

NALC and MDA in 2014



Jim Williams

“Time is the coin of your life. *It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.*” —Carl Sandburg

Often, we get surprised by the way the year speeds by. I know what that is like. Each year seems to go by faster and faster the older I get. And the days are flying past me.

As we look at the remainder of 2014, it is good to gaze ahead to see where we are headed. Certainly that is true of life and our endeavors.

NALC is looking forward to how we intend to support the Muscular Dystrophy Association. There are a number of important upcoming

events that deserve our notice.

Branches are deeply involved with planning MDA events throughout the year. As I look at the list from 2013, branch-

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es took part in bowlathons, golf tournaments, Texas Hold'em poker games and muscle walks. And those are just a fraction of branch activities. It is amazing to see the ingenuity of the MDA coordinators and branch leaders in planning for the year's events.

One of the unique ways we get involved is Summer Camp for those under 18 who are dealing with muscular disease. Kids look forward all year to the week they get to spend away at camp with others who are like them. Parents and caregivers get a respite from the daily responsibilities for a short time to “recharge their batteries.”

MDA camp offers a fun and safe outdoor experience, along with opportunities to engage in a variety of activities such as horseback riding, swimming, adaptive sports, arts and crafts, camp dances and much more. In addition to all of the fun and friendship it offers, MDA camp enables campers to stretch their comfort zones and grow in independence as they spend a week away from home; permit

someone other than their parents to provide personal care; and make new friends. Sure, there's an abundance of fun and games at MDA camp, but if you talk to MDA campers, they'll tell you the real benefits come in a much subtler form—the lifelong friendships, the increased self-esteem and confidence, and the chance to spend at least one week of the year in a place where physical disabilities are the norm rather than the exception.

Letter carriers in all states come for the “VIP” day and help counselors by running activities during the day. It is a great joy to take part in those activities. For example, Region 6 National Business Agent Pat Carroll and his staff cook at a barbecue every year for the campers. Regional Administrative Assistants Jeff Fultz and Troy Clark, along with state officers and local branch members, fund the barbecue and run games during the day as well.

When asked what he and the others take away from their time with the kids, NBA Carroll said, “Spending a day with these kids reminds us all that our problems pale in comparison. When we leave at the end of the day, we feel we have made a difference and made the day special for them. It tugs at your heart.”

Do you know where the closest camp is to your branch? If not, go to mda.org and click on “Summer Camp” to find one near you. Your national business agent can help in that regard. If you really want to stretch yourself, you can volunteer to be a counselor at a weeklong camp. It will be time well spent.

Lastly, 2014 is a convention year as well. That means we will be again raffling a new 2014 Harley-Davidson motorcycle for those who buy a ticket for the reception in Philadelphia. We are in the final stages of determining what the motorcycle will be, and I hope to announce it in the next *Postal Record*. We will be making the tickets available to all who attend the convention and also to those who cannot make it to Philadelphia. You do not need to be present to win, and the bike will be shipped to the nearest Harley dealership to the winner.

By next month, we will have a method to purchase tickets online for those who cannot attend or who wish to buy them earlier. Our reception will be finalized and announced in next month's article, too.

All in all, this year shapes up to be a busy one. Don't let anyone spend your days for you. After all, time is all we have. Spend your days wisely!