

# MDA summer camps return virtually; NALC branches continue to raise money



Newport, RI Branch 57 member Chris Reinmuth helped raise more than \$300 for MDA by running in the Newport 10-Miler road race. Reinmuth, a CCA, hit the ground running—he is the branch’s first MDA coordinator.

**S**ummer camp is a rite of passage for American children, and thanks to the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA), NALC’s official charity, children with muscular dystrophy and other neuromuscular diseases are enjoying the experience again this summer. Though the pandemic has for a second year led MDA to cancel in-person summer camps, its virtual camp is keeping campers connected to their peers while building skills, boosting confidence and creating friendships this summer.

NALC’s enduring support for MDA is helping to make the virtual camps possible. In fact, for almost 70 years, letter carriers have devoted their time to raising funds and providing volunteer support for the organization. With our help, MDA has made tremendous advances toward medical treatments for muscular dystrophy to extend and improve lives, and it has developed programs to help people with neuromuscular diseases live life to the fullest.

NALC’s partnership with MDA dates to the early days of the charity, which was founded in 1950. The union named MDA as its official charity in 1952, becoming the first national sponsor of the group. Since then, letter carriers have raised about \$100 million for MDA. Some letter carriers also have supported MDA by volunteering at summer camps.

MDA has offered summer camps since it was founded, but last year, the pandemic caused the organization to switch to a virtual camp format. Using last summer’s lessons, MDA enhanced the virtual camp this summer for children ages 8 to 17 living with muscular dystrophy and related

neuromuscular diseases by adding to the activities offered virtually.

Offered at no cost to families, the virtual camp includes themed programming, accessible activities, STEM programming and virtual connections with fellow campers.

This summer, campers are participating in one-week sessions—and because the participants are enjoying the sessions from home, siblings were also welcomed. Each session has explored themed activities, such as “Journey into the Wild,” “Across America,” “Around the World” and “Time Travel.” Campers are taking part in activities such as arts and crafts, scavenger hunts, STEM assignments and creating special snacks.

In addition to keeping campers safe from the COVID-19 virus, the virtual camps offer something not available with in-person camps—the opportunity to meet other children with neuromuscular diseases from all over the country.

While the children and families MDA serves are eager to resume in-person summer camps, the virtual camp experience is helping to make up for the loss.

“MDA Summer Camp is the best week of my life every year!” MDA National Ambassador Ethan LyBrand said. “I was heartbroken when I heard camp wasn’t going to happen in person, but I am so excited that MDA is making camp available online.”

Stephanie Erbacher, resource coordinator for the national MDA Resource Center, said, “My daughter, Rylie, attended Virtual MDA Summer Camp last year, and she had a great time. I love that my son was able to participate in the activities along with her.”

“I really liked camp last year,” Rylie, 12, said. “It was a little bit different since it was virtual. But I got to talk to kids from all over the country who were just like me. We also did really cool projects.”

### Fundraising for camps continues

As MDA shifted to online camps last summer, NALC turned to the internet to continue raising funds to support the charity during the pandemic. Branches were spurred on by some friendly competition through several online Deliver the Cure fundraising challenges issued by NALC Assistant to the President for Community Services Christina Vela Davidson.

“We’re all looking forward to traditional fundraising events for MDA, but we can really make a difference by continuing to use the online fundraising tools we’ve relied on in the pandemic,” Davidson said.

While many branches are returning to in-person fundraising events, there still are opportunities to support MDA virtually, including simply by walking your route.

NALC members can support MDA while participating in a physical activity of their choice through MDA’s Boundless Motion App. The app allows NALC branches and members to engage in and track their physical activity when they

raise money for MDA. You can log miles walking, running or riding—or even while delivering the mail. To get access to the Boundless Motion App, register at the NALC’s MDA fundraising hub at [mda.donordrive.com/event/nalc2021](https://mda.donordrive.com/event/nalc2021).

Other opportunities to support MDA directly online are participating in the Virtual Muscle Walk on Aug. 7 ([mda.donordrive.com/team/teamnalcvirtualwalk](https://mda.donordrive.com/team/teamnalcvirtualwalk)) and supporting Team NALC in the Oct. 16 Tough Mudder 5K ([mda.donordrive.com/participant/teamnalcToughMudder](https://mda.donordrive.com/participant/teamnalcToughMudder)).

“I’m proud of how letter carriers have risen to the challenge of supporting MDA during the pandemic,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “As we move forward, I’m confident that we will expand on our commitment to support MDA and the summer camps, whether virtual or in person, that so many children and families enjoy.” **PR**



Michael and Linda Harada hold a self-portrait of their recently deceased daughter Danielle, an MDA ambassador, at the Washington State Association convention. The portrait was auctioned to raise funds for MDA—and the winning branch then presented it as a gift to Danielle’s parents. Washington letter carriers raised \$16,500 for MDA at the convention.