



The Altrusa Announcer

Altrusa International of Branch County

Volume 1, Issue 8

January 21, 2008

President Burkhardt's Message



Dear Altrusans,

It is the time of year we prepare our applications for the District Five awards given at the conference in April. Our yearbook (Mary Shanks Award) and certainly this year our newsletter (Ruth B. Emmons Award) should be among the top entries. In the promotion and encouragement of International Relations activities (Dr Nina Fay Award) we should fare well. As in the past three years, we will again offer the Branch County Club Planning Award to the District Five Club for the best use of the Strategic Plan Process. We may also surprise ourselves in other award areas, so plan to be there in April to take part in the excitement.

Recently, I had the pleasure of being at

Hauska Realty when a request for shoes came in via the teacher looking to get the shoes. Our new project, Happy Feet, is being received with very positive comments. Shoes are being requested and we are supplying them. Also, The Daily Reporter heard of the project and gave the project front page coverage. Connie Winbigler, Sara Roper and their committee members are to be congratulated for committing and making this happen. This project should receive the 2010 Mamie L. Bass Award.

Yes, our Branch County Club has begun 2009 with a bang for many more reasons than those mentioned in this short letter. I am proud to be part of all your efforts,

Your humble leader,
Barb

Calendar:

- FEBRUARY 4, 2009
PROGRAM MEETING
12:00 NOON—ELKS
"PURE PLEASURE
IN EVERY BITE!"
- FEBRUARY 11
BUSINESS MEETING
12:00 NOON—ELKS
- MARCH 4, 2009
PROGRAM MEETING
12:00 NOON—ELKS
DISTRICT 5 REPRESENTATIVE
CYNTHIA RILL
- MARCH 11
BUSINESS MEETING
12:00 NOON—ELKS
- APRIL 1, 2009
PROGRAM MEETING
12:00 NOON—ELKS
"FLOWER POWER"

Altrusa Kicks Off Happy Feet Project

The Altrusa Club of Branch County has selected "Happy Feet" as their hands-on community project. Happy Feet is a program whereby the personnel of the Head Start program and teachers from the local districts can apply to the Altrusa Club for shoes and/or boots for children ages 3 and 4 who are in need of footwear. The club initiated this project in December of last year and it is in full swing.

Club members are purchasing shoes as needed for these children. Sometimes siblings are also in need and as their supply is available, the club tries to also fill this need. Shoes they are distributing are primarily in the 8-13 Toddler size and the 1-6 Children's size. However, items have been dispenses all the way from size 5 Toddler to size 10 Adult.



There are over 400 children in Head Start at 6 locations in Branch County. The Community Service Committee of the Altrusa Club is overseeing this project. When a need is identified the social

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Minutes of the December 17 Business Meeting

ALTRUSA INTERNATIONAL OF BRANCH COUNTY BUSINESS MEETING AT THE ELKS OF COLDWATER

12:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER: President Elect Barb Burkhardt called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m. Members recited the Collect and the Pledge of Allegiance.

GUESTS: Patty DeGroot introduced her guests, Lois Tell, former Altrusa member and current Vice President of Shelterhouse, and Joann West, Shelterhouse Board of Directors President; Connie Winbigler introduced her guest, Jan Storrs, one of the key founders in Teen S.H.A.R.E. and former Altrusa of Branch County member; Cynthia Wakeman introduced her guest, Michelle LaPratt, Branch County Curriculum Specialist.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Happy Bucks announcements: Connie Winbigler announced the birth of her seventh grandson; Mary Jo Krantz announced her trip to Australia and New Zealand and her daughter's expected adoption of a baby from Ethiopia in May; Mary Ann Ford announced that her daughter's surgery, although problematic at times, went well, and thanked Altrusa members for their support.

Cindy Wakeman announced that 40 Altrusa members signed up to participate in the cultural connections dance performance at the Tibbits. She reminded members that the grant requires 100% participation, and she will be passing around sign-up sheets for all those who have not yet signed up to participate. She also announced that she prepared and placed on the luncheon tables cards that members can use to fulfill their obligation to obtain excuses if they know that they will or have been absent from membership meetings.

COMMUNICATIONS: Cindy Wakeman reported that the club received a "thank you" note from Amanda Stewart, former Teen S.H.A.R.E. resident, who was the winner of an Altrusa scholarship and who has been enrolled in nursing school, who also recently received some additional support from our club on the death of her brother; Cindy also announced the receipt of a "thank you" note signed by Jennifer Grant on behalf of Branch County Coalition Against Domestic Violence, thanking the club for its monetary donation and recent donation of groceries.

FINANCIALS: Pam Stratos reported that as of November 30, 2008, Altrusa of Branch County had \$30,758.63 in checking and savings, and a balance of \$1,121.79 in the rainy day fund after the recent deposit and complete expenditure of the proceeds from the White Elephant sale.

