

ALTA NEWS

October 2006 Volume 12 Issue 3



ALTA students or graduates - Brent Halls, Lovena Gokool, Presencer Smith-Watts and Emelia Williams - were all featured in local newspapers in Sept. describing how the ALTA programme has transformed their lives.

BELMONT 624-2582/3442 84 Belmont Circular Road	Mon -Thurs Fri	9am-5pm 8am-4pm	altapos@alta-tt.org
SAN FERNANDO 653-4656 Anglican Church Hall, Harris Promenade <i>Marilyn Rampersad</i>	Tues/Wed/Fri	10am- 2pm	altasfd@alta-tt.org
ARIMA 664-2582 Arima Terminal Mall <i>Arlene Wallace-Romero</i>	Tues/Thurs Fri	9am-1pm 9am-5pm	altaarima@alta-tt.org

www.alta-tt.org



EXPANDED ALTA READING CIRCLES

This year, ALTA is placing greater emphasis on the ALTA Reading Circle and expanding these so that they provide the needed support for our students. The ALTA Reading Circle gives extra reading practice to current Level 1, 2 or 3 students, as well as past graduates of Level 2 or 3.

Regular reading practice is absolutely essential to develop fluency and the habit of reading. Tutors should impress upon all students the benefits of joining the Reading Circle and may invite a Reading Circle teacher to their class to speak to their students. Also, identify your students who most need practice and talk one-on-one with them about Reading Circle.

Reading Circles start the first week in October and follow the academic year. Below is the 2006-2007 ALTA Reading Circle schedule.

VENUE	DAY	TIME	READING CIRCLE GUIDE
ALTA Belmont Office	Mon	4:00-5:00pm	Dominique Forgenie 682-7318
ALTA Belmont Office	Wed	4:00-5:00pm	Dominique Forgenie 682-7318
ALTA Belmont Office	Sat	12:30-3:30pm	Kathryn Proudfoot 681-2204
NALIS Port of Spain	Tues	4:00-6:00pm	Bob Shurland 719-6457
St. James Library	Fri	9:00-11:00am	Fereza Codrington 628-7555
Arima Boys RC School	Wed	5:00-7:00pm	Jennifer Antoine 624-1276 (w)
Chaguanas Comm. Centre	Fri	4:00-6:00pm	Roopnarine Sieuprasad 665-4406
Naparima Girls High Sch	Tues	4:30-6:30pm	Marilyn Jordan 738-9187
Naparima Girls High Sch	Wed	4:30-6:30pm	Suzanne Goomansingh 657-7035
Point Fortin Anglican Sch	Tues	4:00-5:00pm	Lynette Gopisingh 648-5341
Princes Town Library	Mon	4:30-5:30pm	Pamela Mohammed 655-3271
Siparia Boys RC School	Fri	5:30-7:00pm	Margaret Martin 767-0918

On Sat 30th Sept, Marilyn Rampersad conducted a 2-hour training session for Reading Circle guides. We are still seeking more Reading Circle guides, especially for Saturday in Belmont, for Siparia and to start in Tunapuna on a Thursday afternoon. In addition to past tutors, we would welcome those who can't make the full commitment to ALTA teaching, but can offer their services to the Reading Circle.

While it is ideal for Reading Circle Guides to attend every session of their selected Reading Circle, once your Reading Circle has a team, you may work out with fellow team members a roster of which days each person will attend, catering for absences when you are away or have appointments.

TUTOR RECRUITMENT

Recruitment of new tutors for 2007 began in October and will run through to February of next year. If you know anyone interested in being a volunteer, please ask them to call Sally at 624-2582 to arrange for an interview.

Tutors, when a prospective tutor is sent to observe your class, please take the time to complete and return the Class Visit Record, as this is crucial to whether or not an observer is accepted for training.



STUDENT REGISTRATION

A total of 848 new students were assessed and placed in classes. Many thanks to all tutors who helped with registration at the libraries. With continuing students, total enrolment now stands at 1,558 (160 Beginners, 641 Level 1, 598 Level 2 and 159 Level 3). Current tutors number 300.

