

Healing & Hope News

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

Running Helps Ben Buonanno Support Boys Town’s Mission in Pell Bridge Run



Each year, Boys Town staff members lace up their shoes and head to Newport, Rhode Island, to volunteer at the annual Pell Bridge Run, a scenic and charitable race that supports local non-profit organizations. This year’s event held extra meaning for Boys Town New

England, as 14-year-old Ben Buonanno took on his first-ever road race, proudly running to represent Boys Town.

Ben’s mother, Liana Buonanno, served on the Boys Town New England Board, and along with her husband, Rob, and younger son, Thomas, has supported Boys Town’s mission for many years.

Out of 3,364 runners, Ben finished an impressive 150th overall, and 10th in the under-19 age group.

But Ben’s story is about much more than crossing the finish line. Here is more information about Ben.

How did you first hear about Boys Town?

I first learned about Boys Town when my parents told me we were going to fill Christmas lists for kids who live there. At first, I didn’t know much about it, but I thought it would be fun to buy presents. I was surprised to see what was on their lists, things like board games, a book, snacks and even underwear. It made me realize how different people’s needs can be, and how something small can mean so much to someone else.

What do you remember about your first visit to Boys Town?

My first visit was during the summer, and it’s something I’ll never forget. The kids were so excited that someone came just to spend time with them. I remember one of them

asking, “You’re here just to meet us?” I could tell they felt seen and cared about. Hearing their stories and dreams was amazing. When we were leaving, some of them thought the toys we brought were for us to take back and offered to help carry them to our car. I got to tell them, more than once, that everything we brought was for them. Seeing their joy and surprise was one of the best parts. Something that seemed insignificant to me was life-changing for someone else.

Have you learned anything about Boys Town over the years from your visits?

I’ve learned that Boys Town is more than just a place. It’s a real home for kids who don’t have one. The people there truly care and help the kids feel supported and safe. It’s taught me how important it is to give your time and kindness, not just physical things.

Ben’s drive, compassion and determination reflect the very spirit of Boys Town, where caring for others and striving for excellence go hand in hand. Whether he’s running across a finish line or giving his time to support others, Ben shows that making a difference often starts with small, heartfelt acts of kindness. His story reminds us that every step we take, on the road, in our communities and in life, can bring hope to someone who needs it most.



SCAN NOW

SCAN TO READ
MORE ABOUT
BEN’S STORY





From Crisis to Connection One Family's Journey to Healing

When the Martinez household fell into crisis, it wasn't because of a single moment, it was the result of years of stress, miscommunication and pain.

Alejandra Martinez, a mother of seven boys, watched as her family unraveled. Her sons, overwhelmed and unsupported, began acting out. The boys were stealing, fighting and disconnecting from school. Her response, fueled by frustration and fear, turned physical. Eventually, the home became so unsafe that the boys were removed and placed in foster care.

Devastated, Mrs. Martinez knew something had to change. She began searching for a way forward. She knew she didn't need to just reunite her family, but to transform the way they lived together. That's when she found Boys Town New England.



Through Boys Town, Mrs. Martinez was introduced to Eliza, a family consultant who helped her build the parenting tools she never had. Together, they worked on communication

strategies, attending family sessions and building a foundation of mutual respect. The more Mrs. Martinez learned, the more confident she became, not only as a parent but as a person. She began advocating for herself and her children, asking hard questions and learning how to set healthy expectations.



The changes rippled through the family. Her two oldest sons, once constantly at odds, started sharing responsibilities and finding common ground. Whether that meant managing chores or tending to the family's chickens, they connected rather than disconnecting. With time, the Martinez household became more than a shared space; it became a home grounded in accountability, compassion and growing trust.

Today, the Martinez family stands as proof that healing is possible. With support from Boys Town and a mother's determination to do better, a broken home has become a hopeful one, where every member, young and old, is learning how to thrive.



Boys Town New England Is Helping Those in Need During the Holidays

Once again, Boys Town this year is helping those in need during the holidays.

Last month, turkeys, stuffing, cranberry sauce and potatoes were donated to needy families throughout Rhode Island and Massachusetts as part of our "Buy A Bird" campaign in celebration of Thanksgiving.

This month, the popular Boys Town "Adopt A Child" campaign, which provides gifts for the boys and girls in our community programs, is underway. If you are interested in donating, please indicate so either on the enclosed donation card or in the online form which is located at New England | Boys Town New England.

Adopt a Child
this Holiday Season

BOYS TOWN
New England

MAKE THE HOLIDAY SEASON SPECIAL
FOR THOSE IN NEED

SCAN NOW

NFL's New England Patriots Make Dreams Come True For Boys Town Foster Families



Under the bright summer sun, with endless ice cream and Del's legendary lemonade in hand, 25 excited foster kids and their families from Boys Town New England gathered for the surprise of a lifetime—they were about to rush the field and meet real NFL stars. But that wasn't all... they were each getting a brand-new bicycle, personally gifted by none other than players from the New England Patriots.



