Welcome back to Tampa, Florida and the 105th Annual International Conference of the Women of the Moose. Once again, we are on the main stage on Friday Night. It’s great to be here and I am excited to share a lot of good information with you.

Our last visit to Tampa following Tropical Storm Debbie brought us to our 100th Annual International Conference and a history lesson of the Women of the Moose. We’ve made some history of our own since then so let’s celebrate what we have done this past year and talk about where we’re going in the future.

Throughout my travels this year, from the Annual and Midyear Conferences, to Mooseheart’s Homecoming and Founders Day Celebration, our Halloween meetings at Moosehaven, seminars in Las Vegas and on campus activities, I have observed over and over the continued dedication and commitment of the women and men of this great organization who come from far and wide to learn, to make a difference and to volunteer their time to so many worthwhile causes.

Countless Heart of the Community events were held to help those less fortunate and our Moose men and women were there to prove the good works we do. From fundraisers to blood drives to hospital visits our members took time from their already filled schedules to clean, paint, donate, give and simply show they care. The beneficiaries were the people who needed a helping hand and were served by our Moose Heroes.

When we traveled to our beloved Moosehaven for our International Boards and Grand Council meeting in October, Moosehaven held their annual Community Trick or Treat. Thousands – yes thousands - of children, Moms, Dads, Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles visited our campus dressed in every costume imaginable - from rented Super Heroes to homemade ghouls and creative funny creatures. The residents and employees of Moosehaven grinned from ear to ear while handing out hundreds of pounds of tasty treats. Yes, we all dressed up too. What a great time we had and what a difference this safe family event made in the Orange Park Community.

January took us to Las Vegas, Nevada for our 6th 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!

In March, I had the pleasure of attending the groundbreaking ceremony for the Moosehaven Centennial Building. It was an exciting weekend. One of the residents told me “Barbara, I hope they get that new building built soon. I am 92 years old and want to be able to live in it before I pass on.

One of the highlights this past year was with the Washington State-Northern Idaho Moose Association. I had been approached about having the Women become part of the Association. It was not about a money grab but about increasing the talent pool in a small Association. During a recent Supreme Council meeting, the Council approved a pilot program for this association wherein the Women of the Moose could become part of the Association.
At the Midyear Conference held in Pasco, Washington, the Loyal Order overwhelmingly approved asking the women to join the Association. This means that women could serve as Association Officers and Chairmen as well as District Officers and Chairmen. The decision now lies in the hands of the Chapters to determine if they want to join the Association. This does not mean that the men and women will become one, simply that the Lodges and Chapters will now make up the Association instead of Lodges only.

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. One of those Chapters wanted to take over their Moose Home but it would have been impossible for them to survive as the Lodge had far too much debt. This did however open up the dialogue of one of our stand alone Chapters having the ability to open their own Moose Home in the future and guidelines to make this happen have been established. Yes, it is possible and I know of a couple of Chapters that are working toward that goal. Isn’t that exciting!

Since I joined the staff at Moose International in 1999, 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 Mastermind Escape Rooms in Schaumburg, IL followed by a great dinner at Maggianos Little Italy.

Women of the Moose Co-op student and Mooseheart Graduate Jeremy Kalicum continues to stay in touch with us nearly every month or two. I recently checked in with this very focused young man to see what he was up to since school ended for the year.

I can hardly believe that I am almost done with my bachelors degree! Next year I’m going to be doing independent research on the role of wastewater treatment plants with emerging antibiotic-resistant bacteria, and another project working to develop university level chemistry labs for schools with limited resources (such as in developing countries). The way things are looking, I'll most likely be a published scientific author by the end of the year, but only time will tell.

Hopefully you’ve heard about the developing opioid/overdose crisis that is sweeping across North America, but maybe something you didn't know was that Nanaimo, BC was the city that had the most overdose deaths per capita in Canada. Unfortunately, our health authority wasn’t doing anything to address the issue. This is when and why we decided to step-up and take action and put some pressure on the health authority to do something. A month after we set-up our safe injection site in the City Hall Parking Lot, the health authority set up its own site. Without our efforts, I have no doubt that many more lives would have been lost.

