

The Year of the Leaders

My theme for 2010-2011 was Leaders in Service...Empower Altrusa. As this was my second time to serve as President, the first was 1996 –1997; I put a lot of pressure on myself. I am only the fourth person to serve twice in Richardson's 45 years. The first was the Club's Charter President, Patsy Reynolds: she served a second time because of the decline in our Club's membership. The second lady, Velma Lewis, served two terms, and again Richardson was a small Club. Julianne Lovelace served a second term because the President Elect dropped out of the Club. Thus, when phoned by the Nominating Committee, I was honored, surprised (I had told the Nominating Committee that I would be glad to serve where needed.), and delighted. I love Altrusa and our Club.

As President Elect, I studied our Club. The old adage goes "If it isn't broken, don't fix it." The Richardson Club is very strong! I've also been taught "There is always room for improvement." With both of these thoughts in my head, I spent my year as President Elect watching and listening to as many Altrusans as I could. I attended Committee meetings, tried to watch faces of members during discussions, and had lunch with people I trusted to tell me, "Why had I been asked to be President again?"

After a wonderful installation by two of my close Altrusa sisters, I used my speech to first introduce myself to the Club. I knew people follow those they respect and feel comfortable around. I spoke of my Altrusa background and my personal background; then I laid out my goals for the year. I empowered each member to lead!

Goal I: Strengthen Altrusa Leadership

I wanted each of our talented members to be empowered leaders who could make decisions and have ownership of at least one project or event. This goal evolved because:

1. The Nominating Committee had trouble finding a Board.
2. Members seemed to feel there were enough Altrusans to lead; they did not need to step up.
3. Members also pled "too busy" because "leadership takes too much time."
4. Others members seemed to feel that they were not qualified to lead our Club; that they didn't have the talents or knowledge.

I had heard and seen members who did everything for our Club. Others loved Altrusa but seemed to be left out. Those who were doing were tired and those who were on the edge seemed happy but seemed to lack focus on service. I hoped to change this. The following are the steps that show how the Goal of "Strengthen Altrusa Leadership" was achieved.

1. At my Installation, each Board member was given a notebook with all of the Board duties listed as stated in the encyclopedia and also including duties specific to our Club. Examples of those duties unique to our Club are:
 - a. One duty for a Director was to be Special Ambassador of New Members. Before Dinner Meetings during the summer, she had "Come Chat" and sent members from 2008 to the present special emails. Newer members felt part of a small

group, learned more, and felt more comfortable asking questions. This helped these members to bond with other Altrusans. It truly helped strengthen our Club because three new members had joined in May and six new members, who had been attending and already volunteering, were initiated in August.

- b. The secretaries were my "Right Hand Woman" and "Left Hand Woman." I wanted each of them to feel like an executive assistant, not just a lesser important Board Member. These positions can be very important if the President empowers her secretaries.
- c. Another Director, a past President, was my "everything, go to" person. She proof read all written materials, added a Leadership quote to the bottom of each agenda, listened to my ideas, and told me the truth. She truly made me a better President. Each President needs someone on the Board that she trusts to do this.

These notebooks also had sections labeled: Job Descriptions, Club Meetings, Board Meetings, and Misc. This notebook encouraged organization and included information that would be needed. Some information was to inspire. On the front of the President's notebook were my name, the installation message, and "Words Of Empowerment". Mine says, "An Altrusa leader is best when people barely know she exists. Of a good leader, who talks little, when her work is done and her aim is fulfilled those she led will say, "we did this ourselves." This was a strong beginning to help Board members feel comfortable. It also began the usage of leadership quotes on the agendas. Board members carried these folders to meetings. Our 2011-2012 President also used the notebooks in her Installation.

