

Planning an MDA event



Jim Williams

NALC has a long and proud history. One of the reasons is that our union allows retirees to remain involved and to retain membership. As an NALC retiree, I am grateful that my union supports the involvement of the thousands of retirees who stay active in their branches for years after retirement.

Retirees serve as branch and state officers, help with the food drive and MDA, and serve on committees to help the community and our members. Even at the national level, retirees are playing an active role. For example, former officers like Matty Rose, Don Southern and Tom Young all play a vital role with Nalcrest.

One of the enjoyable ways I get to be involved is to work with letter carriers who attend the NALC Leadership Academy. We currently are preparing to graduate Class 18, and those 30 letter carriers will be using the skills and talents they have developed to benefit their branches. A part of the curriculum is that each student must produce a project between each week of the three-week course, which extends over a six-month period.

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One of the classes we teach is the role of community service in the life of our union. As a result, one student chose to revitalize the commitment to MDA of her state association and branch as one of her projects. Michelle Luke of Branch 860 in Honolulu had noticed a falloff in contributions to MDA, so she decided to do something about it.

Michelle saw that when the national telethon for MDA stopped occurring, there was a need to refocus. In the past, letter carriers had staffed the phones during the telethon and taken pledges from callers. Now that activity was no longer needed. She decided to develop a bowlathon for her branch and state association.

Her first step was to put together a committee to plan and carry out their goals. By starting this way, Michelle was able to communicate objectives clearly so that everyone was on the same page. A binder was given to each participant that included a history of NALC involvement with MDA,

worksheets and forms to sign up teams for the event, and an explanation of the tasks necessary to have a successful event.

Michelle and her committee set a goal of sending more kids to MDA summer camp. In Hawaii, it costs around \$1,600 for each child to attend, and by agreeing to that goal, the committee felt that others would be focused on the benefits of giving. The committee brainstormed a list of tasks and ideas about other ways to raise money at the bowlathon. She then assigned specific things for each person to accomplish.

Another key in their effort was the involvement of the local MDA coordinator. She was instrumental in giving the committee support and after the event she made sure the collected money was deposited safely.

After all the planning and the weeks of preparation, the bowlathon was held on Nov. 4 and was a success. The branch had 18 teams of five people each signed up who participated on that Sunday afternoon. In addition to the teams, door prizes and other fundraisers were available to the participants, including candy and cookie sales, a 50/50 drawing and contests for the teams.

All in all, it was a successful event and more than \$7,000 was raised, which will allow four children to attend summer camp who would not have been able to without this NALC bowlathon.

Afterward, I asked Michelle what she had learned. Her comments are what you might expect of any letter carrier. She gave the credit to her committee and was overjoyed and surprised by the results. Her advice for anyone who'd like to revitalize their branch or state efforts was simple as well: Get organized with a group of people so that it is a shared effort. Give each person a specific task and support him or her as they do it. Finally, get as many people involved as you can.

Michelle was quick to say that anyone with a heart for these children could do the same. She told me that she could feel the positive energy around the event, and she is already planning for the next one.

We have a special union. Our members, whether active or retired, feel a deep connection to those we serve every day. If your branch has never been involved with MDA, perhaps it is time. Thanks for all you do!