

## ALTRUSA OF THE SEACOAST

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



March is named after the Roman God, Mars. Back in history, this was the time to return to military campaigns. Warmer temperatures and more daylight allowed for the resumption of fighting. Applying this to the present day, our campaign to fight against Covid-19 has increased in March because more people are being vaccinated. The nicer weather that comes in March allows for easier distribution of the vaccine and for people being able to go out and get their shots.

How does this apply to Altrusa and specifically the Seacoast Club? As more and more members become vaccinated and businesses and restaurants open up, we will be able to go back to meeting physically; initiations and installations will take place again and projects/fundraisers will restart. I am hopeful that all this will happen soon.

The Seacoast Club has been busy throughout the winter. We continue to make fleece blankets to donate and initiated new members into this process. For Valentine's Day we brought "Love" to some very grateful individuals at Durgin Pines for the third year. The Dover Children's Home project continued with an order for books from a list that was generated by the teachers and residents. More details are included further along in the newsletter.

Dr. Violet Jimenez Sims, 2nd Vice Governor of District One, joined us in February for her club visit. She explained the function of the DO Board and invited our members to attend the April Conference. This visit came at a very good time. We welcomed three new members at this Zoom meeting who were able to see Dr. Sims and hear her speak. Thank you Dr. Sims.

## Altrusa of the Seacoast Meeting Schedule

- All Club meetings currently take place via ZOOM until it is safe to meet in person.
- The Board of Directors meet on the first Wednesday of the month at 10AM
- Our Club meets for Business meetings on the second Wednesday of the month at 6 PM.
- Program meetings take place at 6 PM on the fourth Wednesday of the month.
- Bill Thompson will be our Guest Speaker at our March 24 Program meeting. He will tell us "Tales and Trivia of Old York". We look forward to it!

## SENT WITH LOVE TO DURGIN PARK



Altrusa once again reached out to our Sweeties at Durgin Pines Rehab and Long Term Care Center by sending over 60 handmade, signed cards, and bright beaded necklaces in lovely red bags, along with lots of love on Valentine's Day. Unable to visit in person this year and participate in their annual Valentine's Day party due to COVID, we had to settle with a quick door delivery and wishes for a wonderful Valentine Party. We'll be back again next year!



## DOVER CHILDREN'S LITERACY PROJECT UPDATE

As COVID has had an effect on everything, our book project for the Dover Children's Home has been progressing more slowly than it otherwise would. We donated seven Kindles in December and now we are pleased to report that we purchased forty four books along with a donation of eight additional books from Altrusa member Barbara Leavey, with a delivery date the week of March 15. Most of the books had to be ordered and that took a few extra weeks to accomplish. Barnes and Noble did a wonderful job to help facilitate this endeavor. They made it easy and a pleasure to work with them. Our literacy project is successfully moving along.



## FLEECE

We've been making fleece blankets for quite a few years for various organizations and those in need. Member Barb Leavey recently came across a great deal at JoAnns for fleece blanket kits for \$5. each, so with the Board's approval she bought eighteen kits and distributed them to those members who have made many blankets before, and also to our four new members who haven't yet made them. A quick Zoom lesson in construction followed for the 'newbies', and we now have eighteen new blankets to distribute. They are smaller than what we usually make, but will be perfect for children or those who are wheelchair bound, or just prefer a lap blanket. Discussions are underway as to where we will distribute these new blankets.



## What am I?

I move incessant to and fro  
Obedient to Moon and Sun  
But though I serve both high and low.  
All wait for me, I wait for none.



## FOCUS ON: Carol Xenos



To quote Bette Davis: “Fasten your seatbelt – it’s going to be a rocky night”, turns out to be a pretty apt title for Carol Xenos’ life story. Carol is one of our newest members and, as such, in this world of COVID, I haven’t had a chance to interact or work in person on many projects with Carol, except behind masks for our “This Snack’s on Us” project.

I should have been aware that this would not be a run of the mill story when her answer to my very first question “Where were you born?” elicited the response “Worcester, MA – I think. I only know for sure that my mother wasn’t there”. Carol was placed in an orphanage for the first year of her life until she was adopted and moved to Holden, MA. Her new family was made up of Carol and an older adopted brother, followed closely by the parents three biological children. She lived in Holden until her family moved to Westfield at the beginning of her freshman year in high school. Although a bit difficult to fit in when you enter a new environment as a high school “newbie”, Carol made that transition well although her home life was not easy.

She left home in her first year of college for financial reasons and had to find money for college and housing on her own. She found work in a restaurant and during the infamous “Blizzard of ‘78” was working in a restaurant geared for truckers. Although travel was banned during this horrendous storm, she made her way to work to provide the truckers with food and coffee during that long and memorable five days.

