



**Mooseheart Report
Executive Director Scott Hart**

May 24, 2009

As I listened to a local reporter interview the ten boys in Ontario Home earlier this month for a non-traditional Mother's Day story on the Family Teacher, Mickey Hogan, I quietly reflected on the circumstances that brought each one to the point in their life whereby they needed Mooseheart. In a moment, glimpses of admission letters, academic reports and clinical progress reports passed through my mind. How were these young lives that were described as "aggressive, sad, angry, negative, a liar and a thief" able to fit in. How could lives touched with dysfunction, chaos and instability, now stand in confidence, peace and security? I knew for some the transformation was almost immediate, as the child we read about on paper,

was renewed by the hope that is Mooseheart. For others, positive change has been a work in progress, requiring extra attention, teaching and patience.

Life for our children is like a puzzle and at Mooseheart our role is to not only help our kids start putting the pieces together, but to indeed be a piece of the solution for their young innocent lives. What are some things you do when you first open a puzzle box? If you are like me, you turn every piece over so you know what you have to work with. Second, you assemble all the edge pieces that give definition to the whole. Thirdly, you group all the similar color pieces together to understand which areas are going to be more challenging and finally if you are really diligent you take a full accounting of the pieces to determine if any are missing that will leave a hole in an otherwise intact puzzle.

Even before a child comes to Mooseheart we begin collecting as much information as possible on his or her background and the circumstances that lead this child into a position to need our help. Kyle Rife, Mooseheart's Director of Admissions and Recruiting, is largely responsible for this, along with some very dedicated and caring volunteers in the field. These volunteers, prior to this Convention were affectionately known as "Admission Reps.", but going forward we will look to achieve a broader awareness of Mooseheart through a re-defined position known as

Mooseheart Marketing Reps. If you have served as a Mooseheart/Moosehaven Admission Representative in the aide of a child or senior, please rise so that we may acknowledge you and your commitment to the fraternity. If you have an interest in becoming more involved and love to talk about Mooseheart, please stop by the Mooseheart booth in the display area and talk with Kyle or myself.

We talk with teachers, counselors, family members, doctors and even lawyers to turn the pieces of each child's life over to see what brush strokes of life have already been applied to their personal puzzle. Here are some informational pieces we have collected from human service professionals and guardians regarding a number of children, who applied to and were accepted to Mooseheart:

- “Carl’s mother was referred to the Department of Children and Family Services after allegations surfaced that she was sexually abusing Carl.”
- The children’s caseworker who helped secure placement referred to them as typical “closet babies” meaning that they were frequently locked away while their parents did drugs.
- “Mooseheart will give my girls a chance at a future. One they would never have had even a chance to dream about. Their

parents, grandparents and even great grandparents were all into drug and alcohol abuse. For my girls, there was no hope, no future. I want to see them graduate, go on to be good citizens and adding worth to their being.”

- “Taylor has very low self-esteem, poor hygiene, failing grades, skipping classes and little self-confidence. He will need counseling to deal with issues related to his mother’s death. Taylor was the one who found Victoria (his mother) dead in the home and kept telling her to wake up. Taylor is easy to talk to, steals your heart because of his needs, is very respectful to adults and has the ability to be a very bright student. It is my belief that given a lot of love and understanding Taylor will be an asset to Mooseheart Child City and School.”
- “The children originally came to the attention of the Department of Family Services due to concerns with the guardian’s ongoing substance abuse issues, failure to address the children’s medical needs, unstable housing and educational neglect. The children’s ADHD medication is now administered by the school nurse due to alleged concerns that the guardian had been selling the medication.”

The pieces have been turned over for each of these wonderful kids, healing is taking place, consistency has resurfaced anew and smiling faces are aglow –all because of you.

Life at Mooseheart is in a constant state of change. There are no guarantees that what we did yesterday to help a child will work today and the way things were done last year may not be the best practice for tomorrow's child. During this past year we began reshaping the edges of our program, in an effort to continually enhance the quality of care our children receive. In January we placed a 7, 12 or 15-passenger van in the hands of each home, bringing to an end our centralized transportation fleet. Now each home has the flexibility and independence to travel off-campus when they need to, for shopping, appointments, college visits, student jobs, recreational activities and visits to your Lodge homes. We appreciate each Association that has in the past provided their boys or girls home at Mooseheart with their own vehicle and want to recognize the Oregon Moose Association for supporting a new van for the Oregon Home and the Moose Legion for stepping up and funding **five** new vans for our community during this past year. These vans need solid roadway to drive on around Mooseheart and each year we attempt to replace a little bit more. Thanks to the Virginia Moose Association for paving the way around Mooseheart for

our vans and children with a generous gift to support our capital replacement of asphalt around campus. And as you drive thru campus and past the school you will see the investment of the Indiana, Connecticut, North Carolina, Northeast, South Carolina, and Massachusetts/Rhode Island Moose Associations in new school masonry and a newly renovated school lobby. Finally, the Ohio State Moose Association is in the midst of a 3 million dollar plus fundraising effort to provide a much needed facelift to our Mooseheart Fieldhouse. Pictured here are members of the Moose Demolition Crew awaiting orders to begin the process! Every contribution, big or small, makes a lasting impact on the everyday life of our kids – thank you for investing in their future.

