

# ALTA NEWS

October 2011

Volume 17

Issue 3

You can't let reading miss you!

Don't hold strain cause you feeling shame!

The Adult Literacy Tutors Association  
Tel: 624-2582 (Belmont)/ 664-2582 (Arima)/ 653-4656 (San F'do)

**FREE**  
Reading and Writing Classes  
for Adults  
(16 years and over)

Register at Public Libraries

Tues 6 & Wed 7 September 2011  
(9am to 6pm)

**BELMONT 624-2582/3442**

84 Belmont Circular Road

Mon-Fri: 8am-5pm

altapos@alta-tt.org

**SAN FERNANDO 653-4656**

St. Paul's Anglican Church Hall,  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 12 Harris Promenade  
Patricia Noel

Mon & Thurs:

9am-3.30pm

Wed 9am-2pm

altasfd@alta-tt.org

**ARIMA 664-2582**

Arima PTSC Terminal Mall  
Alana Lynch-Gomez

Tues/Thurs/Fri: 9am-5pm

altaarima@alta-tt.org

[www.alta-tt.org](http://www.alta-tt.org)

**YOU CAN'T LET READING  
MISS YOU!**

**DON'T HOLD STRAIN CAUSE  
YOU FEELING SHAME!**

This year's theme brought students out in their numbers to ALTA. Not only did ALTA match the landmark 2,000 registration of 2010, but just surpassed this to reach 2,070. We started the academic year with:

- **202 Beginners**
- **705 Level 1**
- **930 Level 2**
- **189 Level 3**
- **44 Spelling Programme**

Again this year all beginner classes are full with beginners comprising 10% of our student population. For the first time Central has more than 20 beginners. Indeed, Central has mushroomed this year with 319 students.

Like last year, we are particularly pleased to see so many men in ALTA. This is no doubt partly due to our spokesmen JW & Blaze.

Noteworthy too is that North and East have more Level 2 students while South has a higher proportion of Level 1 students. This well established trend serves to confirm the findings of the ALTA literacy survey done 17 years ago which showed higher functional illiteracy (equivalent to Level 2) in the North and higher illiteracy (Beginner and Level 1) in the South.

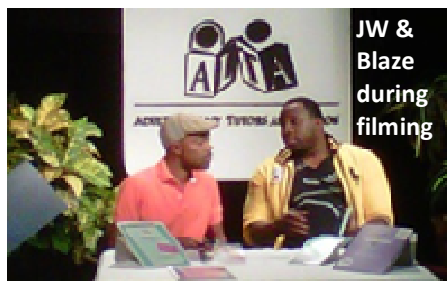
**ALTA 2011  
LITERACY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

JW and Blaze immediately accepted the invitation to be ALTA's spokespersons for a second consecutive year. Andy Johnson at GISL granted free production and Senior Producer Zomarie Tanker created a quality ad at their Morvant studio.



Film crew prepare set for ALTA ad

The ad aired on all major TV stations. TV6 free prime time airing during live broadcasts of "Crime Watch" prior to student registration reached a wide audience. Thank you JW and Blaze for delivering the ALTA message with power and conviction.



JW & Blaze during filming

The 30-second JW and Blaze video ad was posted on ALTA's Facebook page and on YouTube prior to registration and is available for viewing - in case you missed it!

Last year's new outreach initiatives again brought students into ALTA and — best of all — at no cost.

- Pre-movie ads in MovieTowne POS & Chaguanas.
- Digital billboard ads (Sign-Tech & Nexus Advertising)
- Ministry of Community Development community address system (loudspeakers on cars) in rural and hard to access urban communities.

To continue to improve our campaign to reach more and more people, Communications Officer Mariella Garcia is analyzing the findings of the question added to the students data form asking how students heard about ALTA. This will help plan a more targeted campaign — and earn Mariella her Masters in Mass Communication.

## ALTA STUDENTS AND TUTORS SHINE IN MEDIA

JW & Blaze were not ALTA's only male spokespersons this year. Three students — Margaret Lewis, Michelle Motta and Veronica Joseph Gopaul-Chan — did us proud, but special thanks go to sole male student Vincent Valentine, who with his tutor Marlene Charles took on a newspaper interview and two TV interviews without hesitation. Vincent was at home in front of the camera explaining the workbooks, sight word and phonic cards like a tutor!



