

ISSUE 21 | SPRING 2007

# mcastlink

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE MALTA COLLEGE OF ARTS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



# CONTENTS

- 3 Editorial
- 4 Information
- 6 Chaplain's Message
- 8 Institute of Agribusiness
- 10 Institute of Art and Design
- 12 Institute of Business and Commerce
- 17 Institute of Community Services
- 19 Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- 21 Maritime Institute
- 23 Institute of Mechanical Engineering
- 26 Gozo Centre
- 30 Student Council
- 35 Sedqa
- 36 Guidance and Counselling
- 38 International Office
- 39 Business Service Unit
- 42 Student Experience
- 44 Sports
- 46 Kilimanjaro Challenge
- 50 Professional Development Centre
- 53 Exercise Your Mind
- 54 Entrepreneurship
- 56 Green Page
- 59 Library
- 61 Meet the Artist



MCASTlink is produced by the Communications Office

Produced and edited by Caroline Balzan, Communications Officer  
 Proofread by: Joyce Hili  
 Designed by: MAS Communications  
 Printed by: Gutenberg Press

Advertising Enquiries:  
[caroline.balzan@mcast.edu.mt](mailto:caroline.balzan@mcast.edu.mt)

All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is strictly prohibited without written permission. All reasonable care is taken to ensure truth and accuracy, but the editor cannot be held responsible for errors or omissions in articles, advertising, photographs or illustrations.

## EDITORIAL

### Editor's message



**A major event this term was the successful Annual Hair and Beauty Marathon held between the 10th and 11th February. MCAST students, with the help of staff and professional hair dressers and beauticians raised the amount of Lm 64,847 in aid of ir-Razzett tal-Hbiberija. The College believes and is committed to these extracurricular activities as apart from assisting a worthwhile cause these activities provide students with an opportunity to gain professional hands-on experience and develop skills that will help in their development of responsible members of the community. This holistic development of students is an important aspect of fostering a learning and caring environment. MCAST would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who participated and those who supported this event.**

Another important milestone for the College is the setting up of a video-conferencing link between Malta and Gozo. This link provides an efficient and effective means of communication between the Main Campus in Paola and the Xaghra branch of the Gozo Centre. Through this investment, MCAST has provided a means for interactive learning for both candidates and students. At MCAST technology is playing an increasing role in facilitating and enriching the learning environment.

MCAST Sports Coordinator contributed a very interesting article on her experience climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. She provides us with a detailed account of the physical and mental challenge that this expedition entailed. This is a fine example to set for MCAST staff and students. This issue also contains various extra-curricular activities organised by the different Institutes during the Christmas period including concerts, hair and beauty competitions, sports festivals and voluntary work carried out at different charities. All these activities emphasize that MCAST is a Community College.

The College welcomes the new Archbishop Mgr Paul Cremona and wishes him all the success in his new challenging mission that he has embarked on. A vox-pop on students' opinion on the new Archbishop by Comunio is included in this issue.

Thank you all the contributors and please keep those articles, pictures and success stories flowing.

**May I take this opportunity to wish you and your families a peaceful Easter!**

*Caroline*

Caroline Balzan  
 Communications Officer



**MCAST WELCOMES ARCHBISHOP MGR PAUL CREMONA**

Bernice next to the Archbishop

His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, duly inspired by the Holy Spirit, has presented Malta with a new Spiritual Leader. In itself this is a special occasion in more than one sense. This special moment in the life of all of us has rekindled a spiritual enthusiasm. The underlying factor to all this is undoubtedly the person of the new Archbishop of Malta – Mgr Paul Cremona O.P.

Mgr Cremona – smile, charisma, spirituality, wisdom and all - has literally won over many, especially young people who have instantly nurtured a sense of respect and love to this holy man.

This positive reaction of MCAST students was evidenced by the fact that a group of students from various MCAST Institutes joined hundreds of other Maltese young people in a celebration organized by the Diocesan Youth Commission (KDZ) on the 20 January 2007 at St Julian's Parish Church.

This encounter of the young people of Malta with the new Archbishop a few days before his Episcopal Ordination was an experience which cannot be easily described in words. The whole event was so emotional and moving that words are too poor to express the fabulous feeling lived by all who were present.

Comunio, a students' organization who has been active in various socio-spiritual initiatives at the Institute of Business and Commerce and at the College, took up a significant role on this special occasion. One of the Comunio core team members was one of the eight young people representing Maltese youth who posed questions to the new Archbishop in a Q&A session which was an integral part of the encounter. The answers given by Mgr Cremona were a clear indication of the way the new Episcopate will be close to young people's needs, demands and aspirations. The humble and very down-to-earth way in which

Mgr Cremona presented himself was truly an effective magnet which drew young people close to their new Archbishop who was warmly greeted by all at all times.

On the night, Comunio members were chosen to present a commemorative gift to His Grace on behalf of all Maltese young people. This in itself has been another valuable link between Mgr Cremona and MCAST. The gift was designed and produced at the MCAST Institute of Arts and Design, thanks to the cooperation of the Institute's Administration.

The encounter with the new Archbishop on 20 January 2007 was truly an experience which will not be easily forgotten and which has been engraved in the hearts of those present as well as the minds of those young people who met the new Archbishop walking along the streets of Paceville and mingling with them at the hub of youth entertainment.

On that occasion, Mgr Cremona gave us a task that we should all follow. Echoing the Great John Paul II, Mgr Cremona invited us to open our doors wide open for Christ... and by doing this the Archbishop emphasised that we can never find ourselves lost.

"As you pray for the Holy Spirit to descend unto me, also pray for him to come unto you so that together we will build the Church."  
Archbishop Mgr Paul Cremona, O.P.

Meanwhile, to enhance the College's affinity with the new Archbishop, Comunio have come together with other students and members of staff at the College to dedicate the monthly adoration of the Holy Eucharist as prayers for Archbishop Cremona at the outset of this new challenge he has been entrusted with by the Holy Spirit. This Adoration – one of a series of Adorations forming part of the "Monthly Spiritual Top-Up" which Comunio organises monthly - was organised on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2007 and was facilitated by Fr Marco Portelli who is the Assistant Delegate of the Archbishop for Young People.

**Vox Pop comments**

On this special occasion in the life of the Maltese Church Comunio members went around the Paola Campus gathering comments from students about the new Archbishop. The following are reproductions of some of the many comments recorded.

