

# Mary Martinez is a 'volunteer's volunteer'

**How do you feel about being nominated Citizen of the Year?**

"Very surprised."

**By Darragh Doiron**  
The News staff writer

Sometimes, volunteering is about the little things.

Consider a misshapen candle, a souvenir plate or a vase of artificial flowers that just needs a little pepping up. These are the kinds of "little things" Mary Martinez loads in a cart to restock the Mission's Attic store shelves. The dimes and quarters spent at this store help fund a variety of service programs brightening lives in mid and south county.

Volunteering here is just one of the dishes on Martinez' figurative full plate. Several groups get to claim her service. The McAllen, Texas native says her motivation is simple.

"It's just giving back to your fellow man," she said. "Anybody can. It's not like a big chunk of time to do it."

Darlene Byrd, president of Quota International of Southeast Texas, nominated Mary for the honor of Citizen of the Year.

"Mary never asks or expects recognition for her deeds. Although she has received various recognitions from grateful organizations (including ours) over the years, she seeks to give and receives personal satisfaction through her giving," Byrd said. "She is always coordinating projects and workers from different organizations she is involved with to make efforts more efficient."

Nancy Currie, who has worked with Martinez on numerous Quota Club and Chamber projects over the years, says Mary is a delight to work with.

"It is always nice to work with volunteers who always come through and are conscientious and reliable. Mary is definitely one of those. She always keeps her ear to the ground and comes up with partner projects or other ways to enhance whatever it is we are working on. She is the consummate volunteer's volunteer," Currie said.

But Martinez waves off praise and says she's called to serve. She enjoys meeting new people who volunteer and who are served by groups she supports. At United Board of Missions, she communicates with Spanish clients and helps all clients find just what they need.

"Some people are just really, really thankful," she said.



Mike Tobias/The News

Mary Martinez stocks merchandise at the Mission's Attic in Port Arthur.

**"It's just giving back to your fellow man. Anybody can. It's not like a big chunk of time to do it."**

**Mary Martinez,**  
on volunteering

Karen Bradberry, an assistant manager at The Mission's Attic, said her smiling face is a draw.

"She's always so friendly to the customers. People stop and chat with her. When she says she's going to be in the shop, she's there," Bradberry said.

Martinez is active with Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church and Mid Jefferson County Aggie Moms and Service League of Port Arthur. She serves on the CavOILcade board and has also been involved with decorating trees at Christmas for foster children,

Salvation Army's Angel Tree, the Court Appointed Special Advocate program and the children's nursery at Capland Speech and Hearing facility. She has served as a Museum of the Gulf Coast docent and is a Texas Artists Museum docent.

"We meet a lot of people," Martinez said.

One of her earliest memories of service came from her father, when the family sheltered at the Beaumont Courthouse for Hurricane Carla. Crammed into a small space with

strangers, he worked to make everyone feel at home.

"We didn't have a whole lot, and my Daddy would go and get the food and feed everybody," she said.

Martinez and her husband, Ellis, have a daughter, Christina, and a son, Erik. The couple owns Tejas Engraving and Awards. She is a Capland Center receptionist.

Martinez says her heart remains in Port Arthur and its people.

"It's a growing city. It's had its ups and downs. It has untapped potential," she said.

Some naysayers can't see the forest for the trees, she said, and added she is confident someone with vision will come along and build the city up.

"I really wanted to thank my club president, Darlene for nominating me for this honor. It is through working with The Service League of Port Arthur and the Quota International of Southeast Texas that helped introduce me to the many agencies that I volunteer for," Martinez said.

Byrd said that her friend "embodies the true meaning of 'sharing,' which is Quota International's motto.

**MARY MARTINEZ**

**CITY:** Port Arthur  
**FAMILY:** Husband, Ellis, and two children  
**OCCUPATION:** Receptionist at the Capland Center

**NOMINATED BY:**

Darlene Byrd, president of Quota International of Southeast Texas, nominated Mary for the honor of Citizen of the Year.

"Mary never asks or expects recognition for her deeds. Although she has received various recognitions from grateful organizations (including ours) over the years, she seeks to give and receives personal satisfaction through her giving," Byrd said. "She is always coordinating projects and workers from different organizations she is involved with to make efforts more efficient."

Byrd explains that Mary has volunteered all of her life with a variety of people, associations and charities and when she volunteers, it is understood that her husband and her children will be assisting her.

Some of her activities include: serving in nearly all PTA offices while in her children were in school, decorating trees at Christmas for foster children, manning the Salvation Army's Angel Trees during the holidays, volunteering with Court Appointed Special Advocate program, collects items for the United Board of Missions, volunteered at the children's nursery at Capland Speech and Hearing facility.

