

## Conference 41, Invercargill, May 2025 Edition



### District Service Bulletin





**Altrusa International District Fifteen 41st annual Conference was held in Invercargill on 2 - 4 May 2025, jointly hosted by Altrusa International Clubs of Invercargill, Queenstown and Taieri.**

'Goodie bags' were reintroduced with a biscuit and something sweet and the bags repurposed after Conference as swimming bags for Invercargill to distribute as they see fit, projecting Altrusa into their community (check out the June Kiwi Altrusan to find out more).

Friday afternoon was time to be inspired by Selina Burnett who led a presentation covering the essential requirements of resilient communities where folk require friends, socialisation, purpose, and value. Selina used examples of communities working together such as the Student Army following the Christchurch Earthquake, community garden projects which teach, share and provide produce and communities where friendships can extend support through health challenges or financial hardship. Three Altrusans, past and present, shared their stories of working with communities for positive outcomes.

Friday night's "Southern Women" party had great energy, with so many varied interpretations, country & western style, rugby supporters, farm girls, Queens of the South, compass taking us south, Indian motorcycle T-shirts, light up necklaces, to Southern Albatross flown in from the Southern Ocean!!

The Official Opening on Saturday was energised by the Town Crier, Lynley McKerrow, from Invercargill followed by our wonderful Guest Speaker, Melissa Vining, talking about her amazing journey. The drive of her husband's illness and experience with the health system - such a long wait for access to diagnostic tests and treatment - and his promise to the community, led to Melissa leading the building of the most Southern free Hospital, where dozens of superb volunteers built and manned this hospital and support the Blood Test research for Bowel Cancer.

The afternoon was based around Think Do Learn.

- **Think** – lunch over a questionnaire on barriers recruiting volunteers, making stronger community connections, and extending Altrusa's brand.
- **Do** – Four service projects were on offer for the afternoon, A decorated "Reindeer" bag containing children's age-based gifts for Women's Refuge. Using wool to make cute Christmas or Easter gifts for children Decorating bookmarks. Cutting and sewing bags for Manaaki Mats.
- **Learn** - a leadership relay with four presenters providing ideas for strengthening leadership pipelines in our clubs.

Our delightful International visitor, Kitty McElhaney, International Vice President, spoke of looking after club members – Mentoring, Coaching and Listening techniques for volunteers. "Listening is one of the loudest acts of kindness".



Sunday breakfast was followed by half an hour with a "comedian" type presentation which lifted our spirits with a good laugh, by Sarah McCarthy.

Claire Patterson – Taieri Conference Chair





## Our International Visitor

### Kitty McElhaney

International Vice President

Altrusa International of Lake City, Florida, Inc.  
District Three



An Altrusan since 2000, Kitty has served on numerous committees in her club, including Club President (2006-2007 and 2018-2019). She served as a District Three Director, Governor Elect and Governor for the 2019-2021 biennium. During her biennium, she chaired the Governor's Council for Altrusa International.

Currently, Kitty is the Parliamentarian for the District Three Board, in addition to serving as the ASTRA Committee Chair. She served as a Director for the International Board (2021-2023) and is currently Vice-President for the Altrusa International Board.

Kitty's professional career spanned more than forty-two years in the role of teacher, school-level administrator and Assistant Superintendent. Though retired, she is often contacted by school systems in surrounding counties to consult on a special project. During her tenure in the school system, she began her service on the Take Stock in Children Board, which provides college scholarships to First Generation College bound students. She continues to serve on that Board, having chaired it for many years. Her altruistic spirit in other areas include serving on a Board that manages foster care and adoptions. A member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Kitty has served as Vice-Regent, Regent and is an Honorary Regent of her Chapter.

Kitty is married to her husband, Frank, of forty years. She has a son, daughter in law, two awesome grandchildren; and her stepdaughters' family includes four amazing grandchildren. When not engaged in family or volunteer activities, she enjoys reading, camping, crafting and quilting.

I am excited to be attending the "Southern Lights - Altrusa Leading the Way in Our Communities."

I am looking forward to making new friends and strengthening connections with familiar ones.

Kitty McElhaney



## Foundation

Conference Foundation Raffle.  
\$1693 raised. A big thank you to Clubs and Individuals for your donations to the Conference Foundation Raffle.

