

WE ARE

# BOYS TOWN NATION

BOYS TOWN NATIONAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION®

WINTER 2020  
Volume 59, Issue 4

*Happy Holidays from Our Home to Yours...*



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## FROM FATHER BOES

PRESIDENT AND NATIONAL  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### DEAR ALUMNI,

What a year 2020 has been! And what a challenge. This Christmas season brings to mind the great gift we all received over 2000 years ago in Bethlehem when our Savior, Jesus Christ, was born into the most humble of beginnings. His arrival into this world was surrounded by turmoil and strife, not unlike the world we live in today. Yet the kindness of a simple innkeeper gave the blessed family a stall in which to rest.

Many of you were born into this world amidst the pain and suffering of family strife. Boys Town became that "Inn" where you were welcomed into safety and care. The welcoming arms of Boys Town still reach out to thousands of youth across our country today. We are still doing what Father Flanagan did over 100 years ago and that is to accept the child who needs a safe and nurturing home into our "Inn."

All of our lives have changed in 2020 as we adjust to living during a pandemic that none of us has ever experienced before. As you go about your daily lives during the Christmas season, keep in mind and prayer the many who have suffered great loss and are suffering today.

Many of our children will get to travel home for the holidays, but others will remain on Campus in Christmas homes. Some will be there because of turmoil that still plagues their families. Others, due to COVID-19, may be there to remain in as safe an environment as possible.

We will have our "Inn" open to welcome them for a season full of care and joy. This year, as in Christmases past, we will share the joy of the season with a Village decked out for the holidays. Santa made his annual trek to Boys Town in early December, and though the lighting of the Boys Town Christmas tree was a little different celebration, the Christmas season was off and running. Our youth will more than likely observe religious services virtually this year. And many of our annual Christmas traditions will also be centered around the family home. Nevertheless, all of our youth will be treated to special dinners, pizza parties, movies and events so their memories of Christmas will be one of warmth and the joy of youth.

I ask each and every one of you to reflect on your days as a youth at Boys Town. Remember the staff that worked overtime to give you a special day, a special memory so that you felt wanted, needed and part of a family. Keep them in your prayers. Look to your family today and give them the same love and care you received at Boys Town.

Merry Christmas.

Father Steven E. Boes  
President and National Executive Director

# AROUND THE 'TOWN AND THE Nation...

## Youth Care Support Team Provides Care Packages

Over the past seven months, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many families to find a new normal. The same is true for Boys Town's Family Homes on Home Campus, Boys Town New England, Boys Town Nevada, Boys Town Washington DC and Boys Town North Florida.

To help keep youth in the Family Home Program entertained while being at home, members of the Youth Care Support team purchased care packages for homes to provide enrichment activities for the kids.

These care packages included items such as games, kites, sidewalk chalk, candy and lots of fun family items. Four weeks' worth of care packages were delivered to the Family Homes one week at a time. Each week, administrators would walk around their respective campus and deliver them to the homes.

"There are a lot of hard-working people reaching out and lending a hand," said Angie Powers, Executive Director, Boys Town Home Campus. "This campus is choosing joy and gratitude right now. I could not be prouder of the people who live and work here."



## #TEACHLOVE Alumni Discount

The Boys Town online Gift Shop has a full range of #TEACHLOVE apparel and other items. If you wish to order, simply go online at [boystowngiftshop.org](https://boystowngiftshop.org). Just use the discount code BTALUM. It will give all Boys Town alumni 25% off of all Boys Town branded items. This opportunity is good through March 31, 2021.

## Mother's Guild Makes Masks for Healthcare Providers

The Boys Town Mother's Guild has transitioned from making quilts for Boys Town youth to making protective masks for area healthcare providers.

There has been a nationwide shortage in protective masks, making it extremely difficult for healthcare professionals to find masks when they are needed. The Mother's Guild, an organization that is deeply rooted in Boys Town's history, has done its part to

give selflessly to the youth of Boys Town, and now they are giving back to the people on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Mother's Guild began over 100 years ago by Nora Flanagan, Father Flanagan's mother. The group of women would meet on Thursday afternoons to sew quilts and mend clothing for the boys at the Home. The guild was put on hold during World War II, but was revived in 2005 and members started quilting for the boys and girls of Boys Town again.

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*"For successful people, aspiration is as important as inspiration is. The joy and satisfaction they get come from living rather than from life. They know that it is only when a person gives up, content to live in the past instead of in the future, that the heart grows weary."*

— SERVANT OF GOD EDWARD J. FLANAGAN



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# Melvin Hamilton, '65, Chooses Boys Town as Destination for Charitable Food Donation

BOYS TOWN  
SPOTLIGHT

**M**elvin Hamilton, '65, will never forget what Boys Town did for him.

That's why when it came time this fall to decide where to dispatch a tractor trailer loaded with over 40,000 pounds of non-perishable food items, Hamilton knew exactly the place – Boys Town.

