

# Painstaking paint strokes turn

## porcelain into art

### Sun City china painters fire up graceful works

**MITCHELL VANTREASE**  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

With the light stroke of her brush, Lorna Pieres delicately painted a portion of a pink Dogwood onto a porcelain tea tile.

"It takes time and effort to do this but I enjoy every minute of it," she said. "You just need patience because it's an artform."

Pieres has created her own works of art on porcelain plates, cups, bowls and tiles with the Sun City China Painting Club. More than 75 members are a part of the organization, founded in 1966.

Merrell Grant, president of the club, said china painting takes time and dedication, but anyone could do it with the proper instruction.

"It can go from simple to complex," she said.

Every week, the club offers open workshops for its members. They've often worked on projects for themselves and family members.

In September, Grant will have three free classes for people interested in the craft.

Grant said there are several methods used to paint artwork onto china. Some members trace patterns on their porcelain, then painted them. Others have created a design from scratch or duplicated from a variety photos or magazines.

After members finish painting their china, they place them in a kiln — an oven used for work with glass, pottery, ceramics, china and knife work.

China painting has been a fine art around the world for centuries. The United States didn't recognize, however, it until President Lyndon Johnson declared the craft a part of the fine arts.

### IF YOU GO

- **CLUB:** Sun City China Painting Club.
- **WHERE:** Fairway Recreation Center, 10600 W. Peoria Ave., Sun City.
- **INFO:** 974-6497.
- **MEETINGS:** Beginner through advanced classes Tuesday through Friday. Meetings are at 9 a.m. the first Mondays monthly.

Vernetta Wagg said she's always considered china painting important to the arts. The Sun Citian has been involved with the craft since the 1950s.

The retiree bought a book and taught herself the basic methods. For more than 50 years, Wagg has painted intricate and detailed work.

Wagg recently duplicated a Little League picture of her then 7-year-old great-grandson, who is a teenager now, onto a china plate. She will give it to her grandson, his father, as a present soon.

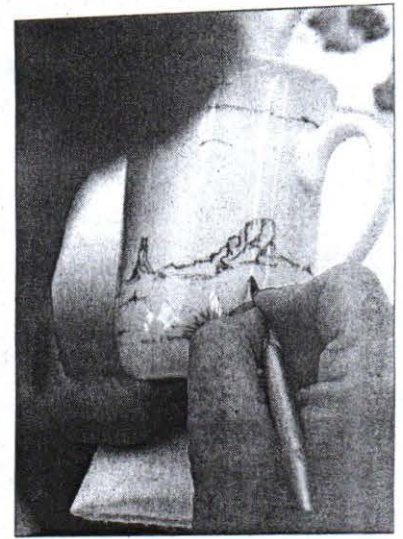
"I tried to put all of the little touches from the photo and more," she said.

China painting has been more than a hobby for some members. They've won several competitions, including a contest with the local chapter of the International Association of Duncan Certified Teachers at Pueblo El Mirage.

"You can create anything you want on porcelain with your mind or patterns," Grant said.

*Have a hobby you want to share? Contact Mitchell Vantrease at 876-2526 or mvantrease@aztrib.com.*

