Sometimes coming off of a major holiday break and into a new year can seem overwhelming. There is always so much to do, so many events to plan for, so many lives to touch, so many people relying on us every minute, and so many goals to be met.

Often, I find that the “shoulds” of life can get equally as overwhelming. When this feeling comes, it’s time to take a step back and prioritize. What’s important and what is not so important? It’s not about marking tasks off of my overwhelming list of things to do. It is truly taking time to appreciate our blessings, the blessings of life, and the people who share it that encourage us to persevere through every challenge and embrace each joyous celebration we encounter.

That includes YOU our Fraternity and family, who each day provides us the means to offer our children a better way of life. Because of your unselfish work, we get to live alongside our students, through challenges and celebrations. We get to be there for them in every area of learning, growing and maturing. We are there for each step of their lives here. More often on the Mooseheart campus, we are witnessing students making progress in their own journey and growing in the areas necessary for them to achieve success and a better future.

We often over hear comments like, “I can do it, I have potential;” “I can make a difference;” “I wish to do more;” “I am somebody;” “I improved my reading score;” “I did something nice for someone else; I received an A on my test;” “I can’t wait to go onto college!”

Wouldn’t it be a tragedy if we missed these because of how busy we are trying to complete all the “shoulds” on our lists! To all of you, I express my sincere gratitude and thanks for allowing us the means to continue the program that our Founder, James J. Davis envisioned some 107 years ago.

We look forward to many occasions in May that we will be able to be together.

- 16 Blessing of the Bikes, 8 a.m.
- 16 Senior Class of 2020 Alumni Dinner, 5 p.m.
- 17 Class of 2020 Lap Top Ceremony provided by the Moose Riders at St. Charles Moose Lodge, noon
- 22 5th & 8th Grade Promotion in Milwaukee, 2 p.m.
- 22 Opening of the International Convention in Milwaukee, WI
- 23 College of Regents Conferral, Pilgrim Conferral, and the Class of 2020 Commencement followed by a church service at the House of God

Thank you for playing such a pivotal part of our lives at Mooseheart. We hope you enjoy all you see in this newsletter from your amazing Mooseheart community! The fact that our community expands past Mooseheart is a gift we share with YOU! We look forward to seeing you soon.

— Gary Urwiler, Mooseheart Executive Director
Chicagoland received 7.9 inches of rain during the month of August. This led to our very first “surprise downpour” during the Back to School Bash. Many students and staff alike chose to run indoors to eat in the school hallways. Those who stayed outside were “soaked to the skin” but still enjoyed the great food provided by Canteen!

The Girls Cross Country team logged between 20-25 miles each week preparing for meets. In addition to running, the girls also participated in strength training twice a week. The team ended the week with restorative yoga on Fridays. Mooseheart has dedicated Cross Country athletes!

A soccer player averages 5,000 ball touches during each practice. It is recommended that soccer players try to get 10,000 touches each practice to really “hone” their skills.

Mooseheart soccer players averaged 25,000 ball touches each practice week during the soccer season. In preparation for their 13 matches during the 2019 season, Mooseheart players each averaged one quarter of a million ball touches! GO RAMBLERS!

Mooseheart students utilized 6,000 lbs of pumpkins during the month of October to create many beautiful jack-o-lanterns for display at their homes. Many homes also enjoyed roasting and eating the seeds!
National Honor Society
Community service is one of the requirements for induction into the National Honor Society (NHS). For her project, Mooseheart junior Makayla Schalk organized a “Penny War” fundraiser, which pitted Mooseheart’s grades against each other. Schalk’s hope was to raise $500 and to give 80% of that to Aurora, IL-based Feed My Starving Children, a “Christian nonprofit dedicated to providing nutritious meals to children worldwide.” Schalk and fellow junior Autumn Campbell (pictured left to right in photo 2), raised more than $700, with the junior class contributing the most. Schalk said the success of the fundraiser means she will also run it in her senior year. A bonus of the event was an ice cream social for the winners.

Wisconsin Ring Ceremony
The Class of 2020 shared their hearts, dreams and thanks with powerful tear-jerking testimony at the annual Wisconsin ring ceremony luncheon held in early December. We hope you can meet them in person this May as part of the program for this year’s International Moose Convention.

Basketball
The Mooseheart basketball program enjoyed success with top four finishes in early tournaments this fall.
2019 saw the inaugural soccer season kickoff at Mooseheart. The boys had a lot to learn, but showed marked improvement along the way and enjoyed an overtime playoff win as a fruit of their hard work and perseverance. The team will graduate only 1 senior and the boys are eager to build on their playoff success in the upcoming 2020 campaign.

“I fell in love with the game and really enjoyed playing this season. We’re going to become a good team.”  
— Julius Perez

“We learned our roles and expect to be more of a team next year.”  
— Joshua Gaye

“We worked hard and made improvements. We expect to be better next year.”  
— Heritier Rukumbuzi

“We’re focused on the future. We’re committed to getting better.”  
— Collin Hanson

“We look forward to winning more games next year.”  
— Alfonso Bailey
Welcome New Residents! Mooseheart continued to open its doors to children in need throughout the calendar year. Zainabu and Quinn were two special gifts to our community this past Christmas season.

