Good afternoon! Welcome to New Orleans and the 106th Annual International Conference of the Women of the Moose. How many of you were in the Big Easy back in 1991? Remember the rain? And more rain? And still more rain?

The worst came suddenly, in torrents, in late afternoon just before rush hour on June 10. A few hours later, the flood waters were furiously flowing, hundreds of abandoned cars littered the streets, a horde of commuters were stranded, acres of inundated carpet sloshed underfoot.

I was here and fortunately was able to make it back to our hotel – the Hyatt Regency out by the Super Dome without incident. But I do remember watching the men who were on their way to attend the Moose International 25 Club event walk through water, in their suits, with their pant legs rolled up to their knees, carrying their shoes and socks! And, by the next day it was gone.

As I was reading through the Proceedings book of the one hundred third Annual International Convention of the Loyal Order of Moose, I was reminded of how much these Conferences have changed, how the Fraternity as a whole has changed and how somehow, we are still the same.

You see, while perusing the book, the only time the Women of the Moose were mentioned was when they were “invited” to visit the Loyal Order during one of their sessions. During their visit, they reported on the “state of the Women of the Moose” and gave many generous donations. There weren’t any Joint Sessions, no Joint events other than the “family night” and there wasn’t a Joint Installation.

The 1991 New Orleans Conference was also the first International Conference for then Grand Chancellor Vivian Borom and just a few minutes ago we remembered her in our memorial. During the Loyal Order of Moose Session, there was a resolution, honoring the Women of the Moose that read “Supreme Governor John, Director General Paul, officers, delegates and members assembled here in New Orleans for our 103rd International Convention – 1991 should long live in the memory of the new Grand Chancellor of the Women of the Moose, Vivian Borom. It marks the first full year in her tenure as the head of our great partner in Moose philanthropic endeavors . . . the Women of the Moose.
From the reports you have just heard of their charitable endeavors and successes, all moose members can rest assured that under Vivian’s leadership and guidance, the Women of the Moose are working as hard as ever.

BE IT RESOLVED: We thank and congratulate Vivian, and her Board of officers and the Women of the Moose for their many gifts, and contributions to our Moose programs and projects.” The resolution of course received adoption and was topped with a standing ovation!

So here we are, twenty seven years later back in the city known as the birthplace of jazz or NOLA to many! Make sure you take time to visit this “Most unique” city when you aren’t in our meetings or events!

This past fall, hurricane Irma ripped through the State of Florida leaving flooding and devastation across the entire state and decided to take on our beloved Moosehaven. As referenced in a letter from Executive Director John Capes, Irma left a mess on campus and the most disheartening damage is to the pier, which is completely destroyed. The storm surge was devastating and at one point even crested our seawall. Despite everything, our residents were safe, comfortable and well-cared for thanks to the amazing staff at Moosehaven.

The Women of the Moose stepped up in our usual fashion and provided the necessary funds to restore the fishing pier to its glory; assisted in repairing damage to the deck at the Michigan Building; replaced shingles on wind-damaged roofs and reduced the financial burden of the clean-up effort of downed trees, limbs and moss. While insurance helped with most of the pier restoration, contributions from the Women of the Moose offset the high deductibles and restored our campus for the enjoyment of our residents for years to come.

We have a long tradition in preserving, repairing and rebuilding the Moosehaven Fishing Pier and I was confident we could do it! Our love for our twin cities is stronger than any hurricane and you got the job done. Thank you – thank you for your contributions to ensure that Moosehaven is still “Another Day in Paradise”. Demolition of the remainder of the pier is done and a new durable virgin plastic pier should be completed by August.
While visiting Moosehaven for our International Boards and Grand Council meeting last November, we were able to observe first hand Irma’s destruction. In addition, we had an opportunity to attend Moosehaven’s 8th Annual Chili Cook Off. This Heart of the Community event hosts cook teams from around the nation to compete in this International Chili Society sanctioned event. Teams compete with their favorite recipes to win People’s Choice and Chili Society awards, while enjoying a Craft Fair, classic car show by the Clay County Cruzers and live entertainment. In addition, thousands of visitors enjoy chili and learn about the good works of the men and Women of the Moose.

The Grand Council was excited to be able to participate and won Third Place in the People’s Choice Blind judging. Good job team!

January took us back to Moosehaven for our 7th Chapter Analyst Coordinator Seminar. This is a voluntary two day meeting to determine how we can best help our Chapters in the event they need a helping hand. These dedicated volunteers give so generously of their time to help our Chapters when the need arises in addition to planning and conducting Training Sessions and help our Chapters become successful. Let’s give a round of applause to our 43 dedicated volunteers!

