

Healing & Hope News

"The work will continue..."
- Father Edward J. Flanagan,
Founder of Boys Town

A Letter from Executive Director Bethany Lacey



This summer, families across South Florida are growing stronger, children are gaining confidence and hope is being restored—all because of you!

We know community impact doesn't begin and end in the classroom—it extends into homes, neighborhoods and every

moment of a child's life. So, as our children take time to be outside and spend time with friends and families, always remember, we are here for families across our area. With your support, we work alongside community partners to continue the work of saving children and healing families year-round.

Another key topic discussed was how the role of technology has amplified the challenges youth face today. For instance, texting has evolved into many youths' standard form of communication, forcing parents to change how they engage with their children. Nuances like this are sometimes not discussed, but during the Summit we had the opportunity to explore them.



*True change is possible
through open dialogue...*

True change is possible through open dialogue and that is the purpose of our summit. We are beyond grateful to the panelists, emcee, mission sponsors and everyone who attended.

Thank you for standing with us this summer and always. Together, we're building stronger families and brighter futures.

For the Children,

Bethany Lacey, Executive Director

P.S. Don't miss Chase's heartwarming story from adversity to triumph in this newsletter.

2025 Community
ACTION
SUMMIT

In April, we hosted our Community Action Summit, which delved into familial challenges and solution-driven strategies that can be implemented to reduce juvenile delinquency. One of the

major points discussed was how to improve access to better systems, such as parental support and behavioral healthcare resources.



Boys Town South Florida New Board Member: Jesus Garciarivas



Q: Why did you become involved with Boys Town South Florida?

A: I first heard about Boys Town when living in Omaha, Nebraska. My wife and I were intrigued by the big campus and we began to learn about Father Flanagan. When we moved back to South Florida, we immediately recognized the presence of Boys Town and decided to do more than have

curiosity. We chose to get involved in helping the children in the South Florida communities.

Q: What do you hope to accomplish during your time on the Board?

A: First and most importantly, I want to learn and master the many ways Boys Town contributes to improving the lives of children and their parents.

Second, I would like to leverage my network (personal and professional) to grow Boys Town's presence and have a wider impact on the community.

Finally, I would like to contribute my skills and experience to the board of directors, hoping that I can add enough value to make it a better board.

Q: What is your favorite program/service that Boys Town South Florida provides? Why?

A: The best way to prepare a child for success is to have parents who are ready and properly educated for the challenge. Common Sense Parenting is a program designed to help parents learn new skills, build on their parenting strengths and develop healthy relationships with their children.

Q: What will others be surprised to know about you?

A: I am a first-generation immigrant from Mexico. I enjoy learning and practicing languages. Today, I can communicate in four languages. I am trying to learn to play piano and that is really difficult.

Q: What are your hobbies or interests outside of your professional life?

A: I enjoy a number of indoor and outdoor activities that help me stay fit. My wife and I try to engage with the community as much as possible. We are lucky to have our two sons living in South Florida, so we get together as much as possible. We are globetrotters, always looking for excuses to travel.

Q: Favorite Quote:

A: I am a true believer in one particular quote from Father Flanagan "There are no bad boys. There is only bad environment, bad training, bad example, bad thinking."

2025 Community **ACTION** SUMMIT

Boys Town South Florida's Second Annual Community Action Summit

Boys Town South Florida hosted its second annual **Community Action Summit** on April 25 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Palm Beach Gardens. The Summit focused on the root causes of juvenile delinquency and strategies for mitigating it at the individual, family and community levels. The panel discussion was targeted at prevention and early intervention services to help families remove barriers, learn skills and utilize resources so they can better guide their children to grow up in safe and strong communities.



*Jennifer Siroris, Bethany Lacey,
Peter Hamlin, Chase Hamlin*

Every year, Boys Town South Florida recognizes a Family of the Year, who completes one or more of their evidence-based programs in a positive way. This year, the Family of the Year was Lori and Peter Hamlin and their

12-year-old son Chase, who participated in Boys Town's Care Coordination Services program. While we know every child deserves a chance to grow, thrive and feel loved, circumstances are different for each child. In Chase's case, his story is one of perseverance, strength and the unwavering support of those who refused to give up on him.

From the womb of his biological mom who suffered from drug addiction, Chase started facing hardships. As a baby, Chase was diagnosed with multiple vision impairments, which made his early years harder.



In 2024, the elementary school Chase attended referred him to Boys Town South Florida. For eight months, the Hamlin family received home visits from the Care Coordination Services supervisor, who shared with them different parenting and coping skills and resources to help them remove as many barriers as they could to help Chase get on a positive path. A turning point was the young boy's dedication to improving his coping skills. He learned strategies to manage his frustration, to calm down and learn about boundaries and personal space. He also learned respectful ways to share frustrations, and to talk with others about his sight challenges. With the right resources, parenting support, including 24/7 crisis call services, the family strengthened their relationship with one another and learned new ways to address issues while remaining calm.

