

# Growing Together: First Association

“If we’re going to solve this younger member problem, women are going to have to help us solve it. We have to work together to solve the problems we face.”

— *John Mangiatini*  
(below, left) *WSNIMA Secretary/  
Mooseheart Board of Directors*

As he walked toward the opening session of the Washington State Northern Idaho Moose Association’s (WSNIMA) annual convention in September, Junior Past President Ron Morgan mentioned that this would be an interesting convention, with all the updates he’d been making and changes to the order of business.

The convention also was only the second combined association meeting in the Fraternity’s history. This marked the first time men and women cast votes together, decided the future of their association together and voted both men and women into office together.

“We voted as a nation in favor of women’s suffrage in 1920 and it took the Moose nearly a century to do something similar,” said Association Secretary John Mangiatini. “We have a long way to go before we’re truly equal, but we have to tap into women’s talents and ideas. If we’re going to solve this younger member problem, women are going to have to help us solve it. We have to work together to solve the problems we face,” he said.

Shortly into the opening session, Official Visitor and Past Grand Council member Molly Brown announced to the men and women at the convention that she was not going to describe what the association was venturing into as an “experiment” – because it was well past that point.

Brown was correct – experiments are tests to prove whether something is valid or not, the outcome might be success or failure. WSNIMA had already proven to be a success. While the vote to move to all-encompassing association membership was not unanimous, the conference ran smoothly and the future will bring more unity rather than less.

“I’d ask people to go back and read that oath they took when they joined the Moose. What was it that made you want to be a Moose? Was it that you wanted to give to children, to help the elderly or to help your communities? I’m pretty sure that feeling and emotion you had when you became a member didn’t have a divisive feeling of ‘men’ or ‘women’ in mind,” WSNIMA Heart of the Community Chairman Joe Fairbanks said.



# Joint Convention Makes History

## Supreme Council Creates Pathway

In 2010, the Supreme Council set the stage for any association to move toward including both men and women on its rolls. To date, WSNIMA is the only association to vote to combine Loyal Order of Moose and Women of the Moose into one association membership.

Moose International has signaled its support and willingness to work with any association that wanted to move toward joint membership. In 2015, Mangiatini and a handful of other WSNIMA members had conversations with both WOTM Grand Chancellor Barb McPherson and Director General Scott Hart about making a unified association board a reality.

The process moved forward steadily from that point. McPherson visited WSNIMA chapters to discuss what the change would mean. The association then voted at its 2017 annual convention to allow men and women to be considered members, and that the September 2018 annual convention in Pasco, WA would be the first opportunity to vote on a unified board of officers.

“We took a straw poll at our mid-year conference in March (2017), when (McPherson) came out, and said that if the women were in favor, we were ready to do it,” Mangiatini said. “There was very little opposition. A few people thought we were nuts, but the overwhelming majority were in favor of it. The women had time in which to vote to determine if they wanted to join the association and they did.” Mangiatini, a past state president, is also a member of the Mooseheart Board of Directors.

Considering that the order of business had undergone changes up to the final moments before the opening session, there were surprisingly few bumps in the flow of business at meetings which were conducted by Association President Paul Taylor and Deputy Grand Regent Heather Morgan.

“I believe this teaches the men and women to work together. At the lodge level, lodges and chapters are still separate, and they don’t all get along well. I think this will help that,” Mangiatini said.

Association Youth Awareness Chairman Rebecca Hoffarth said that she had a “victorious” feeling when she walked into an association meeting where both men and women were members.

“Everything’s a learning curve and a bumpy road. But it’s huge for us. It’s not like the men are sitting on one side and the women are on the other. It’s everybody sitting together, all mixed together. That’s a win for all of us and we just have to make sure everyone sees that,” Hoffarth said.



continued on p. 10 ▶

# Growing Together: First Association



“It’s huge for us. It’s not like the men are sitting on one side and the women are on the other. It’s everybody sitting together, all mixed together. That’s a win for all of us and we just have to make sure everyone sees that.”

— *Rebecca Hoffarth,*  
*WSNIMA Youth Awareness Chairman*

There was also a sense of familiarity in the meetings. A first-time visitor would have gotten the impression that this was how the association had done things for quite some time, and that’s because, even when there was a men’s board and a women’s board – the association worked together to get things done.

“We’ve always been a team,” Hoffarth said. “We used to have the slogan: ‘one team, one mission.’”

Hoffarth is 29 years-old and she said she sees removing walls between men and women in the Fraternity as one of the ways to attract other members of her generation. Allowing joint membership within associations is one step toward achieving larger goals.

“When it was brought before our board for discussion, I shared with Ron Morgan, the president at the time, that I’d been raised in a world where we had equal rights everywhere except in our organization. I definitely feel this change is an appealing thing for younger members,” Hoffarth said.

All agreed that having a unified association membership and having both men and women on the board is a great “eyes on the future” move.

