

I love puzzles! Jigsaw puzzles are my favorite. Finding a beautiful picture, sorting through a thousand pieces, evaluating what pieces go together, and the thrill of placing the last piece. My approach to solving problems and processes is similar to solving puzzles. I look for the big picture of what I want to accomplish and frame the project. Once framed, I organize and focus on the internal pieces bringing the appropriate pieces together. I am committed to the end, placing that last puzzle piece.

The AAO is the beautiful picture because it supports orthodontists who change patients' lives. I am fiercely loyal to the AAO because it is the entity through which we have the ability to protect our patients and our profession. It has the voice loud enough to be heard. I see great value participating in and shaping the organizations where I choose to spend my time like the framing of the puzzle. From an early age, my mentors instilled the value of giving back to others with my time, talents and support for the next generation. This includes volunteering my time as an Assistant Clinical Professor and participating as an AAO mentor. I am a committed, collaborative, and engaged member of the team. Working on the Component Support and Leadership Development Committee for the past year and a half, I have helped develop the leadership network and increased support for our components and constituents. Part of the new strategic map for the AAO includes being relevant to our members, being inclusive, and engaging and delighting our members. This is an area where I have the ability to influence. With the increasing number of female members, it is vital to bring a female voice to the board and the organization. My passion to bring diversity to our leadership will increase innovative ideas needed to navigate the future of orthodontics.

Sitting in the AAO House of Delegates for the last six years has kept me up to date on the critical issues facing the AAO and its members and focused on the pieces of this puzzle. These issues include:

- do-it-yourself orthodontics
- the heavy debt of young graduates
- remaining relevant to our members
- the consumer awareness program
- advocacy
- support for our components and constituents
- the increasing diversity of our members.

I will work to make certain that our patients' health is being protected, that our members concerns are being addressed, and that our profession is being protected.

The orthodontic field is undergoing rapid changes and we must be forward-thinking, responsive, and optimistic to address these changes. I am very proud of what the AAO has accomplished for its members and I look forward to finding ways to engage and encourage our members as they focus on the puzzle pieces. I am what the AAO needs right now; the perfect piece for the puzzle.

Valerie D. Martone