Unfortunately, our Chapter Analyst Coordinators were not able to save the forty three Chapters that we lost this past year. Several of the closures were due to the loss of the affiliated Lodge. The others either struggled for quite some time and the efforts to revitalize them were unsuccessful or they gave up due to irreconcilable differences with their local Lodge or with their Chapter members. Personal attitudes and a lack of regard for our General Laws remain a big factor in many of the closings. How could they not care about what it is we do?

Currently the Women of the Moose have thirty-six Chapters that are not affiliated with a Local Lodge. It’s not that they have simply lost their Moose Home - their affiliated Lodge has forfeited their Charter. Eleven of the thirty-six have earned the coveted Award of Achievement for the 2017-2018 Chapter year and three thus far have Green Cap qualified Junior Graduate Regents. One even has their own newsletter and Chapter Moose Riders group! In addition, this Chapter is one of the top Chapters in their State! Anything is possible if you put your mind to it. This Chapter is a group of empowered women who believe in our mission of
caring for others in need! Monroe, North Carolina Chapter members are you in the house?

Let’s give them a big round of applause for all of their hard work!

Since I joined the staff at Moose International in 1999, and for as long as anyone can remember, the Women of the Moose have sponsored an event for our Senior Class as well as our three outstanding scholars in the freshman, sophomore and junior class. This year, we visited K-1 Speed in Addison, IL followed by a great dinner in their Winners Circle dining room.

In that 1991 Proceedings book, there was a list of all Chapters including their assets and membership totals. I might add, at the time, the Women of the Moose had 532,783 members and had shown an increase in membership that year of 10,904! This during a time when you had to have a male family member who was currently a Lodge member in order to join and the average wage was $11.02 per hour. Dues at the time were $8.00.

Today, we have right around 375,000 members. Anyone who is invited by a member – man or woman - can join and dues – well, let’s just say they vary from Chapter to Chapter but the Average wage is now $22.52 per hour. Why aren’t we overflowing with members? Our mission is so vitally important to today’s society – helping those less fortunate!

Have we simply forgotten how to have fun? Have we forgotten how to play in the sandbox or didn’t we ever learn? Maybe we’re not having fun at our meetings?

Have you ever tried dance lessons after your meetings?

Or how about playing games? Ok, let’s try something fun right now!

How many of you have ever seen Ellen Degeneres’s Game of Games? Have you ever seen “Blindfolded Musical Chairs?” Let’s play right now!

Wasn’t that fun!

Or maybe we need to be a little more compassionate toward our fellow members?
Unfortunately, far too often, our Chapter members and Officers forget to say thank you to their volunteers or the Officers simply take them for granted. The members feel used and don’t return.

Senior Regent Sandy Ziros of Elgin, Illinois Chapter gets it. She told me “That is my job to make sure everyone gets fair treatment. It is not all about me making MY year, it is about ALL my co-workers knowing I am here for them. I want them all involved and I’m trying to change that.

She said “A little about me: I do a benefit every year for someone in need. Stranger or friends. If there is a medical issue and help is needed to pay bills, I am there for them. I have a special group of people who work with me, as I could not do it alone. WE usually make $20K to $40K for them. It really depends on their friends and families, who want to spend at the Silent Auction, raffles and 50/50’s. It is amazing to see the looks on their faces. But again I have a team, I cannot do it alone. And I cannot do it alone with the WOTM of Elgin. I am working on getting everyone feeling wanted and needed. It is a long road because of previous history, but we are getting through it.

“I will work my hardest to get these co-workers to feel like they are wanted and not just needed for their dues. I want them ALL to feel they are needed. I pop up with things all the time. We just signed 300 Christmas cards for the Troops in just four days. Radio station US-99’s Roman stopped at the Lodge and picked them up yesterday. It is just the little things that will make us stand out! (Can you image how many we would have had it I had thought of it sooner)!

Sandy and the Elgin Board of Officers held an Honors dinner/Christmas party this past Dec 7th. Everything was first class – salad, prime rib, real potatoes, fresh vegetables and desert served by the Lodge brothers. Invitations were sent and Santa was there. They handed out pins for 10+ years of service. “They have never had anyone tell them they appreciate their membership and without them, we would not be a Chapter. I am always being told, by past Senior Regents, you don’t have to do that. My response to them, is yes I do!!!”

Because of Sandy’s work for others, she won the Woman of the Year Award from the Elgin Altrusa Club. It was a great honor for her as it has usually been Doctors,
Lawyers etc. that are nominated. So when, as she described it “the plain Jane of the world, was nominated she felt amazing. And then she won.

Congratulations Sandy and I hope your co-workers understand the power of teamwork.

Another team of co-workers has been very busy – the Frederick, Maryland Chapter has been making some unique items. Let’s watch.