Hamilton's donation comes as a team effort from himself and several of his college football teammates from the University of Wyoming. A member of the Cowboy football team's famous 1969 Black 14, the "Mind, Body and Soul" initiative is sending the donations to nine communities thanks to the University of Wyoming diversity program and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.



Melvin Hamilton, '65

The goal of the group is to feed young people in needy settings.

"We're thinking of the underserved," Hamilton said. "As part of the group, it was clear to me where I wanted a portion of the donation to go — Boys Town was a natural. And there were others that came to mind, too."

Hamilton, who was sent to Boys Town in the summer of 1961, said his goal this holiday season is to help endangered youth.

Besides Boys Town, Hamilton is distributing trucks to Cathedral Home, a Laramie institution for troubled youth, and the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming. All three destinations are close to Hamilton's heart.

Deliveries arrived mid-November, before Thanksgiving.

Hamilton still remembers literally being dragged by his mother the four blocks from his home in Wilmington, North Carolina, to the bus depot where he would begin his journey to Boys Town in the summer of 1961.

"I cried the whole four blocks," Hamilton confessed.

But today, Hamilton says the decision to send him to Father Flanagan's Boys Town was a move that probably saved his life.

Hamilton said something had to be done at the time if he was going to amount to anything. His mother was trying to raise he and his five brothers and two sisters, all on her own. She did the best she could, considering the conditions, but things were beginning to turn for the worst.

"My older brothers started to drop out of school," Hamilton said. "I always had the ability to do well in school, but I started to follow the pattern of my older brothers. So, I started acting out, and missing school."

Thankfully, Hamilton's mother talked to a local priest. He suggested a drastic move — sending Melvin to Boys Town.

"I should have known something was up," Hamilton said. "I kept taking these physicals and getting shots, going to psychiatrists and taking tests. But I never put the things together that they were working behind the scenes to get me to Boys Town. Finally, the day before I was to take the bus to Boys Town, my mom told me where I was going to go. That was how I got to Boys Town."

Hamilton says at first he resented the move.

"I really felt for a long time I was abandoned," Hamilton said.

"Psychologically, that took a toll. I knew I didn't want to be here because I felt that abandonment. I also thought this was a reformatory school and I had heard from my buddies on the street how tough you had to be to survive at a reformatory. So, I put on my mean face and started fighting as soon as I got here. I wanted to let everybody know that I wasn't going to be the underdog. It was a rough first two weeks."

But just like everything at Boys Town, Hamilton said he learned.

"After a couple weeks, I had a counselor, Mr. Keenan, pull me aside and



said, 'Mel, we don't have any fences here. If you want to go home, I think it would be the wrong thing for you, but we'll send you back home. If you keep fighting, we're going to have to do something.' Then we just had a long talk, and from that day on, it was smooth sailing."

Athletics played a major role in Hamilton's success at Boys Town, and in college. But even that required some extra effort. Hamilton, who would go on to earn a football scholarship at the University of Wyoming, had to be tricked into playing for Boys Town.

"I had no interest in playing football at the beginning," Hamilton said. "But coach used reverse psychology on me. He asked if I could play football. I said, sure, I could play. He asked if I had ever played. And I said, no, but I was sure I could. I told him I just didn't want to play ball. Then one day I was sitting around with Ken Gilchrist, watching practice. The coach came over and said, 'Hamilton, I don't think you're tough enough to play this game!' I said, what? Get me a helmet! I'll show you. That was it."

At the University of Wyoming, Hamilton had a career that included playing in the Sun Bowl and the Sugar Bowl. But even though he had athletic talent, Hamilton still gives credit to the place where everything started — Boys Town.

"Everything I've done is a result of my stay here," Hamilton said. "There's no doubt about that. Everywhere I go, my first opportunity I have to talk about Boys Town, I do, and what Boys Town has meant to me. I have no hesitation about doing that."

"I earned a full scholarship to the University of Wyoming thanks to Boys Town football. Heck, I've experienced things that people would give their left arm to achieve, and it's all because of Boys Town."

Hamilton says it is easy for him to give thanks to Boys Town because he knows what tragically would have happened had he remained in North Carolina growing up.

"Let's put it this way, I've been back to Wilmington many times," Hamilton said. "The guys I hung around with growing up are either dead, in prison or they're at the local auto dealership washing cars. Those were my best friends, and most of them are still my best friends, but that's where they ended up. There's no doubt I was headed in that direction."

For now, Hamilton is just proud to be able to give back to the place that did so much for him.

Coming in the Spring edition of *Boys Town Nation*, read the story of how Hamilton's life took a drastic turn at the University of Wyoming, and how 50 years later, the experience of the Black 14 can inspire us all.