On Friday, July 25, 55 members of the Boys Town community—

including staff and foster families—were treated to an unforgettable VIP experience at Patriots Training Camp at Gillette Stadium. This incredible opportunity came to life thanks to Patriots guard Caeden Wallace, who first connected with Boys Town through last year's NFL "My Cause, My Cleats" campaign. Since then, the partnership has only grown stronger—and more inspiring.

The field was buzzing with energy as Patriots players mingled with our kids, signing autographs, offering encouragement and helping each child take their first spin on their brand-new bikes. The smiles were wide, the cheers were loud and the joy was contagious.

As Caeden shared, having a bike is "an integral part of being a child"—and we couldn't agree more. At Boys Town, we believe every child deserves the chance to simply be a kid. Thanks to the Patriots, these children got more than just bikes—they got a moment to shine, to laugh and to feel truly special.

To the entire New England Patriots organization: THANK YOU! Your generosity and heart made this day one we'll treasure forever.



Huge thanks to Caedan Wallace and Caedan Cares for partnering with Boys Town and making this all possible!

Back-to-School Giving Pare Corporation Employees Provide 120 Backpacks for Local Kids



Back-to-school season can be stressful for families, especially when the cost of supplies adds up quickly. Thanks to the generosity of Pare Corporation employees, 120 children supported by Boys Town New England will begin

the school year with everything they need to feel prepared, confident and excited.

From July 17 through August 6, employees from Pare's offices in Lincoln, RI, Foxboro, MA and Holyoke, MA came together to raise funds for the annual backpack drive. This marks the fourth consecutive year that Pare has partnered with Boys Town New England to help ensure local children have the tools they need to succeed in the classroom.

On August 6, a group of volunteers gathered at Pare's Lincoln, RI office to transform donations into fully stocked

backpacks. With music playing and plenty of teamwork, employees filled each bag with supplies tailored to

different grade levels from elementary through high school. The backpacks included:

- » Classroom essentials like notebooks, binders, dividers, folders and index cards.
- » Pencil pouches filled with pens, pencils, markers, highlighters, erasers and more.
- » Health and hygiene items such as tissues and hand sanitizer.
- » A special goodie bag with fun keychains and bracelets featuring words of encouragement to inspire students as they begin the school year.

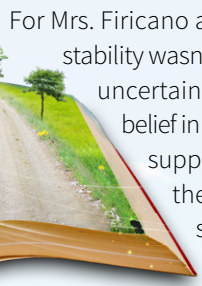
In all, about 45 employees contributed to the fundraiser, and 10 volunteers rolled up their sleeves to assemble the backpacks on site. Their efforts will help Boys Town New England kids walk into school not only equipped with supplies, but also with the knowledge that their community believes in them.

As children and teens head back to school this fall, Boys Town New England is grateful to partners like Pare Corporation, which continues to invest in the future of young people across our region.



Boys Town New England Services Help Family Stay Together

When hope felt distant, one mother refused to give up.



For Mrs. Firicano and her two daughters, the road to stability wasn't easy. The journey was paved with uncertainty, hard choices and an unwavering belief in second chances. With the compassionate support of Boys Town New England (BTNE), their story transformed from one of separation and struggle into a powerful journey of reunification, resilience and renewed love.

This past year, Mrs. Firicano and her daughters closed an important chapter in their journey with the successful completion of the Reunification Program. It was a significant milestone that marked their official transition back into a stable, loving family unit. But their story began long before, and it's one filled with perseverance, growth and the power of community.

The family's connection with Boys Town first began through the Lift Program, where they received valuable support and training designed to strengthen their home environment. When that program eventually dissolved, life took a difficult turn. The daughters were separated and placed into foster care, and the family's sense of togetherness was fractured. Yet, Mrs. Firicano's determination never wavered. She was referred to another BTNE program that would help her rebuild her family. It began with BTNE's visitation program. There, she learned new parenting approaches and received mentorship that prepared her to transition into the Reunification Program.

Throughout this process, Mrs. Firicano became an active participant in Common Sense Parenting classes, embracing new strategies and tools to strengthen her relationship with her daughters. Her energy and eagerness to learn inspired those around her, including Boys Town staff who saw her transformation firsthand. As she continued to grow as a parent, she also received vital assistance through BTNE's Care Coordination Program, where she worked closely with Sindi, a dedicated consultant who connected her to essential community resources, from housing and childcare to parenting support.

One of the most impactful decisions Mrs. Firicano made was leaving an unstable housing environment to create a safer home for her daughters, who were now ages five and ten. It was a bold, life-changing step that reflected her growth, confidence and deep love for her children. Through the encouragement of her BTNE support team, she not only achieved reunification but also found the stability and self-assurance needed to thrive as a single parent.

Today, Mrs. Firicano and her daughters stand stronger than ever. They are a family restored and thriving with confidence, compassion and connection. Their success shines as a reminder that with the right support and determination, families can overcome even the toughest challenges. At Boys Town New England, stories like theirs affirm a simple truth: when families are given the tools to heal, they don't just reunite, they flourish.



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

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 with Boys Town 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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