

IAFF HISTORY / BACKGROUND

The tradition began in 1952, when a father in desperate need ran to IAFF member George Graney's Fire Engine Company 1 in South Boston. IAFF Local 718 immediately rounded up 20 fire fighters and set in motion a door-to-door canister drive that raised \$5,000. In 1953, Graney launched a citywide fund-raising campaign with the help of Boston fire fighters and made appeals across Massachusetts in behalf of children with muscular dystrophy.

Realizing the potential that fire fighters had to offer the cause and their excellent image in the community, Graney approached and persuaded IAFF members to support MDA. In August 1954, Graney raised his voice at the IAFF's biannual convention in Miami and proposed that MDA be established as the International's "charity of choice." MDA Goodwill Ambassador Luis Grant, who had a form of muscular dystrophy, gave an emotional presentation to IAFF members, helping to gain unanimous approval of Graney's proclamation. This marked the beginning of a formal bond between the IAFF and MDA.

Since then, fire fighters have taken this vision and made it their mission, raising funds a thousand ways: by placing collection jars in stores and restaurants, sponsoring charity softball games and running auctions. These days, their signature fund-raising activity is the MDA Fill-the-Boot drive.

The IAFF has emerged as the single-largest sponsor of MDA, contributing nearly \$300 million since 1954. The International has renewed that commitment to MDA under the leadership of General President Harold A. Schaitberger, who is also an MDA national vice president. Some 250,000 IAFF members in the United States and Canada continue to break their fund-raising record year after year — all to benefit "Jerry's kids."