Carol completed her sophomore year in college, majoring in Art, and then had to drop out for financial reasons. She may not have had much money but she did possess a brilliant mind and was very artistically talented. With this dynamic duo behind her, she was able to secure a job as an apprentice draftsman in structural steel detailing. This was an entry-level job – basically clerical – folding and mailing drawings. She soon proved her abilities and was quickly moved “on the board” doing the detailing. She moved to Waterford, CT in 1980 working on the board doing piping drawings at a nuclear power facility. It was this same year that she married her first husband, and had a daughter, Heather, in 1982. The marriage proved unsuccessful, however. Her husband had many jobs over the next few years, moving them all over the country and never keeping a job for more than six months. After six years of this and now living in Atlanta, GA, Carol had finally had enough and moved back to Worcester with her daughter with a promise – and delivery – of a kitty.

Carol moved many times, seeking geographical cures to help her feel comfortable in her own skin. At this point in her life, things were slowly beginning to come to the surface for Carol. She happened to watch an Oprah show devoted to child molestation and began having flashbacks of repressed memories of molestation. She had been struggling with alcohol abuse for quite some time, suppressing the molestation she had suffered from her parish priest. This began in her own home, since the priest was also a family friend, when she was in either third or fourth grade until Carol was eleven.

This ushered in the beginning of a very long climb back to mental health. She married her husband, Nick, in 1992. He was a machinist; eventually earned a law degree; and was definitely a “keeper”. Carol started a ten year journey of therapy while also working; being mom and wife, and continuing to drink. She joined a SNAP group – Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests. This was a major milestone in her climb to recovery. Through SNAP, she was put in touch with another woman who not only had been molested by this priest, but had been in Carol’s class in elementary school. Together, they brought a civil lawsuit against this priest and eventually settled out of court. This was at the height of turning the spotlight on priestly abuse in the Boston area and the Boston papers and

tv news covered the story. Carol was also part of the group of those abused by priests who were successful in having the courts rescind the gag order that had been imposed on victims of priest molestation from speaking out about it.

Through much counseling, support, and time, Carol has come out the other side an incredibly strong woman. She has a loving husband, daughter, and three wonderful grandchildren; Rennee, Daniel, and Audrey. She is 23 years sober. Throughout all this, she eventually found mental challenges through work in power systems – be it supports for tubes of power plants or internal components of turbine for power generation.

This article, as long as it is, is the truncated version of what Carol lived. I believe it shows the level of determination she possesses – abandonment at birth; orphanage; continued molestation by a priest in her young life and little home support; a very public resolution to a lawsuit from it; alcohol abuse; unhappy first marriage. All this would have crushed a lesser woman. She managed to overcome all of this through many years of counseling, SNAP meetings, self -help and finally being strong enough to speak out about it.

She came to Altrusa through her husband's association with Joel Goldstein and the Masonic Lodge. Joel's wife, Judith is a Seacoast member. To say we are fortunate to have her with us just isn't a strong enough statement. Our Club is beyond fortunate in the caliber of new members joining our ranks. We are once again beyond blessed to call Carol an Altrusa of the Seacoast member.

I will end this with a sentence I have heard Carol say many times as we've talked, and one that she lives by – which is why not only does it serve her well in facing her past as she continues to claim memories that still continue to surface – but encourages others with any issues that may be in their lives to speak out about them:

**YOU ARE AS SICK AS YOUR SECRETS - In other words – SPEAK UP, SHARE, GET IT OUT, GET WELL!**

**A FEW THOUGHTS**



**from the editor**

I never know what to expect with a new member sit down, but I leave every “interview” with a wonderful sense of who she is and a bit of a roadmap as to how she ended up with us. Usually, it's a fairly typical story of a fairly normal upbringing, maybe college, job, marriage, children, grandchildren, hobbies, and how they “found” Altrusa.

I've done this many times over the years. Of course, no one has to tell her story if she chooses not to. It is strictly optional and everything I publish has her complete support. I am utterly amazed at the candor of our members and their willingness to speak freely about their lives and the fact that Donna Reed, or Leave it to Beaver's June Cleavers' lives are not the bedrock of today's society.

I am so proud to be Sisters to these women who have overcome so much adversity in their lives and come out the other side with a strength and devotion to helping others that leaves my jaw on the ground and my pencil poised in mid air as I get so wrapped up in their stories.

I love this part of the newsletter - finding out more about who our Sisters are and the talents they bring to Altrusa. It strengthens us to read what they have gone through. It empowers us to share more of what we, ourselves have gone through and still find more in our reserves to give to others – including our Sister Altrusans. I could not be more proud of our women and the courses their lives have taken and their willingness to share that with all of us. We are mighty, indeed.