Marlene Charles & Vincent Valentine with ACTS 25 host about to film in ALTA library

ALTA's 'You can't let reading miss you' message was everywhere — making it hard for you to miss ALTA in 2011!

- 7 newspaper articles, 5 with ALTA students and tutors
- 7 radio interviews despite the newly-declared State of Emergency's domination of the airways.
- 5 television interviews

## THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

ALTA tutor Elizabeth King-Oliver and Level 2 student Wendy Sieudath had their 'half-hour of fame' replacing the 1966 stars *Clint Eastwood* and *Lee Van Cleef* on the Mayaro version of "The Good, The Bad and the Ugly". They were interviewed by Mayaro Cable TV host Kyron James on Sept. 13 in a bid to encourage Mayaro residents to come to ALTA since classes remained undersubscribed even at mid-Sept.

MCTV's Rushton Paray and Kyron James were fully supportive, accommodating ALTA at late notice. Our thanks also go to Lystra Hazarie, Agatha Williams, Arvolon Wilson-Smith and of course the stars of the show: Elizabeth King-Oliver and Wendy Sieudath.

Although not a part of that cast, ALTA Coordinator Felicitas Kisson targeted the CEPEP contractors and other groups in the community as part of the Mayaro awareness campaign. Teamwork works!

## THANKS!

We hope all those who helped this year will be back with ALTA in 2012. To name just a few:

### Students interviewed

Vincent Valentine  
Margaret Lewis  
Michelle Motta  
Veronica Joseph Gopaul-Chan

### Tutors interviewed

Marlene Charles, Norbert Yaw Ching, Ian Georges, Ingrid Stuart

**Sponsors** Digicel, CNMG, Guardian Life, T&TEC, Courts, Methanex, TSTT, Christle Ltd., Parts World Ltd.

**TV Ads / Interviews** TV6 (Rhonda Ottley), CNMG (Hamilton Clement) ACTS 25, Trinity Communications Network, GISL, IETV, CNC3, MCTV

**Radio** CL Communications Network (Ebony 104 FM, Heartbeat 103.5 FM, 97.1 FM), Citadel Ltd (I95.5 FM, Red 96.7 FM and 107.1 FM, Power 102 FM) 103FM, Heritage Radio, Talk City 91.1 FM, Isaac 98.1 FM

**Press** Newsday, Trinidad Express, Trinidad Guardian

**Digital Billboards** Sign-Tech, Nexus Advertising and MovieTowne (Nestor Abraham)

### Cedros & Debe Outreach

Rosemarie Welsh and Motilal Boodoosingh (organizing in Debe) Gloria Ferdinand for her tireless efforts to overcome the particularly strong stigma that keeps those that need ALTA outside of our Cedros class.

#### **4<sup>TH</sup> YEAR OF YOUTH LIT**

The Youth Lit programme ran smoothly in its third year, 2010-2011. 104 students started literacy instruction in Oct 2010 and 54 students - 29 Level 1 and 25 Level 2 - were awarded certificates in mid-June 2011.

Literacy instruction restarted from Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10 libraries: Chaguanas, Maloney, Mayaro, Moruga, Pt Fortin, POS, St James, St Helena, Princes Town and Sangre Grande.

Thanks to Mario's Pizzeria, ALTA can now award Youth Lit students with a certificate of excellence which entitles the recipient to a complimentary mini pizza!

#### **ONLINE DATABASE UP!**

By the end of term, tutors will be able to:

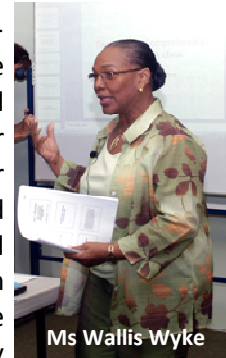
- View/modify their own and student contact details
- View co-tutor contact details
- Enter evaluation reports for students (at the end of the academic year)
- Enter student attendance

The online database records only the total number of sessions attended by students, so tutors still have to maintain and submit the Excel attendance register (available on website/CD/via email) to Isha at [ishao@alta-tt.org](mailto:ishao@alta-tt.org) at the end of each term.