Jien ghadni ma kellix l-opportunità li niltaqa' direttament ma' l-Isqof, però jidher vera orrajt.... narah li jmur tajjeb hafna man-nies u jidher li jhobb jghin, kif ukoll, xi haga li impressjonatni immens, hija t-tbissima tieghu.

Personalment nahseb li l-Isqof il-ġdid lilna ż-żghażagh ha jġieghelna nħossu l-imħabba li ghandu ghalina l-Mulej. Nemmen f'dan għaliex, dak li jemmen fih, iwasslu b'hegga kbira. U nahseb li ahna ż-żghażagh dak li rridu naraw. Meta l-Arċisqof

il-ġdid iltaqa' maghna ż-żghażagh fil-knisja ta' San Ġiljan, kelli esperjenza speċjali li żgur minie ser ninsa.... il-preżenza tieghu kienet eċċezzjonali għaž-żghażagh...kien hemm briju, żfin u daqq, però haġa ta' l-iskantament meta kien hemm l-adorazzjoni, bi kliemu waqa' skiet perfett.

... u kulhadd semghu u kien emozjonat hafna waqt dawkl-mument speċjali fejn urienu kemm verament huwa Missier Spiritwali.

**Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" "Here I am," I said; "send me!" Is 6, 8**



Jimpressjonani ferm kull meta jghid grazzi minn qalbu b'dik it-tbissima sabiha li tixghel minn wiċċu. Verament Arċisqof dhuli li jġieghlek tisimghu fl-umiltà li juri.

Nistqarr li qatt ma kont xi wiehed li jinteressawni l-affarijiet fil-Knisja. Nammetti wkoll li f'dawn l-aħħar snin tant bridt li hassejt li ma kellix għalfejn nersaq lejn Knisja. Però meta deher għall-ewwel darba dan l-Isqof il-ġdid, hassejt xi haġa tiġbidni. Wara li smajtu jitkellem kemm-il darba speċjalment maż-żghażagh, hassejt li għandi nagħmel l-ewwel pass u nerġa' nibda mmur il-quddies nhar ta' Hadd.

Nahseb li dan l-Arċisqof il-ġdid ser iġib il-bidla li hija tant meħtieġa fil-Knisja speċjalment fost iż-żghażagh. Ma nistenna xejn ta' barra minn hawn jew radikali... kull ma nahseb li hemm bżonn huwa li l-Isqof ikun viċin taż-żghażagh kif għamel f'dawn l-aħħar ġimgħat kull meta kellu ċans.

I am really proud of the new Archbishop especially since he baptised me. He is a close friend of my parents and although I never met him directly I am told that he is wonderful and really special. May we all benefit from this holy man.

The new Archbishop is a person that is trying very hard to connect with us young ones.... It seems that he will be opening a new road between the Church and Maltese youth.

One final comment... this time as a fitting farewell to Mgr Mercieca who has worked hard at the helm of the Maltese Church for the past 30 years. We at MCAST have a special thought for Mgr Mercieca, especially after he accepted to be amongst MCAST students and staff at the Opening Ceremony of the Academic Year for the past two consecutive years. May the Lord Bless Mgr Mercieca – Ad Multos Annos.

# REJOICE IN THE LORD

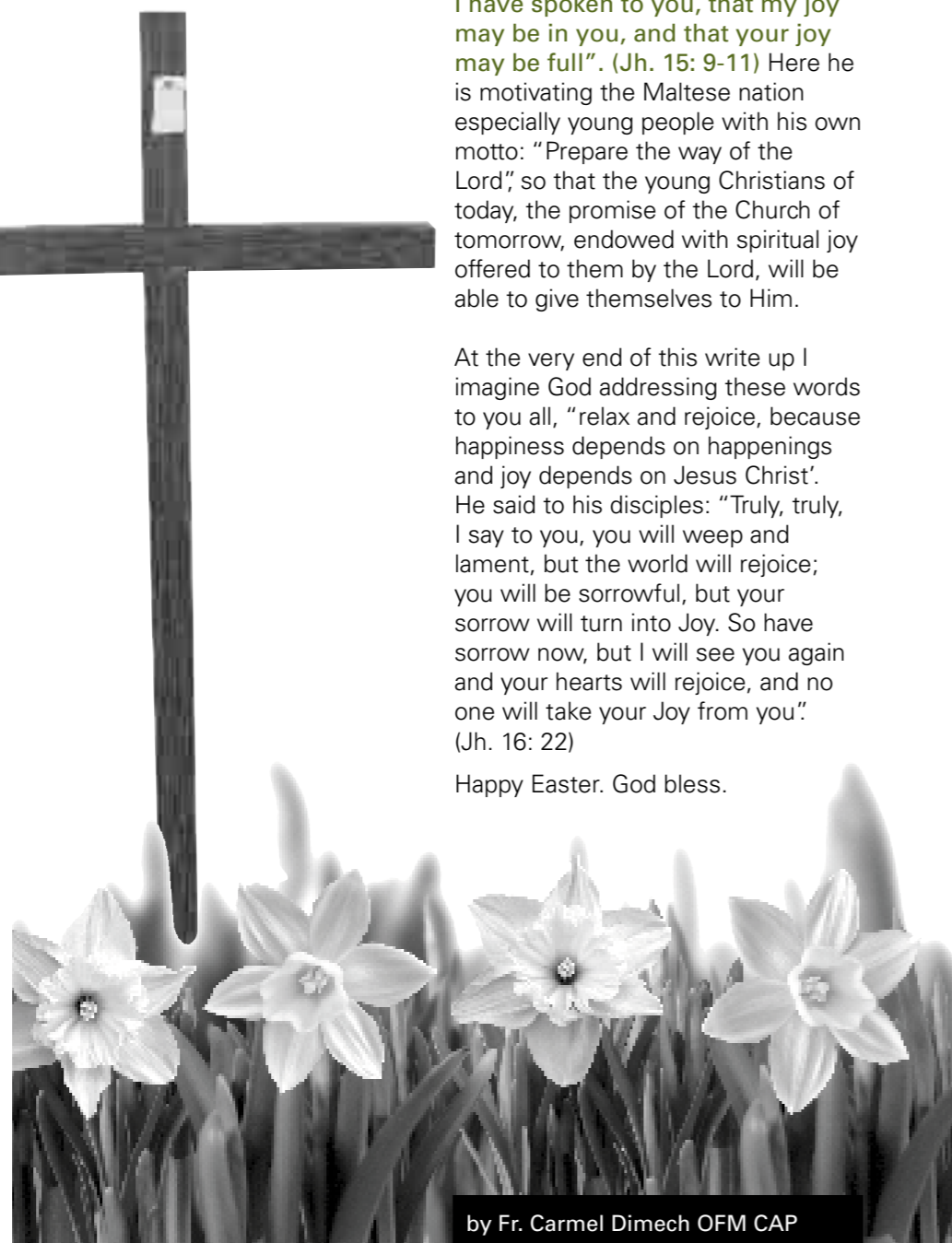
“O come let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!” (Ps. 94, 1-2)