Thank you co-workers of Frederick for your commitment to providing mats for those less fortunate.

In January, I received one of those “warm feeling” emails from a co-worker - Dear Mrs. McPherson,

I have been meaning to write you to let you know how truly honored I am to be part of the Moose. My husband Anthony Dufault and I (Elizabeth Metcalf) have been members of the Big Bear Lake Lodge 2085 for almost 12 years now. I am a Past Regent and he is the current Governor, District Sargent of Arms and Legion Fraternal Director. We are very active in our lodge and have made it a mission to get our lodge more involved in our community over the last few years. We raised 5 children and are now raising 2 more, our grandchildren. So many have told us that one day we would be blessed for all the things we have done. Well on Oct. 12th, 2017 I second guessed that and all I believed in. I am writing this to you to let you know how our own lodge and the Apply Valley Lodge helped restore our faith.

On Oct. 12th, 2017, we received a phone call that our son Brandon was in the hospital and had glass in his eyes. I begged the nurse to ask my son what happened and she said that my son just said tell my dad that Luke went crazy and shot everyone in the house. We packed a bag and took off to the hospital which was 2 1/2 hours away. I googled a shooting in his town and sure enough there it was, the home my son lived in. The article stated that a male and female were deceased and two 50 year old men were taken to the hospital. My heart sunk as my son is only 23 and I was not sure he was alive until I reached the hospital. He was actually transferred to another hospital before we arrived. My son was not even aware he had been shot until later that evening. I lost 2 of my best friends
that day and my son is left blind from this incident. My two friends which were murdered rented a room to my son so he could finish college when his roommates dropped out. We spent 7 days in a hotel while he was in the hospital and 6 additional days for more surgeries. Our son has had 5 surgeries to date, the last one was the day after Christmas and has to undergo more in the future.

Our lodge and the Apple Valley Lodge stepped up right away to help us and I was so amazed by the love we received from them. You see we had to move our son back home and we didn't have a room for him as the grandchildren were in his old room. We put him in our room and my husband and I slept on the couches for 45 days. We had started to add a room on to our house about 5 years ago and ran out of money so it had been sitting untouched for 2 years. Well our lodge and Craig Robnett made phone calls and raised money and help to get it finished. The Apple Valley Lodge and Gary Witthans held an awesome fundraiser on Nov. 18th for us and the Women of the Apple Valley Chapter, Marie Fay and Noreen Sprague donated half of their yard sale benefits to us. Apple Valley didn't even realize it was my son until we showed up at district and told everyone.

What both these lodges did for us, I will never forget and I will always treasure the friendships I have made. We now have a room and a bed to sleep in as we continue to take care of our son.

I have stopped crying on a daily basis and thank God my son is alive. I also thank God for making me become part of the Moose.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Michele Metcalf

Elizabeth, I know you are here somewhere. We hope your son is doing better and we wish you and your family the very best!

Then, I received some great information about one of our co-workers from the Port Charlotte Chapter in Florida

Dear Mooseheart,
I would like to introduce myself as donation coordinator for this project. I work for Gildan Activewear Inc. in Charleston, SC in the Quality Control department as a CTL coordinator. I basically coordinate product testing for all items that Gildan ships to Walmart stores. I am a long distance member of the WOTM of the Port Charlotte FL Chapter and the daughter of Laurie Nelson who is an officer at this chapter.

Gildan is a leading manufacturer and marketer of quality branded basic family apparel, including T-shirts, fleece, sport shirts, underwear, socks, hosiery, and shapewear. We sell our products under a diversified portfolio of company-owned brands, including the Gildan®, Gold Toe®, Anvil®, Comfort Colors®, American Apparel®, Alstyle®, Secret®, Silks®, Kushyfoot®, Secret Silky®, Peds®, MediPeds®, and Therapy Plus™ brands. Sock products are also distributed through the Company’s exclusive U.S. sock license for the Under Armour® brand, and a wide array of products are also marketed through a global license for the Mossy Oak® brand.

With over 48,000 employees worldwide Gildan operates with a strong commitment to industry-leading labour and environmental practices throughout its supply chain in accordance with its comprehensive corporate social responsibility program embedded in the Company's long-term business strategy.

Aside from my personal connection with the Moose, this is why it is my pleasure to offer Mooseheart Child City & School, Inc. a donation box once a month. My Moose chapter agreed to pay the monthly shipping costs to support this endeavor. We believe in the work of this organization and this is the least we can do to show our support. Please find my contact information below should you have any questions and/or concerns with any of the donated items or any future donations.

