

The *Alive!* Interview

LAPD Wives:



Standing Together, in Strength

■ In May, Club CEO John Hawkins and Arlene Herrero interviewed the three leaders of the LAPD Wives Association – Lynn Caprarelli, Adel Martin and Stacy Jensen – to share their story.

Alive! So, tell the *Alive!* readers about the LAPD Wives Association. Is it a non-profit, or a social thing?

Adel Martin: It's going to remain social. We've decided not to become a non-profit because that means we'd have to file tax papers. We want to stay friends.

Alive! Yes, good idea. So, what's the primary purpose?

Adel Martin: To walk along side of, encourage, support and educate other women who have the same concerns, fears, and questions that we had and have as police wives. We're more seasoned. We're really trying to reach out to the younger women, the up and coming wives. We want to go back to the basics of the

traditional family. You don't see that too often nowadays. Our number one goal is to save and build strong marriages that in turn will grow happy families. We're women of faith and that's our cornerstone, the core of our foundation. It is what gives us our strength and courage during difficult times.

We're faith-based. We are about the traditional family. That's where our experience is — women married to men.

Stacy Jensen: We became friends. We all met at my wedding a couple of years ago; we didn't know each other until then. We recognized a kinship and went on a church retreat. We found that we all had women's issues and friendship, but we all were married to police officers and that carried a certain amount of ...

Adel Martin: Commonality.

Stacy Jensen: Yes, commonality and risk and hardship and fun as well. In my mind, the police officers have their group, their graduating class, and then, where they're hired they have a support system whether they choose to use it or not. The wives are left kind

of out in the cold. Who do they go to? What if they don't know another officer's wife? What if they're just in their com-

munity alone with their two- and four-year-olds? They can never have holidays; they can never count on their men being home. They're alone. So I'm the newest. My husband is now retired. He served 33 years.

Adel Martin: I've been married 34-years.

Lynn Caprarelli: Thirty [years].

Stacy Jensen: I was asking them questions about how do you deal with this and how do you deal with that. They said, "Oh, girl, let me tell you." And so what I can bring to the group is just life experience. I have good listening ability, but once a cop always a cop, and he's retired and I'm going to live with that personality until the end of our marriage when one of us passes away. It was just formed out of a mutual need. The younger wives will have a better chance to have a longer-lasting, fruitful marriage and be an integral part of keeping the glue together when difficult things happen.

NO MORE SUFFERING IN SILENCE

Adel Martin: Our men might go through a "debriefing" at the end of watch by going somewhere with other cops, having a couple beers, smoking a few cigars and discussing what their night or day was like. We wives can't just call a neighbor who doesn't understand so we suffer in silence. We want to be able to give the wives the opportunity through friendship to be able to call one of the other wives and say, "Hey, what worked for you?" It's like a mentoring program.

Alive! Is it only wives? What's the requirement to join?

Lynn Caprarelli: Any woman with a steady relationship with an officer. They don't have to be married. We'd like them to be engaged, but we do have a lot of girlfriends, which is fine. It gives them a sense of what to expect by talking to the wives who have been married a long time. The average age in our group is about 28 to 30.

The average marriage is 11 years [in the group now]. We keep hearing, "I've been married 11, 11, 11." There are a lot of commonalities in 11-year marriages and 11 years on the force. There are things that happen at 11 years, and we're finding that out from the psychologists who are coming to talk to us. The ladies feel lonely. They say that their friends don't understand why.

You also have the fear of every single day when your husband leaves for work that he's not coming home. If you wake up at 2 in the morning and he was due home at 11 and your heart is beating fast and the bed is empty and you think, "Wow, well I know that Mary Jane's husband works [narcotics], and she's in the same boat as me right now." You have a kind of a peace about you that somebody else knows what you're going through. Or if somebody else's husband has been in a shootout, you can talk to them.

Adel Martin: We want our members to be able to call another wife on the phone and say, "I'm really struggling with this," and know she completely understands. We do have criteria for the group, such as not tolerating gossip, putting our husbands down, or putting the Department down. The LAPD has been good to us. They've been good to our husbands and our families. We are extremely proud of our Men in Blue. We love them!

Alive! Are there dues?

Adel Martin: No.

The modern LAPD Wives Association is led by (from left) Lynn Caprarelli, Stacy Jensen and Adel Martin.



The Alive! Interview

UNIQUE IN THE COUNTRY

Alive!: Is there anything you model this after, in the country?

Lynn Caprarelli: No. We have a sister site that we started. Our motto is "We are the hidden partners," so we opened up hiddenpartners.org, and any Police Association of Wives that wants to start its own police wives support group, for a fee, can get a duplicate Website. Then they can also use our slogan, "We are the hidden partners," which we've trademarked.

WALKING ALONGSIDE

Adel Martin: We want to get away from the stigma that police officers themselves have about women joining a support group. There's a stigma of, "Oh, you're going to go and you're just going to hear bad things about me." It's not [like that]. We have speakers come. We have someone come and talk about injured on duty. We have a psychologist come. We had a boutique fundraiser. We've had various speakers on various issues. So it's about building up and encouraging and walking alongside. We want our men to see that we're with them. We support them.

HOW IT WORKS

Alive!: How often do you meet?

Stacy Jensen: Once a month.

Alive!: At different locations?

