Like many communities across the nation that experienced challenges due to COVID-19, Mooseheart was no different. We began to “quarantine” our students on March 6, stemming from the Illinois Governor J. B. Pritzker’s orders to “Shelter in Place,” which officially began on March 12. This is when the Illinois State Board of Education canceled all Illinois students’ in-school learning and determined that students would complete the year learning remotely from home. Mooseheart contacted all of the students’ guardians to let them know of the order and asked whether they wanted their child to remain at Mooseheart during the pandemic or to learn remotely from home.

We were forthright and informed every guardian that we were unsure when the campus would reopen and their child would be able to return. Currently, we have 48 students on the Mooseheart campus. All students are healthy and doing extremely well during this pandemic. Truly they have been “rock stars!”

Our plan, based on the governor’s recent guidelines, is to reopen Mooseheart for returning students who have been identified as “priority need.” We will begin placing new admits to Mooseheart in August. Our goal is to bring all returning students to Mooseheart in the safest manner as possible – both for our current staff and students residing at Mooseheart. We anticipate this taking place in June and July. We intend that all students returning will meet with our Community Nurse and follow any and all guidance of our Medical Director, (Pediatrician) Dr. Kleinfeld.

As an “essential” organization with the responsibility of remaining open, we had to make daily decisions throughout the pandemic. Overall, we have fared extremely well and there have been no reported cases of COVID-19 on campus.

We enthusiastically look forward to returning to some normalcy to our daily routines. We joyfully anticipate having our students return, and are using this time, through hiring, to rebuild our Family Teacher workforce. This seems to be a beneficial time to hire, with a large number of people currently looking for jobs. However, we know that the process of hiring and building our enrollment numbers is going to take time. That is the reality of this time and the direct effects of the COVID-19 time of quarantine.

Thank you again Moose members for all that you do to make our jobs what they are: Essential!!

— Gary Urwiler, Mooseheart Executive Director
A total of 40 Mooseheart staff and students participated in the Winter blood drive.

10 different vegetables are growing in the Mooseheart garden this Spring.

- squash
- basil
- eggplant
- tomatoes
- jalepeños
- sweet peppers
- carrots
- swiss chard
- broccoli
- cherry tomatoes

Mooseheart has a total of 11 horses on campus including a mini horse named Midnight and 1 donkey named Bullet.

In addition, 6 individual raised garden beds have been planted by the Washington, Pennsylvania/Arizona, Canada, Virginia, Alabama/Kentucky and Baby Village homes this year.
Exciting Events

Happy Birthday to GLU! Students made a card and helped to celebrate Mooseheart Executive Director Gary Urwiler’s Birthday.

Recognition Mooseheart community nurse Kathy O’Brien got special congratulations for her 20-year Moosiversary.

Horsing Around Midnight the mini horse loves getting some exercise.

Easter Hiding eggs required a few more precautions this year, but the Mooseheart children certainly weren’t left wanting.

Hop to it Students love holding “Big Juicy,” the campus bunny, at the Mooseheart barn.
Mary Miller, Mooseheart’s Librarian since 2014, was nominated to be the Kane County Private School Teacher of the Year. The awards will be given in 2021 due to cancellations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Her many improvements to the library and its programs make her a winner in our book! Miller has updated Mooseheart’s book collection, connected the school through Reach Across Illinois Library System and organized the “Louder Than A Bomb” poetry team.

“Mary recognizes the importance of connecting with the students in every aspect of the job and has positively impacted our entire community since her first day at Mooseheart.”
— Mooseheart Executive Director Gary Urwiler

“People who care enough to give of themselves outside their scheduled work hours are rare and hard to find. People who consistently give 100% effort at their jobs are also infrequent. Mooseheart is tremendously fortunate to have found both of these in Mary.”
— Mooseheart Assistant to the Executive Director Colleen Morgan

“She always has a great smile and a cheerful greeting for everyone who visits her.”
— Mooseheart Superintendent of Education Jeff Szymczak

“Mary is more than just a librarian. She is the go-to person for everything in the building.”
— Mooseheart third grade teacher Jennifer Enstrom

“Mary is always available to work with staff and students and always has new recommendations or new resources to provide.”
— Mooseheart Family Teacher Lindsay Burcham

“From The Mouth
Mooseheart Staff shares their appreciation for:

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Rambler Roundup

Visit facebook for the full collection of Mooseheart photos.

