



## 2011 MDA telethon credits the past, looks to the future

**A**long with letter carriers who appeared on behalf of the winning NALC branches, Executive Vice President Tim O'Malley represented the National Association of Letter Carriers and its nearly 300,000 members at this year's Muscular Dystrophy Telethon on Labor Day weekend in Las Vegas.

O'Malley presented a check for \$1,750,000, which was the total money raised by NALC in 2010. I want to thank every branch that helped and hope to report even a larger amount for this year at next year's show.

As I wrote in previous articles, this was the first year in the telethon's long history that Jerry Lewis did not appear on stage. Jerry, a legendary performer and comedian, has retired from this great event but still pledges his support for MDA. In the history of the event, Jerry was instrumental in raising more than \$2 billion for his "kids."

It was with a real sense of loss that I watched as the telethon continued without his presence. All good things have to end sometime, but Jerry will never be forgotten as the driving force that began the effort to provide the help and hope that MDA provides. The hosts of the program were effusive in their praise. The great thing is that the real "stars" of this effort are the families that benefit from the money we raise. Let's not forget our true purpose as we work for a cure.



NALC President Fred Rolando met with MDA National Goodwill Ambassador Abbey Umali at NALC Headquarters in May 2010.

But Jerry was not the only individual who found the 2011 telethon was their last one in an official capacity. Many of you have met the young lady who has served the

longest as MDA's national goodwill ambassador. If you attended the national convention in Anaheim, you had the opportunity to meet Abbey Umali. Abbey is a real delight and is a wonderful representative for MDA. She will be finishing her fourth year in that job at the end of the year.

Abbey is now 12 years old and is in seventh grade in Redlands, CA. Her father and mother, Joel and Wendy, have enjoyed every minute of their time working with MDA. She has a form of Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease (CMT) that causes a lack of coordination and balance, along with muscle weakness. Abbey walks with the help of leg braces.

You'd never know in talking to her that she has any handicap. Abbey has a very busy schedule and takes voice and piano lessons along with being an avid reader. In fact, when Abbey visited NALC Headquarters last year, President Rolando gave her one of her favorite gifts, a Kindle reader. She reads voraciously as she travels. She told me that she has read 25 books this summer thanks to her Kindle.

While MDA has accomplished a great deal over the last 60 years, this time of change is allowing the organization to look at the future and craft ways to meet the coming challenges. MDA will always be a beacon of help and hope to those afflicted with the more than 40 diseases they fight for every day.

Making the telethon reflective of change is one way MDA has chosen to look to the future. By reducing the telethon to six hours, costs are controlled and more talent is drawn to the show. The great news is that in just six hours, the telethon raised more money than last year's event, which lasted nearly 22 hours. More than \$61 million came in during this year's show!

We are proud to be a part of the MDA family and our commitment is the same. We look forward to the cure and a day when no child needs crutches or a wheelchair to get around. I look forward to that day, as I know you do. Make a muscle, make a difference! 