The Supervised Consumption Site in Nanaimo was an incredible experience for me. It was a tremendous amount of responsibility thrown on my shoulders all at once, but I learned a lot from it. I've also developed an interest in the field of addictions and mental health that I would really like to pursue further in the future. Like I said on the phone, the Safe Consumption Site directly saved 7 lives and collected thousands of dirty syringes from the streets. Needless to say, this is something that I am very proud of!

Way to go Jeremy!

During Director General Hart’s comments at the 2017 Mooseheart High School Commencement ceremony, he told the students they were the 99th class of Seniors to graduate from Mooseheart and the only class ever to have the Chicago Cubs as the reigning World Series Champions! The Cubs fans in the near capacity Field House roared!

As a Cubs fan, I have “waited my whole life” (or at least since I knew who the Chicago Cubs were) for the beloved Chicago Cubs to win the World Series. The night they won, there were tears in my eyes. I was happy it finally happened but sad at the same time that “next year” was finally here. That the team everyone revered
even when they lost had done it! But most of all, I was happy for the team. The “team” no one has seen in 108 years.

This team was comprised of mostly 20 somethings – Anthony Rizzo, Addison Russell, Javier Baez and an aging backup catcher – my favorite player and the man they lovingly called Grandpa Ross. He won over an entire fan base with the force of his personality and helped to mold the young team into the very best in baseball. He retired as a hero, on top of the world, as he was carried off the field by his teammates following their World Series win.

Much of his impact on the team went unseen. He had late-night conversations with struggling teammates, he had dinners on the road to build morale; he offered kind gestures to teammates who were new or didn’t feel like they “fit in.” He made sure the young players respected the game and played the Cub way – unselfish, team-first, winning-first baseball. And you could see it. High fives – pats on the back – players jumping for joy and hugging was seen everywhere during the majority of the 2016 season.

Being a great teammate is work – hard work. It requires intention and discipline but is a skillset others can learn. “How to make yourself valuable, even if you’re not the most valuable is important” to those who are an asset to the team but not necessarily the leaders. To quote David Ross “To be honest with everyone around you, humble no matter how good things get, reliable and consistent so that everyone knows what to expect, to willingly share your experiences with others – including those who might one day take your job! – to manage change with a smile on your face and stay engaged with everyone so that you can know how best to inspire them. That is what it takes to be a great teammate.”

So why am I rambling on about the Chicago Cubs? Because I think it is important. It is important for everyone to know that just because you only come to meetings to be with people and do not possess great leadership skills, you can still be an asset and influence over your Chapter “team”.

Be supportive of your fellow Moose members and attentive to their lives. Celebrate their successes and help the next co-worker achieve the same. When your co-workers talk, really listen to them. Don’t be critical or think you have to be better than them. We all contribute equally, just in different ways.

The Internet describes fraternal as “of or like a brother”; so check your egos at the door and treat all co-workers as you would like to be treated. We will be in a far better place and accomplish so much good for others if we do.

The Women of the Moose was organized to bring women closer together in a fraternal relationship to assist in the charitable activities of the Moose fraternity. It is our mission to assist in the charitable activities of the fraternity with special attention to Mooseheart and Moosehaven.

To quote an article from a February 1936 Moose magazine “In all that they do, these co-workers try above all else to be real co-workers in every way that that name implies. They want to work together to further the women’s program, and they want to work for the men’s organization to further the program of the Loyal Order of Moose.” The article went on to say “…where could there be found a more noble and glorious purpose than Mooseheart and Moosehaven?” To help others – especially the children and the old folks – is what has made the Moose great! So, naturally, Mooseheart and Moosehaven hold first place in the women’s program.”

Recently, the Women of the Moose at Lowell, OH Chapter have been doing fundraisers to spruce up the deteriorating headstones at the community cemetery.

"We were driving by and we've seen a lot of them that were stacked on top of one another," said Tina LeMasters, officer of the Women of the Moose who is also heading up the project. "We were walking through..."
and seeing that a lot of them were in disrepair and we thought that would be a good project for the Women of the Moose to do."

LeMasters noted that there are 151 headstones in Greenlawn Cemetery in Lowell that need to be replaced which will cost approximately $15,000. They are holding fundraisers and are accepting donations to buy granite plates to place on the salvageable headstones and to place on the ground for the headstones that are not.

