

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FRATERNAL DEPARTMENT

Volunteering

The Fraternal Difference

Members are rewarded for their volunteer efforts at fraternal seminars

VOLUNTEERS SAT EAGERLY waiting to share stories about brightening the life of a young child or showing a young adult how simple it is to bring pride to a neighborhood. Some talked about giving Christmas presents to children who otherwise would not have any or how they organized school supply drives to help students start a new school year prepared to learn.

These storytellers included volunteer branch leaders and district representatives from across the Midwest who oversee NMB-sponsored programs in their local towns. They discussed how to organize fund-raisers and funnel financial resources into their communities at one of two Fraternal Leadership Seminars held last February in Spearfish, South Dakota, and Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Nationally known speaker, Jeff Yalden, “wowed the crowd” as he shared his experiences as a youth coach on MTV’s weekly television show *MADE*. He challenged participants to be good role models by continuing their efforts and being mentors to young people in their communities when they got back home. He feels role models should not be actors, singers, and professional athletes, but hometown heroes who look out for each other and are willing to lend a hand.

National Mutual Benefit branches are a positive force in their communities. In 2005, \$46,400 was disbursed through the

NMB Community Outreach grant program. For every 25 hours of service, the branch is provided with a \$250 grant to purchase materials for their project.

Since the Matching Funds program was initiated in the late 1980s, over \$2 million has been disbursed. Through fund-raisers that included book fairs, chili and spaghetti dinners, softball tournaments, egg roll sales, and auctions, members raised over \$146,000 in 2005 (almost \$186,000 with NMB Matching Funds) to assist individuals and families.

Teamwork is what makes National Mutual Benefit branches so successful. Twenty-five branches were recognized for earning the Gold Medal award for their 2005 efforts. To earn this award, a branch must complete at least nine service projects that strengthen families, improve a school or neighborhood, promote patriotic values, and most importantly, assist families in need.

Although branch leaders insist their fraternal projects are done as a group, extra praise is well-deserved this year for four individual award recipients. Vi Bergum received the President’s Award for being named Fraternalist of the Year and Hugh Hart received the William J. Wenger award as Fraternal Agent of the Year. (You can read about them on pages 6 and 8, respectively.) Delores Thomas of Janesville, Wisconsin, and Ron Andersen, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin also received plaques for being named Fraternalist of the Year of their respective branches. Whether it’s individually or through group efforts, NMB members do make a difference. ♦



Keynote speaker Jeff Yalden asks the audience if they have shared similar experiences that he has faced when dealing with young people.



Theresa Matz, secretary of Wisconsin Valley Branch 3, leads the National Anthem as the Wisconsin Wing Civil Air Patrol Color Guard stands at attention.



Volunteers enjoy sessions where they can share best practices, success stories, and ideas for new projects by networking in small groups.