Don't forget to record tutor attendance as well.

#### **MASSIVE ANNUAL TUTOR MEETING**

On July 2<sup>nd</sup> ALTA hosted its annual tutor meeting with the largest turnout ever — 134! Featured guest speaker Wallis Wyke is a long standing friend of ALTA and expert in the field of literacy. Her presentation on strategies for comprehension was interactive and applicable to the ALTA classroom and Reading Circle. Tutors interested in revisiting these strategies, or who were unable to attend, may bring a memory stick/flash drive to the Belmont office for a copy of Ms. Wyke's Power Point presentation.



#### **REFRESHED REFRESHER**

In keeping with ALTA's continuous development of the programme and taking note of coordinator and tutor feedback, ALTA redesigned the Level 1 & 2 refresher.

Tutors welcomed the opportunity to participate in a demo lesson taught by trainers, to compare this to their classroom practice and discuss options for each element of the ALTA lesson. Engaging students in active reading was a key focus of the training. Small group and paired reading were demonstrated and strongly recommended instead of chorus reading or individual reading to the whole class. Several tutors have reported that students are keen to read in pairs and this works well to apply skills learnt - though paired reading takes a little more time.

The small-group teaching practice that is an ALTA staple was expanded in 2011 so tutors experienced both ALTA Level 1 and 2 rather than just the level they would be teaching for the new academic year. The on-the-spot editing of four student drafts simulated the real classroom and clarified the often challenging editing process.

The new format was well received, especially by refresher veterans, one of whom enthusiastically declared at the end of the long day that she really felt refreshed this year!

**BE PART OF ALTA'S  
20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS**

**Commemorative magazine**

This is your opportunity to get published! By April 30<sup>th</sup> submit a short piece of writing, photos, cartoons or drawings that illustrate what ALTA means to you. If you know of any student success stories, email Mariella (mariellag@alta-tt.org) with name and contact info.

**Inspirational Movie**

The critically acclaimed National Geographic film “The First Grader” is based on the true story of a former Kenyan revolutionary who attends primary school in his eighties to learn to read and write, despite protests from his community. ALTA plans several screenings in the weeks after Carnival in each region, following which tutors will devote two lessons to writing so that students can document their own literacy journey. Coordinators will provide details to tutors at the start of Term 2 and all pieces should be submitted to Mariella at Belmont by the end of Term 2.

**Earl Lovelace Writing Workshop**

Trinidadian novelist, playwright and short-story writer Earl Lovelace has kindly agreed to lead a one-day writing workshop for Level 3 students, graduates and tutors.

Dates and venues for all events will be posted on our website and Facebook page.

**FREE SPELLING PROGRAMME JOINS ALTA LINE-UP**

The ALTA Spelling programme developed by Lystra Hazarie and Paula Lucie-Smith, which was first piloted in selected venues last year, is now officially part of the ALTA programme. Students assessed to be above Level 2 and previously unable to enter our programme can now be accommodated in the Spelling Programme. Classes conducted by veteran volunteer ALTA tutors are located at Tranquillity Gov't Sec, Arima ALTA Office, Holy Saviour Anglican School, St Thomas R.C School (Mayaro) and Chaguanas North Secondary.

**ALTA EVENTS & DATES**

**TERM DATES 2011-2012**

Term 1 Mon 12 Sept – Fri 9 Dec  
Term 2 Mon 9 Jan – Thurs 29 Mar  
Term 3 Mon 16 Apr – Fri 6 July

**INTERVIEWS FOR  
NEW TUTORS Oct—Feb**

Pass the word to your friends. Once ready for the commitment, they can call or email ALTA.

Tutors: Expect observers in your class and thanks in advance for feedback on them. Do let us know if an observer stops coming, as we often have more applicants than placement spots.

**TUTOR TRAINING 2012**

Venue	APR	MAY
Belmont Sat	21, 28	5, 12, 19, 26
Arima Tues	24	1, 8, 15, 22, 29
San F'do Thurs	26	3, 10, 17, 24, 31

**CO-ORDINATOR TRAINING**

**Date:** 5<sup>h</sup> Nov 2011

**Time:** 9 – 1:30 pm

**Venue:** Belmont Office

Just 1 training a year, so all coordinators are expected!