"They'll have their name, date of birth and their date of death," explained LeMasters. "They are black granite and will be a little bit bigger than a block."

Additionally, they will be adding the branches of the military for veterans and other decorations to honor those who have passed and to make the cemetery a nicer place to visit.

"Just because we don't see them doesn't mean they are gone," said Carolyn Farmer, officer of the Women of the Moose. "I think they still deserve to have the recognition there for them; we've got people who are willing to help us do fundraisers and we will continue to do fundraisers of our own throughout the year."

LeMasters said they want to place American flags on the graves of those who have served and, in addition, other decorations for those in the cemetery.

The cemetery has more than 3,000 graves, including four for Revolutionary War soldiers, five for veterans of the War of 1812, 82 for Civil War soldiers and dozens for veterans of each war to follow. The cemetery began around 1800 with a donation of land and the first burial was in 1806.

"They are satisfied with what we are wanting to do," Farmer said. "I think if we get this project going and it does well, other people might take an interest in their own local cemeteries."

"We have a lot of history in there and I think it's good that upcoming generations can see the history that we have," LeMasters said. "It's a big help for us that the community is wanting to get involved."

Farmer added the cemetery is special to a lot of families in the area and they are happy to be able to improve a space that many hold near to their hearts.

To date, the Chapter has raised $4,000 and have placed an order for their first 20 black granite headstones to be set by the middle of August.

Just days before Christmas, I received a very excited message from Jennifer Spear, then Senior Regent of the Holly, MI Chapter of the Women of the Moose.

She said “I’m so excited to share the news and not sure who I can brag about this to but I wanted to let you know that our Women of the Moose won "Organization of the Year" from the Holly Michigan Chamber of Commerce. This is a huge honor for our chapter and our lodge and I was hoping it is appropriate to let you know about all the great things our Lodge and Chapter have been accomplishing.

Not only did our WOTM win that esteemed honor against so many other worthy local organizations, our Lodge itself has been extremely active in our community. This summer we participated in a program near and dear to my heart by raising funds for Flag Poles that flank an entrance to our community and honor our country, our state and our veterans. This project was a huge honor to be a part of and is just one of the many things our little lodge has been doing to help our community. Each thing we do for our community raises awareness about the Moose Fraternity and in turn, helps us reach more people and potential members.
Being fairly new to the Moose Organization (only my second year as a Board Member), I am not sure of the exact hierarchy or who to contact but I am so proud of our Boards. Both the Mens and Womens Boards in our little town of Holly have been so hard at work this year and I think it would mean a lot to all of us to get the word out that the Holly Michigan Lodge and Chapter is making great things happen both in our community and fulfilling and exceeding expectations through Moose International. I am so very proud of our chapter and lodge and its members and especially our hard working board members and volunteers.”

Good job Holly!

Once the winter holiday season was over, Tina Miller of Chester, Virginia was looking for a new project. As a fairly new member of Williamsburg Moose, she decided to peruse the Moose International website and sent an email, explaining that she had a stash of yarn, loves to crochet, and wondered if the children were in need of hats, scarves or gloves. Mooseheart responded, asking if she would be interested in crocheting afghans for the 2017 graduating seniors in their school colors to commemorate their accomplishments. There were 19 seniors scheduled to graduate in June 2017.

“NINETEEN!!!” Tina thought, but she was not willing to say no, so she accepted the task!

Layouts and plans were made and the crochet project started on January 24th. At first, Tina crocheted panels of each color, then stitched them together and added a border. Her goal was to make them “the same, but different”. Each afghan was made in the school colors (red, black, and white) but in different patterns and different stitches. She crocheted every weekend and almost every evening, while watching TV, sitting on her balcony swing on the porch, and everywhere she went, the yarn bag was with her. We must mention that Tina also works full-time and enjoys an occasional dinner out or Friday night Karaoke at the Moose, where everyone enjoys her beautiful singing voice.

In February, Tina and her LOOM-husband Barry travelled to Alabama and stocked up with enough yarn for the 12-hour one-way drives, where she completed two more afghans. In April, Tina and five Moose friends drove to Canada and she used that vacation opportunity to complete her last two…or so she thought! When Tina returned home and began the final stages she performed her final count, only to discover that she was short by three afghans!!! So, on the last day of April, devastated and in tears, Tina frantically began to crochet the last three graduation gifts.