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*"Everything I've done is a result of my stay here.... There's no doubt about that. Everywhere I go, my first opportunity I have to talk about Boys Town, I do, and what Boys Town has meant to me. I have no hesitation about doing that."*

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— Melvin Hamilton, '65



## FROM TONY JONES

ALUMNI DIRECTOR

### DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

All of us in the Alumni Office and Alumni Association wish you a blessed and happy holiday season. As 2020 winds down, we look forward with optimism to a brighter year in 2021. Together, we have navigated through the pandemic, caring for each other and those around us. During this holy season, I give pause to reflect on the blessings that we receive every day and for the fortune of good health we enjoy. It is a time to give thanks for those blessings and to remember those who have cared for us.

We lost our dear Father Peter this year, and we all know how much he loved the Christmas holidays! Carry his Christmas spirit with you this holiday season.

As brothers and sisters, we have the ability to share a part of our heart with one another and help **#TEACHLOVE**. This blessing can truly heal a broken soul. Boys Town has a new national campaign that encourages everyone to **#TEACHLOVE**. We all know of Father Flanagan's reputation for providing a home for children of all races and religions to live together and be treated equally. Father Flanagan's ability to love and care for every child regardless of the color of their skin, their religious belief or ethnicity was a radical idea in 1917 and so far ahead of its time.

As alumni, we, better than most, are ideally positioned to spread this important message because we have lived it. Our hope is that you will join Boys Town in this **#TEACHLOVE** Campaign and spread the message. Let your friends and family know, throughout this holiday season, how you **#TEACHLOVE** in your families, communities and workplaces. This is so important.

### Reunion Update

Your Boys Town National Alumni Association Reunion Committee has been hard at work developing options and alternatives for the 35th Biennial Alumni Family Reunion, scheduled for July 2021, here in Omaha.

With the uncertainty about what restrictions will be in place in Nebraska for large gatherings, the Committee has recommended the following to the BTNAA board.

1. **Plan on holding the reunion on campus** unless the situation dictates otherwise.
2. **Cancel the banquet** due to the uncertainty and sizable non-refundable deposit required.
3. **Hold a banquet for the 50- and 25-year reunion classes** on campus or at a nearby local establishment.

If the campus remains closed next July, the Committee has recommended that the reunion be moved to July 2022. Your Alumni Board will meet in December to discuss the steps needed to move forward based on information available at that time. We will keep everyone informed on what decisions are being made.

Please keep our boys and girls living at Boys Town in your thoughts and prayers during this holiday season. For many of our children this has been a very disappointing year due to the pandemic. Your prayers are truly appreciated by the staff and all the children in our care.

I wish you a Merry Christmas and the happiest of holidays.

Your Boys Town Brother,

Tony Jones, '88  
Alumni Director



# COWBOY UP!

Despite COVID-19, Boys Town athletic teams continued competing this fall. Many of the home events were streamed live over the internet. At the time of this issue, that plan is still in place for Winter sports.



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## Stand with Boys Town and Teach **LOVE**

*"It costs so little to teach a child to love, and so much to teach him to hate."*

This simple but profound statement was made a century ago by Father Edward Flanagan, founder of Boys Town. From its inception, Boys Town welcomed every child regardless of race, religion or creed. At the time, many believed such integration was scandalous. There were threats and condemnation. But Father Flanagan was steadfast in rejecting all forms of discrimination, and he embraced every child who needed hope, a helping hand and a home.

Today, Boys Town remains committed to the ideals of tolerance, respect, equality and fairness. Every day, in our Family Homes, our foster homes, our schools and all of our youth-serving programs, we teach children to choose love over hate, calm over rage and justice over vengeance.

It's a lesson that needs to be heard and taught in every home... now more than ever.

Recent events have laid bare just how much divisiveness and distrust exists in our communities and our nation. When misunderstandings and suspicions cause us to fear those we consider "other" or "different," it can lead to the kinds of tension and friction we see playing out on the streets of America. This is the cost of hate.

As people, we all must work to create a more just, peaceful and equitable society. I urge you to use this moment of

turmoil and pain to look inside and see your part in this greater racial problem. I promise to do the same.

As parents and caregivers, let's commit ourselves to investing in love by building solidarity in our families, not barriers; by teaching and modeling compassion and kindness to our children rather than indifference and cruelty. The change we want to see in our world really does begin with us, with our families and in our homes.

Today, I humbly ask you to join with us to **#TEACHLOVE** and make a commitment to promote tolerance, respect and equality. We will be sharing different ways to **#TEACHLOVE** in the coming days.

With your help, support and prayers, we can amplify a message of love, inclusion and understanding so families and communities can find a renewed sense of hope and our country can begin to heal.

God's Blessings,

Father Steven E. Boes  
President and National  
Executive Director

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for story updates,  
In Memoriam,  
and more  
Boys Town Nation

