

## Westford's Nancy Burns wins international award for video

By Lenore Barnes/ Special To The Eagle  
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**W**estford resident Nancy Burns, coordinator of the Upper Merrimack Valley Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), recently shared the spotlight with some world-renowned figures.

On April 22, she received a Dalton Pen Communications Award, a prestigious international award, for scripting an MRC recruiting video. Recipients in various categories included Warren Buffet and CNN broadcaster Renay San Miguel. The award program, hosted by Warwick Publishing, is an "international evaluation forum designed to recognize outstanding projects in the communications field."

Burns submitted the 12-minute video somewhat "last-minute" in February and in mid-March learned she had won the award for Best Script.

"I submitted it thinking that if it won something, it would reflect well on the whole program," said Burns, who accepted the award along with Rob Tosatto, Commander of U.S. Public Health Services and Director of Medical Reserve Corps Programs.

When the news came that she had won an Honor Award in the category of "Writing - Scripts and Speeches," it was "jaw-dropping."

"We're absolutely on Cloud Nine," said Burns. "Especially at the thought that Fortune 500 companies win these awards. We're just this little organization, doing everything ourselves. The night before we filmed the video, I was ironing tablecloths to use as a backdrop; we borrowed plants from a store in Westford."

Although Burns specifically won the award for scripting the video, she emphasizes the collaborative effort behind the end product.

"I keep trying to emphasize to Sandy (Collins, director of Health Services for Westford) that this was our award, which we submitted to reflect on the program, and that her edits (in my humble opinion) could well be the factor that nudged the video into award-winning status," said Burns. "But she's too eager to share the glory. We've got some pretty incredible people on our team - as a local unit, as well as a national initiative. All in all, this MRC system is truly an organization to be proud of, and it benefits all Americans." [\[continue\]](#)

**I**n many ways, Burns said, the award almost seemed "meant-to-be." The awards ceremony coincided with the annual MRC national conference, which Burns and Collins attended as part of a federal grant. Both the MRC conference and the Dalton Pen awards ceremony took place in San Francisco during the same week in April

Burns, who was an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) for more than 20 years and has "been in 100 million industrial films as an actress" had never written the script for a video before.

"I didn't tell Sandy that until afterwards," Burns said, with a chuckle. However, her extensive research on MRCs and long-time involvement in industrial videos served her well. The script came easily in one late-night writing session, followed by a few hours the following morning, resulting in "Being Prepared Just Makes Sense!"

The video explains the role of the Upper Merrimack Valley MRC and simulates a terrorist attack and an MRC's response to the crisis.

"We're in business for three reasons," said Burns. "We're trained to respond to public health emergencies, to mass casualty incidences, and to provide community service."

The Upper Merrimack Valley (UMV) MRC, for which Westford Board of Health is the Lead Agency, is made up of a collaborative regional team serving more than 250,000 people in seven communities: Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Lowell, Tewksbury, Tyngsboro, and Westford. This June marks the first anniversary of the UMV MRC, which currently counts 210 active members. Included among its volunteer ranks are 100 nurses, 40 EMT's, pharmacists and dentists, and representatives of affiliated fields, including non-medical administrators.

"Public health is the newest player to the table in emergency management," said Burns. "When (public health organizations) do their job effectively, you tend to overlook them. Because of them, there are no toxins in the water; an infectious disease doesn't spread due to the inoculations they provide. When they are doing their job well, they are somewhat invisible. Many people aren't aware of the widespread role they play in a community's health and in emergency management." [\[continue\]](#)

**A**lthough Burns' high-profile video, which has been shared among MRCs throughout the country, will undoubtedly help spread the word.