In summary the graduation afghans:

- Took approximately 15 hours to complete each of the 19 afghans, for a total of 285 hours (35½ 8-hour days!!)
- Used a total of 95 skeins of yarn.
- Each afghan has roughly 6,300-9,000 stitches, which is approximately 147,000 stitches!
- In addition to the afghans, Tina added a note along with an Amazon gift card for each graduate!

Tina and her husband Barry are active members of Chester Christian Church in Chester, VA where Tina is a member of the Worship Team. Service work is in her blood. She crochets for others and loves to see the joy in the faces of those receiving her handmade masterpieces – some beautiful, some useful, some funny! Tina taught herself the art of crochet when she was about to be a grandmother for the first time.

Thank you Tina for your contribution to our Graduates and for all of your hard work.
Past College of Regents Board Member Jan Grecco of Clifton, New Jersey emailed my office recently with some photos and pictures of “Chapter Rally Day 2017 New Jersey Style!” What? Some of you I realize do not know about Chapter Rally Day, a program that ended about 20 years ago.

Jan was a cheerleader all through grammar school and high school. In high school, they had pep rallies to promote support for their team and promote enthusiasm. Jan wanted to create enthusiasm throughout the state of New Jersey and have more camaraderie with the co-workers. Thus Chapter Rally Day New Jersey Style was born and they are now in their 4th year. There are 3 things that have to occur according to Jan:

Number 1 - We have to learn or share something relating to the Women of The Moose. The 1st year we did the New Member Orientation so more co-workers were aware of the tools being offered and hopefully it helped more co-workers feel more comfortable “selling” our program. They reenacted College of Regents and Academy of Friendship Committee Activity nights so everyone could see the correct way to do these beautiful rituals. This year she left the sharing topic open and began with what she thinks New Jersey needs to succeed. More mentoring etc. was discussed. Of course, the co-workers in attendance are the co-workers that can get the word out that we are trying to get the state in better shape. What we did come up with was a topic that would be beneficial to all Chapters. Conducting a Proper Meeting will hopefully be shared at the Midyear Conference.

Number 2. We have to have fun! We have some type of “fashion show”. Last year you had to decorate a pair of shoes with any type of Moose theme. We called it “Show Us Your Shoes” (I decorated my shoes with all pennies for Moose Charities proving that every penny counts!!) We have had garbage bag dresses and hat contests as well. This year you had to decorate T-Shirts with a Moose theme. As you can see we had Kathy Furlong & Emma Louise Brown decorate their shirts with the words to Mooseheart The Happiest and Barbara Rose with Member Retention just to name a few.

Number3. And lastly, as WOTM we need to have some type of refreshments. Just to sit and relax. We have had lots of fun doing this and we try to get more involvement every year. As long as the co-workers want to do this, I am willing to keep it going no matter how many are in attendance.

So, what have the Women of the Moose done collectively this past year? Across our continent, we have donated the sum of $2,864,158 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 has donated the most with a total of $56,812.

Rounding out the top five donors to Moose Charities is Venice, FL with donations of $21,799.

Speedway, IN Chapter at $17,921.

Findlay, OH Chapter with $14,303 and Naples, FL with total donations to Moose Charities of $12,887.

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 $13,830,371 in community service. What an outstanding contribution to those who count on volunteer assistance for their programs.

This past year, we instituted seven new Chapters – Concord, CA; Athens, GA; Oak Island, NC; Branson, MO; Newbern, TN and Appomattox and Pearisburg, VA. 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!

(pause for applause)

May 1, 2016 we began this past Chapter year with 387,319 co-workers. We processed a total of 54,472 applications for membership which was an increase over last year by nearly 3,000 applications. We were able to add an additional 10,397 members back to the rolls of the Women of the Moose through our Membership Retention mailing in February. However we still ended April 30th, 2017 with 375,423 for a decrease of 11,896.

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!

The Grand Council of the Women of the Moose hopes to re-energize our Chapters this year. Throughout the years our office has given our Chapters a simple, inexpensive certificate for their efforts to earn the Award of Achievement. This year, we have designed a plaque, to be hung in the Moose Home, which 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. (Note: the requirements for the Award of Achievement remain the same.)

