

Healing & Hope News

“The work will continue...”
– Father Edward J. Flanagan,
Founder of Boys Town

This Isn't a Job

LISABETH AND BRANDON DEPINA EMBRACE THE LIFESTYLE OF BOYS TOWN FAMILY-TEACHERS®

There really is no job description that could fully explain the depth and responsibilities of a Boys Town Family-Teacher®. In simplistic terms, they are the parents of six kids who come from challenging backgrounds to the Portsmouth Bazarsky Campus. They are responsible for providing a

they feel comfortable and feel supported, so they have an opportunity to use all that is good to be successful.”

The Depinas came to Boys Town a little more than a year ago and have made an impact with kids not only in House 125, where they live, but also in the entire Boys Town community. Their background helps to explain why they have been so impactful here.

“Honestly, Boys Town specifically was never on our radar,” Brandon said. “Lisabeth and I went to school together and when we were teens, we were both very much into the ideas of mentoring and serving our church. We were camp counselors and church youth leaders. While our friends were out partying, like most high school kids, we were already working to improve the lives of younger kids.”

Lisabeth added, “We needed an escape. We didn't want to do drugs to get ‘high’, we wanted to work with others to help them feel better.”

The Depinas first started working professionally at a private school where they worked extensively with teenagers. But the challenge of needing to make more money got them thinking about possible next professional steps. Boys Town Foster Care Trainer and Recruiter Kim Gagne is a member of His Province Church in Swansea, the same church that the Depinas attend. Aware of a family teaching opening at Boys Town, she recommended the Depinas.

“Honestly, this wasn't something I was thinking about doing,” Brandon said. “Lisabeth was sold right away, but it took some convincing for me. Once we got to campus, I immediately loved the environment and the boys in the house. I saw that House 125 was open and I knew we would love to work here.”

The Depinas' house features six boys and is right next to the outdoor basketball court. Any day after school, on weekends and throughout the summer, you will see Brandon and the boys playing hoops. It is in many ways the epicenter of campus.



Brandon & Lisabeth Depina

sense of family and community, all within the Boys Town model of behavioral learning.

Lisabeth and Brandon Depina are Boys Town Family-Teachers who do all of that and then some... and they love it!

“This isn't a job, it's a lifestyle and my life,” Lisabeth said.

“For me, it's sad when people don't see all the good in kids. Our job is to provide a community for them in which

A LETTER FROM SARAH

Dear loyal supporters,



As the year draws to a close and the holiday season approaches, we wanted to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support. Your generosity has been a beacon of hope for us and those we serve.

Your contributions have made a significant impact on our

mission, allowing us to continue our vital work.

Your belief in our cause empowers us to reach new heights and make a real difference in the lives of kids, families and communities.

This holiday season, we want to extend our warmest wishes to you and your loved ones. May your days be filled with joy, laughter and the company of those you cherish. Your kindness has already made this a brighter year for many, and we hope that the spirit of giving and togetherness fills your holiday season as well. Your contributions have not only changed lives but have also touched our hearts, reminding us of the incredible goodness that exists in the world.

It is donors like you who make our mission possible, and we are truly grateful. Here's to a joyful and prosperous holiday season and a wonderful new year ahead.

With warm regards and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Sarah Galvan".

Sarah Galvan

Executive Director

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For Brandon, what is so impressive to him is the kids' resilience. "Each kid has gone through so much in their lives and they still face that while they are here. And yet, despite the disappointments, they bounce back."

Brandon shared an example of resilience talking about a boy in his house who received an email from his parent telling him they didn't want to visit anymore, suggesting their son end his life. That's a pretty tough message to receive.

"And yet after Lisabeth and I spoke with him about the email, he hugged us, thanked us for caring and had a smile on his face."

Brandon went on to talk about the misconception of Boys Town kids from those who don't know them.

"So many people think these kids are hopeless and that one day they will be in prison," Brandon said. "Most of the people in their lives haven't given them the time of day. And yet all these kids want is a loving home and to be around people that care about them. That's what Boys Town gives them."

Added Lisabeth, "Kids are so misunderstood by everyone. They are people, not just a number. All they want is to be accepted, loved, understood and to be part of a community."

