



ALTA NEWS

March 2011

Volume 18

Issue 1



The re-elected ALTA Board and patron. From left: Marise Warner, Paula Lucie-Smith, Mrs Zalayhar Hassanali, Hetty Sarjeant, Tim Padmore, Gem Rowe, Brenda De Silva.

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,
3rd Floor, 12 Harris Promenade
Pat Noel/Marilyn Rampersad-Talma

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

NEW TUTORS FLOOD IN

Up to the end of Feb, our tutor recruitment drive brought in approximately 400 interested persons. Despite this, we are short of volunteers in:

Sangre Grande, Princes Town, Siparia, Mayaro and Arouca

Thanks to:

- Camille, Brenda, Jeanette, Lystra and Marilyn for interviewing each candidate
- Sign-Tech for free display on digital billboards - Saddam Siddat, Asha Williams
- Catholic Pulse newsletter, Fr Peter de la Bastide
- Radio: WMJX, 100.5FM, HOTT 93, Radio 97. A special 'big-up' to Darren Lee Sing and the Citadel crew for i95.5FM airplay like ALTA never had before.
- Ira Mathur for featuring ALTA in three of her Sunday Guardian columns.

TUTOR TRAINING

Venue	Dates
POS: ALTA Office Belmont	Sat April 30 May 7, 14, 21, 28 June 4
East: Bethel Pentecostal Church, Arima	Tues May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 June 7
South: To be confirmed	Thurs May 5, 12, 19, 26 June 2, 9

AT LAST — ALTA DATABASE IS ONLINE

<http://www.alta-tt.org/StudentDB>

Since April 2010, Mindbase has been developing an online student and tutor database for ALTA since Access could no longer cope with the complexity of ALTA data. For months Joanne and Isha have been working their way through long columns of data to check that data uploaded is accurate.

From the end of Term 2, tutors will be able to enter their students' attendance directly online instead of having to email the Excel register. Once tutors login with their password, they can see the records on the students they are currently teaching. They can add comments during the term and the end-of-level evaluation, tracking their students' progress through ALTA to better meet students' needs. The database is structured to safeguard both tutor and student confidentiality.

ALTA coordinators, trainers and facilitators will also enter their reports from home. This will free up staff time as emailed data no longer has to be re-typed into the database.

These benefits depend on tutors, coordinators and facilitators using the online option for their reporting to ALTA. To enable tutors and coordinators to make the most of the online database, the BG IT department free training for ALTA will this year switch focus from students to tutors. Joanne will be organising dates in May. Tutors who are not comfortable on the computer and internet should email to indicate their interest and take advantage of this free training.



NEW GUIDED READING APPROACH IN READING CIRCLES

Reading Circle guides attended two Saturday training sessions at Belmont with Paula Lucie-Smith and specialist reading teacher Wallis Wyke. From 1992-6, Wallis worked with Paula to develop the ALTA tutor training course.



She has returned to ALTA after teaching at the International School and then for five years in the Cayman islands. In the Cayman Islands she worked intensively with the guided reading approach and as this is a great match for ALTA Reading Circles, ALTA has contracted Wallis to develop a package of Reading Circle lessons.



Lystra Hazarie
Spelling Programme
developer/manager

FREE SPELLING PROGRAMME

ALTA spelling instruction took its place indelibly among the ALTA volunteer classes for the first time in Jan 2011. Four spelling instructors are pioneering this in Mayaro, Pt Fortin, Chaguanas & Arima. Cast into the dual role of trainers, Agatha Williams, Gloria Ferdinand, Cheryl Thurab-Prince and Earlyn Wilson are training 8 new instructors using ALTA's specially crafted OJT programme.

The 30 students in this community pilot programme comprise past Level 3 students and persons assessed as above Level 2 in need of spelling instruction. This pilot involves monitoring the programme to see how it fits into 50 hrs of instruction and splits lessons into 2-3 hr sessions.

The ALTA Spelling Workbook has evolved into a compilation of Level 2 and 3 spelling rules and follow-up exercises along with 12 amazing crossword puzzles which give spelling students additional opportunities to practise the rules. The spelling workbook, spelling dictionary and our skilled spelling instructors may well be on the way to charting a new course on the local educational landscape.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

ANNUAL TUTOR MEETING Sat July 2nd 9am-12noon

Feature speaker:
Guided Reading
Wallis Wyke M.Ed

Remember to bring
eats or drinks to share.

Tutor-Coordinator Meetings

Between Apr 4th - May 7th, co-ordinators will meet with their tutors to review evaluation steps at their venue/s. Download the evaluation forms in 'easy-fill' format from www.alta-tt.org. Remember:

- Report on all students on the term 1 class register.
- Submit evaluations two weeks before the end of Term 3 (by June 24) to allow for certificates to be printed.