Paschal joy is not just that of a possible transfiguration: it is the joy of the new presence of the risen Christ dispensing to His own the Holy Spirit, so that He may dwell with them. (Exh. P. Paul vi). But why do many Christians fail to experience real joy, which is listed as a fruit of the Holy Spirit? We find the answers in the teaching of St. Paul to the Galatians:

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”. (Gal. 5: 22) Charles Swindoll in his book “Laugh Again” suggests three common “joy stealers” – worry, stress, and fear. He defines worry as “an inordinate anxiety about something that may or may not occur”. Stress, says the author, is “intense strain over a situation we can’t change or control”. Fear is a “dreadful uneasiness over danger, evil, or pain”. But the same author suggests that to resist these “joy stealers”, we must embrace the same confidence St. Paul had in God when he was in prison. He said to the Philippians: “My brethren, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved”. (Ph. 4: 1)

The Holy Spirit stirs up in the Church divine life and zeal for the apostolate. This has now happened to our local Church by the Episcopal consecration of Mgr. Paul Cremona. This special occasion has made us experience joy which is eminently spiritual, the joy as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, in our century which is so threatened by the illusion of happiness, we note the spiritual inability of man to accept “the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2, 14)



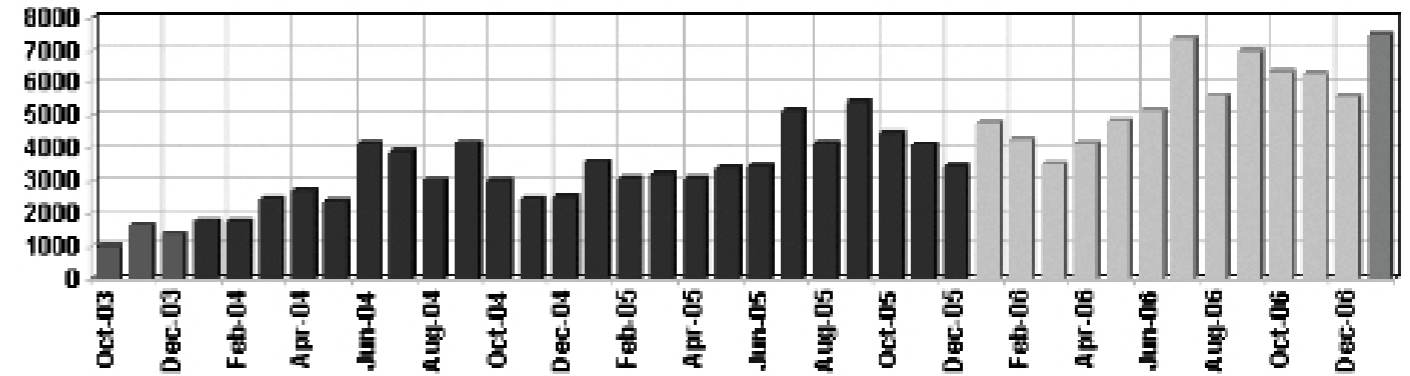
Let us suppose our new Archbishop encouraging us with the words of Jesus Himself saying, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full”. (Jh. 15: 9-11) Here he is motivating the Maltese nation especially young people with his own motto: “Prepare the way of the Lord”, so that the young Christians of today, the promise of the Church of tomorrow, endowed with spiritual joy offered to them by the Lord, will be able to give themselves to Him.

At the very end of this write up I imagine God addressing these words to you all, “relax and rejoice, because happiness depends on happenings and joy depends on Jesus Christ”. He said to his disciples: “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into Joy. So have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your Joy from you”. (Jh. 16: 22)

Happy Easter. God bless.

by Fr. Carmel Dimech OFM CAP

## Highest number of visitors recorded on MCAST website [www.mcast.edu.mt](http://www.mcast.edu.mt)



**The number of visitors on the MCAST website has increased over the years. The College is proud to announce that this January the website has reached the highest number of visitors amounting to 7446.**

**The website is a flagship communications vehicle for prospective students, current students, parents, alumnae/i, and staff. Streamlined navigation makes it easy for prospective students to find information about admissions, full-time and part-time courses, international programmes, stipends and student life. It provides users with dynamic multimedia content via a variety of cutting-edge techniques and technology, including Flash design that adds a more dynamic look to the user interface. The web site reflects the vibrant visual appeal of the College’s print and audio visual material.**

# THE MAGIC OF HERBS

The culinary and medicinal as well as fragrant qualities of Rosemary have been known by man since time immemorial.

The ancient Greeks believed that Rosemary strengthened the memory and Greek scholars traditionally wore sprigs of Rosemary in their hair to help them study during exams. In fact Rosemary is traditionally associated with remembrance. A sprig of rosemary is often included in funeral wreaths as an invocation to remember the departed. On the other hand it is also used in wedding wreaths because remembrance also strengthens fidelity in marriage.

Whether these traditional folkloristic beliefs have any basis in scientific reality is not really within the scope of this discussion. It does help to make the plants a bit more interesting. The association with memory, however, does seem to have some scientific basis. Rosemary helps stimulate blood circulation and this could definitely aid the memory. For this reason it was also used extensively to stimulate the scalp and prevent or inhibit baldness.

The stimulant effect improves the circulation of blood around the bulbs of the hair root. Rinsing the hair with an infusion of Rosemary – after allowing it to cool down sufficiently – not only helps keep the hair roots in good condition but also maintains good circulation in the scalp and controls dry flaky skin and dandruff.

