

# Healing & Hope News

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

## Spotlight on Board Leadership: Insights from Justine Morgan



At Boys Town South Florida, we are fortunate to have dedicated board members who play a vital role in advocating our impact and guiding our mission. We recently received insight from Justine Morgan, who started her board chair position this year after serving on the board for the last two years. As she reflects on her time on the board, she shares

her thoughts about the importance of board presence, being driven by the “why” of Boys Town’s mission and advice for future leaders looking to be part of a nonprofit. Here’s what she had to say.

**Q.** What role do you believe board members play in shaping the organization’s impact?

**A.** *Board members play an instrumental role in helping guide and govern the organization. It is a significant responsibility, and although the impact might not be seen by board members, it is felt by staff and impacts those they serve. Active participation is key, and board members should look for ways to contribute their time, talent and treasure to an organization they are passionate about.*

**Q.** What drives your commitment to Boys Town and its mission?

**A.** *My experiences working with various nonprofits across South Florida allowed me to see the critical need for organizations like Boys Town. It starts in the home. If we, as a community, want to help solve issues like homelessness, addiction or incarceration, we need to focus on helping early and meet families where they are. Boys Town is changing the way America cares for children and families, and their evidence-based model is proof that it’s working.*

**Q.** What advice would you give to others interested in board service or taking on leadership roles?

**A.** *Board service is one of the best ways to support an organization. I would recommend researching the organization you’re interested in, attending events, meeting with the leadership team and learning as much as you can about their needs. Evaluate what skills or resources you can offer that align with their needs and if you have the time to commit. If you don’t have the time currently, be honest and find an alternative way to support, such as chairing an event or serving on a committee. If it is a match, I’d say dive in, be present and speak up.*

Make an  
impact

Community

Supporting

Learning

Helping  
guide

Let’s make  
a difference

## A LETTER FROM BETHANY

As I reflect on this year, I am deeply grateful for the team we have built at Boys Town South Florida. We are dedicated to improving our communities through preventive and early intervention efforts that provide essential resources to families and children facing challenging circumstances. Even when setbacks occur, our commitment to rise up and continue pursuing a better future remains unshaken. This dedication to continuing Father Flanagan's legacy is also evident in our generous funders and donors who are active contributors to fanning the flame and sparking the hope that all children and families need in times of hardship and crisis.

Change has been a significant theme for Boys Town South Florida in 2024. Our Broward location has moved to a new office in Plantation, we've expanded programs and we've increased our parenting training. All of this is only possible because your continued belief in our work has made every step forward possible. Thank you for being part of this journey. As we transition into the season of festivities, let us remember the children and families who are not in the same situation and who need a little more help to enjoy and thrive during the holiday season. Our work is far from over, and we hope you will continue with us in creating more robust systems so children no longer fall through the cracks. Only together can we change the future.

As Father Flanagan once said: "This year, when so many more are in need, may the great heart of humanity open and share with the last needy child. May there be not one forgotten."



**Bethany Lacey**  
Executive Director

## Threads of Comfort: Cassandra's Creative Crocheting Project Healing Children

Kassandra is a 15-year-old high school student with a heart as big as her talent. She creates beautiful crochet animals for the children who receive therapy services from Boys Town South Florida's Behavioral Health Clinic (BHC).

It all started when Kassandra created a crochet pumpkin as a gift to her mom, Dr. Diane Kelly Andreou, the Director of the Behavioral Health Clinic. Dr. Diane placed the crochet pumpkin in

her office, and often, when she had a therapy session with little ones, many would gravitate towards the crochet pumpkin to touch and hold it. The soft, handmade object seemed to ease the children's and teens' anxiety, helping their busy hands to find comfort while they shared their feelings, emotions and challenges during therapy. When Kassandra heard about this from her mom, a light bulb went off. She figured she could do some good through her hobby of making crochet comforting animals for the kids to play with during the therapy sessions.

In the photo, she has fish, turtles and dinosaurs of different colors. From the beginning, she aimed to create five patterns with ten types of each. Three patterns, aka animals, were made, and there are two more to go! "These weren't just toys; they were tools for healing," said Bethany Lacey, Executive Director at Boys Town South Florida. Dr. Diane and her peer psychologists were excited to see what other animals would be created by Kassandra for the children to hold and feel comforted.

Kassandra's crocheting efforts to provide some manipulatives for the children who BHC serves are directly connected to her personal project, which involves learning a new skill that also provides a benefit to a community. She is currently a member of the crocheting club at her high school, where she teaches others who are new to crocheting. Kassandra's hobby blossomed into helping others, which is a big win-win!