Senior Night 2020
How time flies when you’re having fun. These seniors enjoyed their last hurrah as Mooseheart athletes as the 2019-2020 winter season wrapped up.

Award Winners Korpo, Izeah (shown above) and Lucy (shown below) were among our community award winners.

Rock-a-bye baby
Senior Joel Williams getting a glimpse of fatherhood with his senior class “practice infant.”

Smiles Abound
HR Manager Krystal Rife, enjoying time with Zoey at Tennessee Home.

Gone Fishin’ Students enjoying a beautiful day at Mooseheart Lake.

Holiday Happiness Mooseheart students enjoyed filled stockings from Mooseheart’s corporate sponsors last Christmas.
Maria arrived in the U.S. at the age of 21, deciding to take charge of her future and leave behind Mexico City with hopes of chasing the “American Dream.” However, domestic abuse knew no borders, so at 26 she summoned her courage again to help put her abuser in jail and to raise her three beautiful children on her own.

No matter how hard she worked, she could not make ends meet. When she was able to find work, she earned a very meager income and depended on government assistance to feed a family of four breakfast, lunch and dinner. Maria had left Mexico City to prosper, but was faced with the cold reality of poverty.

At the age of 14, Rocio knew two things for certain. The first was that she wanted to help make her family’s life better. The second was that she loved learning new things, so she took it upon herself to research boarding schools. Rocio knew this would mean her mother had one less child to worry about. Finally, things took a turn for the better, for Rocio and her family. She applied for and received a Daniel Murphy Scholarship, which is given to low-income students from Chicago that seek to continue a higher education. With that scholarship in-hand, Rocio was on her way to Mooseheart.

For the first time in a while, Maria felt a sense of relief knowing Rocio had a place to sleep, eat, and receive an education.

Dee was raised by a single mother in the inner-city. Her father spent most of her childhood incarcerated. She dropped out of school and gave birth to her first son Ben at the age of 16. Ben’s father, Travis, began selling drugs in order to make an income and was first incarcerated at the age of 19. Over the years Ben saw very little of Travis. Dee worked different temp jobs and provided childcare for families in her neighborhood. In spite of her efforts, Dee was barely scraping by and felt like Ben was not safe in their neighborhood. Ben was excited about the new opportunity for him at Mooseheart where he is now enjoying a safe high school career.

Rocio Sanchez
2014 Class Salutatorian
Rocio’s positive experience at Mooseheart and its effects on her family were instant. It even motivated her younger brother, Ramiro to attend Mooseheart as well.

One of Rocio’s fondest Mooseheart memories was the first time she traveled outside of Illinois. Along with 9 other girls from Oregon Home, Rocio traveled to North Carolina. They visited many Moose lodges on the way and heard fantastic stories from Moose members. What she enjoyed most about these events was the genuine feeling of family and unconditional love. Rocio realized what it meant to be a Moose member. It meant giving children the gift of unconditional love, hope, strength and the opportunity to move forward towards a better life.

During her time at Mooseheart, Rocio was greatly impacted by her first Family Teachers, Peter and Rebekah Jordan, who made her feel immediately welcome and at home. She participated in three sports and was deeply impacted by her years in the Naval Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps. Rocio graduated in 2014 as the class Salutatorian, qualified for a $36,000 Moose scholarship and attended St. Norbert College in De Pere, WI.

It is now six years since Rocio graduated from Mooseheart. She now has a bachelor's degree St. Norbert. She is the proud founder and owner of Ooh La La Digital, an online marketing company that helps small businesses take off and succeed in their markets. She manages a team of six other professionals and over 100 clients nationwide. When not growing her business, Rocio enjoys time at home with her black lab Jet.

“Mooseheart gives children a second chance. It takes away the worry of having a roof over their heads, food in their bellies and is filled with people that care. At Mooseheart, all kids have to worry about is furthering their education and making goals for the future. Mooseheart gave me the opportunity to learn. I left to serve as a Mooseheart alumni, to continue the cycle of hope, and strength for small businesses that need a helping hand,” said Rocio.