2. Board/committee training continued with a Saturday breakfast "information swap." Committee Leaders, Co-Leaders (I labeled all committee heads "Leaders". "Leader" is definitely a more powerful word than "chair." It implies that the person is moving forward, has authority, and is not just an object that is sat on.) and Board Members exchanged materials, ideas, and helpful hints.
3. The first Board Meeting started one hour early with dinner so that anyone who could not attend the Saturday breakfast could make an exchange of information. Those needing more information were encouraged to come a second time.
4. The June Business Meeting included time for committees to delegate, plan, and budget for the coming year.
5. Our first Program Meeting speaker was Fiona MacLeod Butts from Southwest Airlines. Her topic was "Empowering Altrusa". My "trusted Board Member" had previously heard Fiona speak. It must have been a "God thing," because it was as if Fiona read my mind. Her speech fit my goals and ideas exactly. Members left the meeting very motivated. I received numerous emails that said, "What a great speaker!"
6. My President's message in our newsletter, Altrusa Tidings, became Mary Beth's Musings. Throughout the year I wrote of my Altrusa experiences and growth. I

shared so that other members might see that a person grows in leadership and can laugh at her mistakes and fears. I also felt that this was a good way to indirectly say thank you to those who had helped me grow.

7. In my installation speech I stated that I would be Altrusa's best Cheerleader. This led to an Altrusa Tidings cheerleader box that encouraged club members to submit Thank You messages and praises for other Altrusans.
8. I knew I must set a good example with my communication. I had agendas emailed on Tuesday before our Thursday meetings. I asked all members to correct, add, or delete from the agenda. I printed final agendas on white paper for Business and Board Meetings and Colored or "Fun" paper for Dinner/Program Meetings. I emailed the final agenda to members before the meeting on Thursday or no later than Thursday night after the meetings. Everyone knew what was happening, even those not in attendance. The agenda contained all announcements with the event, date, time, and location. This was a challenge. I wanted only one page. Having agendas early to correct and add to and having announcements with full information on the agenda helped speed up meetings by having very few additions or corrections, but lots of communication. Members needed to know I valued their time.
9. In June, our Club has a Past Presidents Lunch to welcome the new President into office. What a wonderful, fun way to pass on words of wisdom. District Nine suggested this and it is a great idea, even for someone who had served before.
10. Basic Parliamentary Procedure was placed on the back of the July agenda and the accent on these rules was chosen and given by the Immediate Past President. By having her teach our Club, it showed her that her leadership was valued. That first time off the Board appears to leave a leader feeling finished, rather than thinking "What can I do to help?" I saw this as a waste of excellent leaders. I wanted our Club to let these leaders rest, but also, to feel important.
11. Throughout the year accents were tied to the program topics or to what was happening in District or International. Accents truly became something members listened to and learned from.
12. Since my first goat was about Leadership, I picked very strong Co Leaders for the Leadership Committee. Former Governor Mary O worked with Samantha Slaight, a professor from North Lake College. At the end of my year, this Committee won our Club's Administrative ACE (Altrusa Committee of Excellence) Award. Everything the Committee did was first class and extremely meaningful. Some of the things the Leadership Committee members did were:
 - a. Members of the committee wrote short articles on leadership for each issue of the Altrusa Tidings.
 - b. In January, they decorated the dinner tables with leadership quotes in many languages, made a leaders' pamphlet for all members, and invited a world-class speaker, Cynthia Brink. Her presentation on interactive "cultural immersion" included a card game that was fun, challenging, and also very frustrating. (We couldn't make a sound or talk.) Members of the Committee also did the innovation and accent, stressing wonderful leaders and their qualities.
 - c. There was a well attended spring Saturday Leadership Event with noted workshop presenter Elaine Sullivan speaking on "Living and Leading From Whom We Are."