BOARD ACTIONS: Barb Burkhardt reported that the Board directed Rhonda Ives to begin the process of applying for 501(c)3 status for the club. The Board also discussed application to the United Way for funding support for community service's new initiative, the Happy Feet Project. The Board also discussed the possibility of attempting to create a new membership status for longtime members who face changed circumstances. Barb Rosene was unable to attend today's meeting, but, on her behalf, Barb Burkhardt reported that the Literacy Committee will have a short meeting following today's meeting, and Vocational Service has begun the process of reviewing scholarship applications.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: On behalf of the Hands-On Committee, Connie Winbigler announced that the committee met, spent time reviewing the Teen S.H.A.R.E. situation, and spent \$200 on purchasing food and household items for the Teen S.H.A.R.E. houses, along with a \$100 donation from Alliance Food. She also announced that the Committee worked on the Happy Feet Project, and she invited other Altrusa members to view the neatly organized system of shelves containing boots and shoes that are being housed at Sara Roper's office. She reported that the project has already provided 15 pairs of shoes and boots, responding to requests presented to the schools and social workers. The initiative has been able to purchase

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Guests this week included Lois Tell and Joann West from the BCCADV Board, Jan Storrs and Michelle LaPratt.

Thank you notes were received from Amanda Stewart, scholarship recipient and Jennifer Grant from BCCADV.

The process of applying for 501(c)3 (nonprofit) status has begun.

Joann West updated the club on the BCCADV status and answered many questions.

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shoes at Wal-Mart for 10 percent off the list price, and has received some cash cards for purchases at Wal-Mart and Meijer. Connie asked Altrusa members to bring in boots and shoes in good condition for distribution through the program. She also announced that the Committee discussed check distribution plans for the rest of the year, particularly through programs that have already been arranged for presentation before the members.

NEW BUSINESS: Michelle LaPratt, Curriculum Specialist through Branch County Schools, thanked Altrusa for its recent donation of cultural materials to be used by the schools to enhance cross-cultural learning.

Barb Burkhardt and Connie Winbigler and others led the group in a discussion with invited guests, Joann West and Jan Stores, regarding the future of Teen S.H.A.R.E.. In summary, Teen S.H.A.R.E.'s portion of the total funding for the Branch County Coalition Against Domestic Violence has declined to such an extent that the Teen S.H.A.R.E. houses will have to be closed on December 31st if operational funding is not obtained before that date. Joann West responded to numerous program questions from Altrusa members. She said that the Shelterhouse Board resolved to try to keep the teen houses open from month to month, as long as they could find funding. In each month, they must raise \$3,000 to supplement their meager grant funds available in order to meet each month's expenses. She reported that that Board is searching for new grants and new avenues for funding, but that the grant cycle is problematic. There was some confusion over whether the figures provided by Julie Grant were for a whole year, or only a section of the year, but in any event, each grant is on a different annual cycle. The United Way grant for Teen S.H.A.R.E., which is approximately \$15,000, runs from March to March. The MSHDA grant for Teen S.H.A.R.E. runs from April to April. Teen S.H.A.R.E. has cut its employees from 15 at the start of the year to nine, and cut all full-time employees down to 35 hours per week. However, since it is open 24 hours a day, every day of the week, its expenses are high. Members discussed their concern at the over \$5,500 per year spent on telephone expenses for Teen S.H.A.R.E., and the inability of Teen S.H.A.R.E. to get a residential telephone line and billing rates. Other members recalled that the Teen S.H.A.R.E. Board petitioned the Shelterhouse Board to allow Teen S.H.A.R.E. to merge with Shelterhouse in order to obtain some stability

Joanne reported that the Board has hired Christine Drake, currently a Maine resident, to be the new Teen S.H.A.R.E. administrator, beginning on January 5th. There will be a transition between Julie Grant and Christine Drake, starting next Monday. Christine Drake has worked in this type of project before, and is expected to bring a wealth of experience in grant writing and community service.

Members noted and Joann West agreed that local efforts at fund raising, and even community awareness raising, have been poorer for Teen S.H.A.R.E.. However, Joann said that they have been getting better. They have cut costs, reduced staff, and are looking for new grants. Only two of the grants that help fund the Shelterhouse organization are available for use at Teen S.H.A.R.E.. All of the other grants are earmarked for Shelterhouse itself, and would be cut off if the funds were used for Teen S.H.A.R.E..

