

Winged Foot Foundation Donates Shoes, Clothing to Mooseheart's Girls Cross Country Team

MOOSEHEART, Sept. 9 – In its first season, Mooseheart's girls cross country team is already undergoing a transformation, which received a massive boost on Saturday (Sept. 6) when it received a donation of shoes and clothing from the Winged Foot Foundation.

"I can tell from the look on my girls' faces that they're happy to receive this equipment," Mooseheart girls cross country coach Ann Price said. "They're going to come more determined to our next practice and then to our next meet as well."

Mooseheart received training shoes, competitive "spikes" and clothing from Naperville-based Winged Foot Foundation founder Mitch Johnston. Since 2004, the foundation has supplied shoes and equipment to 71 track or cross country teams in Illinois and Indiana.

"Shoes and equipment can be so expensive," Johnston said. "It's great for us to be able to help out."

Johnston said some of the items his foundation receives come from retailers near Mooseheart, such as Geneva Outfitters, Naperville Running Company, The Runner's Soul in Elmhurst as well as directly from shoe manufacturers.

"They trust the Winged Foot Foundation to distribute the goods where they are really needed," Johnston said.

Mooseheart's girls cross country team is in its inaugural season and competed on Saturday in its first meet, the Harvest Christian Fall Classic. The Ramblers wore "flats," running shoes without spikes in that meet. They will wear their new spikes when they next compete in the Northeastern Athletic Conference Relays on Sept. 16 at Westminster Christian.

"I think this will boost the girls' confidence," Price said. "I know that they're very grateful and they can't wait to try these shoes out. It's great to have this kind of support for our team from the get-go, in our first year."

As a high school runner with Thornton, located in south suburban Harvey, Johnston ran on Mooseheart's track in the early 70s.

"In 1973, when I was a track freshman at Thornton, my coach Steve Toth brought me to an AAU, Junior Olympics qualifying meet on this track at Mooseheart," Johnston said. "It wasn't my first meet, but it was my first postseason event that was above and beyond the IHSA competition. It was so exciting to me, and I never forgot. It makes this a special place to me."

For more information on the Winged Foot Foundation, go to: www.wingedfootfoundation.org.

Founded in 1913, Mooseheart is supported completely through private donations - the great majority of which come from the 1.1 million men and women of the Moose fraternal organization, in more than 1,700 Lodges and 1,600 Chapters located throughout the U.S., Canada, Great Britain and Bermuda. Moose International headquarters is located on the Mooseheart campus.

Since its founding, Mooseheart has operated a complete, accredited kindergarten-through-high-school academic program, plus art, music, vocational training and interscholastic sports. It is an extremely nurturing and student-tailored program, with an average student-teacher ratio of 12-1.

Mooseheart is currently home to roughly 230 students, ranging in age from preschoolers to high school seniors. Applications for admission to Mooseheart are considered from any family whose children are, for whatever reason, lacking a stable home environment. Mooseheart boasts its own U.S. Post Office and a fully functioning branch of Fifth Third Bank.

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Cutlines for attached photos:

Mht xcountry shoe donation: Mooseheart's girls cross country team received a donation of shoes and clothing on Sept. 6 from the Winged Foot Foundation. From left are: Mooseheart coach Ann Price, Etna Tejada, Abby Driscoll, Kammie Kolb, Madison Hart, Winged Foot Foundation founder Mitch Johnston, Shelby Ball, Kassadi Crowe, Sarat Yusuf and Audrey Show.