People who have dark hair can especially benefit from rinsing their hair in Rosemary water because it not only keeps the hair growing strong and clean but it gives the hair a dark sparkling shine.

Rosemary has a warming effect on the entire body, probably because of the improved circulation that it stimulates. A nice tisane or infusion made of some hot water poured over

a few sprigs of fresh Rosemary can impart an inner warmth that is very stimulating.

A few sprigs of Rosemary in the bath water has also been found to be useful to help stimulate the circulation and to relax. In this case, the Rosemary water should be produced separately first and then added to the bath water or else dried Rosemary should be used. This is because Rosemary releases a resin that could form a kind of film on the surface of the water and this could adhere to the skin like a gluey scum. If the infusion is prepared beforehand and then filtered through a tissue paper, this problem would be eliminated. Dried Rosemary does not release this resin so it could easily be used directly in the bath.

**So what else could we do with Rosemary? Let's recapitulate. What can you do with a simple sprig of Rosemary? Well we could:**

Tuck it into a nice big roasting chicken to add that special flavour and to help in the digestion. Rosemary sprigs are also very good with roast pork and even fish.

Pour boiling water over a few needle-like leaves for a stimulating cup of tea. Keep some of these leaves in a closed container in your desk and drink a Rosemary infusion instead of coffee.

Boil it and strain the aromatic water into a hot bath to relax tired nerves and muscles. Because of the resin in fresh Rosemary, it is best to use dried leaves for making this tisane. A teaspoonful of dried crushed leaves steeped in a cup of boiling water for ten minutes makes a refreshing and invigorating tea. Place sprigs of Rosemary between woollens to repel moths. I suggest that the sprigs are wrapped in tissue paper so that the resin would not stain the woollen items or stick to them.

Toss some Rosemary into the fireplace as fragrant incense or

occasionally add some to the barbecue to impart the fragrance to the meat. An old French name for Rosemary was *Incensier* because the poor used to burn it in lieu of incense for religious ceremonies and to ward off the evil eye and to banish evil spirits. In fact Rosemary was often used, before the arrival of disinfectants, to purify and cleanse the air in hospital wards. Tuck it in a letter of condolence "for remembrance." Cultivation of Rosemary is not difficult – once you know how.

Rosemary prefers a light sandy well-drained soil. A waterlogged soil could well spell the untimely death of even the most vigorous Rosemary plant.

The plant must also be protected from snails - especially during the growing period - which in Malta is during the end of winter and throughout spring. A special watch must also be kept for the notorious Rosemary beetle. This is a small beetle which attacks primarily Rosemary bushes but has also been found to attack lavender, thyme and sage.

by Saviour Vella, Senior Lecturer



[Rosemary – botanical name: *Rosmarinus officinalis*, *Klin* in Maltese]

## MARY MARY QUITE CONTRARY, HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW? WITH SILVER BELLS AND COCKLE SHELLS AND PRETTY MAIDS ALL IN A ROW.

### HOW GREEN IS YOUR FINGER?

Many people hesitate at the thought of growing vegetables, herbs, and fruit trees in their gardens because they believe that it requires lots of hard work, complicated skills and intricate knowledge about numerous plants in order to make a success of it.

Naturally, things do not happen all by themselves and plants and trees do not grow well if you simply stuff them into a hole in the soil and forget about them. But with a little bit of information, a dose of determination, and an occasional dash of perspiration, most of us would be quite capable of growing some delicious vegetables in our small gardens all year round and persuade our trees and bushes to yield some mouth-watering fruit which would put to shame anything you can obtain conveniently from the green grocer round the corner.

In order to obtain satisfactory and encouraging results one should plan ahead. The soil must be prepared well ahead for planting or sowing so that the plants or seeds will find a suitable medium in which to grow and thrive. If you have never cultivated any vegetables, do not try to do too much at first. Limit yourself to just 2 or 3 different vegetables and do not plant more than a dozen of each. Keep the varieties and numbers down to suitable proportions that will allow you to keep up with their care requirements and to be able to give them sufficient attention. Regular monitoring of your plants is essential. Disease, parasites, and insects can attack without warning and if such threats remain unnoticed, it would soon be too late to apply any remedies that could save your plants. Vegetable plants could be overgrown

rapidly by numerous weeds that would literally suffocate your plants. That is why proper preparation of the soil is essential. The soil must be rotovated and hoed to a good depth prior to planting. Sometimes, it requires several rotovations. There are literally millions upon millions of grass and weed seeds in the soil, but only the ones on the surface manage to germinate. Everytime you rotovate or hoe the soil, you bring up more seeds to the top and these seeds germinate and grow. If you rotovate your soil several times prior to planting or sowing your vegetables, you will be destroying all those weeds in anticipation of planting and therefore there will be very few weed seeds to germinate once your crop is in the ground. Remember that weeds are detrimental to your crops because they:

- are aggressive thieves of the nutrients that the vegetables require
- are aggressive thieves of the moisture available
- are carriers of diseases and insects
- can - and often do – deprive the vegetable plants of the sunlight they need to produce their food
- can – and often do – actually wrap themselves around the host plant and strangle it.

Therefore, if you notice that weeds have started to grow around your vegetable plants despite your diligence in rotovating and hoeing prior to planting, there is nothing to do but get down on your knees and – no, not pray – attack those weeds with your hands, penknives, trowels, forks, small hoes, large hoes - whatever it takes.

Do this while the weed plants are still young and when the soil is soft and moist. That way, the weeds will come out easily, totally, and without pulling up the vegetable plants with them.

Always collect the weeds you have pulled up and throw them on the compost heap. Never leave them near your plants since they could quite feasibly take root again and revive.

Even if you may feel that you are still a very green gardener without a green finger, your efforts will still reward you with some delicious surprises. Start off with just a few varieties – those which you use most frequently so that you will enjoy them even more. Watch out for insects, snails, slugs, cutworms, which may undo in a few minutes what you may have struggled for an entire month to achieve. Your efforts to grow some vegetables for yourself will not only reward you with some wholesome food but will re-establish your contact with the natural world and force you to reclaim your ration of fresh air.

### Quiz with a prize

At the top of this article there is an old nursery rhyme about Mary Mary quite contrary and her garden. Whoever hands in the first correct explanation of what kind of garden this was and who Mary Mary quite Contrary was, will receive a decorative plant or a herb plant from the Agribusiness Institute.