**ALTA CHRISTMAS OFFICE HOURS**

**Belmont & Arima:** Closed Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> and Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec as Christmas Eve falls on a Sat.

**San Fernando:** Closed 12<sup>th</sup> Dec  
Re-opens Wed 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 2012

### **VISITING ARIMA OFFICE?**

ALTA's Arima office at the Priority Terminal Mall was recently painted in the national colours and carries similar signs and symbols as the commuter buses. A fleet of buses is now parked at the Arima terminal to provide additional services.

Although we have received no notice from PTSC, safe practice dictates that the ALTA office should be accessed only via the East gate as it is inadvisable for tutors and students to traverse the terminal compound.

For drivers, please note that traffic is no longer allowed inside the gates, so utilise the parking area nearest the office taking care not to obstruct the buses.

For 2011-2012 there is an additional morning class at Arima office, Tues and Thurs, 10-12 noon. As this restricts mobility try to call before you visit so Alana can prepare what you need.

### **NEW LEVEL 3 BK 4**

ALTA now has 1,000 copies of a new Level 3 Workbook 4, A programme thanks to sponsors: Republic Bank Ltd, Trustees of Haji Gokool Meah Trust & John Phillips Trust; National Lotteries Control Board; Sagicor Life Insurance; TECU Credit Union Co-operative Society Ltd; Petrotrin. New lessons include nutrition, defensive driving and hire purchase agreements - useful for both tutors and students.

### **ALTA READING CIRCLES – BIGGER & BETTER**

On Oct 1<sup>st</sup> Paula and Wallis Wyke trained 31 guides in applying Guided Reading to texts available for students. They are now enthused and ready to conduct small group guided reading sessions to enhance word recognition and comprehension. Tutors should encourage students, especially repeaters and those in big classes, to attend the nearest Reading Circle as they benefit greatly from the small group/one-on-one work.

<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>TIME</b>
Arima Boys RC	Mon & Thurs 4:00-6:00pm	POS National Library	Tues 4:00-6:00pm
Belmont ALTA Office	Mon & Wed 4:00-7:00pm <i>Computers</i>	San F'do Naparima Girls' High	Mon 4:00-6:00pm
Chaguanas Montrose Vedic School	Fri 4:00-6:00pm	St. Stephen's College Princes Town	Fri 5:00-6:30pm
Curepe Holy Saviour Sch	Thurs 5:00-7:00pm	St. George's College	Wed 4:00-6:00pm
Mayaro Resource Centre	Wed 4:00-6pm	St. James Library	Fri 9:00-11:00am
Couva South Gov't Primary	Mon & Wed 5:00-7:00pm	Siparia Boys RC	Thurs 5:00-7:00pm
Pt Fortin Anglican School	Tues 4:30-6:30pm		

### **IBM READING COMPANION IS HERE**

From Nov ALTA goes high tech with Reading Companion, a web-based voice-recognition reading software. Reading Companion is a philanthropic initiative of IBM Corp used by schools/NGOs around the globe. Students read into a microphone and get immediate feedback on errors or help with words they can't decode. This individualised reading practice will reinforce reading skills acquired at ALTA. Initially it will be introduced at the Belmont Reading Circle. Email or call Joanne (624 2582) to volunteer to help students with this exciting software.

### CHESHIRE READING CIRCLE GOING STRONG



CDTT volunteer presents the book to a Republic Bank representative

On Sat 23<sup>rd</sup> July, the Combined Disabilities of Trinidad and Tobago (CDTT) Reading Circle class hosted its closing ceremony. Students in the group wrote accounts of their field trip to San Fernando Hill and these narratives were compiled

into a book. A copy was presented to the representatives of Republic Bank, programme sponsor.

### BROWN SUGAR & SPICE AT READING CIRCLE

On Sept 28<sup>th</sup>, Ms Betty Peter, author of Brown Sugar and Spice, gave a reading of her book to the students at the Belmont Reading Circle. Ms Peter has been in demand at schools for live reading of her book. Brown Sugar and Spice tells about the impact of World War II on the lives of people in the Caribbean as seen through the eyes of a young girl. Ms Peter will do a reading for Youth Lit students at St James Library next year.