Another important recognition presented at the Summit was Boys Town South Florida's Youth Impact Award presented to the Honorable Judge Kathleen Kroll. The Youth Impact Award recognizes community leaders who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to empowering and positively influencing the lives of young people. Judge Kroll has dedicated three exceptional decades to improving the trajectory of many children's lives.

Event attendees had the opportunity to watch the summary of the Blue Baby documentary, which follows eight youth and their journey at Boys Town as an alternative to prison. Scenes from the film showed key risk factors that impact juvenile delinquency, as well as intervention services that can help prevent youth from ever entering the juvenile justice system. Following the film, a dynamic panel discussion featured leading voices in juvenile justice, prevention services and behavioral health. Thank you to the following panelists and the emcee for driving the meaningful conversation.

- » The Honorable Judge Melanie Surber, 15th Circuit, Juvenile Division
- » Sara Mooney, Chief of Police with the School District of Palm Beach County Police Department

- » Johnny Sanders, Senior Regional Outreach Coordinator, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Office of Prevention Services
- » Ann Berner, President/CEO, Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network
- » Dr. Diane Kelly Andreou, Former Director of Boys Town South Florida's Outpatient Behavioral Health Clinic
- » Emcee: Jim Grimes, Anchor, CBS12 News

The Summit was concluded with a call to action, as attendees were encouraged to contact their Florida senators to support the reauthorization of Titles II and V of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. The bill's overall mission is to enhance juvenile justice reforms by reducing unnecessary incarceration, promoting diversion programs and ensuring fair treatment within the justice system.

Boys Town South Florida is grateful to everyone who attended, including elected officials, commissioners Gregg Weiss and Bobby Powell, and School Board Member Virginia Savietto. We also thank our Mission Sponsors, Wellington Regional Medical Center and Florida Power and Light, for making this event possible.

Together, Boys Town will continue to help children and families in South Florida.



*Bethany Lacey and
The Honorable Judge Kathleen Kroll
with Youth Impact Award*



*Chief Sarah Mooney and
Commissioner Gregg Weiss*



*Chief Sarah Mooney,
Dr. Diane Kelly Andreou, Johnny Sanders,
Ann Berner, Judge Melanie Surber*

Family of the Year: Chase's Journey of Resilience and Triumph



Every year, Boys Town South Florida honors a family who has completed one or more of Boys Town's programs successfully. These families show immense strength and dedication in the program. Chase's story embodies just that.

Boys Town South Florida's Care Coordination Services

Supervisor, Jennifer Sirois, nominated the Hamlins as Family of the Year. Jennifer worked with the Hamlin family, sharing parenting and coping skills, navigating mental health services, the school system and linking them to community resources.

Born to a mother dealing with drug addiction, Chase faced hardships from the very beginning. With no parents to support him, Chase was placed with his grandparents after he was born. As a baby, Chase was diagnosed with multiple vision impairments, which made his early years harder.

At the age of four, his grandmother became ill, forcing Chase into foster care. He had 13 different placements over the next two years, where he experienced neglect and physical abuse by foster siblings.

In 2019, after years of adversity, he was reunited with his grandparents. Lori and Peter had worked tirelessly to gain custody, and finally, in 2022, they officially adopted Chase.

In 2024, his elementary school referred Chase to Boys Town (due to frequent emotional outbursts.) With Jennifer's expertise in Boys Town's evidence-based interventions, Chase learned strategies to manage his frustration, to calm down and he also learned about boundaries and personal space. Key for him was learning respectful ways to share disappointments about his sight challenges.

Chase made strides academically by transitioning into mainstream classes, when possible, which helped improve his grades. He accomplished all his Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and maintained near-perfect attendance for the first time ever.

Chase discovered a passion for sports, joining a local community recreation center and Special Olympics teams. These activities boosted his confidence, fostering teamwork and discipline.

Using his new skills, taught through Boys Town, Chase built strong connections with family and friends. This sense of belonging and stability played a crucial role in his emotional growth. Chase also found comfort in faith, joining his family's local church.

Today, Chase is thriving and his success story is a celebration. Every child deserves a chance to grow, succeed and be surrounded by love. Chase's story provides hope for children facing challenges.



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For more great stories, visit

BOYSTOWN.ORG/south-florida

Since opening in 1991, Boys Town South Florida has impacted the lives of over 66,000 children through life-changing care to area youth and families. This care includes behavior and mental health, social and emotional support for families with children, school support services, positive parent-child interactions, home visits for families focusing on language and pre-literacy skills, improvement in students' adjustment to school and parent training.



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our mission

Changing the way America cares
for children and families.