Thank you for your time,
Rebecca Nelson

Let’s give it up for Rebecca and the co-workers of Port Charlotte for their support of our kids!
So, what have the Women of the Moose done collectively this past year? Across our continent, we have donated the sum of $2,336,550 to Moose Charities. This is a combination of all donations for the Moosehaven Centennial Fund, projects on both the Mooseheart and Moosehaven Campuses and donations to the Endowment Fund.

Anna Maria Island, Florida once again leads the way with donations totaling $43,995.

Rounding out the top five donors to Moose Charities is Juneau, AK with donations of $28,572

Speedway, IN Chapter at $16,134

Findlay, OH Chapter with $13,619 and Yuma, AZ with total donations to Moose Charities of $13,488

In addition, many many other Chapters have donated over $10,000. To each of you who have given to Moose Charities, please accept my heartfelt thanks. Let’s give all of our Chapters a big hand for their total contributions!

In addition, the Women of the Moose have been heroes in their local community to the tune of $13,589,480 in community service. What an outstanding contribution to those who count on volunteer assistance for their programs. Please give yourselves a big hand!

This past year, we instituted five new Chapters – Carson City, NV; Highland, MI; Milltown, MT; Waltham, MA and Killeen – Harker Heights, TX. I am sure we have co-workers in attendance from a couple of our new Chapters. Let’s give them a warm Women of the Moose welcome to their first International Conference!

May 1, 2017 we began this past Chapter year with 375,423 co-workers. We processed a total of 56,441 applications for membership which was an increase over last year by 1,969 applications. We were able to add an additional 7,720 members back to the rolls of the Women of the Moose through our Membership Retention mailing in February. However we still ended April 30th, 2018 with 370,461 for a decrease of 4,962.
These co-workers became members because someone cared enough to ask them. Some of these co-workers had been members for many years yet they let their dues lapse for whatever reason. Were they mistreated, did the Chapter not meet their needs or expectations? Many have no idea what their dues even do to help others in need.

I do see a bright future ahead and am very thankful for everyone’s efforts to maintain their membership goals as our membership loss was less than last year. But it looks like we’ve got a lot of work to do!

Last year the Grand Council of the Women of the Moose hoped to re-energize our Chapters with the new Award of Achievement plaque, to be hung in the Moose Home, that looks similar to the Premiere Lodge Award. The “coins” that will be used yearly to denote the recipient of the Award of Achievement are the same “coins” that are used in the Premiere Lodge Award. The Chapters earning the Award of Achievement for the 2017-2018 Chapter year will be the very first recipients of this beautiful award. As of Friday when I left the office for this Conference, initially 553 Chapters will be receiving the very first plaques! Congratulations co-workers! This is an increase over last year of 43 Chapters and we haven’t done any appeals as of yet!

The Senior Regent and Recorder of the Chapter earning the Award of Achievement will be the recipients of 30,000 Moose Rewards Points providing they meet all of the requirements to qualify for the Green Cap honor and the Star Recorder degree. If the Recorder has already earned the Star Recorder degree she must once again meet all of the eligibility requirements to earn the Rewards Points.

So, are you ready for the top states with a gain in membership? Remember, we only announce those with a gain in membership

In 5th place – with +80 Arizona-New Mexico!

In 4th place – with +103 Colorado.
In 3rd place – Virginia +130.

In 2nd place with +184 – Florida.

And in first place with +349 – we know it’s not Florida – it’s Michigan!

Co-workers, we must rebuild our Chapters, make them stronger and educate our members about what it is we do as a fraternity. We must sponsor members who believe in our cause and believe our mission is to ensure the future of Mooseheart and Moosehaven and those dependent on us for their very existence but we won’t be able to keep them if we don’t treat them with some kindness.

All we have to do is plan a wide range of activities and invite people to become a part of something good.

Just this week, during a pre convention meeting, one of the New Orleans Convention Center staff was moved to tears and could not continue with the meeting simply because she learned about the good we do as an organization - taking care of children in need, providing for our senior members and providing assistance to our Communities. She wishes there were more organizations in the world like the Moose. WOW! What a profound statement and what an impact we can make in the world.

Our Orientation program is so very vital to the success of every Chapter and our fraternity. We aren’t just a local bar – we are still the largest women’s fraternal organization in the world. Why not tell people about it? Why not share our passion to help others? And while we are helping others, we can have fun!

Aren’t you proud a place called Mooseheart was there to give them solace when their life was upside down? Aren’t you proud Moosehaven is available for our senior members to finish a life well lived? Aren’t you proud you volunteered to donate a little time to an event to help make their life easier? Only you have the ability to create your own mission to increase the membership of your Chapter and empower women to make your corner of the world a better place.
As you leave this meeting in a few minutes, make sure you stop by the door to receive one of my favorite things – a vitamin, or pill if you take them - organizer for all of your traveling needs.

Thank you co-workers for another year of success and please remember to be kind to one another.