## A VERY WARM WELCOME TO OUR THREE NEWEST MEMBERS!



Cyndee Cirelli



Betsy D'Agostino

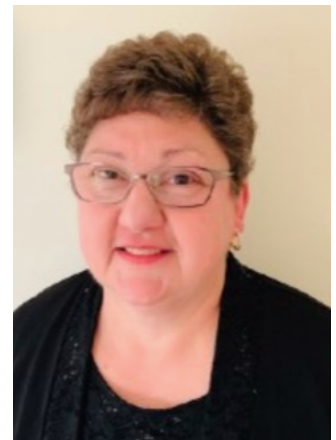


Charlene Plotycia

## DISTRICT ONE – A CHALLENGING AND SUCCESSFUL BIENNIUM

What started out as a normal Governorship for Linda Ring quickly became a biennium to remember. COVID hit us in February of 2020, leaving us all inside, isolating, and behind masks. The bulk of Linda's tenure required ingenuity and positivity in reaching all District One Clubs, keeping us on track and on task. Governor Linda kept District One humming along with her computer expertise; upbeat attitude; hard work; perseverance; numerous Zoom meetings and lots of help and support from her Board and Committee Chairs. This "can do" attitude filtered through to all Clubs in the District and encouraged all of us to soldier on during this crisis; keeping our projects going, and continuing to seek out new avenues of service to explore.

Linda will turn over governorship to Pam Lemieux during the April Conference. Altrusa of the Seacoast joins all District One Clubs in thanking Linda, her Board and her Committee Chairs for a very successful and rewarding biennium.



## BIRCHTREE READING UPDATE

Last Fall, we reported that four members of our Club read Fall and Halloween stories for the kids at Birchtree while being filmed, at a member's home. Obviously COVID is still preventing us from in person visits to the Center itself. These stories were put on a flash drive and sent to the school. This has proven to be very successful. The flash drive was installed on a classroom internet website which Birchtree staff accessed with the few students still physically at the center. Other students who had Staff home visits viewed the stories on tablets as an adjunct to their curriculum. Parents were able to view these stories with their kids as well. Staff at Birchtree have requested we continue with this program and we will be filming more stories for them in the future.

## Riddle Answer:

The Tide

## LIVING WELL . . .with Janet Lawson

Even though normalcy is on the horizon, we must continue to follow a strong game plan; be vigilant about masks, distancing, and vaccinating; kicking this pandemic to the curb and having a successful 2021. Being away from family, friends, work, routine, and activities has caused a huge rise in stress. Focus on constructive outlets that can make a positive difference.



**EXERCISE** is the best medicine. Consistent exercise is one of the most effective, drug-free ways to combat anxiety and stress. It triggers the release of feel good endorphins that kill pain, bust tension, elevate mood and offer a sense of calm. A 15-20 minute walk in fresh air; chair yoga, tai chi or meditation, and just plain deep breathing is powerful enough to calm the nervous system.

**SLEEP** is a vital component of good health. Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep each night. Eliminate blue light – the kind that comes from electronic devices, Fit Bit, I-phone, computer, etc. - for at least an hour before bed. Our body releases melatonin in response to darkness, according to nationally recognized health, nutrition and weight loss expert, Dr. Fred Pescatore, MD. It's the hormone responsible for the sleep-wake cycle and our bodies produce less as we age. Dr. Pescatore recommends the same dosage he takes every night – 3mg. Cleveland Clinic's research team, looking into a 30% lower risk of testing positive for COVID 19 in their patient data registry of those taking melatonin, and focusing on complications of severe illness like sepsis and acute respiratory distress syndrome identified 34 different potential meds or supplements that could help curb complications from COVID 19. Melatonin emerged as one of the tops contenders, states Dr. Pescatore. **ALWAYS** check with your own doctor first before adding any new hormone or supplement to your diet. In the meantime, get outside; exercise; keep a healthy diet; get vaccinated and we'll be celebrating together soon.

## THANK YOU JIM!



As you all know, my husband, Jim, and I have been doing the Newsletter together since it first "hatched". I do the writing (along with help and input from members) and editing. He does the difficult part of fitting everything in, with pictures, quips, whatever. It's worked out very well and we've both enjoyed it. However, due to health issues, Jim will be giving up his position as my right hand. He has done everything he can to fit in everything I have asked of him. It simply could not have been done without him. Writing is easy. Making it into a cohesive, readable newsletter is what he has always done. We get many, many thank yous from all our members, and we both appreciate them very much. I just want to personally give a big **THANK YOU** to him for always, always trying to put

everything together exactly as I'd like it, and making the Newsletter something we're both proud of. **THANK YOU JIM!!!!**



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Spring Conference is scheduled for April 23,-24 2021. It will be a Zoom conference.

**INTERNATIONAL NEWS:** [altrusa@altrusa.org](mailto:altrusa@altrusa.org) 

International Convention in Charlotte, NC is scheduled for July 28-31, 2021.

We continue to support the International SOS Program as well as the Days for Girls Program.