In March we undertook one of the more ambitious plans in closing our Central Kitchen facility and moving the grocery shopping and cooking into the homes. Since 1969 Victory Hall has served as the Central Kitchen facility for Mooseheart. Over those 40 years, nearly 10 million meals were prepared for the kids. Through this move, we are seeking to better prepare our children for their eventual independence from us. Learning to menu plan, budget, shop and cook are important life skills that will benefit everyone. We have a licensed Dietician that meets with our children and staff regarding menu planning, healthy eating habits and specialized diets.

Children and teens enjoy playing a more active role in the shopping and food preparation and feel this move is setting them up for success as they mature into adulthood. By redefining these two edge pieces, along with a number of other program changes at Mooseheart, including maximizing office space in Loyalty Hall and closing the doors at the Student Services Building, we were able to reduce our planned annual operating budget for 2009-10 by nearly one million dollars versus the 2008-09 budget. Our focus and desire is to be the best residential education program in the country, to have a vision for the changing needs of today's at-risk child and to continually serve as good stewards of your generous gifts.

Since 1913 Mooseheart has helped children find their place in the world. You have faithfully believed in the potential of every child. You have loved, fed, clothed and educated those who needed someone to extend a hand of compassion and an arm of security to him or her. Our children arrive into the safety of Mooseheart with trouble on their mind and in their hearts, an immeasurable weight pressing down upon their shoulders. We quickly work to organize and group the pieces of Mooseheart life that will be key to the success of each child. Because of your amazing support, we have an array of services and activities to help ease the pain, begin the healing process and prepare for the future. We have talked in the past of the

benefits of scouting, 4-H, athletics, rocketry program, counseling services and employment opportunities, but what else is happening to enrich the lives of our students. This past year we were able to add a new extracurricular activity to the mix, when Supreme Councilman Danny Albert and some generous donors from the state of Ohio funded a Lego Robotics team. Seven of our top middle school students were able to experience programming a group-designed robot to perform 18 different missions in two minutes and studied issues surrounding global warming, resulting in a group presentation during their regional competition. The Ramblers placed 6th out of 16 teams and won the Rookie Team Award.

A key component of the Mooseheart High School system is the solid vocational training that our students receive each year. Beginning with their freshman year, each student hones in on their vocational choice, making a full time commitment their junior year. Being able to choose from Automotive Mechanics, Management Information Systems, Cosmetology and Barbing, Family & Consumer Science, Health Occupations and Commercial Music. What makes the vocational training so special is how well it fits in with Mooseheart's traditional academic coursework and the invaluable four-years of learning about citizenship, personal responsibility and service to others through the Navy's ROTC program. The investment of

time and energy into these programs allows our students to be prepared on all fronts for college coursework, employment opportunities or military service.

Whenever there is a hole in our program or a need that isn't being filled, the first thing we think of is "rub a little Moose on it." No matter how many times our kids look to you for help, you always give freely. Our kids find hope and strength to overcome life's challenges through your encouragement and support through the Sunshine program. They are thankful for the opportunities to travel to your Associations and Lodges to visit you in your home. This summer a special piece of Mooseheart (our kids) will be traveling to Oregon, West Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts/Rhode Island, Connecticut and the Northeast to spend time with you. Our young men out of the James J. Davis Home are preparing for a weeklong visit to Moosehaven in June to enjoy the company of our senior residents, to tackle a few community service projects and to stop in to a few Lodges in Florida to say thank you for your investment in their lives. This trip is being underwritten by a number of very generous Moose Legion units.

Now and again even the strongest of us must acknowledge that we owe a debt of thanks to someone else for extending a helping hand to us when we needed it most. In a moment of discouragement, during a time of misfortune, through a period of loss, we all need a ray of hope, for God to send a guardian angel to provide peace, comfort and the strength to move forward. At Mooseheart when each new child walks into his or her new home, the cycle of help and hope is renewed. The Moose fraternity stands as the guardian angel that God uses through the brightest day and darkest night over our children. We should never take for granted that things will somehow just move along within our Lodge, Chapter, Moose Legion, community, Mooseheart or Moosehaven without our determination and hard work. It will never be easy, but it will be worthwhile. It will never happen by chance, but through the collective will of the whole.

As we witness childhood at Mooseheart pass before us, we reach to grasp just a touch of the energy and passion for life. To enjoy once again the thrill of trick-or-treating during Halloween, of celebrating all that we are thankful for, including some tasty turkey and without a doubt - you. To feel your heart pounding in your chest and allow your imagination to float as freely as the first snowfall of the season as Santa gives you his undivided attention and the gift you dreamed about all year. To feel the cool spring air

against your face as you race to lay claim to most wonderful colored Easter eggs. At Mooseheart what was once lost is now found, childhood is regained because of you. When the pieces come together, life is good, even when you are upside down! Brothers and Co-workers, the newest child's puzzle is being poured out onto the table, just waiting for your undivided attention and support. Be encouraged, dare to do more everyday and always know that you **are a valuable piece of the solution** for our children at Mooseheart. God Bless Mooseheart!