So, what makes Brandon feel like the time he spends with kids is making an impact?

"I have two answers to that. We were all at breakfast the other day and the boys were talking," Brandon said. "One of them said, 'you act like the father I never had.' Believe me, that made a huge impact on me. The other example I would share has to do with school. Our kids candidly struggle in school. But the longer they are here, the better they get. When I see their grades improve, and how proud they are because of that, it reminds me that we are helping to open doors for them and provide opportunities."

Lisabeth had a similar story, but just as profound.

"We were on the back porch and all the kids were talking and playing video games inside," she said. "We looked through the door and they were all smiling, and they were just all so happy."

The Depinas both feel strongly about the community aspect of Boys Town and through their work they have established one that is valued and will be always remembered by the kids in House 125.



Meet Corey

A Boys Town Success Story

As a child, Corey was the victim of abuse by his biological father. He was adopted, but because of his early childhood

trauma, Corey showed a high level of aggression toward his adoptive parents and was later placed into a high-level rehabilitation center by the Rhode Island Department of Child Youth Family (DCYF). Translation: Corey wasn't wanted by his biological parents nor his adoptive parents.

Think about that.

After several more years, DCYF suggested Corey go to a facility that focused on a

family environment. And that's when everything changed.

Corey came to Boys Town at age 13 with goals to learn how to respect authority, build trust in relationships and understand the value of community. The hope was that Corey would improve skillsets in understanding boundaries with others and learning how to cope when things weren't going well.

"When Corey first got here, he was receptive to Boys Town because it meant he was five minutes away from his family," Family Home Program Consultant Tim Croteau said. "The goal, as it is for all of our kids, is (family) visits followed by reunification."

Corey has succeeded in mastering those skills so effectively that he advanced to being able to be a member of the Middletown High School baseball team, work two different jobs and begin his college search. Within Boys Town he graduated to the Achievement level – the highest level any youth can attain. This means he no longer is required to have the Boys Town behavior point card, he has his own cell phone and he can now hang out with friends like any other kid would do. In the last four years, only four other kids at Boys Town New England have reached this level.

Corey is a poster child for the Boys Town model of care and the belief that every kid is a good kid. He didn't choose the circumstances into which he was born, yet those

circumstances often determine one's chance for success. Many are fortunate that when things get tough, we have family to support us. Corey didn't have a family, nor a community until he arrived in Portsmouth to the Boys Town Bazarsky Campus. Despite numerous attempts, Corey's family didn't choose to visit Corey, which led to continual disappointments. Despite those heartbreaking realities, Corey persevered.

The Boys Town goal is for kids to be reunified with their families, moved to Foster Care or adopted. At his age and due to his circumstances, none of these options materialized for Corey.

"To Corey's credit, he accepted that his hope for returning home wasn't going to happen and he changed his goals," Croteau said. "His goals are now to pursue a career, get a job and go to college."

"To see Corey's progress and how he has learned from all of his challenges just puts a smile on our faces," Family-

Teacher Brandon Depina said. "Corey took control of his life, which was great to see."

Added Brandon's wife, Lisabeth, "I am so proud of how hard he works in school, at his job and on campus. He understands his goals and you can literally see him thinking about them and processing how

