

# NEWSLETTER

Altrusa International of the Central Coast, Inc  
PO Box 5026, Santa Maria, CA 93456  
[www.districteleven.altrusa.org/central-coast](http://www.districteleven.altrusa.org/central-coast)



DECEMBER 2025

Hello! I hope that each of you had a very Merry Christmas filled with faith, love, and joy. Three traits to bring with you into the new year. Speaking of the new year means a new beginning and resolutions are being considered. A Resolution is a firm decision to do or not to do something... keep in mind what you could do to add to our Altrusa club. January is when a nominating committee is developed to search for candidates for upcoming vacancies on the club board. You could serve on the nominating committee or maybe even consider serving on our board. Or you could chair a project. There are so many options coming your way for the New Year. Let's enjoy 2026 together.

Happy New Year,  
Nancy

## IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

**Jan 4**-World Braille Day  
**January 5**-Board Meeting-Shaw's Tavern 6pm  
**Jan 11**-Human Trafficking Awareness Day  
**January 12**-Business Meeting-IHOP 6pm  
**Jan 24**- International Day of Education  
**Jan 28**-Multicultural Children's Book Day



DECEMBER/JANUARY

**12/25**-Raul Aguirre  
**1/15/26** Natalie Baldwin



## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

### **A Simple Christmas Tradition (written by members of our club):**

**Bea Goyette:** After my dad died, I really couldn't handle Christmas for several years, so we traveled - New York, Washington, DC, San Francisco, San Diego, Rome. Paul and I and Barry. It was fun and interesting. In DC, we stayed at the hotel directly across from the White House. We had adjoining rooms with balconies overlooking the White House. The door to our balcony was locked and we could not use it. Barry's was accessible and apparently, he was out there with his camera, extended lens, taking photos. Suddenly, there was a loud knock on our door. I opened the door and was surprised to see hotel security, DC police and Secret Service members. They came into the room and searched everywhere including under the bed and in the closet. Then they accessed Barry's room and searched it. Evidently the Secret Service members stationed on the roof of the White House saw Barry on the balcony and were concerned about his intentions because the president's 3 helicopters were on the lawn ready to fly. Barry and I followed the agents out of the hotel as we were going for a walk. Barry made a smart aleck remark about doing it again and the agents politely suggested that was not a good idea. Scarey, in the moment, but very funny in retrospect

**Melinda Aguirre:** Growing up in Texas in the 1960s, Christmas at our house didn't come with fancy stockings or expensive gifts. Instead, my dad would hand each of us a brown lunch bag filled with small treasures — an orange, a handful of peanuts, and a few pieces of candy. It was humble, but it was full of heart. Back then, an orange was a special treat, and those little bags were his way of sharing joy from his own childhood traditions. Today, that memory reminds me that the spirit of Christmas isn't found in the size of a gift, but in the love behind it. Those simple paper sacks taught us gratitude, generosity, and the beauty of celebrating with what you have. And even now, the scent of an orange or the crinkle of a paper bag brings back the warmth of those Christmas mornings — a reminder that the simplest traditions are often the most meaningful.

**Stacey Bassett:** Christmas memories for me are a lot and I carry them in my heart and mind every year. Even though time has definitely changed, I still spent every Christmas with my cousins, aunts, uncles, parents and of course my Grandparents... A few things that trigger, to me, memories...My Grandparents doing stockings with tangerines, mixed (the real nuts, not in can) and chocolate coins. Queen Anne Cordial Cherries (my grandpa loved them and so do I). Also, My Grandpa always started Christmas Dinner and Thanksgiving singing the Doxology. He would look around the table with a big smile on his face and tears in his eyes. So, Christmas or Thanksgiving I spend with my mom or her side of the family; we always sing that in his honor... Those holidays are very important to me and I'm glad I have great memories that I would never trade for the world.



## LITERACY

### Literacy in Action

From June through December 2025, Altrusa of the Central Coast proudly gave away approximately **5,500 books** to children in our local community. Through our club literacy projects and **ASTRA book giveaways**, we reached **5,500 kids**, each receiving a book to take home and call their own. The joy on a child's face when they receive a book is something special. For many, it's more than just pages and pictures—it's the chance to read someone else's story, hear someone else's voice, and discover new worlds through reading. These moments spark imagination and nurture a lifelong love of learning. Providing books for children to read at home helps strengthen literacy skills and opens doors to curiosity and creativity. Every book placed into small hands is a step toward a brighter future. As we move into the new year, our commitment to literacy continues. Together, let's keep the momentum going and reach another 5,500 kids in our community, sharing the gift of reading—one book at a time.