Other members questioned why, if the crisis has been ongoing, Altrusa of Branch County was not informed earlier. Other members questioned why offers of volunteer time and services made to Julie Grant were not responded to. Jan Storrs responded that Teen S.H.A.R.E. or Shelterhouse dropped the ball, but she urged Altrusa to remember that the establishment of the teen houses took an enormous amount of effort. She begged Altrusa members to be patient for another month or two to see whether the new administrator will be able to find other resources and avenues for fundraising. She volunteered to speak to every service organization to solicit funds, as she did in the past. She noted that the Branch County community has been supportive of this project in the past, and she asserted that Teen S.H.A.R.E. can be a good and viable organization in the future.

2008/2009 Community Service Projects

*Vocational
Scholarships*
◆
Literacy Council
◆
Literacy Project
◆
*Breast Cancer
Clinic*
◆
Tibbits Membership
◆
Tibbits Dinner
◆
Shelterhouse
◆
*Altrusa Teen
SHARE*
◆
*Bronson Food
Pantry*
◆
*Deacon Al Provot
Food Pantry*
◆
*Quincy Food
Pantry*
◆
*Union City
Food Pantry*
◆
*Girls State
Scholarships (3)*
◆
*Women's Health
Fest*
◆
Hans-On Project

Minutes of the December 17 Business Meeting

Members questioned how quickly other funding could possibly become available. To which West responded that grant funding is paid only after an organization expends money, and then 40 days may pass between filing of the expense reports and the receipt of actual funding. What is needed is a cash flow that will get them through several months.

West responded to many member questions regarding BCCADV.

Connie Winbigler read a statement prepared by the Community Service Committee, in which the committee told the membership that it was unable to come up with a unified recommendation, since it needed to have more questions answered, as was attempted at the business meeting. However, Connie urged members to give the new Teen S.H.A.R.E. administrator a chance and urged members to wait and see what she can do, because it is cold outside, and these young people will have nowhere to go. Sarah Roper told members that the Community Service Committee could juggle some money to give the Altrusa Teen S.H.A.R.E. \$3000 today. That would be \$1200 as was approved in the initial budget, \$1500 that was earmarked for the Shelterhouse, which could be moved to the Teen S.H.A.R.E. funding, plus some amount of money out of the rainy day fund, perhaps \$400. By meeting the immediate need for operational funding today, however, the club will lose its ability to do some of the special things that it had intended to do for Teen S.H.A.R.E. during this funding year. However, she urged members to attempt to contribute to this solution to the Teen S.H.A.R.E. funding crisis in order to keep the houses open.

\$3,000 reallocated from Community Service funds for Teen S.H.A.R.E. needs.

Chris Delaney moved that Altrusa of Branch County reallocate community service funds as described by Sarah Roper in order to be able to provide the \$3000 in funding that Teen S.H.A.R.E. needs in December to keep the doors open through January 31, 2009. Laura Shemel seconded the motion.

Barbara Burkhardt called for additional discussion, and after some further discussion, called for a voice vote. **All members who voted, voted in favor of the motion, except one member who voted against the motion. The motion passed.**

RAFFLE: \$33.50 was won by Connie Winbigler, on a ticket drawn by guest Joann West out of ticket proceeds of \$67.00.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Megan Angell for Karen Pierce, Recording Secretary

Altrusa Kicks Off Happy Feet Project

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worker or teacher from Head Start or other schools completes a form provided by the club. They can drop it off at Hauska Farm and Home or e-mail it. A committee person is then assigned to fill the order and the item(s) are then picked up at the business or can be delivered.

The local Meijer and Wal-Mart stores have been supportive to this project by providing grant money and discounts to assist in the purchase of these shoes. The club is also working with an international group called Soles for Souls, which is based out of Nashville, Tennessee. This group facilitates the donations of both new and used shoes to 70 countries, one of which is the United States. It is hoped this group will be helpful in supplying the Altrusa Club with shoes/boots for local distribution.

Members of the club are busy on an ongoing basis to maintain their warehouse of shoes and boots. As items are dropped off they must be screened, prepared for distribution, and placed on the warehouse shelves in an orderly manner for easy accessibility when removed from storage. The club sees this as one of the ways they can serve the needs of their local community.

As one of the teachers said "I am so thankful for your organization. It's such a blessing to be able to help families with shoes". For further information about this project or to make a monetary or shoe/boot donation call 278-4068 or 279-9500.

"Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it into small jobs."

Call 278-4068 or 279-9500 for more information on the Happy Feet Project

Think Spring — and Golf Scramble!

Tired of winter? Then let's think about spring and golf! It's time to start planning the Altrusa Golf Scramble to be held in May. We will be passing around a committee sign up sheet at the next few meetings. The committees are advertising, team development, finance, hole sponsorship/prizes and volunteers. Please think about which committee you would like to be on. With the economy the way it is, we each need to put in 150% to make this a success again. Remember, we need to make money to give away money!!



Thank you,

Alicia Cole &
Ginger Kesler,
Co-chairs



"When a team outgrows individual performance and learns team confidence, excellence becomes a reality."