13. Each year our Immediate Past President works with new members who became Altrusans during her year. This committee selects a project, sometimes "Make A Difference Day". This year the project for "Make a Difference Day" was "Read to Some One". It was not a huge project, but the Committee truly stood out with their Dinner Meeting Program. The Committee did the innovation and accent on "Making a Difference" and following dinner, there was a lively game of "Who was it that made the difference."
14. In January, all Leaders were invited to the Board meeting. We started at 6:00 with soup, chili, salads, and desserts, so Leaders could again bond and share. At 7:00 the Board Meeting began with Mid-Year Reports from all the Committee Leaders. These reports showed that members of committees were stepping up and leading. The amount of projects, hours, and variety of leaders blew everyone away and prompted many to call or email the next morning that "They couldn't sleep for all the excitement."
15. In our Club, the President usually sets the Membership goal. I chose to empower the Recruitment Committee to set this goal. They were the ones who were going to recruit and motivate members. The Committee decided they wanted six strong people. Their goal stated that they wanted "quality not quantity". The fall and spring Orientation/Reorientation Events were fun and informative Saturday Brunches. (The icebreaker in the fall had members write compliments on a paper on each member's back. There were lots of smiles as members read the praise they might never have heard orally. In the spring, members brought their Yearbook and Encyclopedia to discuss Conference and Convention.) Six women were initiated in August. Three more were added in January, so the Committee reset their goal to "replace any old members who were unable to renew and still extend that by our original goal of six new ones." Three more joined in May. These new members leaped in. One took over Yearbook and finished it by September's deadline. Another helped start a Book Club. Our new Board Recording Secretary is an August new member. This Recruitment Committee definitely was empowered and on fire! Our Members liked bringing their friends to our Retention Committee events, such as the Book Exchange and Swim Party, Bridge Club, Book Club, Besa's for dinner after our Business Meetings (three times we had over twenty five members), Meet and Greet Happy Hour on the second Thursday, and quarterly Lunch Bunch. Women came and enjoyed each other and wanted to come back. Because both Committees worked together they were more successful.
16. In our Club the most successful event we have is our fundraiser, Outstanding Women of Today (OWT). Each year the event grows. Each year our members are tired yet excited and up after the event is over. There is definitely magic in the room at the first Business Meeting following OWT. We pat ourselves on the backs and sing our own praise. The newspapers always run articles. Since this is an important part of our Club, I looked for Leaders for this event that would delegate. I wanted all members to have the opportunity to feel a part of this superior project. Our Past President, Julianne Lovelace, who I knew strongly believed in empowerment, and her friend and partner in business, Courtenay Tanner, led OWT. Their committee, which consists of the entire Club, succeeded in building attendance at the luncheon, kept the nominees at the same high quality as the pervious year, and ran a beautiful, smooth event with a

powerful speaker. Sponsors were up, but with the downturn in the economic level, sponsorship dollars were down. Although the Club earned less money, member participation was strong. Newspaper coverage was stronger than ever.

17. Because of the failure to earn as much money, the Retention Committee chose to make Altrusa Marketplace not just a fun shopping event, but a money producer for our Foundation. Seventeen vendors gave 10% of their sales to the Foundation and members baked and sold over \$250 of sweets for our Sister Fund. (Times are hard and this fund secretly helps our members who might be in need.) Newspaper articles advertised Marketplace four times and then celebrated its success with a long article and picture.
18. For Conference, I challenged the members to have 30 members attend with five First Timers. Friday at roll call, our Club numbered 32. Five other members arrived on Saturday. Our Club won the First Timers Award. We also had 7 leaders of workshops and 5 members serving on District Committees. No one had more fun than we did with the "Dancing with the Stars" theme. (The design for our dance partners came from a new member.) My mini suite was full between events and both Friday and Saturday night. The energy in the suite was extremely high.
19. Because we had grown to over 80 members on March 1, our Club will have five delegates and five alternates at Convention in Rapid City. We had to have an election for delegates, because twelve members, so far, will be attending the Convention. Our Club wants to be a part of the new Altrusa branding initiative.
20. The Nominating Committee did their job quickly. Finding Board members was much easier this year. When health reasons called for one candidate to drop out, another was easily found to replace her.
21. Our new President for 2011-2012 found Leaders for Committees quickly. Many of the Leaders who served in 2010-2011 are returning as Leaders of the 2011-2012 Committees.

Goal I, "Strengthen Altrusa Leadership", was definitely achieved. With this goal achieved, I feel that our Club became stronger and was improved.

Goal II: Work with other Altrusa Clubs

If Altrusa is going to be strong, I feel Clubs should work together. As the largest District Nine Club, Richardson should lead the way. International makes Grants and gives support; District Nine often gives monetary help to Clubs and definitely gives support, so our Club should also continue this chain of aid. Each Altrusa Club, no matter what size, "reinvents the wheel." Each Club holds Membership Recruitment Events, Fundraisers, etc. Going together on some events might help Clubs receive more publicity, save money, raise more money, and get more members. It could be a "win-win" effort. The following are examples of how our Club started on this goal.