Ms. Betty Peter at Belmont Reading Circle

### NEW REPEATER BEGINNER PROGRAMME

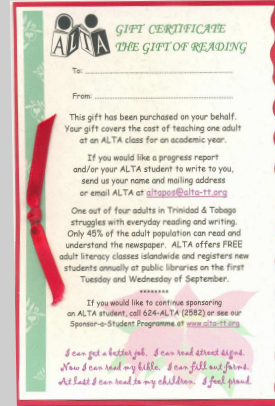
Increasing numbers of beginner students mean that the bigger classes can conduct a repeater programme to give the targeted practice needed to get to Level 1.

Paula Lucie-Smith has created a plan for Term 1 along with new predictable books. Eighteen new predictable books are needed so ideas for these and drawings are most welcome. Indeed tutors who submitted a predictable book as part of beginner training homework may get to see this in print.

### CONDOLENCES

ALTA extends condolences to Brenda De Silva and Devika Balgobin Mohess on the loss of their loved ones.

### CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEA



This gift is for the person for whom giving is better than receiving; for someone who wants to make a difference, but doesn't have the time to volunteer. The gift-giver purchases a 1-year Gift Certificate for \$500 or a 1-term Gift Certificate for \$180 to sponsor an ALTA student. Download forms from the website or order from ALTA Belmont. You can give certificates to friends, family or business associates in lieu of a present. They will know you have thought of them and will appreciate that, through your gift, they have helped someone.

### FAREWELL NORBERT

Long-serving tutor Norbert Yaw Ching Jr. is migrating. We thank him for his faithful dedication to the Belmont class, willing help with set-up for events and a great interview this year on IETV's One-on-One.

## **HOW FINLAND BECAME AN EDUCATIONAL LEADER**

Finland has one of the most comparatively successful education systems on the planet; it contradicts the test-obsessed, teacher-demonising orthodoxy of education “reform” that dominates many other countries. In the early 1970s Finland had an underperforming education system and in order to create a true knowledge-based society they knew they needed to completely revamp the education system.

The first step taken in the 1970s was the transformation of how future teachers were prepared and selected. This was fundamental in enabling Finland to have a much higher level of professionalism among teachers. Each teacher acquired a master’s degree, and received the same high quality level of preparation. As a result, teaching has become the most highly esteemed profession but not the highest paid. Only one out of every 10 people who apply will be accepted.

In Finland there has been consensus for the past 30 years over the importance of education and high quality teaching to move the nation forward. Due to this education reform, Finland is rated among the highest in the world in innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity.

Finland has taken a different path in education, away from factual learning and testing. They’ve defined what is excellent teaching, not just reasonable teaching, and they have set a standard for that. Second, they have defined what is most important to learn, and it is not a memorisation-based

curriculum, but a thinking-based curriculum. In terms of teaching they’ve defined professionalism as working more collaboratively, in order to continuously improve their curriculum and their lessons.

Harvard Researcher Toby Wagner contends that in the United States and in many other countries, among teachers the level of professionalism is at a 19<sup>th</sup> century level, or worse, it’s medieval. The teacher works alone all day, every day, and isolation is the enemy of improvement and innovation, which is something that Finns figured out a long time ago.

*Adapted from The Trinidad Express July 19,2011*

The Adult Literacy Tutors Association (ALTA) is exactly what its name implies, an association. ALTA’s educational philosophy is very similar to that of Finland.

At ALTA, tutors do no work in isolation - it is a community where professional teaching skills are fostered and shared. Applicants for ALTA training are individually interviewed and outnumber places more than 3 to 1.

ALTA is committed to on-going training to create high calibre tutors. Initial training is required with annual refresher courses to continually enhance teaching skills.

ALTA does not “teach to the test”. Indeed, ALTA has no tests using continuous assessment to determine student progress through the levels. ALTA teaches literacy skills - not content - using a directed discovery approach with an emphasis on getting students to think. Tutors question, rather than tell.