

# 2021 MDA updates



Christina Vela Davidson



**H**appy New Year! The Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) announced in December that it had selected former Vice Chairman of the Board of the MDA, Donald Wood, PhD, as the new president and chief executive officer (CEO) of the organization, taking over from Lynn O'Connor Vos. Wood is a renowned medical researcher and scientist, and most recently was the vice president of institutional effectiveness at Odessa College in Texas; before that, he was president and chief operating officer (COO) of IntegraMed America, a fertility and medical services corporation.

Wood has been involved with the MDA for nearly 40 years—notably, he helped launch and managed the organization's task force on genetics, which led to the discovery of the genetic cause of muscular dystrophy in 1986. In 1980, he was named director of the task force, which also funded the discovery of the genetic cause of Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

In total, Wood has more than four decades of experience leading both nonprofit and for-profit institutions. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, he served first as an executive and then as president and COO of IntegraMedAmerica Inc., a medical services provider, where he helped take the company public and operated the company's national network of reproductive science centers, driving profitability for 12 years. During this time, he also helped create a new genetic-testing company, Odyssey Biomedical.

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**Wood succeeds Vos, who had served as president and CEO of MDA since 2017.** “I am very proud of the contributions and achievements we have made at MDA over the past three years,” said Vos. She went on:

With this foundation now set and the long-term strategy clearly paved I have determined that now is a good time for me to pass the baton and pursue new and different opportunities. We have always put mission first, investing in



Dr. Donald Wood

research, care and advocacy. I continue to believe deeply in the mission of MDA and will always remain dedicated to our clinicians, partners, advocates and families in the pursuit of accelerating new treatments to achieve better health outcomes and bring equal opportunities to this significantly underserved community. It has been a privilege to work with all of you. Thank you for your ongoing support and guidance.

**Depending on what your evaluation of the past year shows, celebrate your accomplishments, make corrections and keep moving forward toward the goal.** Then, next year about this time, do the whole process over again. If we can keep moving our strategic plan along, we will help MDA get ever closer to finding a cure, and we will continue to provide help and hope to MDA families in need.

NALC's fundraising helps MDA with that promise as it builds on recent successes. On that note: The beginning of the new year is a time when many people make resolutions to better themselves or those around them. Has your branch set any goals for community service for 2021? If not, I hope your executive board sits down soon to plan for the year and considers helping with MDA.

MDA and NALC dream of a day when every child and adult diagnosed with muscular dystrophy will have access to treatment or even to a cure. Thanks for all your work!