Reminders

- Start Bk 3 in Term 2 as Term 3 is only 11 weeks with Monday classes affected by 3 holidays (Easter Monday, Indian Arrival and Labour Day). Schedule make-up sessions early.
- Send in attendance registers early. Tutors with internet can enter directly in the ALTA online database; download this as Excel worksheets from ALTA website and e-mail to ALTA.
- Term 3 runs from **Tues 26th April – Fri 8th July** with end-of-level function awarding certificates the following week.
- Return BG cricket books asap.

ALTA PUBLICATIONS

Three revised editions were sponsored by the Canada Fund:

ALTA Adult Workbook 1, Level 2 B Programme (Nov 2010)

ALTA Adult Workbook 3 Levels 1 & 2, B programme (Jan 2011)

Until the stock of tutor books is depleted, tutors will get a list of changes to make in their tutor book to match the tutor notes to the revised lessons. Current tutors who are teaching the B Programme, should bring in and exchange their workbook - just for the level they are teaching.

REFRESHERS FOR 2011-12 TUTORS

Tutors - we want you teaching at ALTA next year! Experienced tutors build stability and expertise in the classroom. Tell your coordinator as soon as possible if you are continuing and hold one of the dates below to attend your refresher.

Time: 8am – 4pm
POS ALTA office, Belmont:

Level	Dates
Beg.	Fri 26th & Sat 27th Aug Must attend both days!
Levels 1 & 2	Sat 20 th Aug Tues 23 rd Aug Sat 10 th Sept
Level 3	Sat 3 rd Sept

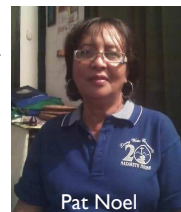
SAN FERNANDO, Naps

Levels 1 & 2	Sat 3 rd Sept
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DEPARTURES AND ARRIVALS

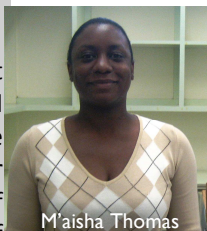
Communications Officer: Varuna Sookoo, who managed our successful awareness campaign last year, has taken up a teaching post at Marabella North Secondary. She now no longer has to face four hours a day on the road and she will still be a part of ALTA as she joins us as a volunteer tutor.

South office Our sincere thanks to Inga Crichlow for sharing her wealth of administrative experience with ALTA and leaving a legacy of effective systems and procedures at the South office. In December Inga handed over to tutor Pat Noel whose smile brightens up the office. Good news for South tutors - Pat is able to work up to 3.30pm on Mon and Thurs.



Pat Noel

From February, *M'aisha Thomas* took up the new position of Resource Development Officer, working on proposals and projects to handle ALTA's expanding programme. Capable and willing, her flair for colour and decorating has come in useful with the remodeling of the office, required to fit 8 staff members at Belmont.



M'aisha Thomas

WORLD PEACE FESTIVAL

Bliss Yoga hosts the Trinidad and Tobago World Peace Festival on **Sat 11th June, 10am-10pm at NAPA, POS**. ALTA has been invited to be a part of this fun-filled day by hosting a booth. Those willing to give of their time are asked to call the Belmont office and inform of their availability.

The Festival celebrates unity in diversity and peace by linking like-minded community members and organizations. The day will include an interactive Art Exhibition; peace speeches by Fr. Clyde Harvey, the Japanese Ambassador and the Indian High Commissioner and performances by 3Canal, Love Movement, Mungal Patasar and Silver Stars Steel Orchestra. Workshops on stress management and relaxation and a children's village are planned and various food items will be sold. Visit www.globalpeacefestival.org

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2010

While the rest of Trinidad shut down, 45 tutors and our stalwart patron Mrs. Hassanali braved the possible wrath of Tropical Storm Tomas to attend the Annual Meeting on Saturday 30th October, 2011.

All members of the board, who are ALTA trained tutors with three still active in the classroom, were re-elected. Their combined expertise and experience are a remarkable asset to ALTA.

Chairman: Hetty
Sarjeant

Secretary: Gem Rowe

Treasurer: Hamilton T.
Padmore

PRO: Brenda De Silva

Legal Officer: Marise
Warner

CEO: Paula Lucie-Smith



Central tutors Cheryl Thurab Prince, Lilian Ramsaroop and Lesley-Ann Charles discuss the newsletter

The post-AGM meeting of tutors with their regional coordinators enabled more waiting-list students to be accommodated in POS classes.