## SERVICE

**RECURRING SERVICE PROJECTS:** The following list are recurring monthly projects. Our club is always collecting **RX bottles, aluminum tabs and bedding for Sleep in Heavenly Peace**. Please bring them to our business meetings. Aluminum tabs go to Stephanie- RX bottles go to Bea-and Melinda gets the bedding. Thank You!

### Alzheimer's Walk Recognition- (*one of our yearly service projects that is ongoing*)

Bea Goyette received two awards this year for her outstanding participation in the Alzheimer's Walk. With the generous support of our club and foundation, Bea was able to reach her fundraising goal in loving memory of her husband, Paul, who lived with Alzheimer's disease. Bea shared that participating in the walk makes her feel she is truly helping a meaningful cause reach its mission, and we are grateful to have supported her dedication and commitment.



## Hope Village Christmas Stockings

The spirit of giving was alive and well this holiday season as Altrusa members came together to assemble Christmas stockings for the residents of Hope Village. The stockings were put together at Sunday Ballas' church, with the help of fellow Altrusa members and Sunday's church friends. Thanks to everyone pitching in and donating items, the project came together quickly and smoothly. Tables were filled with an abundance of thoughtful donations, making the assembly both easy and joyful. On December 19, members worked side by side to fill each stocking to the brim. Every stocking included a generous assortment of items the Hope Village residents would need, want, enjoy, or eat, ensuring each gift was both practical and heartfelt. The completed stockings were delivered to Hope Village on December 22, just in time to spread holiday cheer. This project was a wonderful reminder of what can be accomplished when members come together with willing hands and generous hearts—making the season a little brighter for our neighbors at Hope Village. Pictured is **Sunday** and our newest member **Emily**.



## Celebrating 3,000 Beds of Hope

Since opening on January 15, 2022, the Sleep in Heavenly Peace chapter has made a tremendous impact in our community, recently celebrating the delivery of its **3,000th bed** on December 3, 2025. Each bed provides comfort, dignity, and a safe place to sleep for a child in need. Altrusa of the Central Coast is proud to support this mission through donations of sheets, pillowcases, and blankets this past year. Our student clubs have also rolled up their sleeves—Astra of Pioneer Valley has participated in three bed builds, and Astra AHC has joined two so far. Volunteers of all ages make these builds possible, proving that when our community comes together, incredible things happen.

**Next build: The Home Depot – SLO, Saturday, February 21, 2026.**

*"Volunteering is the heart of a strong community—and every helping hand truly makes a difference."*



### Youth Leadership Committee

The Days for Girls Youth Leadership Committee was created in 2025 to bring youth voices and insights to the heart of our global work. This advisory committee plays a vital role in amplifying the impact of our mission and deepening our commitment to meaningful youth engagement. Our Youth Leadership Committee comes from a diverse range of backgrounds, each bringing their unique experiences and perspectives on menstrual equity. There is currently eight board members that are from diverse college institutions.

### Key Committees for a Strong Altrusa Club

Altrusa International's Encyclopedia recommends that each club establish three essential committees: a **Service Committee**, a **Membership Committee**, and a **Literacy Committee**. Depending on the size and needs of the club, the Service and Literacy Committees may be combined. These committees are considered the most important to ensuring the club operates smoothly and fulfills its mission. They provide structure, encourage member involvement, and help guide meaningful service and literacy projects throughout the year. All committees should be made up of club members, allowing everyone the opportunity to share their skills, leadership, and passion for service while strengthening the club as a whole.



## COMMUNICATIONS

**Sunshine Committee**-The Sunshine Chair is responsible for communicating, on behalf of the Altrusa Club, any get well wishes, condolences, sympathy, etc. to members needing a little Sunshine in their life. Sunshine examples might include reaching out to members who are sick, have had surgery, are in the hospital, lost a loved one, etc. Thank you to Stephanie for chairing this committee. Stephanie can be reached at 805-310-2263 or by email at 60mermaidstevie@gmail.com.

**Newsletter Committee**-If you have articles/pictures, please email to Melinda by the 25th of each month at: [melinda.aguirre84@yahoo.com](mailto:melinda.aguirre84@yahoo.com) or text 805.448.6268

**Website and Social-Media**-You can visit our CLUB website at:

[districteleven.altrusa.org/central-coast](http://districteleven.altrusa.org/central-coast).

Check us out on face-book at our official page, Altrusa of the Central Coast.

**District Service Bulletin**-The DSB was emailed to all District Eleven members three times per year and contains DISTRICT ELEVEN updates. Make sure to read it and any other emails you receive from Altrusa International.

\*You can find the district eleven website: [districteleven.altrusa.org](http://districteleven.altrusa.org).