This year ALTA introduced a new feature of our student outreach. In areas with a history of low registration, drivers were hired to play our jingle and announcement of our registration dates over a loudspeaker. This was in addition to flyers, press, radio and TV announcements. Thanks to Natacha Jones of 97.5 for updating our jingle.

Brenda De Silva, our Public Relations Officer, once again did a great job getting interviews on TV and the radio. We thank NCC TV in particular for granting ALTA **six** interviews – one with Ruskin Mark, one with John Victor and four with Allyson Hennessy. Every year, Allyson is most gracious and welcoming to our students. This year, on one of her programmes, Paula was also able to show the ALTA Workbooks and explain our Programme.

The radio and TV stations which gave us their support were NCC TV, IETV, CNC 3, CCN TV6, Synergy, Radio Trinbago, 98.1 Isaac, Heartbeat 103, Power 102, Radio Shaktie 97.5 and Radio Trinidad. We appreciate their help. Advertisements were sponsored by The Beacon, HCL Group, ALGICO, Powergen, T&TEC, Guardian Life and CMMB. Newsday inserted flyers free of charge in areas which usually have low registration.

The success of the campaign owes much to the students who braved the spotlight to be interviewed. The students on the cover were featured in the Guardian, Express, Newsday and Catholic News. Our thanks to these four students as well as to Natasha, Monica, Curtis, Elroy, Bernadette and Sylvester who appeared on the radio or television.

Our best wishes for a speedy recovery go to Sylvester, who spoke on Radio Trinbago, NCC TV and CNC 3. He was robbed and stabbed in his car in the course of his work in early September, but is recovering and should be returning to class in November.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Beginner tutors: **Sat 18th Nov**, ALTA Office Belmont, 9:00am-12:00noon

Purpose: Feedback and guidance on the LiPS approach

Coordinators: **Sat 25th Nov**, ALTA Office Belmont, 9:00am-12:00noon

Tutors: **March 2007** (date to be set by coordinator)

Purpose: To meet with your coordinator, receive your news-letter & student end-of-level evaluation guidelines

TUTOR TRANSFERS

Unexpected student numbers led to a shortfall of tutors in some classes and too many tutors in others. This necessitated asking tutors to transfer from one venue to another. While this is inconvenient, there is no point in having 5 tutors for 4 students in one venue while in another there are 3 tutors for 35 students. Many thanks to the tutors who agreed to change venue.

UPDATES & REMINDERS

Class dates Term 1 ends on Fri 8th Dec and Term 2 begins on Wed 3rd Jan 2007. With three public holidays this term, in order to complete the 24 lessons in Bk. 1 or Bk. 4, tutors need to either put on an extra class day or extend class by an hour on two or more days. Schedule the extra time in early November before the Christmas rush cuts into everybody's time.

Outing & speaker Start thinking about options for a class outing or speaker early next term. Open-air outings need to be done in the dry season!

Extra reading Sets of high-interest, low-reading-level books graded at Levels 1, 2 and 3 are available from all offices to tutors for loan to students.

Contract teaching Caribbean Fisheries Training and Development Institute has contracted ALTA and there are prospects of the Programme being introduced at the Tobago Regional Health Authority and the T&T Regiment. As we expand into the workplace, schools and other NGOs, our skills bank of experienced ALTA tutors needs to grow. If you are available for contract teaching, call Arlene at Arima or complete the 'Private/Contract Teaching' form and return to us. This form can be emailed on request.

15TH ANNIVERSARY

Help needed with:

- ALTA T-shirts (supply, graphic design, printing, sponsor)
- Researching & compiling success stories of past students: 'Where are you now?' Finding a newspaper to run as a regular feature, perhaps for the month of September 2007.
- Face-lift for ALTA building, Belmont. After 7 years, the building needs painting and repairs, especially to make our stockroom leak-proof!



STUDENT GLASSES

For the last academic year 46 students sought help from ALTA for vision testing and glasses. Of those, only 13 got glasses. While all had free eye tests, only four got discounts on their glasses - 50% from Vision Eyes, Curepe and from Savitri Rattan, San Fernando. Special thanks to these two opticians.



