It’s always a “new” beginning as school begins after a long summer break. The ongoing challenges of the pandemic continue to lurk in many communities across our nation, including ours. To say that things have been easy would be misleading. Navigating through these unprecedented times and situations definitely has had its drawbacks, but also has provided positive blessings!

We want to provide a positive perspective as we move through the 2021-22 school year. I marvel at the sense of community and positive resolve witnessed in our entire student body and staff. The goal of returning to “normalcy” was at the forefront of all of our minds and to make it happen took our entire teams’ effort.

We are fortunate that the school year began on-time, without any remote learning and with all athletic competitions underway. To see Ramblers teams competing and representing our school filled our hearts in places we didn’t realize were empty. This is a HUGE positive and something to be very thankful for! Mooseheart is fortunate, blessed, and so appreciative of the amazing “supporting cast of Moose members – Friends of Mooseheart” who wholeheartedly believe in our mission and show incredible encouragement and support to the children in our care. Thank you for your countless efforts and service you give to our staff and students! You always inspire us to give it our best and work to positively impact other lives right here in our school community.

As the first semester concluded, our focus increases on the 14 members of the Class of 2022. This class has had to endure the effects of the pandemic for the past two years, but they have done so favorably! We look forward to working with this class as we continue to prepare them for their June 4 graduation. We hope to see many of you at the Mooseheart Fieldhouse at 9 a.m. on that morning to help us celebrate!

As we complete the last days of 2021, let us not forget that it is all about perspective. Let’s keep our eyes up, our minds clear and focused, our hearts thankful, and to “be kind” in all that we do. Plan to carry that perspective into 2022. Be grateful for one another and continue reaching toward the stars. God Bless Mooseheart.

— Gary Urwiler, Mooseheart Executive Director
By The Numbers

1. **108** working days (5 lost due to rain) have occurred since the Mooseheart Activity Center (MAC) groundbreaking on June 5. Look at the progress!

2. Mooseheart welcomed **41** new students to campus for the 2021-22 school year!

3. November 19 was the last day at Mooseheart for Admissions Director Kyle Rife. During Kyle’s **15-year** career he helped **903** families place children at Mooseheart.

4. In 2013, a total sum of grades at the end of first quarter resulted in **135** D’s and F’s in both high and middle school classes. Mooseheart teachers and students have worked hard and have employed many interventions. This year the sum total of grades at the end of first quarter was **18** D’s and **18** F’s. That’s a **74%** decrease!

5. Founder’s Day 2021 marked a return to traditional campus activities. During the in-person ceremony, **14** seniors received watches. **7** seniors received letter/band jackets.

6. Basketball player Vlad Pirshin who is **6’5”** was the tallest senior of the day!
Mooseheart Graduation 2021

June 5th marked the commencement ceremony of Mooseheart’s class of 2021. It was a beautiful day filled with family pride, celebration and recognition of the hard work and success of this special group of Mooseheart seniors.
Exciting Events

Summer recreation was brought to a close with a community party at the beautiful Ohio pavilion. Students and staff enjoyed time together with plenty of good food, games, water balloons and golf cart rides.

Nyma and Jakira were proud representatives of Mooseheart at an area charter school fair for rising freshman seeking a high school home for the fall.

Mooseheart was honored to host the Coalition of Residential Excellence (CORE) National Conference on our campus. We were even more honored to be able to present one of our own Family Teachers, Katie Riddle, with a Houseparent of the Year award!

The annual Back to School Bash picnic helped get our teachers and students charged up for the 21-22 school year.
From The Mouth

Each quarter the Mooseheart Middle School teachers collaborate to create a fun activity for the middle school students to do together as a large group. The purpose is to build the students’ perception that the Middle School is one team. Previously students have participated in “Minute to Win It” style games. On Friday, November 19, the afternoon before Thanksgiving Break, the teachers planned a Breakout Box.

Overheard during the activity …

Is “integrated” a word?
— Kamiya

I’ve tried everything!
— Jaden

I think I’ve got it.
— Aubrey

Of course the teacher’s not going to tell us the answer.
— Tobi

Get to the back of the bus!
— Jaden

What was the best part of this activity?
— How did you figure out the puzzle?