**Altrusa International-THE COMPASS** comes out every other month to ALL Altrusa Members and is filled with any changes, events and inspirations and can be found at the International Website: [altrusa.org](http://altrusa.org). **username**: Altrusan, **password**: MamieBass1955

**Yearbook**-The communications committee is working on our **club yearbook; expected by October 2025**.

### ***Navigating the ALTRUSA Web... • Important websites to know!***

[www.altrusa.org](http://www.altrusa.org) (click Member Login in the upper right) *See above*

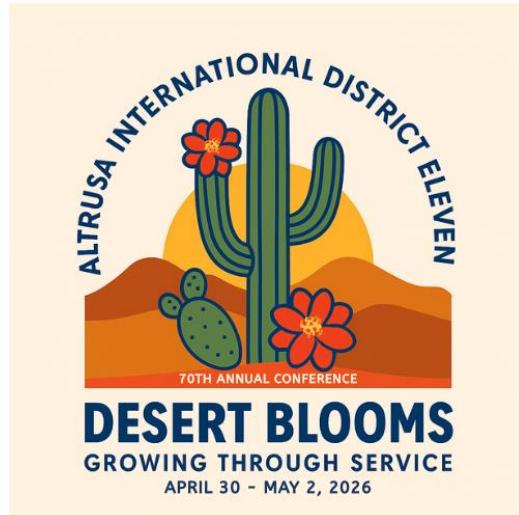
[login.altrusa.org](http://login.altrusa.org) (go directly to the members area)

[www.altrusastore.com](http://www.altrusastore.com) (purchase Altrusa branded items including pins and banners)



## DISTRICT ELEVEN NEWS

### DISTRICT ELEVEN INFORMATION:



### **“CELEBRATING 70 YEARS”**

**ALTRUSA INTERNATIONAL NEWS-Why WE choose Altrusa (taken from [altrusa.org](http://altrusa.org) website):**

“Leading to a better community”

We believe that everyone is able to make a positive difference to the world around them. We can each volunteer our time, or donate our money, towards worthy causes. Our individual efforts are small, but they matter.

We can achieve even more when we bring people together. For over 100 years Altrusa clubs have collected members from varying occupations and lifestyles, all sharing an interest in community service.

We enjoy the friendship, fun and satisfaction that comes from working together for the benefit of others. Each club develops a program that is tailored to local needs, undertaking a variety of hands-on service and fundraising projects each year. One of our shared goals as an organization is to improve literacy, which we believe is the key to opportunity.

Through Altrusa activities we develop our leadership skills in a supportive environment. We welcome new ideas and aim to provide enough flexibility so that our members can give their time in a way that works for them.

## CLUB FOUNDATION NEWS

### FESTIVAL OF TREES-IN APPRECIATION

#### **A Big Thank-You to Nancy and Our Wonderful Volunteers**

A heartfelt thank-you to **Nancy**, our Festival of Trees scheduler, for doing an outstanding job coordinating all the volunteer shifts. She called, texted, and followed up to ensure every spot was covered and the event ran smoothly. And thank you to all our **club members** who answered the call and stepped in to help. Your teamwork and support kept the magic of FOT shining bright! Let's not forget **Ana Jacobo**, former Santa Maria FFA for her expertise in Social Media Marketing.

#### **Gratitude for Our Incredible Organizers**

Thank you to **Noe, Leticia, Maria and Nancy** for their exceptional organizational skills in coordinating our sponsors, mall move-in and move-out, and all the behind-the-scenes details that make Festival of Trees possible. They managed countless calls, paperwork, the insurance policy, mall space logistics—and, of course, the all-important task of securing our tree sponsors. It truly takes a village, and we are grateful for each one of you who helped bring it all together!

#### **Thank You, Chuck!**

A heartfelt thank-you to **Chuck** for sharing his incredible knowledge of computers, video filming, and creative advertising. Every year he steps in without hesitation, helping us make the Festival of Trees better than ever. His skills, support, and dedication are truly invaluable. Our club members are grateful—and FOT simply wouldn't be the same without **Chuck**!

#### **A Shout-Out to Ronnie**

Let's not forget a big thank-you to **Ronnie**, who plays a vital role behind the scenes at Festival of Trees. He helps with tree setup, measures out the spaces, and even steps in as our unofficial security guard—always watching out to make sure we're safe. **Ronnie** also pitches in with cleanup and is always ready to help our members whenever needed. We appreciate you, **Ronnie**!