Joe Paterno

Fourth Quarter Perfect Attendance

Attended all 7 meetings October 1 to December 31, 2008:

**Gail Doerr
Mary Jo Johnson
Sandra Mancino
Sara Roper
Pam Stratos**

Met the requirement of 6 meetings October 1 to December 31, 2008:

**Cynthia Bordner
Sue Crabtree
Patty DeGroot
Chris Delaney
Rebecca Duke
Mary Feller
Mary Guthrie
Vicki Kibiloski
Caroline Lowe
Cindy Wakeman
Norma Wojack**

Congratulations!

Greeters' Schedule

January 7, 2009

**Barb Rosene
&
Laura Shemel**

January 21

**Pam Stratos
&
Valorie Vaughan**

February 4

**Jill Smoker
&
Katherine Cousino**

February 18

**Mary Jo Johnson
&
Sue Wieglos**

March 4

**Jessica Handy
&
Lynnette Wintersteen**

March 18, 2009

**Mary Feller
&
Chris Hilton**

April 1, 2009

**Lola Taylor
&
Mary Jo Kranz**



Cultural Connections Project Supports Coldwater

Michelle LaPratt, the Coldwater Curriculum Coordinator, attended our meeting December 17th to thank Altrusa for donating \$400 toward new social studies materials. The donation is part of the International Relations Committee's local project and grant, Cultural Connections. The funds purchased Kids Discover Magazines on AFRICAN KINGDOMS, a new required area of study for the 5th Grade. The Elementary Social Studies Committee took an interest in the Cultural Connections Kits distributed to all Branch County elementary schools last year. They came back with an idea when funds were offered to local schools this fall. Our support helped to make this new material available to all Coldwater elementaries, provides a resource where there were none and will be used in the years ahead. Your contributions through Give-A-Quarter-If-You-Care helped us stretch the International Grant into this second year.





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Member Spotlight



To review the 2008 updated Club Policies, go to our website at <http://www.altrusabranchncounty.com/>. Go to "Member's Page", sign in, and click on Altrusa Local Club Policies.

Committee Spotlight



Greeter Committee

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Patty DeGroot, Chair, and Pat Male

CURRENT COMMITTEE PROJECTS AND GOALS:

- Have greeters know when they are scheduled.
- Complete list of greeters for the year and get it done in time for the year book as up to date as possible.
- Contact greeters prior to meeting they will be a greeter for.

WHAT ONE THING WILL YOU REMEMBER MOST ABOUT WORKING ON THIS COMMITTEE?

It was a easy committee to work on. My other member and I split the year in half to contact the greeters before each meeting.

Rhonda B. Ives was born and raised in Eaton Rapids, MI. She graduated from Michigan State university with a degree in Management. Rhonda enrolled at the Thomas M. Cooley Law School in May of 1994 graduating in January 1998. She was a member of the Sixty Plus Clinic which provided free legal aid and representation to elderly persons in the Ingham/Clinton/Eaton county areas. She won the intra-school negotiation competition two years in a row and went on to the region finals in both years.

Rhonda has been practicing law since graduating from Cooley Law School. Her first office was located in downtown Lansing on Washington Square and then she spread her wings and opened a satellite office in Coldwater. In November of 2001, she officially moved to the Coldwater area with the purchase of her home in the City of Coldwater.

Rhonda represents people in a variety of issues and believes that in order to successfully navigate through any legal issue, the client must be informed about what his or her options are and about how the court or jury will look at the particular facts of the case. Rhonda primarily practices in Branch, Hillsdale, St. Joseph, and Calhoun counties. However, she has provided consultation throughout the State of Michigan and regularly consults with lawyers in other counties.

Rhonda's goal as a sole practitioner is to advocate for her clients through a very difficult process. "Good people get divorced; Good people make mistakes; and sometimes innocent people get charged." These people deserve 1quality representation in a very unpleasant arena.

Rhonda is a member of the Family Law and Criminal Section of the State Bar of Michigan. She also is a member and sits on the Board of the Criminal Defense Attorneys of Michigan. Though Michigan foes not require it, Rhonda routinely attends continuing education for criminal defense and family law attorneys so that the latest defense strategies and most up-to-date changes in the law are utilized. Yearly, she attends advanced trial training classes that involve in depth personal reflection to better assist her clients in bringing their stories and the truth of their cases alive in the courtroom. Recently, Rhonda has been certified in National Field Sobriety Testing so that she can better advocate for her clients in drinking and driving of-fenses.

Rhonda enjoys being an active member of the community and has previously been on the Branch County Coalition for Domestic Violence Board. She currently sits on the Branch County Literacy Board and the Great Start collaborative Board. She is also serving her third year on the Board of Altrusa.