Clue: History students have a better chance of knowing the answer than agriculture students.

by Saviour Vella, Senior Lecturer

# GERMAN MASTER CABINET-MAKERS VISIT THE INSTITUTE OF ART AND DESIGN

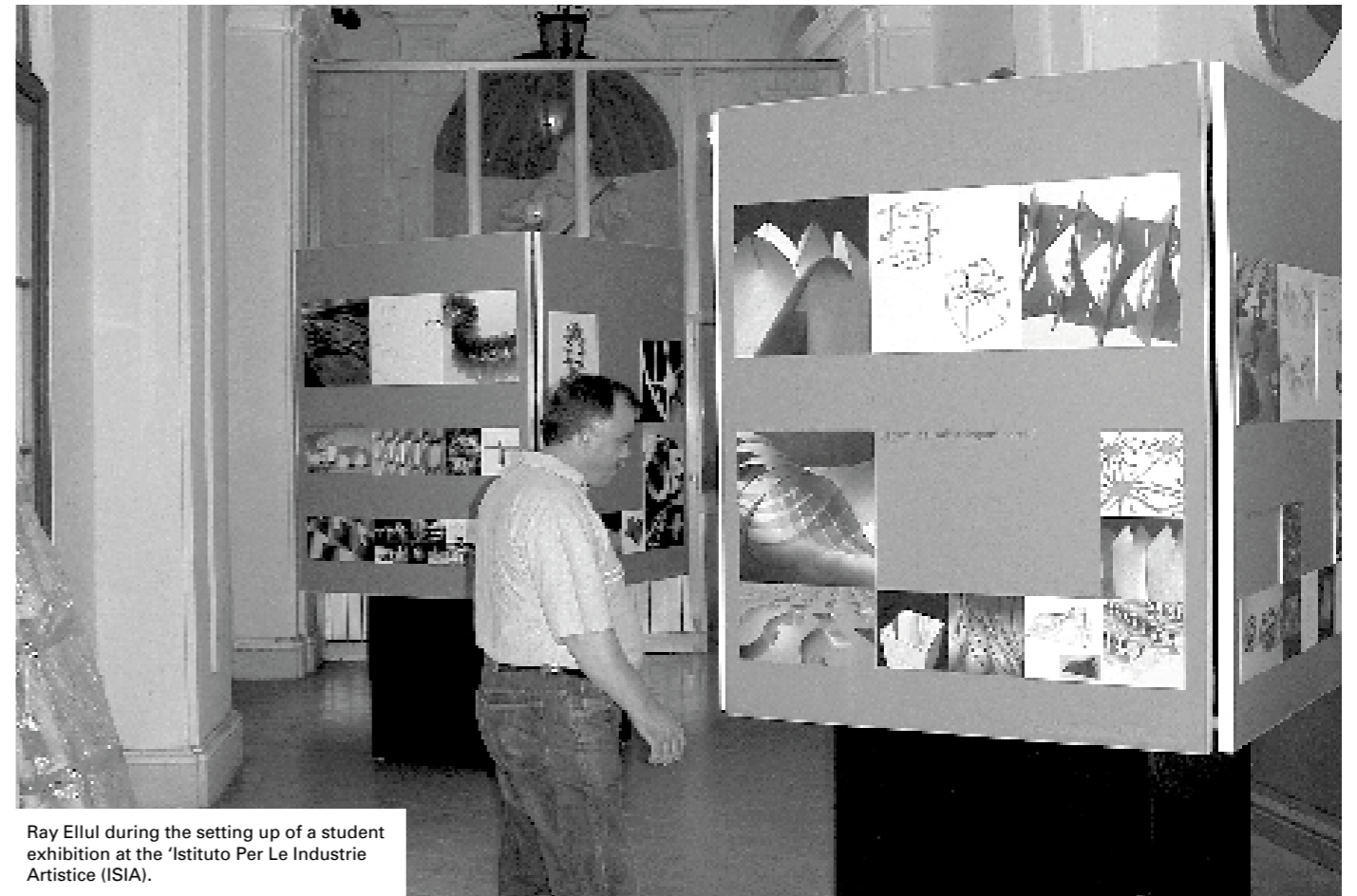
Following a request received from a vocational college in Germany which delivers specialist degree programmes, three lecturers and eleven students from the Academy for Plant Management, Furniture Making and Interior Design in Freiburg were invited to spend a morning at the Institute of Art and Design. The participants, all of them mature students who have completed a first degree for Master Cabinet-Makers (the German "Meister") and who have already worked for some years in their area of specialization, are following a one-year full time course. The school is one of the most important training units for building professions of all kinds in Baden-Wurttemberg.

Donald Friggieri, Director of the Institute of Art and Design, delivered an illustrated lecture entitled "Crafts in Malta – an Expression of Cultural Values".

Historically craft was associated with producing objects which were necessary for life. The visual presentation dealt with craft products which are traditionally linked with the Maltese islands and which have been specifically associated with a number of applications: work, leisure, home life, transport, food, identity, religion, information and environment.

Craftsmanship is a fundamental mode of education, through which we explore, discover the qualities of, and come to terms with the world in which we live. Craft provides an induction of a human being into his culture, for he meets, not in books but first-hand in actual objects, so many values.

Following a tour of the Institute workshops, the Head of the German group, Joachim Speck invited two



Ray Ellul during the setting up of a student exhibition at the 'Istituto Per Le Industrie Artistiche (ISIA).

stone sculptors from the Institute of Art and Design to participate in the European Stone Festival which will be held in Freiburg in 2008.

The German College will be organizing the 2008 sculpture celebration. Since the end of the nineties, the meeting of young European stone carvers has taken place in several countries in the EU. The festival has now grown to considerable proportions. More than one hundred and fifty stone carvers at different

stages in their training and from numerous European countries went to Freiburg in 2005 to demonstrate their skills and ideas before the visitors' eyes.

At the end of the festival, the finished pieces are auctioned. The proceeds from this auction go towards the financing of the festival itself and serve as a reserve to support participation in future festivals in Europe.