# HOBBIES

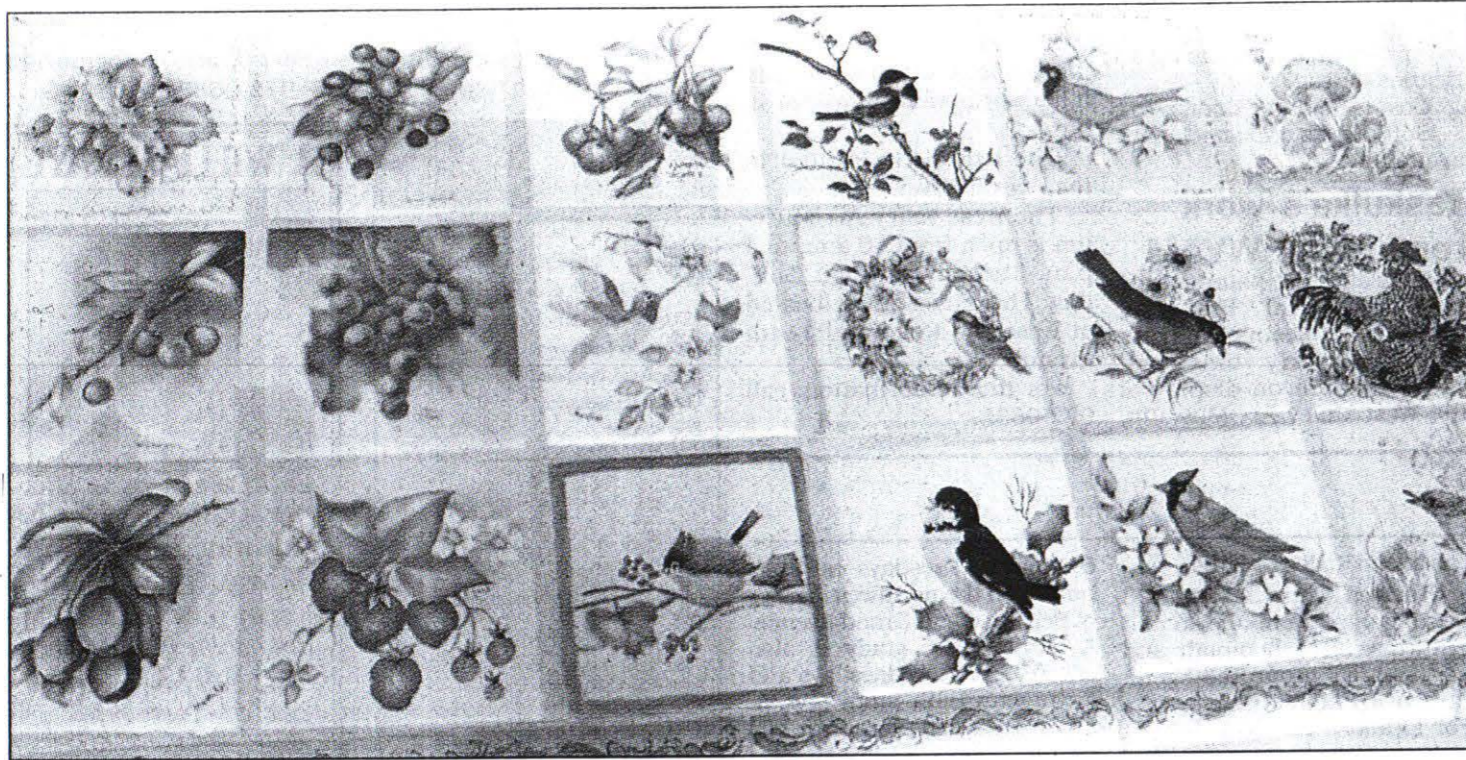


PHOTOS BY STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Roberta Feetham-Licari paints a desert scene, above, freehand on a mug at the Sun City China Painters Club Thursday. Vernetta Wagg, left, loads the kiln with freshly painted ceramic pieces at the Sun City China Painters Club Thursday.



Sophie Clapp, 91, left, paints details on a ceramic clock at the Sun City Painters Club at Fairway Recreation Center.



**INDEPENDENT**  
August 13, 2003

Photos by Chris Seggerman/Independent Newspapers

### China art

Above left, these tiles, which make up a countertop, were painted by individual members of the Sun City China Painting Club. Above, Vernetta Wagg prepares to fire the kiln, which bakes oil-based paint into the china's glaze at about 1,400 degrees Fahrenheit. Far left, Ruth Madrill's portrait of a friend's great grandchild will be part of a matched set. "I've done all of my own, and so I'm borrowing," Ms. Madrill said. At left, Lorna Pieres works on a plate decorated with flowers. The club holds workshops Monday and Thursday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and classes Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9 a.m. to noon at Fairway Recreation Center.

# Club members enjoy one of oldest art forms

HAYLEY RINGLE  
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Ursula High has been painting on china for 26 years, making gifts for her family in Germany and Mexico.

"To me it has been great," said High, who was painting leaves and berries on a centerpiece bowl that she said she likes so much she may not give away. "I may not be the best china painter, but I'm not out there to make money."

High is one of 82 members of the Sun City China Painting Club who spend hours painting and firing their artwork in a kiln to produce their one-of-a-kind pieces at Fairway Recreation Center.

Members paint original or found art on china plates, salt and pepper shakers, bowls, cups and saucers, or any other type of blank china that they can get their hands on.

Using a very fine brush, the china painters paint art such as flowers, children or fruit using a special type of paint specifically for china.

The china is painted several times between firings, enhancing the piece as it is being worked on.

Classes are taught twice a week in eight-week segments on everything from learning how to paint chrysanthemums to painting on bowls.

Jack Simpson, president of the club, began painting china after his wife, Sylvia, got him interested in the hobby.

She was already a member of the China Painting Club at Marinette Recreation Center, so he joined the Fairway club so he

could learn different things than what she was working on.

