

American Legion Auxiliary  
Department of California

East Palo Alto Unit 472  
District 26

Unit Member of the Year  
2009

Mary Elizabeth Martin

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Unit President

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Date

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Unit Secretary

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Date

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Mary Martin of East Palo Alto Unit 472 is the kind of member every unit wishes they had. She consistently goes above and beyond anyone's expectations and does so for the good of the Unit, not personal glory. She works tremendously hard, though usually behind the scenes; and many members of our Unit probably don't even realize all she does to better our Unit, the ALA overall, and most importantly, the lives of veterans and children all around us. She is an inspiration to us, and we believe will be an inspiration to all ALA members once they know more about her. It is our honor to nominate Mary Martin for Unit Member of the Year.

Mary serves our Unit in many different capacities. She is our Chaplain, Newsletter Editor, Public Relations Chairman, a member of our Executive Board, and a very *active* Unit member who participates in virtually all programs and attends all monthly meetings. As chaplain, Mary provides spiritual leadership at all general meetings by giving an opening prayer, tailored to each month's special events and/or ALA supported activities. She also provides a monthly thought or prayer in our newsletter, and submits a beautiful report every month for our meetings. She takes an interest in every member by collecting information about special days and events in our lives through a survey she created, and even though this is facilitated electronically, we know she is genuinely interested in our lives. She keeps members' information on file so she can send future cards of encouragement or congratulations. When necessary, she also sends cards of congratulation or sympathy to other members of the District and Department. And even if everyone else forgets, members know they'll at least receive birthday greetings from Mary. She is also great about encouraging us to share important events in our lives with the Unit, which she publishes in the monthly newsletter. This is especially important and appreciated in our electronic Unit in which not all members have met face-to-face.

Ensuring our members are connected to the ALA and to each other is a primary goal for Mary as Newsletter Editor as well. She fully embraces the Unit philosophy that everyone benefits when we share our ideas, so she strives to share best practices and program information and ideas with as many ALA members as possible by including them in the monthly newsletter. She emails the newsletter not just to Unit members, but to members at National, many Departments, the Department of California officers and chairmen, Districts, many Unit members throughout California, and businesses which support the ALA-sponsored activities such as Children's Miracle Network—245 subscribers in all! The newsletter averages 10 pages per month, and is published to the Unit website so anyone can access it and all past issues at anytime.

Each issue of the newsletter includes calendars showing patriotic days, programs of the month, District meetings and events, and member birthdays; articles pertaining to program and holidays of the month; patriotic recipes; news from National and Department pertaining to special projects; Unit president letter; Unit fund raising information; member happenings and special events; Chaplain's prayer or thought; ways to support our troops; patriotic video critiques and film reviews; info from our Post, as well as articles about TAL and Sons of the Legion activities; and information from our Unit, District, Department, and National officers and chairman. Each issue is also packed with links to other organizations, suppliers, and businesses that support the work of the ALA. To help our Unit raise money to support non-budgeted VA&R activities, she also started "selling" advertising space in the newsletter. This simple enhancement has earned \$198 to date, plus allowed our members to spotlight their businesses, send public congratulations, advertise an upcoming event, and more! Mary regularly encourages all members to contribute to our newsletter, but as Editor, contributes a major portion of the content. She spends an average of 20-30 hours each month creating it and emailing an announcement of publication! Now that's dedication!

Again, Mary is a dedicated *member*, first and foremost. She continuously works with other chairmen to support ALA programs. To support Americanism, she flies Old Glory at her house every day, and has been working to promote the pocket flag program. She uses poppy seals when writing letters and sending cards in support of Education, and purchases poppies to offer to local neighbors. She crocheted a blanket for Menlo Park VA Hospital, and for National Security, facilitated two "Cards for the Troops" workshops during which members hand-made blank greeting cards that she sent to service personnel. She also sent cards to troops through [www.LetsSayThanks.com](http://www.LetsSayThanks.com). For Community Service, she gave \$100 worth of Starbucks gift cards to service personnel on Make a Difference Day. She also continuously assists our webmaster by editing our site and checking links.

If all that weren't enough, she assisted with the Department Leadership Workshop our Unit facilitated by editing workshop materials and acting as chaplain. She traveled 880 miles round trip to attend the workshop, and obtained a Leadership Instructor Certificate. As you can tell, Mary is a consummate learner. She reads the National Plan of Work to better understand the programs when writing for the newsletter, and uses the past Unit, District, and Department leaders when she has a question about Unit business. She is also always eager to help other members. As Public Relations Chairman, she provides membership with hints on submitting PSAs and news articles. As an Executive Board member, she actively takes a role in inspiring new ALA work suggested to membership, paying particular attention to what's in the best interest of the Unit and members. When Mary commits to doing something, you know she's going to follow through, and won't settle for the minimum.

As you can see, Mary Martin is a model member in every way. She is hardworking, dedicated, helpful, and humble, and we are proud to present her as our Unit Member of the Year.