## Premio Nazionale delle Arti 2006

In collaboration with the Istituto Italiano di Cultura at St George's Square Valletta, the MCAST Institute of Art and Design is organising a seminar on the Premio Nazionale delle Arti 2006 (PNA) Ministero Italiano dell'Universita e della Ricerca MIUR. The PNA is a competition which is open to all art and design students attending courses in Italy. This national initiative awards the best works of art from various disciplines such as Sculpture, Painting, Graphics, Decor, other artistic techniques and design. The objective of the competition is to create a synergy

among state academies and universities in Italy and throughout the European capitals disseminating contemporary art & design experiences. This has also given an opportunity to students to exhibit the winning entries outside Italy and as a result promote those institutions that offer such courses.

Such initiatives are also important so as to create openings and opportunities for students opting to further their artistic career in Italy.

The MCAST Institute of Art and Design has already discussed student exchanges and staff placements, signed an erasmus agreement with the Accademia di Belle Arti in Frosinone (Rome) in May 2006.

## SPECIALIST LECTURE ALL THE WAY FROM JAPAN



Just before breaking up for the Christmas recess, students following the National Diploma in Applied Science together with students who have just started off a new course leading to a Diploma for Pharmacy Technicians, had an opportunity to follow a lecture by Mr Mark J Micallef. Mr Micallef is a Senior Scientist at the Toray Industries in Japan and is a Visiting Lecturer for Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics at the University of Malta.

This year's lecture focused on Clinical Trials in Anti Cancer Drug Research and Development. Mr Micallef started off by delving into various considerations in drug development. He went on to highlight the process of introducing new medicinals on the market. It is estimated that out of several hundred thousand synthetic

chemical drug candidates, only a few hundred will be chosen to undergo pre-clinical trials. Statistics show that out of 5,000 compounds in pre-clinical testing, only five will be evaluated in clinical trials, and only one will be approved for clinical use. The research and development of a drug will take on average between 12~15 years up to clinical acceptance and cost between US\$500m~US\$800m.

Students attending this interesting lecture had the opportunity to go through the various intricate phases of drug development from pre-clinical studies, on through the different phases of clinical trials, right up to the application procedures for new drugs. The ethical considerations along the way were given their due importance by the speaker.

## ON SITE VISITS

Students following the Matriculation Certificate had the opportunity of placing their theoretical studies within their contextual perspectives. Students studying Systems of Knowledge had an opportunity of visiting the Museum of Fine Arts. Thanks to the expertise of the very welcoming guides at the Heritage Malta site, students were given an in-depth exposure to the variety of artifacts on display. This explanation was put into contextual perspective by

their lecturer. The relation to the relevant Systems of Knowledge module elements was continuously emphasized.

Studying a book for a literature exam may at times seem to be inanimate and can cause boredom. Taking a tour around the place which offers the scenario for a literature book starts bringing life into its study. Students studying Maltese at Advanced Level had the opportunity of visiting sites which have inspired

or which actually provide the background for the plot of literature books they are currently analysing as part of their studies. This, together with a dose of culture emanating from the same sites which were visited, helped give life to elements which at times tend to be lifeless in one's own vision and perspective.

## THE HON EDWIN VASSALLO ADDRESSES STUDENTS

On Tuesday 31 January 2007, the Parliamentary Secretary for Small Businesses and the Self-Employed within the Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications, addressed a group of first year students following Business courses at the Institute. In a very vivid and informal address, the Hon. Mr Edwin Vassallo touched upon various aspects of commercial activity. His main emphasis was placed on the skill of entrepreneurship and the importance that such a skill is embedded in all young people

whatever their job may be. It was emphasized that nurturing entrepreneurial skills is not something which is solely the realm of students who have embarked on studies leading to management or business activity. The positive outcome of such nurturing also leads directly to the achievement of a compendium of skills which help students deal with day-to-day situations. Mr Vassallo highlighted this by referring to a myriad of practical examples.

Mr. Vassallo urged students to appreciate the importance and relevance of fostering entrepreneurial skills as in this way they would not only develop as entrepreneurs, but more importantly as holistic individuals with a verve for life.

The session was considered by many students as a very down to earth and practical attempt at instilling in them a love for entrepreneurship as well as

business sense from a practical point of view. The Hon. Vassallo encouraged them to consider a business start-up as a viable alternative to employment. He shared his experience about the fact that self-employment can lead to personal and commercial success and while it is true that every person's ultimate aim, whether in self-employment or not, is to make money, all must remember that our priority must be to provide a service.

The speaker also referred to our corporate social responsibility, and the need to nurture a strict code of ethics in all that we do.

The Parliamentary Secretary went on to focus on the positive relationship between those offering and those receiving a service within the market. He emphasized that the effectiveness (success) of any commercial activity was highly dependent on the level of customer service given to clients.

## EDUCATIONAL QUIZ

An educational quiz highlighting aspects and rules governing Maltese grammar and linguistics was organised for students following the Foundation Certificate in Business. The quiz was a very animated event wherein students responded to a variety of questions exercising their knowledge of the various linguistic aspects of our mother tongue.



**CELEBRATE LIFE WEEK 2006**

Throughout a Celebrate Life Week, Comunio – a students’ organisation active in the promotion of positive social, cultural and spiritual values – launched a Charity Campaign.

The Celebrate Life Week was a week of life awareness initiatives which reached culmination on 1 December 2006 – World AIDS Awareness Day. In fact, throughout the week, students at the Institute of Business and Commerce wore the AIDS awareness and solidarity ribbon, which was distributed by Comunio to all students.

The week of events included seminars facilitated by Sedqa and Caritas, as well as interesting encounters with Fr Hilary Tagliaferro and media personality John Bundy. Initiatives promoted by Comunio included an exhibition of artistic expression focused on the theme “Life Expressions” as well as a Street Football Tournament. Both initiatives insisted on the importance and relevance of sports and creativity as the best means of enhancing life and keeping away harmful situations which endanger

life – such as alcohol and drug abuse.

Other remarkable initiatives included the putting up of a number of colourful banners with life awareness messages. These banners were set up all over the Institute’s two lecture blocks, thus making sure that the chosen messages reached all the students.

The value of life is high on Comunio’s agenda throughout the varied calendar of events planned



for the first months of 2007.

The launching of this year’s Charity Campaign fitted in nicely with the Celebrate Life Week objectives, especially since one is to keep in mind that the value of Charity and Altruism is one of the paramount values of life.

Various charity stunts took place at the Institute as part of the Charity Campaign which aims at raising funds in favour of charitable institutions.