“One thing the next generation wants is not just to *say* ‘equality’ – they want to *see* it,” Fairbanks said. “They want to see men and women on equal ground, knowing what that diversity brings to the organization. They expect it and we had better be able to show it, or they’re going to pass us by.”

Another benefit to the unified association board is that it solves some of the difficulty in finding members who wish to serve. With only one association position to fill rather than two, and both men and women eligible, the talent pool is doubled and the number of positions to fill is cut in half.

“It’s a struggle on every side to fill positions. If you’re able to say, ‘I’m not looking for a male chair or a female chair’, but ‘I’m looking for a chairman’ – I think that’s a motivator,” Hoffarth said.

## Attracting Younger Members

Hoffarth already served the association as the Youth Awareness Coordinator for the WOTM. As the LOOM couldn’t fill that role, Hoffarth held the title for both organizations.

“I haven’t had a male counterpart since I started, and that’s because they had so much difficulty filling that chair. The board, at the time, decided to overlook it and let me do it, because it was better to have the position filled rather than not filled. The following year it became OK, so I continued serving,” Hoffarth said.

Suzanne Dinning was one of three women elected at the convention to serve as a district president. The unified membership exists only at association level, meaning Dinning will make visits to lodges and chapters, where membership is still divided.

# Joint Convention Makes History

“I’m excited but I’m also nervous, because I’ve always worked on the women’s side. I’m going to have to learn the men’s side, their lodge officers and lodge boards as I make my visitations. It was those lodges that nominated me, so I’m hoping I’ll get a good reception when I visit them,” Dinning said.

## WSNIMA Stronger Together

Dinning said her desire to see the unification of her state association is based on her desire to see the Fraternity succeed in all its goals. She has served a number of roles at the state, local, as well as international level. She is a Past Deputy Grand Regent for Washington and is currently on the Academy of Friendship Board.

“I was working as the association Moose Charities chair for the women. John Prough was doing the same job for the men, and we were working together like a team already. Now we’re all working together on one board, one team together,” Dinning said.

Dinning or one of her female counterparts – or a future female district president – will one day be the association president, something that has never happened before in the Moose.

“When that happens, it’ll be just like this convention – it will be an easy transition,” Fairbanks said. “It’s not going to be some great change. It will be a situation where we’ve already accepted the person as a leader and we will already know how great she is for our association. And when it happens, that woman will lead us greatly. I already know that.” ■

continued on p. 12 ▶



*Men and women of the Washington State Northern Idaho Moose Association participated in a combined community service event prior to the start of their Sept. 14-16 annual convention in Pasco, WA. Association members delivered socks, clothing and water to a homeless shelter.*



## Joint Membership Is the Future Say Hart, McPherson

At every step through the process, Moose International was 100% behind the Washington State Northern Idaho Moose Association's (WSNIMA) move toward unified association membership.

"Can we accomplish more together than as separate organizations – the Loyal Order of Moose and the Women of the Moose?" said Director General Scott Hart. "I don't see any other answer than 'yes.'"

WOTM Grand Chancellor Barb McPherson worked closely with the association's chapters as they voted to join the association in 2017. Three female district presidents were among officers voted into office at the 2018 convention in Pasco, WA.

"It's groundbreaking," McPherson said. "There's been so much separation between the men and the women for so many years. In many instances in our lodges, even though it's 2018, many men still treat women like second-class citizens. This gives women an opportunity to have some common ground with men."

While unified association membership has been allowed since 2010, WSNIMA is still the only association to have made the shift. Others are, however, considering moving in the same direction.

"When the decision was made by the Supreme Council and the Grand Council, the idea wasn't that this was going to be a one-off or that we'd try it and go backward. This was made with the idea of us moving forward," Hart said.

Unified membership at the association level furthers a move by Moose International a decade ago to allow women onto the Mooseheart, Moosehaven and Moose Charities boards as well as other international committees and boards.

"It's been in place for quite a while and we've definitely seen benefits from that," Hart said.

Though no date and no pathway toward unified membership beyond the association level has been discussed in concrete terms, the realization that this will someday happen has definitely been a topic of discussion.

"Mr. Hart talked about it in his International Convention address in New Orleans," McPherson said. "I believe that, at some point, the men and women will be equal partners in the Moose. I don't see them being equal fraternal partners to the level that people would have to give up their degrees, because people worked very hard to earn those degrees. When we do it, we have to be careful. We have too many lives depending on us."

Both Hart and McPherson agree that the future of the Moose is going to be toward more unity, not less.

"When you look at connecting with the younger generation – they want activities to be involved in, they want non-smoking facilities and they want men and women to have an equal voice in the organization. If you don't have that, we're not going to attract them," Hart said. ■

"It's groundbreaking — there's been so much separation between the men and the women for so many years ... this gives women an opportunity to have some common ground with men."

— Barb McPherson,  
WOTM Grand  
Chancellor



"Can we accomplish more together than as separate organizations? I don't see any other answer than 'yes.'"

— Scott Hart,  
Director General