Thank you to Susi and Kay for their help over the weekend

Alison Burr – Cambridge  
Foundation Chair



On Friday, Selina Burnett, globally experienced change management and organisational development consultant, presented "Inspiring Women – Change Makers".

This session was opened to the public with an attendance fee. A collection bucket was handed around at the event and our Altrousers gave a sizable donation.  
In total, \$1,158.80 was raised.

## First timer, Altrusa International Fifteen Conference 2025 in Invercargill

After an adventure of delayed and cancelled flights, a bus trip and alternative flights, we made it to Invercargill. What an amazing experience Conference was, for a first timer, of which I am so pleased to have been a part of.

I would recommend any Altrusan to attend a conference if they are able. What a valuable opportunity to connect with other Altrusans, and to learn about different club projects, and how clubs operate. I learnt so much more about Altrusa and my role as a President-Elect. I felt very welcomed indeed.

The Conference was so very well organised and packed with a variety of activities. Melissa Vining's address didn't leave a dry eye in the place, as she described her late husband's journey with cancer and the hospital that has been built in Southland.

A huge thank you to all of those involved in the organisation of such a good conference. Governor Margaret announced her theme for the next Biennium. It is called "Share the Journey". I am ready to take on my role as President and "Share the Journey". I will be attending the Wellington Conference. I hope to see you there.

Wendy Morgan  
Altrusa International of Rotorua



## Altrusa International District Fifteen Awards



### Mamie L Bass Service Award 2025

1<sup>st</sup> place Timaru  
2<sup>nd</sup> place Invercargill  
3<sup>rd</sup> place Levin

### 2025 Synopsis of winning award entries

#### 'Creating Kindness at Christmas' – Altrusa International of Timaru

Realising we had opportunities to bring some happiness at Christmas to those who are often overlooked, was the catalyst for these three smaller projects. We hope we made the Christmas season a little brighter for those who needed to be made to feel remembered at this time of year.

#### Next Generation Story Tellers – Altrusa International Invercargill

This entry is about providing a pathway for primary school children in a small rural school to enhance their written and oral literacy skills, along with honing their presentation skills. The pathway is a storytelling and speech competition with prizes for the participants and a memorial trophy for the overall winner. The children enjoy this annual event, and we have observed the progress they have made in their literacy skills over the years. The Club feels it is a very worthwhile literacy project with great rewards for all involved as well as honouring the work of Elizabeth Miller aka "Dreamweaver".

#### 'Oasis of Wellbeing' Altrusa International of Levin

Staff of STAR 4 Rehabilitation Ward, Horowhenua Community Health Centre, were excited that our club offered to undertake a community project to enhance their unused soulless outside space. Working bees to paint seating and trellis work, refurbished planter boxes, colourful potted plants, umbrellas to shade cushioned seating, restored the neglected courtyard into an attractive haven. This facility benefits Horowhenua and Otaki residents following hospital stays, and their visitors enjoy the courtyard's comforting retreat. Staff, and adjoining departments, welcome an outdoor break. Our focus was to work collaboratively with STAR 4 staff to create a calm and restful, fit for purpose "Oasis".

## Letha H Brown Literacy Award 2025

1<sup>st</sup> place Hawera  
2nd place Ashburton  
3rd place Invercargill



## 2025 Synopsis of winning award entries

### A night at the movies – Altrusa International of Hawera

Our President's project was all about promoting literacy. As a passionate speech and drama teacher her project aimed to excite children about books, celebrate Roald Dahl's Birthday and bring to life, on the Big Screen, a children's favourite - THE BFG. No cost, giveaways of popcorn, ice blocks, Roald Dahl books and the chance to dress up and have fun.

### Literally in Ashburton - Altrusa International of Ashburton

The Ashburton project "Literally in Ashburton" aimed to reach all ages in the community. "1000 Books before School", and "Books on Wheels", with the Ashburton Library, encompassed the full range of ages of locals, from birth to maturity. Public displays, at the annual Ashburton A&P Show, and the Ashburton Public Library, reached a wider, more casual audience. 150 children's books, donated by the annual Bookarama, were included in Christmas parcels delivered by local charities. We wanted, and succeeded in highlighting the joys of lifetime reading, and the availability to receive this easily in our community.

