



Cheryl Volden

Grand Council Member

IMAGINE

As my term on the Grand Council comes to an end, I reflect on how the Moose Family Fraternity can change people's lives including mine. I am grateful for the coworkers of all my chapters, who are too numerous to name but know who they are. You have always been there whenever I needed anything and have gone above and beyond what I could have imagined. To my mentors, the staffs at Women of the Moose and International Headquarters, and to the coworkers and brothers of the California Nevada Moose Association, thank you for teaching me how to live a meaningful life.

Imagine a woman sitting in quiet solitude thinking of an unknown future having just lost her mother who was the one person she could always confide in. A friend asks her to come to the Moose lodge with her so they can learn line dancing and to get her out of the house. She has a good time and for a while forgets her recent loss. One evening at the Moose she meets a woman who fills that missing void and becomes a mother figure she can rely on. She becomes her sponsor and on the evening of her enrollment convinces her to become the Membership/Retention chairman. Over the month of May they cook and serve mini meals on Tuesday nights as a fundraiser for the committee. They take pictures of the new members and create a membership board to display on the Women of the Moose bulletin board. She attends meetings and hears the Story of the Rose and after a while starts to understand that the story told is about the children at Mooseheart, the seniors at Moosehaven and helping our local community. If she doesn't attend a meeting, she gets a phone call telling her she was missed.

They go on Moose adventures together enjoying fun activities where she meets women in other chapters in the district and develops new friendships. Her newly designated Moose Momma asks her to memorize the ritual, so she does and discovers she can recite it even though her knees are knocking and her behind is shaking.

She and the members of her chapter do community service activities such as collecting toiletries for a local battered woman's shelter or the Rescue Mission, delivering food to the homeless, and participating in the American Cancer Society Relay for Life. At Christmas they sponsor a family, set up a Christmas tree at their home and deliver wrapped gifts and dinner. The feeling she gets seeing the joy on the people's faces they serve feeds her soul and creates something in her that compels her to do more.

She earns the Academy of Friendship degree with the help of her chapter and Moose Momma. She travels to a conference and is conferred with the Academy of Friendship degree where she witnesses a ritual and learns the lessons of true friendship. She is asked to participate in the ritual by the chairman, memorizes her part, and becomes part of the state conferral team.

After earning the Star Recorder degree, she travels alone to Orlando, Florida to be conferred with the degree and attends her first Moose International Conference. She meets a woman in line to catch the bus for the dedication ceremonies of the Life Care Center at Moosehaven. The woman asks her if she would like to be her Moose buddy. While on the Moosehaven campus the residents share their experiences and are very forthcoming about their adventures living on the Moosehaven campus. During this first International Conference she is never alone because her new Moose family always makes sure she has someone with her and guiding her through all the events and meetings.

Over time she learns more about Mooseheart where children in need never go hungry and have every advantage. She visits the Mooseheart campus, and meets some of the children who live there who tell her their stories; stories of homelessness, loss, hunger, and lost hopes and dreams. She hears stories of lives changed, endless giving, and the gift of a future with unlimited possibilities provided by the Moose Family Fraternity.

One day she gets a call that a moose member is considering sending her daughter to Mooseheart in hopes of a better future. She meets with them and discovers that Mooseheart is the answer to a new future for the coworker's daughter. At first the daughter isn't so sure she wants to move away from her mother, but she slowly realizes the opportunities that Mooseheart offers will provide her with a much brighter future than she could have ever imagined. In her early days at Mooseheart she struggles, has a few disappointments, and finally realizes she can envision the future she really wants. Along the way she receives postcards, letters, gifts, emails, and phone calls from the woman which provides her with encouragement and helps her through the disappointments. During one of the woman's visits with the Mooseheart student she is introduced "This is my Moose Momma". The feeling the Moose Momma gets is so fulfilling that she continues to work the program of the Women of the Moose & helps others to achieve their goals.

Along the way the woman earned degrees by recognizing and appreciating the teamwork required for chapters to earn the Award of Achievement. She learns about cooperation and working toward a common goal and how it is the key to everyone's success. She meets incredible people from across the fraternity, gets educated on the programs of the Moose which encourages her to take a leadership role in the fraternity. She discovers hidden

talents in herself and others and she “gets” that everyone she meets has something unique to offer and is valuable in some way. She begins to understand people are drawn to the Moose for a variety of reasons. She learns we can’t force all members to do the things in the Moose we are doing because each member has joined for their own reason and gives what they are able to.

Just when she needs a boost to get her moving forward, she gets a call from a man who is seeking a boarding school for his nephew. She tells him about Mooseheart. Throughout the conversation the man continually asks about the cost of his nephew being admitted to Mooseheart. She repeatedly explains there is no cost to him or his family. Surely the man must think this woman is crazy telling him there is a place where his nephew will thrive. She travels to meet with the mother, grandmother, and the young man. She learns the young man is the son of a paraplegic who has unsurmountable health issues, lives in a group home and her son cannot live with her. They discuss what Mooseheart has to offer and they are amazed that such an opportunity exists, and they agree to send him to Mooseheart. She travels with the young man and his grandmother to Mooseheart. She sees the wonder in their eyes as they tour the campus, meet with the family teachers in his new home and as he meets his new brothers. On August 1st this young man will graduate from Mooseheart as the Class Valedictorian. He is receiving a scholarship from the Women of the Moose, has been accepted to the University of Nevada in Reno where he plans to study for 2 years and will then transfer to Cal Tech in Pasadena, CA to complete his studies in engineering.

The woman has experienced a life she could have never imagined; met amazing and gifted people; attended amazing events in fascinating cities across the United States; seen the power of fundraising (Life Care Center - Mooseheart School Renovation - Centennial Hall) and knows the fraternity will accomplish its goal of providing the Mooseheart Activities Center. She considers these conferences, conventions and Moose events where she learns new things to be a homecoming because every one of them renews her sense of family. Her family has been expanded beyond her wildest dreams.

Imagine all this happened because a friend invited her to do line dancing at the Moose lodge one night.