NALIS YOUTH LIT

ALTA instruction is on again at 10 libraries for a third year with 94 students (53 Level 1, 41 Level 2), and employment for 13 ALTA tutors and 6 coordinators. ALTA has modified the writing lessons and introduced journal writing to capture the interest of this younger age group. Tutors report that this has had excellent results with students willing - even eager - to write.

SALE! HALF PRICE ALTA POLOS & T-SHIRTS

Polos: Ladies \$30

Sorry, no Ladies' XXL polos left!

T-Shirts: Ladies' fitted \$25
Ladies'/Men's \$20

Black blue green purple white
Colours available depend on size.



WORKSHOP:

***Creating the best
learning environment
in the ALTA classroom***
Ramona Khan, MSc

**Sat 16th Apr ALTA Belmont
\$60 Register by Mon 11th Apr**

All ALTA tutors are invited. Ramona has delivered past workshops for ALTA on critical thinking and behaviour management. Her sessions are dynamic and thought-provoking. Not to be missed!

2011 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Check www.alta-tt.org Calendar of Events for 2011 for ALTA activities including the dates for the AGM, coordinator and refresher training so you can plan ahead to ensure you don't miss essential training.

YOUR INPUT NEEDED - 20th ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE

2012 is ALTA's 20th anniversary! ALTA is planning a magazine featuring student and tutor stories to document ALTA's impact over the years. ALTA PRO Brenda De Silva is heading a team including Marilyn Rampersad-Talma and journalist/tutor Erline Andrews. Tutors, please send in any interesting writing telling how literacy impacted on students' lives. Also, please seek out students, past and present, willing to be interviewed and photographed. Email contact info to altatt@yahoo.com.

FAREWELL & THANK YOU OFFICE VOLUNTEERS

Expats *Shayama Newton* and *Jo Stewart* who successfully managed the Sponsor-a-Student and the Friday morning computer class respectively have had to say their goodbyes to ALTA as their husbands have been re-assigned.

Caroline De Verteuil, volunteered twice weekly in Nov-Dec. Her mastery of language and the computer were a great asset in revising the ALTA workbooks.

Zahra Jacobs has moved on to further study but left a legacy of crosswords for the ALTA Spelling Workbook and Workbook 3. We miss her quiet competence.

FEEL-GOOD LANGUAGE FOR THE CLASSROOM

Redirect good feelings back:
You are learning so well!
NOT: I am proud of you.

Instead of an accusing **you**, try I.
"I probably need to rephrase that explanation, let me try again."

To suggest alternatives try 3rd person. "Some people do..."
"It's a good idea to..."

State problems in a few words, only one point at a time in a straightforward, calm manner.

Watch tone, manner, choice of words. If you get disagreement, ask for alternatives, actively listen. Avoid verbal attacks, snide remarks or silent treatment.

Be upbeat and positive.

REPUBLIC BANK SPONSORED READING CIRCLES

Arima Rehab: After 2 years of successfully running literacy classrooms at the Arima (Psychiatric) Rehabilitation Centre, Marlene Wilson-McNeil and Leonie Lyons have reinvented themselves as Reading Circle Guides. By willingly accepting their new roles and conducting twice-weekly reading sessions with 13 returning students, these tutors have taken ALTA into uncharted territory once again. With a view to ensuring sustainability of the programme, they have recruited and ALTA has trained four Rehab staff as Reading Circle Guides who are currently gaining experience by observing the RC sessions.

Many thanks to Grace Charles-Spencer who taught for two years as Beginner and Level 1 tutor and is probably the only ALTA tutor to be aided by a personal attendant at a venue.

Combined Disabilities of T&T: South tutors, Kelly Ann French and Olive Brizan-Wilson, together with coordinator, Rosemarie Welsh, are conducting a 3-month reading circle on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at CDTT's premises in Pleasantville for 6 Beginner and 7 Level 2 students.

OUTREACH

Thanks to all our wonderful, enthusiastic tutors who attended various outreach activities

- Nov 18th TSTT Rewards and Recognition Ceremony Display booth - Paula Williams, Marilyn-Jordan Romany, Zahra Jacobs, Varuna Sookoo.
- 19th-21st Nov Volunteer Connection Business Expo Leonie Lyons, Lorraine Williams, Rubina Roberts, Linda Blackwell and Alana Gomez.
- 11th Dec Volunteer Orientation Volunteer Connection Margo Malcolm spoke about volunteer needs of ALTA.
- Jan 15th Catholic Youth Expo Centre of Excellence Marlene Wilson-McNeil and Lorraine Williams.
- Mar 22nd Rotary Club of POS, Talk on the social effects of low literacy, Paula Lucie-Smith. Clip on CNC3 news!