**CELEBRATION 2006**

The Institute’s annual Celebration was this year considered to be the biggest and most varied one ever. This year the event was held at the Sir Temi Zammit Hall – University of Malta.

The three-hour talent packed evening brought together various styles of artistic and entertaining expressions. A variety of musical genres – from classical to rock - took over the first part of the event.

The second part of the evening took the form of a Mini-Musical with an interesting plot which conveyed a message about life.

Through the Mini-Musical performed during Celebration 2006, Comunio intended to guide the way through an experience which brings together music, dance, acting as well as a good plot underlying which one could decipher a message linked to life... everybody’s life. After all we are all actors on a stage... the scenario being the world we live in – everybody in his or her own circle.

During this Celebration Comunio shared with those present a well known plot which has made Walt Disney richer than before. The scene unfolds itself a few years ago.... A community living on the fringe of a large industrial town. Very closely-knit relationships where all the commoners have great respect towards a very wealthy family who practically owns all the land and rural industries in the area. This family is also considered as the rulers of the area – benevolent rich people who do all the very best to see that the community has a good standard of living as they strongly believe that, although they have inherited their wealth and lands from their ancestors, it is thanks to their employees that their business has kept on steadily even though the rest of the land was passing through a serious economic recession. This recession has given rise to some worrying criminality amongst gangs who have set up their dens in the downtown zone just outside the vast lands owned by this rich family. Arising from this plot, the audience feasted a

Mini-Musical by the name of “The Urban Lion King Landlord”.

Students’ talents and creative skills provided a colourful feast. This continues to enhance the positive characteristics which are found in young people who have such a dynamic verve for life.

A considerable number of students following different programmes of study at the MCAST Institute of Business and Commerce were directly involved in all the various aspects making up this event. To all those who worked hard for the success of Celebration 2006, a sincere thank you and a wholehearted “keep up the excellent work”.

The event was sponsored by HSBC Bank (Malta) and IQ as main sponsors, as well as supported by Nexos Lighting Technology, Showmix, Bookmark and Agenzija Sedqa.



## FILM FORUM - RENT

**Linked to the Celebrate Life Week initiative a group of students studying Sociology at Advanced and Intermediate Level met together to analyse and discuss the DVD Rent. The session was facilitated by the subject teacher. The Sociology 'A' level second year students wrote the following article.**

Throughout the viewing of the film Rent, various sociological aspects could be pointed out and after watching the film a discussion together with the subject lecturer was held. Some very interesting points were brought up.

Rent tells the story of a group of Bohemians struggling to live and to pay their rent in the gritty background of New York's East Village. 'Measuring their lives in love' these starving artists strive for success and acceptance while enduring the obstacles of poverty, illness, drugs and the AIDS epidemic.

Illness is viewed in moral terms, as it still seems that people see a link between ill-health and moral failures. Many scientific theories still blame personal behaviour as the cause of illness. Therefore this makes the individual responsible for his/her illness. Others are seen as victims. Some illnesses (as in this case AIDS) have a negative label attached to them as the disease is seen as the result of an individual's chosen lifestyle.

We live in a modern society where we understand illness within a narrative of risk. It is our duty to avoid becoming ill. This means that irresponsible sexual activities are seen as the moral failings of the person concerned.

Susan Sontag maintained that modern diseases such as AIDS

are: 'a powerful means of placing the blame on the ill. Patients who are instructed that they have, unwittingly, caused their disease are also made to feel that they have deserved it.'

People, who are not able to cope by themselves in terms of food and necessary hygiene, are being treated differently depending on the country they live in. Unfortunately many people tend to be excluded from mainstream society because of their poverty.

**'Measuring their lives in love' these starving artists strive for success and acceptance while enduring the obstacles of poverty, illness, drugs and the AIDS epidemic.**



Welfare to these people is not always provided accordingly. On the other hand, a counter-argument for welfare provision is that if these people are being offered welfare, there could be a possibility that they start relying too much on these grants while not doing their best to get out of that situation (welfare dependency).

Poverty and ill-health are two factors which might lead a person to not being accepted by society. This would certainly lead to frustration, and these people might retreat from society and form groups where they feel they belong. One should reflect on the fact that while the majority of people enjoy the festive season with their families and friends, (these people) (on these days) feel lonelier and rejected because they see everyone together, while they have nobody to rely on. This leads to sadness and desperation, and resorting to drugs may seem the only option.

Watching this film has given us a true picture of the world around us, and makes one ask, what is 'normal' in the society we live in today? Is there any thing such as 'normal' in today's world? What is accepted and what is not? Without doubt, after watching this film we have learnt that we have to be more tolerant and less judgmental towards others. This film forum was a really interesting experience to us all as it helped us to apply the theory we usually learn in class to daily life situations.

## CHRISTMAS CREATIVITY SHOW



Christmas has come and gone, but memories of an enjoyable day linger on. The annual Christmas Creativity Show organised by the students at the Institute of Community Services was one event that will be remembered by all. This year the show was held on Monday 18 December 2006 at ir-Razzett tal-Fbiberija.

Almost 400 students, divided into 24 groups, took part. Amongst the cheers and laughs of their peers, each group gave a short performance. Most groups came up with fantastic and highly creative ideas based on the theme common to all – Christmas.

Students following Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy courses focused on hairstyles and fantasy

make-up, while students following Care Courses, Early year Courses and Sports Courses came up with other original ideas such as Christmas in Australia, Santa's Toy Shop, Elvis Back in Christmas, Pyjama Party at Christmas Time and Step Up to Christmas.

There were six categories in which the students were judged namely Hairstyles, Make-up, Choreography, Costumes, Original Idea and Original Music. Each group had to enter into three out of the six categories. The judging was in the hands of people from different professions, including former students. It was not an easy task for the judges to choose the winners since the performance of all groups was of a very high standard.

The students were awarded mementos for the hard work they put in to produce the show. The main aim behind this activity was to make the students aware of their talents and help them develop their abilities. Another objective was to encourage the students to work in teams, as this would help them in their future careers.

Another successful activity came to an end, yet most students are already discussing new ideas for the soirée that the Institute will be organising in May.