"I've really enjoyed it," said Simpson, who has been a member since 1991. "(China painting) is one of the oldest arts in the world."

Along with a display of china for sale, the club's new room addition has an extensive growing library filled with hundreds of books of artwork ideas, techniques and suggestions.

"One of the first lessons you have to learn is light and shadow," Simpson said. "It helps it to make it three-dimensional."

Dues are \$5 a year, and members are responsible for buying their own china and paint. No experience is needed to join.

"When I first began I wanted to experiment with colors, so I went to the Bell Library and ran across 'Treasures of Islam' with photos of old plates," Simpson said. "There were plates from the 16th and 12th century and I marveled that both plates were still intact."

Merridee Peterson, vice president of the club, is one of the newbies she said, having only been a member for five years.

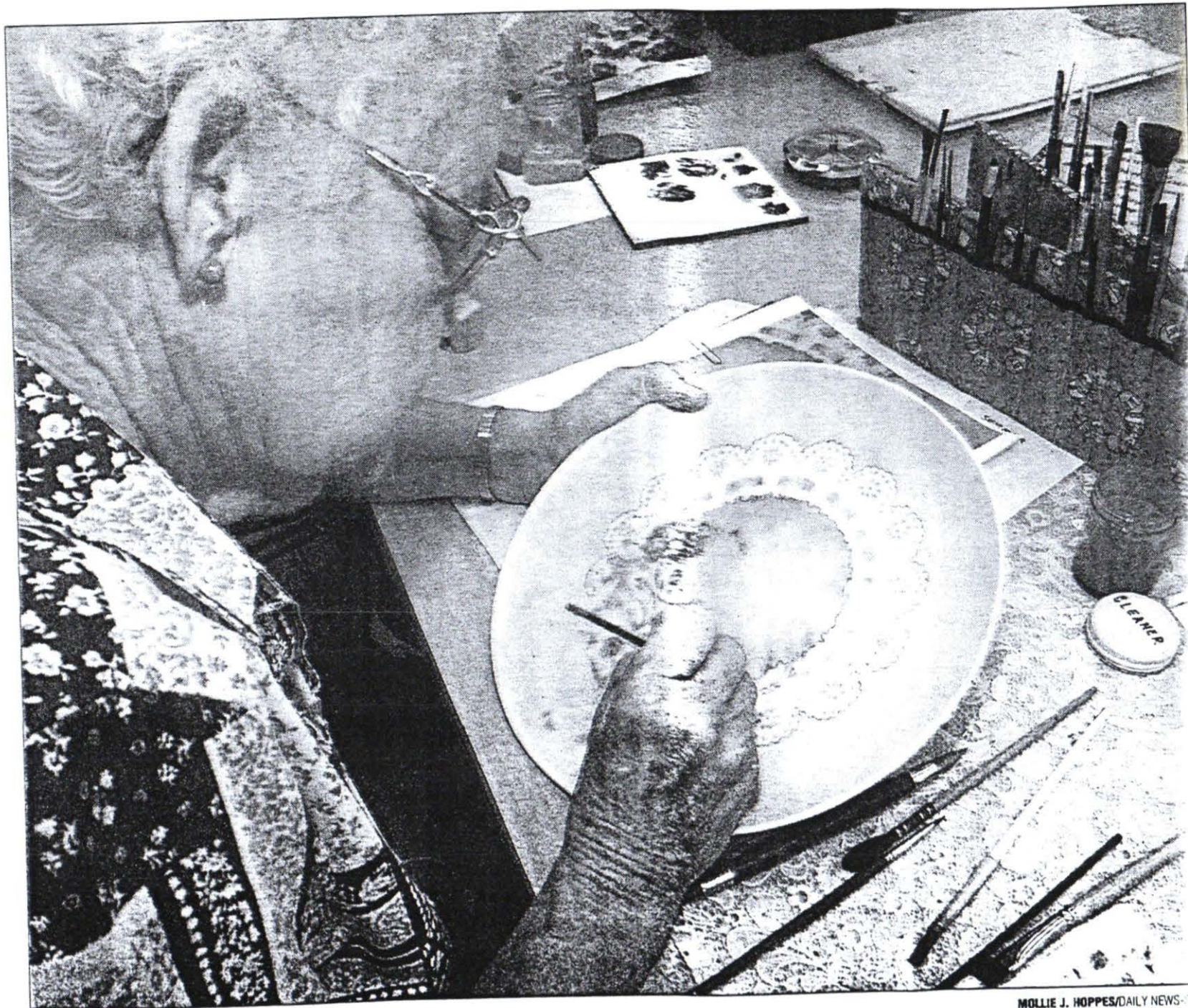
She was painting what is called fantasy flowers on a tea set for her daughter. (Fantasy flowers are flowers that don't really exist.)