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## **Dr. Nina Fay Calhoun International Relations Award 2025 Recognition**

### **Ashburton**

After hearing from Ashburton woman, Marilyn Bennett, of the work New Zealand women are doing to fund and operate an orphanage in Uganda, Altrusa International of Ashburton was motivated to provide 13 colourful, 'no sew' fleece cot blankets for use in the orphanage.



## **District Leadership Award 2025**

### **Katrina Clokie**

Recognised for her leadership in Altrusa, contributions to the formation of Altrusa International of Ohariu and involvement with Girl Guiding NZ.



## **Lamplighter 2025**

Presentation of a Diamond Chip was announced by Co-Governors Leanne Milligan and Jenette Borell to Alison Burr (District Foundation Chair) for Services for District as our District Foundation liaison, District ASTRA Chair, and District Director.



IN MEMORY OF THE LEADERS,  
THE INSPIRATIONAL ALTRUSANS AND FRIENDS,  
LOST IN 2024 - 2025



**Alice McLaren**  
Altrusa International  
of Ashburton



**Elwyn Lynn**  
Altrusa International  
of Ashburton



**Brenda Fitzpatrick**  
Altrusa International  
of Tauranga



**Liz Lockett**  
Altrusa International  
of Christchurch



**Margaret McDonald**  
Altrusa International  
of Tauranga



**Jean Scoullar**  
Altrusa International  
of Tauranga



**Sandra Webb**  
Altrusa International  
of Levin





## Southern Women Mix and Mingle

Winners of best  
costume  
– Taieri Albatrosses









## Service Workshops – a very big thank you to our workshop facilitators.

### Reindeer bags



### Easter or Christmas gifts



### Bookmarks



### Manaaki Mats





## Call to Conference 2026

**Altrusa International District Fifteen Conference 42  
is coming to Wellington**



**Past Governors present the call to Conference**



Sneak peek – more detailed information to come in the June edition of the Kiwi Altrusan

### New Board



### 2025 – 2027 Biennium logo



**Note:** There are many photos of Conference activities on the Altrusa International District Fifteen Facebook page. Check them out and copy them for newsletters, marketing, or just to see how gorgeous your club looked. If you click one photo, you should get the option to save the photo. It will save to your device and then you can edit or share it. Please add your photos for others to see.

**Watch for the next edition of the Kiwi Altrusan.  
To be emailed to all District Fifteen members - mid June 2025.**



**Installation Theme: The Fabric that is Altrusa**  
**Based on Governor Margaret Melhop's passion for Fabric.**

When we describe fabric, we can draw many similarities with Altrusa.

- Fabric is made from fibers, which are spun together to make yarn.
- The yarn is then woven or knitted into fabric.
- The fibers are the fundamental building blocks of fabric, just as people are the fundamental building blocks of our clubs.
- They can have the lustre of silk; or the strength of nylon, the durability of polyester, the warmth of wool, or even the abrasiveness of metal.
- When different fibers are spun together, we get a blending of these features, that determines the properties of our yarn.
- This diversity of characteristics also describes our Clubs.
- The yarn can be colourful and fun, complex and textured, soft and fluffy.
- Its composition determines its function: Industrial, domestic, for fashion or furnishings.
- This is how our clubs are fashioned by the blending of our members.
- How they function is determined by the nature of their yarn.
- When the yarns are woven together, we form the fabric that is District Fifteen.
- Weaving the yarn into a fabric is the responsibility of your Board.
- The Board is what brings us all together, to weave our clubs into a fabric that has stability, strength, durability, flexibility, texture and colour.
- The Board members that you are about to meet, have the qualities necessary to do this.



**ACCENT Conference – Friday 2 May 2025**

Presented by Tui Hunter, President Altrusa International of Levin

**Literacy** is a right, not a privilege.

**Literacy** is a bridge from misery to hope.

**Literacy** is one of the greatest gifts a person could receive. Once you learn to read, you will be forever free

**Literacy** is a fundamental life skill, one that serves as a portal to knowledge and a lifetime of opportunity.

**Literacy** unlocks the door to learning throughout life, is essential to development and health, and opens the way for democratic participation and active citizenship