When asked what words of encouragement she would like to share with other teens her age. She said, "Find a creative outlet that can relieve your stress and give you a break from school. Always try to keep yourself busy with new projects."



# Finding Hope in the Middle of Losses

Boys Town South Florida has been serving the community for more than 33 years, continuing to be a beacon of hope for many children and families. Stories like Juan's remind us of the importance of our work and why we need your support to help youth and families in need. Juan's story is part of our Care Coordination Services (CCS), a program that connects families to essential community resources and helps them get on track for a brighter future. Our CCS Consultants advocate for each family's needs and develop service plans tailored to those needs. Here is Juan's story:

**Juan has been facing overwhelming emotions due to the passing of his mother.** At just 16, a critical age for a teenager, Juan has experienced a major loss and sometimes struggles with expressing himself and self-control. To make matters worse, increased bullying at school has made coping with his grief even harder. Juan's father, determined to support his son, switched him to a different school where he would receive more attention. Juan's father also enrolled in the Boys Town South Florida Care Coordination Services program, where we work closely with the Cambar family and other involved parties to identify strengths and needs, develop service plans, connect the family to critical resources and monitor ongoing progress.

After several months in the program and attending therapy sessions at our Behavioral Health Clinic, Juan's father shared this about the experience:

"The main thing out of this entire experience is that before, I used to be one of those old-school parents where therapy wasn't a thing, and when someone mentioned it, people would go, 'No, I don't need therapy.' But honestly, attending sessions made the relationship between my son and me a lot stronger, and now I have become an advocate where I tell other parents the benefits of therapy. It really changes your perception, and it opens your mind up to find things

*Dr. Marcela helped me see how I can navigate certain things in my life to help him.*



Juan, left, and his father have benefited from Boys Town's Care Coordination Services (CCS)

that would help him, which in turn helped me. One-on-one sessions with Dr. Marcela helped me see how I can navigate certain things in my life to help him. Even though people have written multiple books about parenting, in my opinion, there will never be one book that covers it all, since everyone is unique, and my son's needs are different from those of other kids. Boys Town South Florida really changed my perception of how to help Juan."

At Boys Town South Florida, we take a holistic approach, focusing not only on Juan's current needs but also on the needs of his entire family to ensure they thrive. Juan

has made a complete change, and he has a hopeful outlook on life. His passion for soccer is contagious, and his current ambition is to become a Navy SEAL. The school he currently attends has a Navy veteran who has acknowledged Juan's success in the school. The Cambar family is a testament to how transformation is possible.

Together, we give families and youth like Juan hope for a brighter future.

# At the End of This Year, Think About Teaching Love.

For many of the children and families who have been through our program, at some point they were taught what Love was. Their lives have been marked by neglect and instability, with backgrounds often shaped by disadvantages. That's where Boys Town steps in with a mission to Teach Love. From day one, we show children and families that life can be different and filled with hope, compassion and acceptance. Teaching love isn't just about affection; it's about building a foundation of respect, care, loyalty and shared humanity.

## HOW CAN YOU TEACH LOVE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

### 1. SPONSORSHIP

Support local programs that provide essential services to children and families in need. Your sponsorship can help fund programs that teach life skills, provide therapy and offer a safe environment for those who've experienced trauma. By investing in these programs, you're actively helping to create a loving and supportive community.

### 2. VOLUNTEERING

Give your time to make a difference. Whether mentoring a young person, assisting at a local shelter, or participating in community events, volunteering allows you to show compassion and give back. Your presence and willingness to help can be a powerful reminder to others that they are valued and not alone.

### 3. PRAISING

Share words of encouragement and positivity. Recognize the efforts and achievements of others, no matter how small. Praising builds confidence and fosters a culture of appreciation, showing that Love is not just about grand gestures, but also the everyday acts of lifting each other up.

### 4. SERVING

Offer your skills and talents to support others. Whether through cooking a meal for a family in need, organizing a neighborhood cleanup, or simply helping a neighbor with daily tasks, acts of service demonstrate Love in action. Serving others strengthens community bonds and shows that everyone has a role in building a supportive, loving environment.

Teaching love starts with simple actions that can profoundly impact the lives of those around you. For many of our families, these concepts feel foreign at first. But slowly, they begin to understand. Together, we can help teach, guide and uplift families so they can create brighter futures for their children.



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## For more great stories, visit [BOYSTOWN.ORG/south-florida](https://www.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.