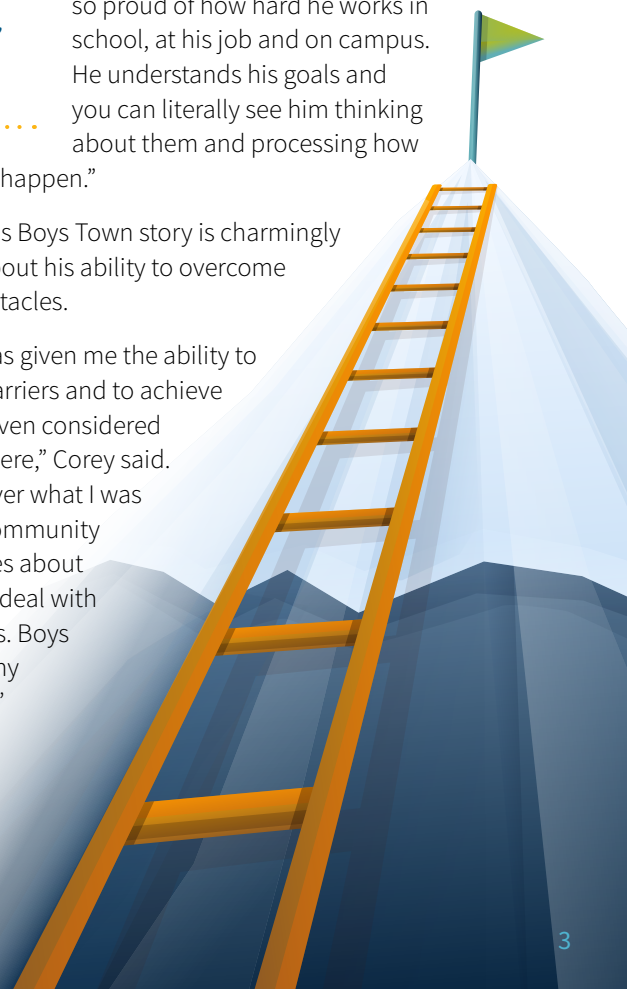
to make them happen."

The hero of this Boys Town story is charmingly nonchalant about his ability to overcome enormous obstacles.

"Boys Town has given me the ability to break down barriers and to achieve goals I never even considered when I came here," Corey said.

"I got to discover what I was good at in a community that really cares about me. I can now deal with my frustrations. Boys Town is truly my second home."

*Corey wasn't wanted
by his biological parents
nor his adoptive parents.
Think about that.*



Holiday Summary

Everyone says the holiday season is busy and they are correct in saying so. We could say the same thing at Boys Town for the entire fall as we had some of the busiest and most exciting months we have had in many years.

We started in October with our annual volunteering at the Amica Newport Marathon and Pell Bridge Run. A special shoutout to the local schools (Portsmouth High School) and individuals that helped at each event. Volunteers had to arrive as early as 5:30 a.m. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Later in October we welcomed employees from the PARE Corporation for a cookout on the Bazarsky Portsmouth Campus. PARE as an organization has been so invested in what we do at Boys Town by annually donating backpacks for nearly 75 students at the start of school, and providing holiday gifts for many of our LIFT program kids in the Pawtucket area. Ken DaCosta, who just retired from the Boys Town Board, helped to initially spearhead these efforts and we cannot thank him and everyone at PARE enough for their continued support.

October concluded with a Halloween trip to Six Flags. This was special because the trip was initiated by one of our Family Home kids who just joined us in September. She advocated for the trip and made such a good presentation that we felt compelled to make it happen!

We introduced a new event this fall, which involves bringing area business leaders on campus to talk about their

personal background, lessons learned, their current job and how they got there. Kathy Wyllie, who is a partner at Revens, Revens, St. Pierre and Wyllie, along with Melvin Veasley, who is President of MVP Marketing Results, did a great job and opened the eyes of our Family Home kids about what is possible if they continue to work hard.

And then we hit the holiday season with the annual Buy a Bird campaign in which we provided 100 dinner baskets as part of our Thanksgiving Food Drive. And we officially kicked off the holiday season with the annual holiday tree lighting and block party. This year the Bazarsky campus homes are outlined with colored lights as requested by the kids. To their credit last year, they picked white lights and this year they wanted a change to see which they liked better.



Yes, it was an eventful and wonderful fall, enjoyed by everyone at Boys Town. Best wishes to you and your family for a wonderful holiday season.

Glenn Hofmann, Development Director



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For more great stories, visit BOYSTOWN.ORG/new-england

Since opening in 1991, Boys Town New England has brought life-changing care to tens of thousands of children and families in Rhode Island and surrounding states.

Boys Town New England has five Family Homes that serve adolescents and young children at our Bazarsky Portsmouth Campus. We also offer Foster Family Services, In-Home Family Services, the LIFT Program in Pawtucket schools and other Community Support Services. For children who have completed Boys Town New England out-of-home programs, Reunification Services are available to help them make a smooth transition back to their families and maintain and improve their treatment gains.



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our mission
Changing the way America cares
for children and families.