Wisconsin Tree Lighting
Guests of the Wisconsin Tree Lighting celebration were greeted by this host of Mooseheart Christmas angels.

Back to School
Mooseheart kicked off the 2019-2020 school year in August with lots of big smiles and generous backpack donations from Houghton Mifflin, Harcourt.

Homecoming
Mooseheart’s 2019 Homecoming Court enjoyed recognition at the pep rally held at the fieldhouse. King Eloy and Queen Doyin were all smiles! Mooseheart’s resident band of Deon, Gabe and Eloy were ready to rock the house at the fall pep rally.

Halloween
Pennsylvania Home Family Teachers Dustin and Shanlyn enjoyed the Halloween festivities on campus with their own little pumpkins!

A beautiful fall day at the Child City.
Cathy grew up in a low-income family that relied on her mother’s meager income. Her father was an abusive career criminal who suffered with mental illness. Cathy herself was a gifted honor student and standout athlete in spite of being abused as a child. Initially excited to pursue an athletic scholarship in college, the news of a teenage pregnancy changed the trajectory of her life. Cathy became a teen mother and went to work in the medical field to provide for her daughter. Soon after, the baby’s father left Cathy. A series of troubled relationships and a second child led Cathy toward depression and she lost her job.

Ultimately, Cathy found a new boyfriend who was violent and controlling. Though she ended the relationship, this new boyfriend harassed, stalked and eventually beat Cathy and she needed long-term medical care. Unable to care for her children, Cathy’s family called on Mooseheart, a safe place that her youngest child now calls home.

Life began for Akeem Edmonds in the Bronx, NY in the care of an overwhelmed single mother struggling to raise six children amidst her own addictions. He spent his early years lacking any semblance of a family structure. When he was 11, a cousin offered Akeem a fresh start in Chicago. Despite many challenges, Akeem excelled in school and enrolled in a prestigious prep school. However, he was expelled from that school and was referred to Mooseheart. Akeem agreed with the placement at Mooseheart. He initially felt overwhelmed with the rules and structure that were foreign to him.

Things began to change when Akeem began learning more about himself through weekly meetings with Mooseheart counselor Stacey Bredehoeft. In his Mooseheart home, the consistent affirmation of his Family Teachers through the Mooseheart Model of Care helped him understand the concept of grace. Akeem enjoyed sports, band, NJROTC and the peer ministry team with Catholic pastor Michael Zak. Akeem graduated from Mooseheart as a member of the class of 2011 and continued his education at St. Norbert College in De Pere, WI, where he enjoyed the familiar feel of a small school setting.

At St. Norbert, Akeem served as a campus tour guide and as captain of the track team and discovered a love of teaching. He graduated from St. Norbert in 2015 with a Bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education. That fall, he took a job teaching Fourth Grade at a De Pere elementary school. Akeem volunteers at his local church, coaches middle school track and works with the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program.

When reflecting on his life and time at Mooseheart he said, “Mooseheart helped open my eyes to the fact that no matter how much trouble you’ve caused or how many mistakes you’ve made, you’re never too far gone. Once I allowed myself to trust people and allowed them to love me, I began to grow.”
On The Web
Our top news on www.mooseheart.org

Mooseheart, IL - September 26
This past fall, Mooseheart was awarded a $24,000 grant from the Baird & Warner Good Will Network.

Michael Guadagno, a member of Plainfield, IL Lodge 2491 and a Baird & Warner employee learned of the grant opportunity. Moose Charities entered an application for the grant and Mooseheart was subsequently one of 10 finalists.

Mooseheart Executive Director Gary Urwiler said the grant money will go toward Mooseheart’s vocational program. Mooseheart offers vocations in automotive mechanics, business, commercial art, commercial music, computer science and cosmetology.

Mooseheart, IL - September 23
A group of 35 Mooseheart high school students on when they participated in a lecture and series of group activities on Sept. 20, with Anna Marie MacDonald, the manager at the Workforce Connection Center in Lombard.

MacDonald explained to the students that “employability” is, “A set of skills or knowledge that make an individual more likely to secure and be successful in their chosen occupation to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.”

Asked to list some skills they may be important, students offered “communication,” “creativity,” “the ability to work hard,” “a good attitude” and “dependability” among others.

Mooseheart, IL - November 11
Mooseheart celebrated its 10th annual Holiday Lights Show. The show began Nov. 29 and ran through Dec. 31 for 33 days of viewing opportunities. One of Chicagoland’s largest holiday light shows, Mooseheart’s Holiday Lights was open from 5-9 p.m. each night and the cost remained $10 per car. The Holiday Lights show included dozens of lights displays over a 1.8-mile route. One hundred percent of proceeds go to support Mooseheart Child City and School.