"Mary embodies the true meaning of 'sharing,' which is Quota International's motto and our club is proud to submit her name for Citizen of the Year," Byrd said.

# Keal uses his job to influence the future

**How do you feel about being nominated Citizen of the Year?**

"It feels real good to be nominated. I work with kids and do different community activities and it's nice that someone recognizes the work I'm doing for the community where I was raised."

**By Amy Moore**  
The News staff writer

As the father of four children, Sidney Keal knows the importance of setting an example. But in his work, Keal sets an even greater example with the opportunity to change the lives of hundreds of troubled youth.

For the past two years, Keal has worked as a Juvenile Probation Officer for the Minnie Rogers Juvenile Facility and has seen that even the toughest kids turn into productive citizens.

"If you can reach just one kid it could help that kid make better decisions later in life and that could save lives," Keal said.

Trips to the grocery store, eating at restaurants and even at his home, Keal is often approached by the youth he has helped as a Probation Officer, Community Service Specialist and former correctional officer.

"Dealing with these young men, they don't know I'm 30 (years old). They think I'm 19 or 20 so they relate to me better. Sometimes other probation officers bring kids to me to see if they'll open up to me. It's not a race thing, either. I see kids from Port Arthur, Port Neches, Groves and Nederland and they all relate to me," he said.

A Lincoln High School graduate, Keal was actively involved in sports in school and is proud of being a member of the last Bumblebee State Championship basketball team with the famous Stephen Jackson — a memory he uses to reach the youth in the juvenile facility.

"He's made some bad choices off the court, but I tell the kids that it's what you do after you make mistakes that make who you become. You can dig your hole deeper or you can dust yourself off and make your life better," he said.

Coming from a strong, Christian family, Keal was raised by his single mother. As the oldest child, Keal had the responsibility of being the male leader in the home to his younger



Mike Tobias/The News

Sidney Keal knows the importance of setting an example. But in his work, Keal sets an even greater example with the opportunity to change the lives of hundreds of troubled youth.

**"When I left to go to college, my mom told me that if I was going to come back, I needed to bring something back with me. Now I know that it means to bring something back that will make things better here. I hope that's what I'm doing."**

**Sidney Keal,**  
on giving back to the community

brother and cousins. "A lot of the kids I work with come from homes with no male figures. They may have uncles, but it's not the same when you're missing a dad," Keal said.

Luckily for Keal, as a basketball and baseball player in high school, he was surrounded by male coaches who helped him become a driven young man. After high school, Keal was disappointed that he did not receive the scholarship offers that his friends did. With some help from teachers and

coaches, Keal attended Wiley College and played on the basketball team. As a player he traveled across the United States and experienced places he never could have seen without a college education, he said.

After earning a degree in Criminal Justice, Keal moved back to Port Arthur from Houston to take care of his ailing mother and grandmother. "When I left to go to college, my mom told me that if I was going to come back, I needed to bring something back with me," he said. "I didn't

understand what that meant until I came back. Now I know that it means to bring something back that will make things better here. I hope that's what I'm doing."

Keal was nominated as a Citizen of the Year by his co-worker, Jabari Hayes.

"I believe that Sidney Keal should be named Citizen of the Year because of the contributions that he has made for his job and community over the years," Hayes wrote in his nomination letter.

In his job as a Probation Officer and Community Service Specialist, Keal is responsible for supervising a caseload of 15 juveniles. Last year Keal became the youngest Juvenile Probation Officer to receive the employee of the year award.

"I don't think I could get tired of this work," he said. "I've seen a lot and helped a lot, but I know I've got a lot more to learn. I tell the kids it's hard work, but at the end of the day it's about being able to look in the mirror and tell yourself that you helped somebody today."

**SIDNEY KEAL**

**AGE:** 30  
**CITY:** Port Arthur  
**FAMILY:** two sons and two daughters  
**OCCUPATION:** Probation officer and Community Service Specialist

**NOMINATED BY:**

Jabari Hayes: Mr. Keal works for Jefferson County Juvenile Probation Department. He started out as a Detention officer and after a year of those duties he was promoted to Juvenile Probation Officer-Community Service Specialist. Just last year, Mr. Keal became the youngest Juvenile Probation Officer to receive Employee of the Year Award at age 30. He's a highly respected mentor for the young men that are affiliated with Juvenile Probation.

**"I don't think I could get tired of this work. I've seen a lot and helped a lot, but I know I've got a lot more to learn. I tell the kids it's hard work, but at the end of the day it's about being able to look in the mirror and tell yourself that you helped somebody today."**