Since the main reason students did not get glasses was the high cost, ALTA is working with the Rotary Club of Piarco to re-organise the student glasses programme. We aim to get more opticians involved, as well as discounts or subsidies on frames and lenses. We hope to begin the new programme with eye tests in January.

To be eligible for this, tutors must fill out the form 'ALTA Students Needing Glasses' and submit to ALTA Belmont before the end of term. Tutors will be given written procedures for their students to follow and we encourage you to ensure that these are understood and followed so that new providers are not disenchanted.

At ALTA Belmont, we have spectacles with somewhat outdated frames, so if your students are not too fussy these can be used in the interim. We would welcome donations of used frames in good condition to the programme.

Also, Parillon Optical at 134A, Frederick St., POS has a selection of older frames at reduced prices for ALTA students. Students who had an eye test but could not afford glasses, can check these out. They should take along a copy of the ALTA letter to the optical company where their eyes were tested.

NEW VENUES



Four new venues were opened in the East sponsored by UNDP: Brazil Village, Carapo, Matura and Valencia. Many thanks to project coordinator Arlene Wallace-Romero, who braved unlit, unknown roads with massive potholes after sunset to get the literacy message to these rural communities. Registration was low this year but we hope that, as communities get used to the idea of adult literacy classes, the intake will increase. A total of 56 students registered at these venues: Matura 14, Carapo 8, Brazil 14, Valencia 20.

Despite valiant efforts by Alisa Gomez, after a number of false starts where registered students failed to show, the Maracas Bay class has been postponed until further outreach can be done. Living Waters is assisting with this as part of their outreach in the area. Thanks to Music Radio 97 for advertising this class.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

The Tutor's Book to accompany Bk 6, Level 3, B Programme, has been printed with the kind sponsorship of the American Women's Club and Imjin Security Services Ltd. This completes the marathon three-year project to redesign ALTA Level 3. Special thanks to author Marise Warner for her unfailing energy, enthusiasm, abundance of ideas and burning the midnight oil for ALTA – even in foreign countries! She is now starting work on revising the original Level 3 and welcomes suggestions from Level 3 tutors.



SPONSORS

CMMB continues to be ALTA's mainstay, sponsoring the training programme, coordinators and administrative costs. United Way T&T has promised on-going assistance and given a second grant to support the ALTA programme in South Trinidad. Bermudez has renewed their 3-year deed of covenant to ALTA. These reliable, annual donations make a huge difference, reducing the day-to-day risk of running an NGO.



The cost of running three offices, the free community classes and additional projects means ALTA is constantly in need of funds. Do call Rosie with names of possible sponsors.

If you know of anyone who would like to help ALTA, encourage them to donate \$500 to the Sponsor-a-Student programme. In this way, they are linked to a student and can follow that student's progress, while helping ALTA with administrative and training costs. Tutors, we need names of students willing to be sponsored so make sure you read to them the letter from Paula explaining the programme.

APPEAL FOR HELP WITH MEDICAL EXPENSES

Kamla Williams, a faithful ALTA tutor, coordinator and trainer, needs to raise £60,000 for a life-saving bone marrow transplant for her husband. Contributions can be made to the 'Kamla Medical Fund' at any ALTA office.

STAFF CHANGES



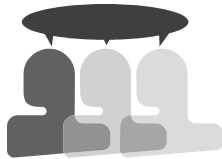
Miriam Thom, who started with ALTA in June this year as a data entry clerk, left us at the end of October to take up a position at the Hilton Reception Desk. We thank her for her rapid data entry, effervescent personality and willingness to assist with any task from front desk to storeroom flooding.

Laurel O'Neil has taken over as data entry clerk, having completed six months On-the-Job-Training at the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education.

ST. AUGUSTINE SENIOR COMP INTRODUCES ALTA PROGRAMME

To address a declining level of literacy in their Form 4 intake, St Augustine Senior Comprehensive has modified its Form 4 curriculum for a group of 20 students assessed as ALTA Level 2. Form 4 General Studies has 18 periods a week of ALTA instruction, enabling them to complete an ALTA literacy level each term. At the invitation of the principal, Paula Lucie-Smith introduced the new programme to incoming students and their parents at the orientation in June and this was well received.


