



## Saying goodbye to an American hero

**I**n less than two months, letter carriers, along with President Rolando and me, will be heading to Las Vegas to represent our great union at the Muscular Dystrophy Association Labor Day Telethon. The letter carrier contingent will be there to stand in for the hard work done by their branches who won one of the 10 categories NALC awards each year. We will also be saying goodbye to a giant who has made a difference in thousands of lives.



Jerry Lewis

Most of you may have heard that Jerry Lewis is stepping down after this year as the face of MDA at the Telethon. Jerry will continue to support this worthy cause, but the years have taken a toll on him. MDA owes him a tremendous debt of gratitude for pushing the envelope all this time to raise money for his “kids.” But MDA will continue to be a beacon of hope for all the families afflicted with these diseases. Time marches on, but the help and hope MDA provides will not cease.

**Since first committing himself to MDA’s cause in 1951,** Jerry helped the Association turn “muscular dystrophy” into a household term.

As National Chairman of the Muscular Dystrophy Association for more than five decades, he’s dedicated himself to the fight against muscular dystrophy, ALS and related diseases with fierce determination on behalf of the more than 1 million Americans affected by these disorders. Jerry has won the admiration and respect of millions for his unstinting dedication to providing help and hope for a diverse cross section of people around the world—people of all ages, races and backgrounds—who live with progressive, sometimes fatal, diseases of muscle and nerve.

Jerry’s determined efforts to raise funds for MDA’s worldwide research and comprehensive services programs have aimed to turn the hope of a better future into reality. In 1986 and 1987, MDA-backed investigators identified the genetic cause of Duchenne muscular dystrophy (the most common and fatal childhood form). Building on that breakthrough, MDA-backed researchers have dis-

covered the specific causes of most genetic neuromuscular disorders, including other forms of muscular dystrophy, the spinal muscular atrophies (one form of which is the leading genetic cause of infant death) and Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease.

MDA scientists have developed improved treatments for some neuromuscular disorders and are on the brink of finding high-tech cures and treatments for the most mysterious neuromuscular diseases.

The Association also leads the worldwide research effort on amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), more commonly referred to as “Lou Gehrig’s disease” after the legendary New York Yankees first baseman whose career—and life—were cut short by the disease. Jerry and MDA have made ALS one of their primary targets since the Association’s earliest days, when Gehrig’s widow, Eleanor, assisted Jerry by serving as MDA national campaign chairman. MDA’s ALS Division has its own website and operates 38 MDA/ALS research and clinical centers devoted exclusively to treating people with ALS and conducting cutting-edge studies.

In February 2001, Jerry led a delegation of MDA scientists and clients to testify before a subcommittee of the U.S. Senate, chaired by Sen. Arlen Specter. Because MDA research has laid the groundwork necessary to develop treatments for the muscular dystrophies, Jerry told the Senate that it’s time for the federal government to infuse needed funds to accomplish the next step—saving lives through treatments and cures based on the foundation of knowledge built by MDA. Testimony by Jerry and others resulted in the passage of the MD-CARE Act, a first step toward securing a boost in federal research funding for all forms of muscular dystrophy.

All told, Jerry has raised more than a billion dollars in the last 60 years to fight these diseases.

**We can be proud of NALC’s work with MDA. We were there** at the very beginning with Jerry Lewis, and it will be with great pride and love that we present our check this year for the last time to an American icon who made a difference in many lives. What greater praise can we give to another human being? God bless you, Jerry Lewis! ✉