

A LIFE CHANGING MOMENT

By Gary Urwiler, Superintendent of Mooseheart Schools

My life changing moment began after witnessing my father's death in 1974. My father was an active member of the Riverside, New Jersey Lodge #279. While attending the Annual Moose Lodge Christmas party, at the age of 5, I recall being out on the dance floor with my mother. I so vividly remember my mother grasping my hands and the security of her swinging me all over that dance floor, while my father watched from across the room and smiled.

As the night progressed, I remember reaching up and grabbing my favorite drink that the bartender made for me, "a shot of coke with a cherry on top." After gulping down my drink, my father turned to me and said, "after this drink we will go." I never thought at this moment that these words would be my father's last. Suddenly everything changed, just as he took his last breath to say we were going, he fell to the floor, and died, suffering from a massive heart attack.

While standing over my father and looking down upon his lifelessness, as my mother tried to revive him, I stood alone. The quick swelling and terrible blue color of my father's lips will remain with me always. James Wilkins, the lodge administrator, who was responsible for getting me to Mooseheart, then came and picked me up and ran me across the dance floor that I was just on with my mother. While in his arms, looking back over his shoulder, I saw my last memory of my father, who lay on the floor dead.

Although the moment of this tragic event still lurks in my memory today, it was by the divine hand of God, that my father passed away in a MOOSE lodge and provided me the pathway to Mooseheart, and who I am today. You see God's hand turned this moment of despair into a Life Changing Moment of a lifetime.

Looking back, I am thankful of one thing. "A CARD", which may seem insignificant, but it's been the possession of the card that started it all and each one of us holds an identical one. This card is no ordinary card nor should be treated in such a way, it is a CARD which has substantial meaning, an incredible purpose and as much service and love, as Mother Teresa. That card is our MOOSE membership card.

This card provides stability in an abused child's life. . .

provides structure to a child who has never had discipline or shown unconditional love. . .

provides opportunity, which enables poverty stricken children to dream. . .

provides certainty in a child whose grandparents may not be able to physically or financially supply. . .

provides safety to children who reside in gang infested areas of cities. . .

provides a sense of belonging to a child in a community that is living out of a car or tent. . .

provides education to a child who lacks the basic fundamentals of learning. . .

provides food, nutrition and health care necessary to grow.

A card, that since 1913, continues to **provide** sizeable benefits to its stakeholders, and unites us as the **greatest fraternity on earth.**

It is because of the proven success of this card that we are united here today. You are the prominent leaders of this remarkable organization, who have paved the way to not only my success and future, but to almost 12,000 others. You are the inspiration behind the scenes and WE, the members of the Mooseheart Child City Community, who you have entrusted, are your biggest fans. We are cheering you on each and every day, and counting on your efforts and the efforts of our leadership in continuing this noble tradition on. You provide the LIFE CHANGING MOMENTS to children each day. Trust me.... I am a living testament and product of what you produce and proud of it. As a member I can only express to you with my actions of service and through my example how thankful I am of the Moose.

May GOD bless each of us beyond our wildest imagination, and with our future endeavors as a fraternity, and our children of Mooseheart.