

## Message From the President

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As 2008 came to a close, it was clear from economic trends that challenging times lay ahead for both [MDA](#) and the country.

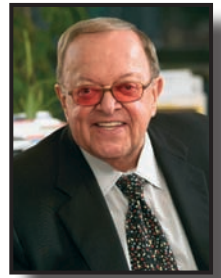
MDA moved immediately to confront these financial challenges, incorporating belt-tightening measures across the board without compromising the integrity of either our [research](#) or patient [services](#) programs.

As you'll read in this report, the medical and scientific research teams that MDA supports worldwide continued to make significant headway against dozens of [diseases](#) in MDA's program.

Also in this report, you'll learn how MDA's services program provided vital support through specialized medical care at [MDA clinics](#) and [ALS centers](#); free, accessible [summer camp](#) for thousands of youngsters; [support groups](#); much-needed financial [assistance](#) with wheelchairs, leg braces and communication devices; public health education resources in print and online; legislative [advocacy](#) efforts and much more.

We're deeply indebted to the many individuals who enable MDA to provide world-class programs of help and hope, including our corps of national [sponsors](#), ambassadors, celebrities, [task force](#) members and other [spokespeople](#), dedicated Board Members and national vice presidents, and the thousands of volunteers who work so diligently at MDA functions. Of particular note are [MDA National Goodwill Ambassador Abbey Umali](#) and her family, who did an outstanding job representing the Association.

The economy may be uncertain, but one thing is clear: There's no uncertainty in MDA's mission or the people who support it.



As always, there's one who stands above the rest, with an indomitable spirit that's been a beacon for decades. In 2008, in recognition of his steadfast support of MDA, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced it would award its highest humanitarian honor — the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award — to MDA National Chairman Jerry Lewis. It's a seldom-bestowed honor reserved for those who set the highest example of selflessness.

The troubled economy and its effect on MDA are undeniable — but so too are the vast human resources that continue to buoy us. Through rough seas, MDA remains steadily focused on its destination — the elimination of muscle diseases.

With every best wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerald C. Weinberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Gerald C. Weinberg

(As this report was prepared in 2009, we learned that our great-hearted friend [Ed McMahan](#) passed away at age 86. Ed's warmth, charm and generous spirit made him a beloved member of the MDA family for more than 40 years. He will be deeply missed.)