

The future is ours to shape



Jim Williams

Association each step of the way. Last year we raised more than \$1.8 million.

I want to thank each of you who works to raise funds for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. President Rolando

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and the whole Executive Council appreciate the hours of hard work each branch puts in to provide help and hope to those afflicted with muscular dystrophies.

At the beginning of the new year, many people set resolutions to achieve to better themselves or those around them. Has your branch set any goals for community service for 2013? If not, I hope your executive board sits down soon to plan for the whole year.

Remember NALC’s “three-legged stool” for MDA. The Bowlathon, Fill the Satchel and the newly designated Muscle Walk (see the November 2012 *Postal Record*) are the three events we push from the national level. Branches are involved in a myriad of other ways to raise money. Please consider taking part in at least one of the national events if you do nothing at this point.

At the very least, designate an NALC coordinator for your branch to work with your officers to be successful in community service. Find out who your local MDA coordinator is and meet with him or her to see how they can help your branch.

MDA and NALC dream of a day when every child and adult diagnosed with a muscular dystrophy will be able to have a

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It hardly seems possible, but 2012 is no more and the new year beckons. For those of us who care deeply about community services, this is a time for looking back at our accomplishments and planning for the upcoming year.

You should be proud of your union and the work we do to make our communities better. Whether it is our national food drive held every May, Carrier Alert or the heroes we honor each September, we show up in cities and towns all over America.

For more than 60 years, we’ve been there for the Muscular Dystrophy

cure or treatment so that families will not be destroyed by the nightmare of disease.

Reporting MDA income

If your branch raised money for MDA in 2012, be sure to meet or speak with your local MDA office and determine how much money has been credited to the branch. Every year I have conflicts between the totals MDA has listed and what the branch believes is the correct amount. This year I will provide the amounts we have had reported to us in early March to each national business agent, who will then contact branches to make sure the amounts are accurate. We hope then to be able to correctly list the MDA Honor Roll in the May issue of *The Postal Record*. Those winning branches’ representatives will then take part in the celebration of their success in an event later this year.

What is ALS? (Lou Gehrig’s disease)

Periodically, I get asked about specific diseases covered by the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Just this past month, I received a letter asking what Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or ALS, is.

ALS is a disease of the parts of the nervous system that control voluntary muscle movement. In ALS, motor neurons (nerve cells that control muscle cells) are gradually lost. As these motor neurons are lost, the muscles they control become weak and then nonfunctional.

The word “amyotrophic” comes from Greek roots that mean “without nourishment to muscles” and refers to the loss of signals nerve cells normally send to muscle cells. “Lateral” means “to the side” and refers to the location of the damage in the spinal cord. “Sclerosis” means “hardened” and refers to the hardened nature of the spinal cord in advanced ALS.

In the United States, ALS also is called Lou Gehrig’s disease, named for the Yankees baseball player who died of it in 1941. Those who suffer from this disease face difficult changes in their life and family.

I plan on writing in the near future about letter carriers who have been stricken with ALS. If you know of any families dealing with ALS, please write to me at NALC Headquarters with the information so that I might be able to interview the letter carrier family.