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.

In addition, several years ago, the Women of the Moose did away with the International Co-worker of the Year and Novice Co-worker of the Year programs as they were very labor intensive. This year, we have implemented a new web application, available through your Moose Admin Menu, in which a Chapter Recorder is able to enter the ID number of an exceptional co-worker to be nominated for Co-worker of the Year. This award is separate and apart from the state and International Lifetime Achievement Award nominees. A certificate will be produced by our office for each nominee and they will be distributed during the 2018 Midyear Conference.

Entry in the Admin area will be available upon your return from the Conference or on July 5th however, the Senior Regent will need to have a meeting with the Past Regents of the Chapter to choose their nominee. The deadline for entering a name is November 1.

Effective with the 2017 Annual Conferences, the pre-registration fee will increase to $20.00. I know this is a big change however, it has been many, many years since we have increased this fee as Conference Expenses continue to rise. Room rental fees are now part of most association contract negotiations. We must be able to cover these and increased audio-visual expenses as we attempt to create more entertaining Conferences.

So, are you ready for the top states with a gain in membership? Remember, we only announce those with a gain in membership
In 4th place – with +4 Idaho-Utah

In 3rd place – Quebec +25.

In 2nd place with +36 – Arizona-New Mexico.

And in first place with +207 – once again - Florida!

I’m sure many of you remember this man Steve Jobs. Steve was a long haired hippie from California who became the inventor of things we didn’t even know we needed. A man whose passion for perfection and ferocious drive revolutionized six industries: personal computers, animated movies, music, phones, tablet computing, and digital publishing. And we didn’t even realize what we didn’t have.

Are we, as an organization, able to provide things to people that they don’t even realize they need? One of my recent reads is a book called “There’s No App For Happiness.” How true – how true!

According to the book, information technology is expanding at such a rate that nearly every aspect of our world has been impacted, yet there has been no corresponding expansion of personal happiness. Instead, we find that we have become anxious, sleep-deprived, depressed, and over-medicated. One in four women in the United States takes antidepressants and/or anti-anxiety medication, with men not far behind. And for sleep? The Center for Disease Control has declared that insufficient sleep is an epidemic.

The premise is not that technology is supposed to increase our happiness but that our society now believes it does. We have become confused as to the difference between happiness and entertainment. The constant glancing into our smart phone to see if anyone has pinged us, while a friend is sitting across the table speaking to us, are indicators that we are addicted to something that is making us less considerate and more alienated.

Our over infatuation with social media is parallel with our slipping into an isolated lifestyle.

Here is one of the most important statistics you may ever read that explains the clash of human happiness with text-based technology. According to research from 1981, approximately 90 percent of human communication is nonverbal. So although we are more connected than ever, when we communicate with text, it is only 10 percent of us that is connected. It is no wonder we feel more alienated. The overuse of social media, texting, and gaming is causing our society, especially young people, to develop symptoms that remind us of Asperger syndrome — verbal difficulties, avoiding eye contact, inability to understand social rules and read body language, and difficulty in forming true friendships.

One on one human interaction has taken a nose dive yet we, who gather at the Moose Home find camaraderie and friendship each and every time we visit and mingle with our friends. A guest to a Moose event told me once that “this was outstanding! It is so great to see children and adults interact, playing games, and having a good time.” I must have given her a strange look because she then said “You have to understand, all of my friends are on social media – email, Facebook and Twitter.” I thought – how sad! How does she see the smile in her friends’ eyes or how does she see her tear up when she gets emotional. Ok, they have emojis for that but truly, the original is much better.

We have the ability to fix the isolation problem and remain the top Fraternal Organization in the world. All we have to do is plan a wide range of activities and invite people to become a part of something good.

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.

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!

(HUMBLE AND KIND VIDEO)

A hero is a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities just like David Ross, Steve Jobs or each of you who give so generously of your time and money to ensure the safety of those entrusted to our care and those less fortunate. We can be the heroes to the underprivileged and help to honor our Community Heroes at the same time.

As you leave this meeting in a few minutes, make sure you stop by the door to receive one of my favorite things – a cross-body bag – just in case you need a little extra help carrying your Women of the Moose “stuff”.

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