



In praise of MDA coordinators

While branch officers provide the necessary leadership for all the NALC does, the most important appointment a branch can make to be successful in supporting our efforts with the Muscular Dystrophy Association is the local MDA coordinator.

Who is the MDA coordinator? What qualities should they have? To be a success, the person the branch chooses to head our efforts should be **dedicated** to the cause, have an ability to **plan, follow through** on commitments and be able to **communicate** effectively.

I believe the key to getting a vision for MDA success is to meet the families we work so hard to help. Once you see how incredible these families are, dedication to raising funds comes easy. The stories of courage are overwhelming.

“Once you put yourself in their shoes or get to know these families on a personal basis, your life will never be the same.”

Those of us who are fortunate sometimes can take for granted our ability to eat, sleep and function in a world far different than what MDA families know. Can you imagine the heartache of knowing your child will never walk? That most likely you will outlive your child? Or that you will watch a family member slowly waste away from Lou Gehrig’s disease?

Once you put yourself in their shoes or get to know these families on a personal basis, your life will never be the same. MDA coordinators get it and understand the tragedy of muscular dystrophy.

The next quality important for an MDA coordinator to possess is the ability to plan. Coordinators work with branch officers to set up events on a yearly basis. It takes months to effectively put together the details so that events go off without a hitch. Remember that a well-planned event communicates that we are serious about

what we do and that MDA really matters.

One of the most glaring problems for leaders is the failure to follow through on plans or commitments. Nothing illustrates an uncaring attitude more than dropping the ball on what we say we will do. An MDA coordinator makes sure that we keep our commitments.

Finally, we need to communicate effectively in both written and oral presentations. Make sure you keep the membership aware of upcoming events. Attend branch meetings and make announcements to keep MDA on the front burner. Members will respond if we let them know what we need.

I want to thank all those who work so diligently for MDA families. If your branch does not have an MDA coordinator, now is the time to appoint one. Get more people involved, and your branch will reap the benefits.

A few years ago, I read a book that moved me beyond words and changed some of my perceptions about life. It was a story written by a former student of a professor at Brandeis University who had heard his former teacher had been diagnosed with ALS, Lou Gehrig’s disease. The book, *Tuesdays with*

Morrie, told the tale of a series of Tuesday meetings between the student and Morrie, the professor.

Facing his imminent death, Morrie focused on what he had learned through his disease and was learning along the way. While discussing the meaning of life with the author, Morrie tells how his body changes under the influence of this deadly disease. If ever you want to know what a sufferer of muscular dystrophy goes through, you should read this powerful little book.

For it is this very truth that drives us to help those who are afflicted with MD. What branches do to help these families makes a difference in their lives. Get to know someone with MD. It will change your life.

One quote from the book has always resonated with me. In thinking about his mortality, Morrie learns a simple truth. I close with what he said: “The truth is...once you learn how to die, you learn how to live.” ☒