys and girls are able to use many of the social skills they are learning in a workplace environment.

We believe the better prepared our youth are to continue their education or enter the workforce after they leave Boys Town, the more likely they will be to achieve their goals and develop as productive, contributing members of society.

Help Us Invest in Their Future!
To learn more about the Boys Town Career Readiness Center and how you can support our efforts to prepare young people for productive careers, please call 402-498-1056.

CURRENT PROGRAMS
» Communication and Media Sciences
» Construction
» Health Occupations

IN-PROGRESS AND FUTURE PROGRAMS
» Small Engines and Welding
» Manufacturing
» Sports Medicine – Athletic Training
» Auto Mechanics and Auto Body Repair
» Business Management
» Computer Software and Hardware
» Culinary Arts
» Horticulture
» Graphic Arts
» Landscape Design

Construction-related courses have long been a mainstay of the Boys Town Career Readiness Center. In recent years, Boys Town has partnered with local construction companies in order to teach youth up-to-date skills that will better prepare them for jobs in that trade.
End-of-Year Gifts and Tax Planning

With the end of the year approaching, a charitable gift can help you support Boys Town’s mission and receive tax benefits. In addition to gifts of cash, here are two charitable gift strategies worth considering: Appreciated Asset Gifts and Charitable Life Income Plans.

Appreciated Asset Gifts

Gifts of appreciated assets such as securities or real estate are an excellent way for you to help the children and families we serve at Boys Town. Securities may be transferred directly to us while real estate is transferred through a deed. These gifts will not affect your cash flow, and they provide the following tax benefits:

- A charitable deduction to help you save on taxes
- Bypass of federal and state capital gains taxes
- Avoidance of the tax on net investment income
- It costs you nothing today to make the gift

From a tax perspective, a gift of appreciated assets makes sense. You can make the capital gains taxes optional, achieve significant tax savings and support our work.

Charitable Life Income Plans

If you have low-yielding assets and are seeking higher income, a charitable life income gift such as a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust may be worth exploring. In exchange for your charitable gift of cash or appreciated securities, you reap multiple benefits:

- Receive a lifetime income
- Generate a current income tax deduction
- Bypass all or a portion of the capital gains on appreciated assets
- Make a future gift upon your passing to support our work

To learn more about end-of-year gifts, please contact our Gift and Estate Planning office at 888-332-3219 or giftplanning@boystown.org or visit boystowngift.org today!