Effective implementation required two ALTA trained tutors, but despite early requests from the school, the school year opened with only the one existing ALTA tutor, Jean Griffith. The Rotary Club of St. Augustine came to the rescue of the students providing a two-month stipend for a second ALTA tutor, Sirimavo Singha. This funding is about to run out, so we do hope the Ministry of Education recognizes the progress being made by the students and makes an appointment soon so the students' new enthusiasm for learning is not brought to an abrupt end.



COMMENTS FROM CONTINUING LEVEL 1 AND 2 TUTORS

Don't be surprised if you see your comment below. Of course if you don't see yours it does not mean that it was not fit to print, rather that space did not permit.

- Thus far, my experience at ALTA has been at the very least, educational. As a first time tutor at ALTA I was amazed to learn that the inability to read and write is more of a continuum since I have seen students with varying degrees of competency in both. I was also amazed to discover that there are many people who do jobs or perform functions that require a certain proficiency in reading that they simply do not possess e.g. driving. Finally, I am intrigued by and empathetic to adults who have used words all their lives in speech but have such difficulty in recognizing them in print.
- Contrary to widespread belief, Trinidad and Tobago has a greater illiteracy rate than is being bandied about. It is not restricted to the older generation who may not have had the benefit of an education (particularly women) but the education system has failed many others as well. Having just completed my first year with ALTA and seen the enormous benefits that the adult students have gained, I wish to continue with this programme and make a positive impact and afford people an opportunity to become literate. The ALTA programme has been mutually beneficial and has been an enjoyable experience for me. It has also given me a different perspective i.e. teaching adults as opposed to teaching children.

- Teaching an ALTA class has been an extremely interesting revelation. Never had I realized the number of persons, particularly adults, who are unable to recognize the alphabet, in some cases could not read or write properly and, worse yet, could not even begin to spell a word. I thought it was easy to fill out a simple form. This was a shocker. My experience with ALTA has taught me to advise persons who are asked to “help me fill out this form” to always assist and never turn down such a request. The joy, encouragement and satisfaction I feel in seeing students improve or relate their success stories can rank as one of the fulfilling events in my life. The ALTA programme is a fantastic one that should be or must be implemented in all primary schools in the country. Kudos to Paula Lucie-Smith and her team! The experience has certainly been an educating and rewarding eye opener for me so far. God’s blessings to you all.
- I’m teaching for another year because I am still learning and I know it will take more than one or two years to really get a grasp of teaching adult literacy. I have seen improvement in myself in the way I teach and in my relationships with the students and my co-tutors, so that gives me “job satisfaction” and confirmation that it is possible to strive, to seek, to find. While improvements in my students is slow, there is some, enough to show me that I am helping to build a cathedral and not just laying bricks. It is making a contribution to the country that also brings self-satisfaction. 
- Joining ALTA has brought new meaning and purpose to my life. I have met many wonderful people including the founder, staff and tutors at ALTA. My personal development, self-esteem, and confidence have also improved tremendously since my association with ALTA. However nothing can really compare to the tremendous joy and fulfillment I experience while interfacing with the students in the classroom. I am truly inspired by their eagerness to learn, their dedication and their undying gratitude - so I’ll be continuing to teach an ALTA class for another year.
- When I first contacted ALTA about volunteering I had no idea about what was involved. When I undertook to be trained I never expected the level of commitment that was required. The ALTA method is very interesting as I too must learn what I am going to teach. Nevertheless, once training was done and I began the actual work, I was hooked. I enjoy going to classes and it is very rewarding to hear a student say how much coming to class has helped him to progress on the job, to complete a form, to be able to read items on the supermarket shelves. I feel as if I am helping to open up a whole new world for that student. Reading is liberating and if I succeed in helping one person, then I want to do that. I do not find it at all difficult to continue, that’s why I am continuing.