#### **Grateful for Our Amazing Youth Volunteers**

A huge thank-you to Mark and the Santa Maria FFA, and Tyler and the Pioneer Valley FFA, along with our three Astra clubs, for their tremendous support during Festival of Trees. These young volunteers hauled, lifted, cleaned, vacuumed, created labels, handed out People's Choice Award slips, and so much more. They make the workload lighter for our club members. Their help is a major lifeline before, during, and after our fundraiser. Thank you to each and every one of them!

## **FOUNDATION BOARD:**

1. Next meeting is January 2026, date TBD. We will discuss disbursement of FOT money;
2. FOT wrap-up dinner will be scheduled sometime in January 2026
3. Noe is working on updating the scholarship and grant applications so they can be uploaded on our website.

## **Celebrating Giving That Makes a Difference!**

Altrusa of the Central Coast Foundation, Inc. is a proud 501(c)(3) nonprofit, established to provide tax-deductible donations and expand our ability to give back to the community. Our one and only fundraiser, started December 2003, the beloved **Festival of Trees**, fuels everything we do. Our nonprofit creates a clear structure for managing funds, ensuring money is used only for the organization's stated purpose. We are in our **22<sup>nd</sup> year** of fundraising and have raised over 1 million dollars! We proudly thank the dedicated members of Altrusa Club of the Central Coast whose generosity, volunteer spirit, and heart for service make our mission possible. Because of their support, the Foundation is able to turn giving into action through impactful grants and scholarships that uplift our community. Together, we celebrate service, generosity, and the joy of giving back.



## ASTRA CLUBS- sponsored by Altrusa of the Central Coast

### NOVEMBER-ASTRA Club of RHS by Dayna

Righetti ASTRA continued to be very involved during the month of December with volunteering at many events and spreading holiday joy to those less fortunate with many donations in the community!

**November - December: Altrusa Festival of Trees:** Volunteers had a great time helping with the event.

**November - December:** Friends of the Santa Maria Public Library Book Sale. Many members have volunteered at the book store in addition to helping with their holiday book sale preparation.

**Saturday, December 6th:** Righetti Campus Clean-Up: Volunteers worked on cleaning up the school's campus.

**December: Winter Warrior Program:** An annual program that ASTRA participates in every year. This year we adopted a Righetti special needs student and her family. ASTRA members really stepped up to make this an extra special holiday for this family with all the donations of gifts received!

**December: Socks for Seniors Sock and Blanket Drive:** Our annual drive collecting socks and blankets for Santa Maria senior citizens living at nursing homes and assisted living facilities was a great success! An inexpensive donation of a practical gift and helping spread holiday joy and warmth to our senior population!

**12/13-**Righetti ASTRA participated in the CHC Cares Guadalupe Posada event held at Mary Buren Elementary School on Saturday, December 13th. What a fun well attended event with hundreds of children and their parents! Volunteers Judith Arevalo, Alma Barrera, Daniela Espinoza, Abigail Santos, and Diana Vences did a fabulous job doing holiday crafts and a fun holiday spinner game for the kids!



**12/13-Righetti ASTRA** volunteers Andrea Alejandro, Alicia Blanco, Jacqueline Cuellar, Evelyn Medina, Maria Navarro, Azelea Pereyra, and John Snyder represented their ASTRA Club and the Friends of the Orcutt Library at the Orcutt Christmas Parade on Saturday, December 13th. They helped with carrying the banner, handing out bookmarks and candy, and some road on the float. A fun day for ALL!



**12/20-Righetti ASTRA** hosted a Holiday Crafts event at the Orcutt Library on Saturday, December 20th. A fun, well attended event making holiday crafts and writing letters to Santa and a great way to start winter break! Thank you to ASTRA volunteers Miah Arevallo Tovar, Soleil Blouin, Braden Collins, Zoey Franklin, Natalia Hernandez, John Snyder, and Diana Vences who did an amazing job with the kids!



## NOVEMBER-ASTRA Club of AHC by Melinda

### 12/5-Astra AHC Assembles Gift Bags

At the December 5 meeting, **Astra AHC** members assembled eight gift bags, and wrote out a christmas card and attached to the outside of the gift bag, for Mr. Nava's special education class as one of our club projects. Using the students' "wants" list from Mr. Nava, the members had fun putting the bags together while learning valuable lessons in teamwork and leadership.



### 12/6-Astra AHC Shines at the Parade of Lights

On December 6, **Astra AHC** members were busy at the Parade of Lights! They helped set up and decorate a tree, assisted other organizations with their canopy lights, handed out tickets and candy canes, and pitched in with tear-down. Along the way, they enjoyed interacting with Astra PV students, making it a fun and collaborative event for all.



