

MOOSEHEART AND ME

By Joan Thurman and Adriana Aguayo (pronounced Āg-wy-ō)

Many people ask, “Why do you do so much for the Moose?” I explain, when you go to Mooseheart and you see the children, they instantly become very real to you. As a mother, a grandmother, a sister, a daughter, an aunt, it breaks your heart knowing our Moose children come to us from the worst possible situations. When a child comes up to you, with those big longing eyes and asks, “Are you my Moose family?” your heart crumbles and instantly you are sold for life to this great fraternity.

The following excerpt was written by Adriana Aguayo, Mooseheart Class of 2010, in response to a scholarship essay request.

Hello. I have attended Mooseheart for four years. While being here, it made me realize I need to appreciate everything I have in life. Even today, there are so many kids in this world who don't have half of what I have.

I came to Mooseheart to better my education, my surroundings and myself. I moved away from drugs, violence and teen pregnancy. I was going through a lot at home, not having enough money to make ends meet. I was just another person to add onto the family budget.

My grandmother was in and out of the hospital a lot. My brother has been addicted to many drugs and is now trying to stay clean. My sister is trying to raise my niece who has had problems since she was born. My mother was an alcoholic and my father left me when I was four years old. That is all I can remember of him. I have always felt like they never cared, because if they did then they would have never left me. Everyday I wonder what would happen if my father were to reappear; would he even know who I was? Would he be proud of how much I have accomplished?

With everything I was going through, I had to get away so I could concentrate on my life. It was time for me to learn more about myself and start a new chapter in my life. I want to be successful and the only way to do that was to move away from the drama.

So, I moved to Mooseheart with the assistance of a Daniel Murphy Scholarship, which I was awarded in eighth grade.

While at Mooseheart, I hit rock bottom in May 2009. My mother was pronounced dead on May 13, 2009. I didn't know what to do and I didn't know how to deal with my feelings. I thought this was the end of my life. How could I go on? I felt as if I had nobody; nobody was going to be there for me.

But, thanks to Mooseheart, I had so many people encouraging me to be successful. The staff members and students at Mooseheart are great. They welcomed me with open arms and I am eternally grateful. Mooseheart has given me a home where I can live safely, in peace. Mooseheart has taught me life skills and prepared me to be on my own someday. Mooseheart has given me so much to look forward to in life.

I plan to attend college this fall and enter the medical field. I hope to become a registered nurse and work in a hospital.

I thank all of you for giving me, for giving all Mooseheart children, a future. Where would we be without your generosity and kindness?

(Pause)

Co-workers, Adrianna asks a very profound question. What have you learned from her story and from being a Moose? While I never claim to know everything, I would like to share some of the things that I have learned from my experiences serving the Women of the Moose:

I've learned that it takes a long time to become the person I want to be.

I've learned that you can do something in an instant that will give you heartache for life.

I've learned that we are always responsible for what we do, no matter what.

I've learned that our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but we are responsible for who we become.

I've learned that either you control your attitude, or it controls you.

I've learned that heroes are the people who do what has to be done, when it needs to be done, regardless of the circumstances.

I've learned that I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel.

I've learned that just because someone doesn't love you the way you want them to, doesn't mean they don't love you with all they have.

I've learned that no matter how bad your heart is broken, the world doesn't stop for your grief.

I've learned that you CAN keep going, long after you can't.

I've learned that even when you think you have no more to give, when a friend cries out to you, you will find the strength to help.

I've learned that money is a lousy way of keeping score.

I've learned that credentials on the wall do NOT make you a decent human being.

I've learned to judge success by what I had to give up, in order to get it.

I've learned that in the presence of trouble, some people buy crutches and others grow wings.

I've learned the need to live through life, and not merely exist through it.

I've learned love is what is in the room on Christmas Day if you stop opening presents long enough and listen with your heart.

I've learned never to humiliate another person. Always give them an honorable way to back down and still save face.

And,

I've learned that what we have done for ourselves, dies with us. But, what we have done for others remains and is immortal which is why I dedicate all that I do to our family; to Mooseheart and Moosehaven.

God Bless each of you and thank you for coming to help us celebrate **OUR** accomplishments.