The club also has a permanent exhibit in the Sundial Recreation Center lobby of a United States map with each state painted by a separate member.

"I never painted before I came to Sun City," said High, who was also painting flowers and a butterfly on a small plate. "I've always liked painting but never got the chance."

CHINA PAINTING

(over)



MOLLIE J. HOPPE/DAILY NEWS

Ruth Medill darkens the colors on her plate at the Fairway China Painting club. Medill says the project should've been completed earlier but she decided to take the summer off.

# China painters brush plates in masterpieces

By P. SOLOMON BANDA  
Staff writer

In all her years of pouring, painting and firing, Jo Eckel-Newton got one thank you.

That's not to say she's only given away one piece of china. Her work is stored in hundreds of china cabinets around Sun City.

The Del Webb Corp. gave her autographed, hand-painted china away to potential home buyers during the early 1970s. The company was buying 20 pieces a month at \$25 each for its giveaways.

"Only one person looked me up and thanked me," said Jo Eckel-Newton, an instructor for the Fairway China Painter's Club, which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year.

The person who called Eckel-Newton must have known something about the work and the care that goes into china painting, said Marie Hinderman, the vice president of the club. They must have understood the frustration.

Each piece requires a minimum of three firings. A firing is putting the plate in a kiln and heating it to 1,350 degrees Fahrenheit. The heat opens up the pores of the china and lets the paint meld into the plate, making it safe to eat off of.

"Some take seven and eight firings. Sometimes we have a disaster (with the artwork) and we have to throw it away. I can't give it as a gift," Hinderman said.

Throwing it away is a bit drastic for club President Gwen Osterberg, because botched works can still be used.

"You can bring it in here and we can put cookies on it," she said.

Botched pieces are all part of

the learning process. The club was started by one of the original china painting instructors in Sun City. Lillian Haak had been teaching china painting in her home and decided to apply for a charter in 1966.

She and her students found a home in the Town Hall which is now the Oakmont Recreation Center. Dues were \$1. The club moved its headquarters to the Fairway Recreation Center in 1971.

Classes run the first Monday of each month. During the first three-hour session, a china painter might work on a rough outline, sketching what eventually becomes a rose, an angel, a bird or other design with paints that come in dry form and change color after they are fired. More detail is added and then it's fired again.

"Each firing adds a different dimension," Eckel-Newton said.

Most of the club's 92 members have some art background such as tole painting, needlepoint or have taken art classes. Eckel-Newton was an oil painter.

"I've tried the others...This is the most demanding," Eckel-Newton said.

But having an art background is not a requirement. Osterberg didn't dabble in the arts until she became involved with china painting.

Although many of the members didn't make their living wielding a paint brush, they are still artists. China painting was declared an official art by former President Jimmy Carter.

"Don't call this a craft. It's really an art," Eckel-Newton said.

Those interested in joining the China Painters Club may call Osterberg at 974-8279.

CHINA PAINTING

## HISTORY OF THE SUN CITY CHINA PAINTING CLUB

The Sun City China Painting club was started April 4, 1966. They met at Town Hall. November 1, 1971 the club was moved to the former Sun City Library. The club was later moved to the Fairway Rec. Center where they hold classes and workshops daily weekdays from September through May. The monthly meetings are held the first Monday of each month in the Arizona Room, at Fairway.

When Sun City was being promoted by the Webb Co. they bought hand painted pieces from the China Painting Club to give as gifts to Newcomers at the parties Del Webb put on. Some orders were for over 100 pieces. This practice continued until 1980.

This China Painting club hand made and painted the United States map that is displayed on the wall in the Lobby of the Sundial Rec. Center, where it was dedicated Nov. 25, 1977. Each state has a flower which is depicted on the particular state, hand painted in color.

The Sun City China Painting Club holds two shows a year. One in the spring at the Fairway Fair, and the Sundial Show in November each fall. The clubroom at the Fairway Rec. Center is open to visitors and we welcome anyone who is interested in china painting.

Prepared by Iva Munkres, June 9, 1998

Submitted To Society November 2000

This China Painting club hand made and painted the United States map that is displayed on the wall in the Lobby of the Sundial Rec. Center, where it was dedicated Nov. 25, 1977. Each state has a flower which is depicted on the particular state, hand painted in color.