- I. Our International Committee emailed other Clubs to learn more about them and to present information as accents or special moments at our meetings. Since New Zealand was our Sister Club, the committee started there. The reply came that New Zealand was having a September 8 "Altrusa Great Read" for International Literacy Day. Our Club decided to join them; requirements were to read for ten minutes on

the same date and report the number of readers to Te Awamuto, New Zealand. District Nine Club Presidents were emailed to ask their members to also read. Richardson reported 2,827 readers in District Nine. Many District Nine Club Presidents stated, "What an easy, fun project."

2. Our Club's agendas and newsletters announced all Club events that were sent to us. Our newsletter often reported with pictures from events of District Nine Clubs. Examples are: Collin County's donation to Foreman Elementary library and Borger's member "swap".
3. Richardson members supported our Mother Club, Dallas. Members attended their Birthday Dinner, shopped at their Christmas Market, attended their "Altrusa Celebrates Women" fundraiser, and drank tea at the afternoon membership tea.
4. Jo Leeper and Samantha Slaight presented a "Communication Styles by Color" program to the Garland Club. Julianne Lovelace and Courtenay Tanner shared with the Garland Club about their travel experiences when they purchase items for their business, "Four Women Shopping."
5. Invitations to "Outstanding Women of Today", our fundraiser, were sent to many Altrusans who attended the luncheon. Although our members cannot be nominated, there has often been an Altrusan nominee from the Metroplex. Laura Trainor-Collins was the Altrusa nominee this year.
6. Seven Richardson members led workshops at District Conference and another helped with Credentials. District Nine Committees had 5 of Richardson members and 2 will continue to serve on the 2011-2013 District Committees. We supported our District.
7. When an Earthquake hit New Zealand, our Club quickly responded with a check for \$500 that was sent directly to the District Fifteen Governor. The money could be used in any way that would help Altrusans.

These seem like small steps toward truly working together, but hopefully this bonding will continue in the future. I knew this was a new idea and that a large metroplex project probably would not happen. I've been taught that small beginnings lead to bigger things. This year Altrusans worked with 15 agencies in Richardson and the Metroplex, giving to them our dollars and our service. We know how to reach out to help our community. I know we can also help our sister Altrusans. Goal II, "Work with Altrusa Clubs," is hopefully a new beginning in continuing to bond and aid other clubs.

Goal III – "Interweave Our Projects, thus Growing Membership Interest and Getting More Publicity"

As President Elect, I thought about polling Community leaders and taking these suggestions to a committee to pick one large, new Service Project for our Club. As my year as President Elect passed, I realized that a large service project didn't fit our Club. Our members like variety and like having many projects that they are passionate about. I had to remember, "**If it isn't broken, don't fix it.**" Committees have always planned projects, announced them to membership, and members served as available. With this goal, I hoped committee projects would overlap in planning and more excitement would grow. Since members pick their own projects, lots of members do not know the exciting things happening in other committees. Our members often stay with a committee for

many years because it is their passion. I hoped to create bigger, exciting projects within what we were already doing. The following are some excellent examples that helped achieve this goal:

1. The end of my year ACE Award winner for a Foundation Committee, Community Outreach, immediately took the challenge. Richland Elementary School had 8 fifth graders in an eight-week program called "Little Ladies Lunch Group." Their sponsors wanted to provide each girl with a copy of the Emily Post Guide to Good Manners. The Education Committee did not have extra funds, but Community Outreach stepped in and purchased and labeled the books "from Altrusa International of Richardson." The Thank You notes and picture from the sponsor and the girls were exciting for our entire Club.
2. The Outreach Committee also decided to help the International Committee by honoring World Health Day on April 17. Volunteers worked on that day at NETWORK of Community Ministries, a Richardson area agency that provides a food bank and aid for family services. In three shifts, including a lunch shift, Altrusans packaged beans and rice, sealed packages, and sorted foods.
3. During September Literacy Month, the Outreach Committee worked with Richardson Reads One Book, providing ushers for the citywide lecture by the author and making a \$1,000 sponsorship to this event. At its new Book Club, the Retention Committee chose to read and discuss The Art of Racing In the Rain, the selected book. This support from the Retention Committee had more Altrusans reading the "one book" selection and helping usher than in the previous 7 years.
4. The Leadership Committee knew that the Nina Faye Calhoun Award for International required that at least two meetings be devoted to International topics. Both leaders of the International Committee had very serious health issues in the fall. A wonderful November program by Rita Martin, US Team Coordinator for HELPS International, Inc., provided us with information about the graduation of our adopted student from the newly built two-story Guatemalan school, and our Club's excitement led to a pledge to again adopt another female student. A second International program did not seem possible, but in January, the program the Leaderships Committee gave was one that stressed International Leadership problems. Our Club met the International meetings goal because Leadership stepped in to help.
5. Our Education Committee has long been International. At our adopted school, Terrace Elementary, children speak 15 different languages. The school's motto is "Many Faces...One Family". The Education Committee chose to add a different International touch by bringing Chinese New Year, complete with drums, dragons, and information, to Pre-K through Second grade students.
6. To get books for Terrace, NETWORK, and Neighborhood Youth and Family Counseling, Altrusans arrive early on Saturday mornings at the Half Price Books Warehouse to box up free books. The Education Committee learned from Retention that "food brings out the Altrusans," and was able to involve more Altrusans by going to breakfast following the hard morning of loading books. Over 3,900 books were collected.
7. Seniors Committee and Retention joined together for the Alzheimer's Memory Walk at the Dallas Zoo. Although it was a very early 6:00 AM start and a very cold

November day, 17 Altrusans registered a record number of over 60,000 walkers. Members then went to breakfast to celebrate and get warm.

8. Retention hosted a February reception for the nominees from our 2010 Outstanding Women of Today and used this reception to kick off the 2011 Luncheon.
9. Our Scholarship Committee selected 5 very International winners from 74 applications. One told of her escape from Africa. Two others told of their families coming to America for better lives. Our reinstated Mary Latimer Medical Scholarship, given to a woman who wants to further her nursing skills, went to a young, single mother with the desire to teach nursing.
10. Community Outreach and Retention have decided to put back \$400 for new pillows for women in a shelter. A Retention Committee "Sewing/Decorating Party," maybe including a Sleepover, will be the fun part of this project. The Committees plan to print the new Altrusa Logo and supportive decorations on the pillowcases then delivery the pillows on November 25, International Day of the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Goal III –"Interweave Our Projects thus Growing Membership Interest and Getting More Publicity" had a good start, including a project that is pending for next fall. More members felt the excitement of projects. The many articles and pictures from the committees for Altrusa Tidings helped spread the news of our successes. Committees begin to understand that partnering with other committees can produce better results and often supply additional money when needed. Members saw through the Altrusa Tidings that our Club is involved in many activities.

Our Club continues to have many service projects, including 10 Ability House, 19 Seniors Committee, 12 Community Outreach, 6 Scholarships, 17 Education, and 8 International Committee. Just a few examples from these committees are:

1. Ability House, where we celebrate birthdays and holidays with gifts and parties for the residents and supply cable TV (\$800), decorations, or needed furnishing (refrigerator) for our friends with cerebral palsy. Our Club was again honored with the 2010 Outstanding Organization Award "for extraordinary efforts in creating a life without limits for people with disabilities" by United Cerebral Palsy.
2. Seniors Projects, where we call Bingo, serve tea or lunches, move books from the Richardson library to the senior care facilities, and auction off items for "apple bucks."
3. Support of Richardson and the city's agencies by donating \$85 to the Police Department's National Drug and Safety Literature, giving 285 toys to the NETWORK Santa Program (almost 100% of membership gave to this), donating 287 pounds of food to the NETWORK food pantry, shopping for \$400 of toiletries and donating small toiletries brought by members in March and April for NETWORK, creating "snow women" costumes and a song for marching in the Richardson Christmas Parade, and shopping and packing emergency lunches to feed hungry clients who are being interviewed at NETWORK
4. Terrace Elementary, where we planned, made, and maintained 13 Homework Backpacks for Pre-K at the request of the teacher, ran both an 8-week "Teddy Bear Time" and a 6-week "Read to Me" programs teaching 26 families how to read with

their child, chaperoned 5 field trips, and gave hundreds of hours of individual time to the children

5. Supported Camp Summit, a camp for disabled individuals, with a \$600 donation to send a camper to camp, helped with the "Spring Clean Up" at the camp (Our job was to clean the entire recreation room, which included all the tables and chairs for meals.), and funded an Eagle Scout, who refinished the camps porch swings.

