

Celebrating 40 years!

Mary Strickland, Founder

How the Austin Alliance for Women in Media came to be...

In 1980, Mary Strickland was working in sales at KVUE when she received a call from the San Antonio chapter of American Women in Radio & Television (AWRT). They had been contacted by the national office and asked to investigate the feasibility of developing an AWRT chapter in Austin. At that point in time, there were very few women in sales. In fact, Mary was the only woman in the KVUE sales department. The idea appealed to her and she told the San Antonio chapter that while she was interested, she needed to think about it.

Mary then presented the idea to her GM at KVUE, Joe Jerkins. He had been a member in Oklahoma and thought it was a great idea. Joe went on to become a huge advocate of the chapter and Mary believes that he was key to their success.

Some managers resisted AWRT because they felt it would be more social than professional. But Joe was a staunch supporter, paying half of the dues for those who joined as a regular member. As if that wasn't enough, Joe would pay ALL of the dues and cover travel to the national conference if one of his staff members became an officer for AWRT.



AWRT Fundraiser, 50's Party.
From left to right Mary Strickland and Barbara Rodgers

In those days, the national organization had very specific guidelines to become a member. For example, managers, copywriters and anyone tied to the product that went on air were accepted. However, if you were a clerk or part of the accounting department, you might not be accepted.

Throughout the next five to 10 years, those guidelines remained. However, many chapters felt it wasn't in line with their mission to educate all women in broadcasting. Why shouldn't women across the board be included to increase membership? When the organization changed to AWM in 2010 it expanded out to all media (not just radio and TV) and brought the organization full circle.

To form a chapter/charter you had to maintain 17 active members. Mary was named the first President and the Austin chapter was chartered once they attended a national meeting and picked up their charter. To keep the charter, a chapter needed to maintain that minimum membership, have a viable budget, award scholarships and illustrate stability. All qualities that remain today.



Trailblazer Recipients 1999. From left to right Gloria Martinez, past President; Dottie Dorwood, former board member & Trailblazer recipient; Mary Strickland past President; Mark Kiestler, former board member & Trailblazer recipient; Neal Spelce, Trailblazer recipient; Bob Cole, Trailblazer recipient.

Mary has continued to be active with AWM since its inception 40 years ago. She feels a strong sense of responsibility and simply enjoys it... and we love nothing more than having her by our side.

We salute you, Mary. A true Trailblazer then, now and always!

#AWMATX40