We got to work together.
— Gracie, 8th

I liked doing the puzzles.
— Jimphelia, 6th

Figuring things out was the fun part.
— Pauline, 7th

I worked with my team and they were really supportive.
— Jenni, 7th

I just read it and used the underlined words.
— Daniel, 7th

What do you like most about middle school?

You get to join ROTC in eighth grade.
— Jeannine, 8th

It shows you how to be more independent.
— Alyah, 8th

You have more freedom.
— George, 6th
Alumna Gigi Galindo, Mooseheart class of 2004, shared words of encouragement and gratitude with the Moose Fraternity this past summer. Gigi was the honored guest speaker at the 2021 International Moose convention in Cincinnati, OH.

A confectionary artist is born! Jayde enjoyed creating a custom sweet treat as part of the Mooseheart summer recreation program.

Taking a break to read a good book! Mooseheart students read "Remembering With The Heart," written by Moose member and author Glenna Orr.

Goodbye and good luck! Mooseheart bid farewell to their beloved community nurse, Kathy O’Brien who retired in June after more than 20 years of service.

We deserve a break today. Students enjoyed a lunch trip to Batavia McDonald’s as part of the summer’s ETF (Environmental Task Force.) The program involved having students help with outdoor tasks designed to teach them to care for the Mooseheart campus.
MAC Update

Construction of the Mooseheart Activity Center is underway

Week by week, construction of the Mooseheart Activity Center (MAC) continues.

The MAC will have exercise facilities for Mooseheart students as well as bowling lanes, space to play video games, watch movies or participate in other activities.

There will also be space where students can relax and gather in a setting apart from the school or their family homes.

On-track for completion
Spring, 2022

Groundbreaking 8/25/21

Foundation is poured

Walls going up

It won’t be long now!
Enter to Learn ...

Dana was a single mother trying to make ends meet and provide a good life for Arthur, her young son. Dana struggled while living with eight relatives in her modest home. Then an automobile accident killed both Dana and her mother. With Arthur's father unreachable, Arthur's guardianship went to Lisa, Dana's 21-year-old sister. Unprepared for the responsibilities of raising a young child, Lisa sought help from a local church. Though families stepped forward to help, a long-term solution was needed. Then Lisa was referred to Mooseheart and Arthur is now a proud, well-adjusted student. Lisa enjoys the peace-of-mind from the knowledge that Arthur receives every opportunity he needs to realize his dreams.

... Leave to Serve

Joey Leitner was a 7-year-old third-grader when he arrived at Mooseheart in the fall of 2007. Joey’s mother had recently divorced Joey’s father and had serious health issues that made providing suitable care for Joey difficult. Her health continued to decline after Joey was enrolled at Mooseheart and she eventually needed full-time nursing care.

Joey recalls that the adjustment to Mooseheart’s busy life was difficult as he had not been around other people much prior to his enrollment. In time, however, it was this new environment that brought a great deal of joy into Joey’s life.

As an elementary student, Joey found early success as a blue-ribbon winner in local 4-H competition. He remembers the exceptional cooking of his first family teacher, Mickey Hogan. Joey said Mickey’s love and support were important in his early time at Mooseheart. In more than 9 years on-campus, Joey made many friendships that he maintains today. He excelled in school and was the Mooseheart Class of 2017 valedictorian. Joey participated in book club, basketball and had a once in a lifetime experience when he spent a summer with the Youth Conservation Corps at Yellowstone National Park.

Joey remained on-campus following graduation. He participated in Mooseheart’s Transitional Living program while he took classes at Northern Illinois University. Joey recently began a professional career in retail data systems and recently accepted a part-time job on the Mooseheart security team.

“I definitely appreciate all the opportunities Mooseheart has offered me,” Joey said. “I remember the lodge Christmas parties and how all the Moose members have supported me through the years, even after I graduated from high school. I try to be a good friend and offer help to others when I can. I keep in touch with my mom and would like to help get her into a better nursing facility.”