

# **MOOSE YOUTH AWARENESS PROGRAM**

## **HISTORY /OVERVIEW**

After several years of donating to local prevention programs, such as D.A.R.E, Red Ribbon and Pride, the Loyal Order of Moose was asked to participate in the “Just Say No to Drugs” Program in 1986 by First Lady Nancy Reagan. Since that time, we have developed a positive approach and, in 1988, changed the name from “Just Say No To Drugs” to the Moose Youth and Drug Awareness Program. Knowing that there are more adverse elements in the community, we changed the name again, in 1994, to the Moose Youth Awareness Program.

The program consists of the various State and Provincial Moose Associations throughout North America holding Association Student Congresses during the fall of each year. Lodges are encouraged to invite two high school students to those particular congresses. The purpose of the Association Congresses is to develop presentations that could be delivered to the targeted group of 4 – 9 year-olds (a target group established in 1988, following that year’s International Student Congress).

The one-day Student Congresses at the Association level challenge the participating students to become a speakers’ bureau and to encourage each of them to present a minimum of three Moose “KidsTalks” presentations to the target group in their own community. The students’ presentations are not scripted, as they are to prepare their own message to deliver to the 4 – 9 year-olds, encouraging them to make wise and healthy choices in life.

Moose “KidsTalks” presentations run from November through February each year. After each “KidsTalks” presentation, the students are required to submit a written report telling us about their presentations. In March, students who attended the Association Student Congresses and completed a minimum of three “KidsTalks” presentations are judged by their peers, and one or more from each Moose Association are invited to attend the International Student Congress.

In the past, International Student Congresses have been held in Washington, D.C., Anaheim, California; Niagara Falls, New York; and Mooseheart, Illinois. At the International Student Congress, the teenagers explain to each other how they went about their particular “KidsTalks” presentations. The International Student Congress is a student-run meeting, which encompasses about 13 hours over a four-day period. At the end of the meeting, the students vote for the top five presentations. Scholarships are then awarded as follows: first, a \$12,000 scholarship; second, a \$8,000 scholarship; third, a \$5,000 scholarship; fourth, a \$3,000 scholarship; and fifth, a \$2,000 scholarship. To date, our Moose “KidsTalks” presenters have reached over 250,000 4-9 year olds.