# list of Names of ARTISTS

## Artists

Ernothy Ake  
Helen Blackburn  
Betty Brooks  
Rose Capel  
Mary Cilio  
Faye Cochran  
Cris Craig  
Bulah Bonison  
Josephine Eckle  
Helen Evert  
Joane Link  
Vernetta Link  
Bernice Hadden  
Irene Haines  
Blanche Halfmann  
Lora Harold  
Eunice High  
Aelia Hill  
Evelyn Johnson  
Estella Kamin  
Meredith Michael  
Adeline Lyons  
Bertha Nordt  
Lori Masher  
Luella Reece  
Bernice Schmitt  
Josephine Steele  
Ed. Stephens  
Helen Stump  
Clare Swinbank  
Janette Tar Linton  
Velta Thomas  
Betty Lou Kiss  
Blakely West

Lapidary Work  
by  
Edwin F. Brooks





# Sun City China Painting Club

October, 2000

Volume 1, Issue 6

## Sun City China Painting Club Fairway Rec. Center

### Club Officers

Pres: Jack Simpson.....933-1770  
 VP: Merridee Peterson.....977-0320  
 Treas: Mary Ruggiero.....977-3405  
 Sec: Mary McMartin.....583-2597

### Teachers:

Cris Craig.....Wed/Thur pm  
 Vernetta Fisk.....Mon am/pm  
 Betty Jett.....Tue am/pm  
 Iva Munkres.....Fri am  
 Betty Lou Weiss.....Wed/Thur am

### Newsletter Editor

Mary McMartin.....583-2597



## Sunshine

Please remember in your prayers our member, **Helga Hammersmack**, who has recently lost her husband.

This month has also seen three of our members in the hospital: **Cris Craig**, **Catherine Anderson**, and **Eleanor Kole**. We wish them all a speedy recovery.

## Raffle Tickets

Don't miss out on tickets for the November drawing of a beautiful soup tureen, painted by **Cris Craig** over the summer. Buy your tickets now — Three for \$1.00.

## Our Loss

We've all been touched by the recent heart attack and hospitalization of **Cris Craig**. She has announced her resignation from the teaching staff, and those of us who have known her as a teacher will find it very difficult to find someone who can fill her shoes. We are delighted that she will continue as a member and as our librarian. Best wishes Cris!



## Dates

### To Remember

### November 6, 2000

#### Monthly club meeting:

Remember November's club meeting will be held on Monday the 6th in the Arizona Room of Fairway Rec Center. We have a treat in store for us as **Betty Lou Weiss** has a surprise demonstration. We are asked to bring a blank plate or tile to the meeting. This could be *very interesting!!!*

### November 24-25, 2000

#### Fall Festival:

The Sun Dial Rec Center auditorium will be filled on Friday and Saturday following Thanksgiving with Sun City's largest Arts and Crafts Festival of the year. We have reserved a sales/display space for our club and encourage all members to participate in this grand event. Please sign up to assist in the setup, sales, and/or takedown process for the event. This is a great opportunity for us to show off our beautiful work and make a little money in the process. See **Ruth Medill**, festival project chairman, for further information.

### December 4, 2000

#### Christmas Party:

Come enjoy the Holiday festivities as we hold our December meeting at the Lakes Club beginning at 11:30AM on Monday, December 4th. You may choose from a lunch selection of Roast Loin of Pork in wine sauce or Lemon Chicken with all the extras. There will be special entertainment plus door prizes. The cost this year will be \$14.00, please sign up soon — it won't be a party without you!

P.S. Sign up deadline is November 27th.



## Tea a Success

**W**asn't it fun! The Open House Tea held on Saturday, October 28th, drew quite a crowd. We had 78 guest sign in between 2:00 and 4:00, and 5 prospective members sign up for possible membership. The china display was absolutely wonderful! Who knew we had so many works of art in our club! The demonstrations were a great asset to the event, and your wonderful hospitality made the day for so many guests.

The team work within the club is outstanding. Everyone pitched in to make it a great day. Did you notice the sparkling clean glass on our show cases that **Dorothy Toney** climbed up to and washed the morning of the tea, or the bulletin boards that **Mary Ruggiero** and **Dorothy** revamped. We had a great team of members who set up the china display most beautifully.

**Roberta Licari** spent the entire time pouring tea and coffee, while **Ursula High**, **Donna Gosselin**, or **Merridee Peterson** greeted every guest who came through the door.

But there was more — not only was there a great team orchestrating the setup, but an energetic team continued to keep things rolling by continually replenishing tea pots, sandwich trays and cookie platters.

And what would we have done without the dish washers and cleaning crew?

But of all the work in the rooms, it could not have been a success without the lovely china cups, sandwiches and cookies that each of you helped provide.

Way to Go, Team!!

