

# Woman of the Year

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Jan Harp Domene

Imagine running a multi-million dollar corporation without receiving a paycheck. Jan Harp Domene, an Anaheim mother of three, does so. She is the highest ranking volunteer in the national Parent Teacher Association. During her two-year presidential term, she has been the overseer of a membership of more than 5 million parents and teachers, including 155,000 from Orange County.

And, like many corporate CEO's, Jan landed this prestigious position after starting at the bottom. According to Jan, her eldest daughter, Christina, came home from school and said, "Teacher says you need to join 'pata'." Not understanding "pata," Jan asked the teacher who clarified it for her: it was the P.T.A. Jan joined, and that was 32 years ago.

One of seven siblings, Jan grew up to be a good cook. So good, in fact, she began catering for friends and eventually got a business license. Her business was well known, and now that she was a PTA member, she was asked to help the organization by being the hamburger chairman. What she did then was to buy hamburgers at McDonalds for the once-a-week burger feast on campus.

After her successful stint as hamburger chairman for Thomas Edison Elementary School PTA, Jan was asked to be president. As her children grew up and changed schools, Jan continued to be active in PTA both at Sycamore Junior High School and Anaheim High School chapters, serving each as president.

During her involvement at Sycamore, a major fire consumed residences on nearby Palm Lane that required some neighborhood families to be evacuated. She was asked to bring her "catering stuff" from work so the evacuees could be fed. Jan not only helped, but called around and got additional support.

Jan's leadership skills led her to become active in the broader PTA organization. She was first elected fourth district vice president and later was named to the California PTA Board, where she was asked to be the vice president before being chosen California State PTA president. While there are PTAs all over the globe, "the fourth district is the largest in the world," she said. "There are one million members from California."

Once on the national board, Jan was elected secretary-treasurer, becoming chair of the Strategic Planning Committee and then national PTA president-elect. When her presidency is completed in 2009, she anticipates once again leading the Strategic Planning Committee.

Jan's work with the PTA got her involved with the Red Cross. After 911, she assisted by making phone calls. Following Hurricane Katrina, she spent three weeks in New Orleans with the local PTA providing tennis shoes and backpacks to needy children. Jan has also been involved with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, Special Olympics Committee and is a past advisory board member for the Prevention of Youth Violence Task Force. Locally, she has been involved with the North Anaheim Little League, Youth Soccer Board and the Cheer Booster Club.

During her years with the PTA, Jan has facilitated collaborative partnerships with many education, health, safety and child advocacy groups to benefit children and to provide valuable resources to PTA members. She has been key in ensuring the inclusion of PTA's recommendations for the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind act.

While involved on a local level, keeping up with her PTA responsibilities was just one facet of her life. She

and her husband, Greg, who were sweethearts at Anaheim Union High School, were raising three children as Jan's catering business grew. Today, she no longer cooks but through Domene's Consulting, her event and party planning company, she secures caterers for her clients.

Originally a Communications major at both Fullerton College and California State University, Fullerton, it was Jan's love of cooking that brought her to Cypress College to study in the Culinary Arts program.

Now, she oversees her business while on the run between her home and PTA headquarters in Chicago or when she's meeting with legislators in Washington, D.C. She loves her PTA job, but relishes spending time with Greg, her husband of 39 years, with her five grandchildren, as with her children and their spouses: Christina and Stewart Knorr; Kevin and Amber Domene, and Kyle and Timberley Domene.

During her career as a volunteer, Jan has collected numerous awards. She was named Honorary Life Member at 32 various state PTA organizations, received the PTA's National Life Achievement Award, and National Life Membership awards. She has also been honored by the Orange County School Boards Assn., by local legislators Lou Correa and Loretta Sanchez, Friends of Education and every school in the Anaheim Union High School District. In addition, she has honors from Sycamore Junior High School, Anaheim Union High School District PTA, and the Fourth District PTA. She is also the recipient of the Golden Oak award, the highest honor given by the California State PTA.

Proud of her work, Jan says, "The PTA began in Washington, D.C., in 1895 to address the deplorable conditions in the inner cities, and over the years it has dealt with health, safety and the well being of children." Her involvement with the PTA in writing the Bicycle Helmet law and working on the Assault Weapons Ban bill has continued the mission started by the founders of the PTA. And to recognize the 100th anniversary of the organization, Jan spearheaded raising a quarter of a million dollars so the organization could enter a float in the 1997 Rose Parade to mark PTA's centennial year. Jan's leadership ability once again came through – the float, entitled "The Field Trip," won the top award, the Sweepstakes.