HAMPERS FOR STUDENTS

ALTA tutor, trainer and author, Marise Warner and her co-workers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs donated two Christmas hampers to needy ALTA students.

Marise presents to Patsy Antoine, ALTA Level 2 graduate in Reading Circle. Cataracts impaired Patsy's vision until 7 surgeries from age 17 gave her sight. ALTA beginner class was Patsy's first classroom.



Past ALTA Communications Officer Varuna Sookoo presents a hamper to Level 3 student Paula Jones who had twin sons last year.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

JB Fernandes Memorial Trust 1 & 2

United Way - South ALTA classes

Canada Fund - 3 ALTA workbooks

Atlantic LNG - Pt. Fortin ALTA classes. New project coordinator Gloria Ferdinand has put great effort into organizing a class in Cedros.

Bermudez Biscuit Co

Neal & Massy Foundation - Repairs to ALTA POS building

Powergen - Women's Prison Literacy Programme

Advance Commercial Equipment Ltd, Haji Gokool Meah Memorial Trust, PricewaterhouseCoopers, RBTT Education Foundation, EOG Resources, EMF

TSTT, Neal & Massy, Kapok, Powergen - Gift of Reading

Rotary Clubs of Chaguanas (Train-a-Tutor) & POS

Value Optical - Free eye tests for Chaguanas ALTA students

WANTED: VOLUNTEERS FOR COMPUTER PRACTICE SESSIONS

ALTA is looking for volunteers to manage practice sessions for students and tutors who have had basic computer literacy training. If you answer YES to the following, then you just might be the volunteer we're looking for.

- Are you computer literate in Microsoft Word and know how to use the Internet to search for websites?
- Do you work or live in or around San Fernando or Belmont?
- Do you have 2-3 hours free on evenings/Saturdays or know a friend/ relative who'd be willing to volunteer?
- Can you consistently give of your time for at least 10 sessions?

Great! Now call ALTA to give an idea of your availability.

BE AN ALTA AMBASSADOR

Thanks to all who responded to our appeal for ALTA ambassadors to talk about ALTA. If you missed the call last year, now is the time to come on board as an ALTA Ambassador.

You will get a media kit outlining the format of your talk with details on what is reading, how to volunteer as a tutor or become an ALTA student and other relevant information to build greater public awareness. ALTA will reimburse any travelling costs.

What it means to be an ALTA Tutor

By Varuna Sookoo

*No man is so poor as to have nothing worth giving.
Give what you have. To someone it may be better
than you dare to think. -Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

At the Adult Literacy Tutors Association, volunteers give something special, the gift of literacy. There is an innate passion in teaching literacy; this is what many committed ALTA tutors tell you. At ALTA, teaching is not a job; it is an act of community involvement.

While we take tasks like completing a form or reading a newspaper article for granted, many in Trinidad find this an insurmountable task. The stigma of illiteracy is not easy to cope with, especially in a society that boasts of free education. Factors such as finance, location, quality of education and motivated parents still often determine access to education. There is shame and apprehension that reflects unfulfilled potential.

Teaching literacy offers a sense of fulfillment. According to tutor Marilyn Jordan-Romany, "It is a great thing to see students "bussing" a suffix, learning a new word or overcoming a fear. I am making a contribution not only to ALTA but to society." She recounts that one of her students was afraid to use the automatic bank machine but eventually overcame this fear by learning to read the instructions. Another would go to the bank and have the loans officer fill out the form for him. Until one day the loans officer was on vacation. He trembled while filling out the form, but completed it accurately. Marilyn says this is where the satisfaction and joy comes from.

Erika Karres, education specialist, believes that every student is a puzzle with unlimited potential, which a teacher can put together by finding the best solution for the student's learning style. ALTA tutors find a strategy for a student and something to hold their interest to make learning possible. The student's achievement is highlighted encouraging him to learn; one student will be able to cook, another can sew, reading then becomes another skill to be mastered.

When volunteering the notion of giving back to the community is important. Marilyn says her father could not read which influenced her to volunteer. Students often report that tutors are there to hold their hands when they are about to write for the first time. With this nurturing, students are able complete the programme and develop lifelong learning habits.

Agatha was a retired primary school teacher when she joined ALTA. She says, "Students motivate you to continue teaching. Adults come with experiences, they run families, they are intelligent. I appreciate working with them". Tutors learn by sharing ideas with students. Teaching adults stirs the imagination, fulfils a desire for continuous learning and keeps one alive.

It is passion that ignites the desire for ALTA tutoring. One can become a tutor by committing to undergo training and teach at an ALTA class twice a week for an academic year.