ASTRA AHC-Adam

## 12/9-A Special Visit to Festival of Trees

Mr. Nava's special education class of eight students toured Festival of Trees and were treated to a story by our member Melinda. The **Astra AHC** club assembled gift bags filled with the students' favorite things, and member Sinai volunteered to help make the event extra special. Mr. Nava was pleasantly surprised by the attention his students received. The kids were thrilled to see the beautifully decorated trees and enjoyed the story—and we can't wait to welcome them back next year!



## 12/9-Later that day...

Vocational Training Center brought in 6 mentally handicapped adult students to tour the trees. **ASTRA AHC** Student Sinai walked them around and pointed out all the different objects and colors on the trees.



## NOVEMBER-ASTRA CLUB OF PVHS by Melinda and Tyler

### 12/5- ASTRA PV Christmas Cards for Seniors

On December 5, ASTRA PV students turned in their Christmas cards for senior citizens at the ASTRA meeting. A total of 30 beautifully written cards were completed and collected, with each student filling out two cards. The cards were thoughtfully written and often included stories from the students' daily lives. In many ways, this activity served as a form of journaling—helping students reflect on their experiences while sharing a personal connection with the recipients. Melinda delivered the cards to Valley Oaks Skilled Nursing Facility, where they brought warmth, joy, and companionship to residents during the holiday season. These heartfelt messages remind seniors that they are remembered and valued, especially during the holidays. This project was meaningful for both the students and the seniors, creating a simple yet powerful exchange of kindness across generations.

### 12/6/25- ASTRA Volunteers at the Parade of Lights

On December 6, eight ASTRA PVHS members volunteered to man a table at the Parade of Lights, spreading holiday cheer while promoting our Festival of Trees (FOT) fundraiser. Guests were invited to take part by receiving free tickets for a chance to win two beautifully decorated trees. We were joined by ASTRA of AHC, and it was especially rewarding to see high school and college students come together, work side by side, and share in this volunteer opportunity. Members helped with setup, teardown, explaining what FOT is all about, and distributing tickets, making the event run smoothly from start to finish. A special highlight was the bilingual skills of the ASTRA PVHS students, which allowed us to connect with even more community members. By the end of the evening, a total of 120 free tickets were given away. This collaborative effort showcased leadership, teamwork, and community engagement—proof that when students come together, great things happen.



## 12/7 and 12/13- ASTRA PV Volunteers at Festival of Trees

On December 7 and 13, ASTRA PV students volunteered their time to assist Altrusa members at the Festival of Trees (FOT). Due to limited space, only three student volunteers were able to work at a time, but their impact was significant. The students helped with a variety of important tasks, including creating labels, handing out “Vote for Your Favorite Tree” slips, counting votes afterward, cleaning up, and returning chairs and tables to their places. Their willingness to jump in wherever help was needed made a big difference. Each year, ASTRA students support Altrusa members during FOT, and they continue to be an invaluable part of the event’s success. Their dedication, teamwork, and positive attitude are a tremendous help to our club, and we truly rely on their support year after year. We are grateful for these students and their continued commitment to service—FOT wouldn’t be the same without them.

## 12/17- ASTRA PV Volunteers at the Mall Kids Event

On **December 17**, ASTRA PV students volunteered at the mall, providing a fun and meaningful service opportunity that allowed them to interact directly with the community. This volunteer outlet gives students the chance to **give away 150 books**, **help children create a craft**, and share in the excitement of each holiday-themed activity. A total of **15 eager volunteers** showed up to help children select a book to take home and assist with the craft project. One favorite task was helping little hands peel the backing off stickers so children could proudly place them on the main page of their craft. The evening was both **fun and informative**, and the volunteers truly enjoyed spending their **Friday night** making a difference. Their enthusiasm and willingness to engage with families created a welcoming atmosphere and helped make the event a success for everyone involved.



### CLUB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nancy Voss	President
Maria Castillo	Vice President
Stephanie Stadtmiller	Secretary
Sunday Ballas	Treasurer
Leticia Kossuth	Director
Noe Mahelona	Director
Patty Elswick	Immediate Past President

### FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Leticia Kossuth	President
Raye Zelaya	Vice President
Kim Tito	Treasurer
Melinda Aguirre	Secretary
Bea Goyette	Director
Noe Mahelona	Director

### COMMITTEES

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE: Chair: Leticia; Committee: Maria, Melinda

LITERACY/SERVICE COMMITTEE: Chair: Nancy; committee: Norma, Sunday

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE: Chair: Stephanie, Melinda

ASTRA OF RHS ADVISORS: Dayna DeBernardi Watson

ASTRA OF PVHS ADVISORS: Melinda Aguirre and Tyler Dickinson

ASTRA of AHC ADVISOR: Melinda Aguirre