There were Altrusa events on almost every week of the calendar year.

Our scrapbook, that holds the 32 newspaper articles about Altrusa and 18 additional articles about Altrusans plus all the pictures and items from the 2010-2011 Altrusa year, is over eight inches thick. A second folder holds copies of all twelve issues of our informative, colorful, emailed Altrusa Tidings. Agendas that were left over after meetings were recycled as background for the scrapbook. Our Club was busy. We budgeted \$18,821 for donations and projects. We gave over 2,407 hours of Altrusa community service, over 2,394.5 hours of Altrusa member service, and over 4,290.5 hours of service outside of Altrusa. This totals 9,092 hours of service! And I know that many of our busy members did not even record their hours. A true number of hours would be unbelievable! Altrusa makes a difference in Richardson.

Richardson Altrusans worked to maintain a professional, smooth running club. A committee reviewed and updated our policies. Last year's Strategic Planning Committee decided that a review of our plan could be done in rotation with a review of policies, so it was not addressed this year. Meetings were started on time and were kept to a tight schedule. Members were fined \$.25 for not wearing their Altrusa pin to meetings, Board members \$.50. We worked hard to make our Club one that we were proud of and that District Nine and International could be proud of. We hope to be the leaders in new software, Wild Apricot, software for non-profit groups. It will be used for our Yearbook, website, newsletter, pay pal, etc. Many administrative duties will be easier with this new change. Yes, it will be a challenge, but we want to move into the future.

Sadness filled our Club with the death of Diane Price, President in 1979-1980. Diane was a very active member and a true lover of Altrusa. At her memorial service, her Florida sister commented, "Of course, I was President of my Altrusa Club; Diane wouldn't have allowed me not to be." Diane's husband, Jim, a wonderful Altrouser, was honored that District Nine remembered Diane at its Memorial Service. Another of our Emeritus Members, Dot McCalpin, is seriously ill. Barbara O'Dell, another strong member, suffered a stroke last fall, and we have applied for Emeritus status for her. Other members have been held close in prayer and TLC.

Joys have also filled our Club. We have celebrated births of grandchildren, weddings, promotions, and retirements. We took in over \$400 on brags. My big brag came when I announced that I was moving from Dallas back to Richardson. I bought a house only five minutes from the Richardson Woman's Club, where we meet. Although my husband and I downsized, we moved because of Altrusa and my Altrusa friends. All our activities and most of our friends are in Richardson.

Our Club's leadership is now stronger; members seem more involved and prouder. Communication, our strength, got even better. I know this year's goals helped make a strong Club stronger. I didn't fix it, because it wasn't broken. I love leading such talented women and truly hate giving up my gavel. You, the Members, were the Leaders, so leadership was easy. I am excited about our 2011-2012 President's goals. Her goals follow my year quite well. She plans to keep many of the ideas, practices, and projects that began in 2010-2011.

I close with one announcement. I should receive a President's pin, but I already have one. I remembered that Julianne requested that books be donated to the Richardson library. This was fitting, as she was the head librarian. I noticed that the Richardson Woman's Club is losing trees. After research by Brenda Duckett, the Board approved \$200 to be donated to the Richardson Woman's Club Arbor Fund for the city to plant a tree at the Woman's Club to honor Altrusa for the 2010-2011 year. Hopefully, we will know when the planting occurs and can be present. Each of us can walk by that tree for years to come, as we attend Altrusa meetings, and say, "I remember what a marvelous year that was." I know I look forward to many more years of service and friendships. Again, thank you for being my talented Altrusa sisters. I plan to call my Presidents Report "The Year of the Leaders" because **you** led the Richardson Club.

McKenmore