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# Want to find a way to give back to others?

## Contact Altrusa of Charlotte and get started

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Are you looking for a way to give back to your community? Do you want to make a difference in someone's life in 2011? Not sure how to go about doing this? Here's an easy way to make a difference: Contact Altrusa of Charlotte.

Altrusa of Charlotte is the local chapter of Altrusa International, a nonprofit that provides individuals opportunities to change the world through community service.

There currently are 36 members in the local chapter, ranging in age from 26 to 80-something, located all over Mecklenburg County, with one member as far away as Mooresville. There are 15 members in south Charlotte, 220 members in North Carolina and 9,400 members worldwide.

In south Charlotte, Linda Atz is president of the Charlotte chapter and Jo Minchew is in charge of publicity.

Both women, in their 50s, encourage residents to find out more about this organization, which was founded in 1917 and has grown into a service organization.

Many activities in Charlotte revolve around literacy and supporting teachers with books and hands-on activities.

Atz, who lives in Brittany Oaks, has been a member for five years. Minchew lives in Providence Crossing and has been a member for three years.

Both women believe the closeness many members feel is due to their willingness to work together.

Members can suggest ideas for projects. There is at least one project a month and social gatherings.

Atz sees Altrusa as a "nice warm group."

"The women become like sisters," she said.

Altrusa is a "diverse caring group," said Minchew. "It's fun, especially working side-by-side with Altrusa friends. ... (It's) a great feeling to do something for someone."

Over the past few years, local Altrusans distributed more than 18,000 children's books to schools, the Charlotte USO, The Salvation Army and other organizations.

Altrusa member Yolanda Hunter heard about a grant offered through the Washington, D.C., nonprofit First Book. She completed the grant requirements and received \$35,000 worth of books for the Altrusans to distribute locally.

Pinewood Elementary in Charlotte is one of the schools that received books.

The school receives a lot of support from Altrusa. Atz, Minchew and other Altrusans have been involved with an Etiquette and Manners class they teach each year at the school. It's a class designed to bring hands-on manners activities to fifth-graders. The kids learn about setting tables and proper phone etiquette. Members created a manners notebook to use at the school.

Altrusans are involved with projects throughout south Charlotte. They have volunteered with Habitat for Humanity of Matthews and the Butterfly Project at the Sandra and Leon Levine Jewish Community of Charlotte.

In 2010, Charlotte Altrusans packed food items for Haiti earthquake victims, collected school supplies for Pinewood and Sterling elementary schools, collected canned goods for Urban Ministry, made blankets for Project Linus, brought snacks, coloring books and books to the Charlotte USO and bought gifts for angel trees during Christmas.

Some of the projects planned for 2011 include a kite-building competition for Sterling Elementary and a reading day and manners class at Pinewood Elementary.

Eileen A. Schwartz is a freelance writer for South Charlotte News. Have a story idea for Eileen? E-mail her at [eileenschwartzusa@yahoo.com](mailto:eileenschwartzusa@yahoo.com).



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