Adel Martin: Yes, different divisions.

Alive!: How do people know where you're going to meet?

Lynn Caprarelli: We post it on our forum, and our forum is private. Then we take an ad in the Blue Line every three months. We don't want to grow too fast. We realize there are 9,000 sworn officers and 10,000 retired. So at some point, we could have 4,000 members. We want to be able to build our core group.

Stacy, Adel and I are Christians and live our lives in that faith. As far as the wives association, it's open to all wives of any and all, or no, faiths. Although our beliefs run the criteria for the association, we select our speakers based upon what they can offer our members to educate or enhance our one goal of being more supportive, understanding wives to our husbands. We feel we need to have certain rules so that we don't turn into the old LAPD Wives Club. There was one about 25 years ago, and apparently it was a [complain] session. The women would have their night to go party. It ended up being where it was just a gossip group.



Club Counselor Arlene Herrero (left) chats with LAPD Wives Association leaders (from left) Stacy Jensen, Adel Martin and Lynn Caprarelli at the Getty Museum.

on duty that I expected it. After a workday, I would shower again, do my hair and makeup, put on the best nightclothes I had and go bed and I'd wait. I did that for six months. If I had had another wife or somebody to talk to who could say, "Hey, I'm here for you. Things are going to be okay," I probably wouldn't have been such a basket case for six months.

We have no political agenda. Sometimes the ladies will bring things in and say, "We should fight this," and we say no. We're never going to stand on anything. We're only here for your hearts and that's it.

BRANCHING OUT

Alive!: Do you have different groups?

Lynn Caprarelli: Since we're just 100 [members] right now, we've come from all over Los Angeles, Ventura, San Bernardino and Orange counties to meet. Next month we will break off our first chapter, which will include the wives in San Bernardino and Orange counties. They'll hold their own meetings and pizza nights and join together with the main group on a quarterly or semi-annual basis.

Adel Martin: What's also been exciting for us is that Chief [William] Bratton came and spoke to our group.

Alive!: Really.

Adel Martin:

His wife, Rikki Klieman, came and spoke to us as well and joined as a member. I think when they left, they were both pleasantly surprised to see that we were women of integrity, not confrontational or complaining. Instead as a group, we showed our support for the LAPD.

Stacy Jensen: Yes, he invited us to speak to the new recruits ...

Lynn Caprarelli: ... their wives. They got all the recruits who are actually in the academy

right now and they got their wives to come down there just so we could go and talk to them and tell them what to expect.

He invited us to the graduation. We haven't actually made it there yet. We think that's important. If we can talk to the new recruits' wives before that first night when they're alone.

Not everybody comes every time. We get an average of 18 to 20 [attendees per] meeting. You have your diehards and then you have some of the ones who never come, but they're on the forum. They say, "I just need to know you guys are there."

Adel Martin: You have your skeptics who come and say, "I'm going to really see if this is what you're about." I think they leave pleasantly surprised.

Lynn Caprarelli: Yes, that's true. We had a member who joined us the very first night back in August last year and, unbeknownst to us, was very skeptical. She put a post on the private forum just the other day, saying that she'd been waiting for eight months for us to not be what we said we'd be. She had expected we'd have a political agenda or turn into a gossip group. Her post was apologetic for her doubts and thankful that we've stayed with our policies. We're committed to just one thing – support, through education, experience and friendship. It's just too simple of a concept to some people.

Adel Martin: Sometimes when you go to a police function – a picnic or the Christmas Party – the other wives can seem stand-offish or cliquish.

Lynn Caprarelli: It's the façade we put on. It's a protective layer.

Adel Martin: It's our own insecurity. It's our own fear. It's just how it is. We want to break

that. We want to not have that anymore. I think we've done it. Our numbers show that. Our meetings show that. Our forum shows that.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Adel Martin: We are huge on confidentiality. When you come to the meeting for the first time, we have a membership orientation and set the guidelines right there. We say whatever is said in this room and shared in this room stays in this room. We want them to have a safe place. Just like our guys have their safe place, we want the women to, also. It's really rewarding to know that you can save a marriage, or you can save a relationship. After a while, the guys will say, "Wow" — [he might think] she's a nagging wife when in reality she's just afraid. She learns to support and encourage her own husband, to build him up and not resent him. "It's okay, husband. Don't worry."

Lynn Caprarelli: Every other month, we do some kind of education. We had an expert come and talk about alcoholism. Alcoholism is huge.

And then the next month we'll do something girly like have a romance DVD exchange and we do a roundtable. We'll fill out the questions that maybe you're afraid to ask like, "Would an affair affect your marriage?" Somebody throws that into the bucket. We have a bucket of questions. We draw them out and then we go around the room and we discuss them. The ladies just love it. We've had a couple of them call us and say, "My husband is so happy that I joined your group because I love him more. I come home and I love him more." So it is working. ■

The LAPD Wives Association meets every month. For more information, go to www.lapdwives.org



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– Lynn Caprarelli

Adel Martin: Relationships were torn apart because of that.

Alive!: But since then, nothing has been established ...

Lynn Caprarelli: Nothing. They've had nothing. My husband has been in two shootouts. He's had a stroke. [There's been] nobody to talk to. I remember being a new wife when my husband was on [his] probation[-ary period]. I was so terrified that he was going to be killed



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