

HERE'S WHY WE ASK YOU TO . . .

Evolve Your Lodge Facility into a

Moose Center

It probably doesn't require a new building. But it may well require a new way of thinking about your facility.

In a true sense, we have always been a "Family Fraternity." For many members, becoming a Moose is a tradition passed down from fathers to sons to grandsons—and from mothers to daughters and granddaughters. The words of an earlier Enrollment Ceremony remind us of the character of the moose, the animal from which our Order takes its name: "Strong and majestic . . . guarding within a defending circle the younger members of his family . . . bringing a sense of comfort and security to his own." While society has changed remarkably over the past two generations, the need to embrace, protect and provide enrichment to the family unit has never been greater. Just as government agencies and private business have done, social organizations like the Moose must evolve to continue to appeal to, and meet the needs of, today's families and their communities.

Plan for Progress: 3 Types of Moose Centers

The Moose fraternity has begun to evolve toward a structure of three different types of Moose operations: Moose Activity Centers, Moose Family Centers and Moose Service Centers. The Family Center concept was first introduced fully 10 years ago; the concepts of Activity Centers and Service Centers were informally discussed as far back as 1998. Last May, Director General Donald Ross described each of the three in his address to the 2003 International Convention:

"The Moose Activity Center would be nearly a replica of what we have known historically as the 'Moose Home' or the 'Moose Lodge,' where the basic Moose program provides social activity for the member, and opportunities to provide community service and support for Mooseheart and

Moosehaven.

"The Moose Family Center is an enhanced Activity Center. It provides a wider variety of activities than the Activity Center; these would include all family members, regardless of age—particularly activities for children and other activities for our 'golden-age' members—and would meet certain criteria to be designated a Family Center.

"The Moose Service Center would be designed to operate with memberships of less than 50. They would not operate a Moose home; there would not be as many required committees; there would be fewer than nine officers; and there would be an emphasis on community service, sports and family activity. The Moose Service Center, in our opinion, has the potential to be instituted worldwide."

The move toward these different types of Moose operations is in response to many trends and needs that we have detected and requests that we have received—but most of all, it is in response to some stark facts: a loss of more than 29% of the Moose fraternity's members on the rolls during the last 20 years, and an even steeper decline of 42% in annual membership applications over the same period. Offering a variety of Moose operations that better satisfy and serve the needs of our changing society is a change that we feel we must make to remain—or, indeed, regain our status as—a world-class fraternal organization.

Continuing as we have—not changing at all—is simply no longer an option. The Director General described three different types of Moose operations. Fortunately, we currently have many of the first two types—the Moose Activity Center being the more modest facility that runs our fraternal program faithfully and competently, and the Moose Family Center which operates a more extensive program with more options for all ages. And within the last year, newly chartered Moose operations have been given the option of starting out as a Moose Service Center; not only has this less complicated, more streamlined concept proven welcome and helpful in breathing life into brand-new Moose fraternal efforts, but it also promises to be a more realistic option to spread the Moose into sparsely populated areas where it might not have been practical to consider a full-fledged fraternal facility.

Unfortunately, a fourth type of operation also exists in our fraternity, not really fitting into any of the descriptions above.

These are Moose locations that resemble, more than anything else, a semi-seedy roadhouse tavern; what some would call “just a bar-type operation.” It should not be surprising that these types of Moose locations are experiencing membership drops at a greater rate than Lodges that fit the above descriptions of Activity Centers and Family Centers. Often, their Social Quarters operations are no longer generating the revenues, and margins, sufficient to maintain and sustain the costs of the physical facility, and they usually offer little in the way of fraternal programs, Mooseheart/Moosehaven fundraising, or community service.

Many such “bar-type” Moose operations are in geographic location that is no longer viable; have outdated, uninviting or poorly maintained facilities which serve to discourage recruitment of new members instead of encouraging it. They lack activities that attract member patronage. Too often, of course, they project to the outside community a decidedly negative image of the Moose fraternity.

What Can We Learn from a Look at the Proven Performers?

The Lodge Merit Award is bestowed annually on Moose operations which meet a number of criteria gauging basic appropriate fraternal functioning—but most prominently, two criteria that must be met are a net increase in good-standing members, and a net increase in financial assets. Of nearly 1,900 Moose operations in North America, only roughly 450-600 achieve Merit Award status from year to year. What can we learn from them? A study of these Merit Award winners over the past two years shows that the great majority pursue programs for families, to retain and gain members. As of this writing,

only 37% of Moose operations have been designated as Moose Family Centers—but fully one-half of all Merit-Award operations have achieved the Family Center designation. Another powerful and telling fact: A whopping 90% of Lodge Merit Award operations are also rated “Excellent” or “Superior” on their Family Activities reports to Moose International. They aren’t rated at just “Participates,” or “Good”—nor do they simply forget to file a Family Activities report. Nine of ten are rated “Excellent” or “Superior.”

Help Protect Your Lodge’s Future – and the Fraternity’s

If your Lodge maintains a facility, which classification does it fall into? Whether it’s a basic, well-maintained Activity Center, or a more comprehensive, kid-friendly Family Center, is it still an attractive and fun place to visit? Is it the place you enjoy taking your family? (Or, perhaps, does it seem to be slipping into that roadhouse-tavern look we discussed earlier?)

Why not attend a meeting, or drop in to visit with your Lodge’s Governor or Chapter’s Senior Regent to learn more about which direction your Moose operation is headed? They may not have considered the ideas you may have. And they certainly would welcome your help. It just might be that a bit of soap and water, and some paint, is the place to start making the sign in front of your Moose Center shine a little more brightly. And someday soon, if it doesn’t already, that sign may announce to your community that yours is a growing “Moose Family Center!”