## Christmas Activities at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering



His Excellency Archbishop Mgr Paul Cremona during his visit to the Hair and Beauty Marathon



## LM 64,847 RAISED AT THE HAIR AND BEAUTY MARATHON

Lm 64,847 were raised at the 36-hour Hair and Beauty Marathon held between Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 February 2007 at ir-Razzett tal-Hbiberija.

Students following the MCAST-BTEC First Diploma in Sport and Exercise Sciences and the MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Sport organised various pool games, 'Giochi Senza Frontiere'. Students from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering set up the Digital Count Down Clock

that they designed and produced and also organised a carwash and football tournament. Art and Design students helped the camera crew.

Maritime students together with the St. John's Rescue team performed rescue drills, while the Comunio group within the Institute of Business and Commerce provided entertainment. Students from the Institute of Agribusiness sold herbs and plants, students following Care and Health Studies sold delicacies prepared

by themselves, while students following the MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Early Years provided child minding services at specific times. The Institute of Mechanical Engineering held car tests.

The College wishes to thank all those who supported this charitable event.



The extra curricular activities at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering are always eagerly awaited for by students and staff. This year's Christmas activities were held on the last two days of the first term and one can say that they were a great success.

On the first day, the activities included an adrenaline pumping Badger Karting session, a military-like Paint ball game and a movie at the local cinemas. Of course, the ever present and popular football tournament was also held on the same day with excellent participation and a good dose of competitive spirit by all players. The fine weather contributed to the success and fun enjoyed by all.

The altruistic nature of our students was portrayed by another two activities that were held on the same day. Some thirty students were sent to do voluntary work at the Park of Friendship and the Eden Foundation. The students, under the supervision of a number of lecturers and other members of staff, put in a packed solid day's work that was highly appreciated by the benefiting organisations. This included maintenance work. The group was made up of 12 female



and 18 male students together with 8 staff members.

The work conducted during the day included full overhaul of water pumps used in the Park's swimming pool, servicing about 30 air conditioning units, inspection and checking of eight large electrical distribution boards, and cleaning the swimming pool's filtration systems. Students were under the supervision of staff members and were continuously monitored.

Beside the hands-on experience, the students gained valuable practical knowledge related to the skills they learn in class. The students had a one time opportunity to spend a day with persons in need.

The second day was equally interesting and successful. Two excellent activities were held. The first was an Aikido demonstration led by one of our lecturers (Mr. Michael Bonello who is a black belt in Aikido) where students were given a chance to practise some of the techniques being demonstrated. The second activity was a treasure hunt that started in Buskett and finished at Dingli.

Having students and staff socialising and enjoying themselves in these activities is also an important educational process that helps our students develop into respectful citizens of the society they live in.



# STUDENTS' EXCHANGE 2006

Exchange programmes are fruitful activities which provide students with a unique opportunity to travel abroad and gain both cultural and industrial experience. Since the opening of MCAST, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering has held a number of exchanges Lyons, France. This time however, the number of students exceeded any of the previous exchanges and also different locations and countries were involved.

Six students, all following the MCAST Diploma in Computer Engineering, visited Dublin. Dublin is the base of computer giant IBM operations in Ireland. The influence of such a large and technologically advanced corporation led to very important industrial and commercial developments in the Dublin area, with quite a large portion of it in IT related fields. Our students had the opportunity to work in the following IT companies, namely:

Greenstar, Alex Hoare IT Consultants, The Design Pool and M J Flood. The students had a chance to acquire practical hands-on experience in server administration, website production and networking. Judging by the students' feedback the experience was challenging, highly motivational and very relevant to their chosen field of studies.

Another group of students following courses in the Electrical area visited the beautiful French city of Lyons – the Rhone capital. Lyons is the second largest metropolitan area in France and boasts of high economic and industrial development. Our students were given training opportunities in leading companies such as ABB, Volvo Group and Solimatique. Training varied from servicing of ATMs to the design of switching controllers and also an exposure to research and development.



Left to right: Borg Reuben, Attard Justin and Mallia Kenneth.



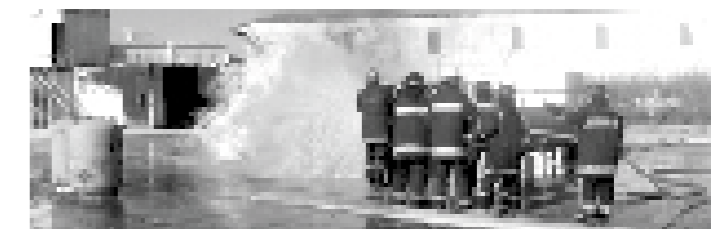
Left to right: Parni Leon, Caruana Keith and Vella Antoine.

## MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE MEET WITH MARITIME INSTITUTE REPRESENTATIVES

Three senior officials from the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service in Liverpool have had meetings with the MCAST Principal and CEO, Mr. Frank Edwards, and the Director of the MCAST Maritime Institute, Capt. Reuben Lanfranco, to discuss ways in which they could be of assistance to the College especially through MCAST's Memorandum of Agreement with the St. John Rescue Corps. During the visit in November 2006, the Merseyside officials toured the Maritime Institute facilities and were given an overview of the safety training programmes provided by the Institute. They also had the chance to observe 3rd Year Navigational Officer Cadets undergo training in Advanced Fire Fighting at Hal Far using the MCAST Fire Tender. It is envisaged that a number of MCAST lecturers/students attached to the St. John Rescue Corps will travel to Merseyside in the summer months to train on Fire Fighting and Rescue Techniques with the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.



Officer Cadets stowing fire fighting equipment on the MCAST Fire Tender after completing the five-day intensive training course on advanced fire fighting.



3rd Year Officer Cadets attending the Officer in Charge of a Navigational Watch Course during the Advanced Fire Fighting course tackle a large fire as a team under the direction of their instructor Mr. James Newell.

## PRESENTATION TO MARITIME INSTITUTE OFFICER CADETS ON THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

On the 24 November 2006, Officer Cadets at the MCAST Maritime Institute were given a presentation on the United States Coast Guard by Commander Brian Lisko, USCG who is the United States Coast Guard Attaché at the US Embassy in Malta. During the interesting presentation, Commander Lisko spoke about the role and mission of the United States Coast Guard (USCG) and the importance of maritime safety as well as the Coast Guard's role in Maritime Law Enforcement. This presentation was of great interest to many of the Officer Cadets especially those who have already completed their 12-month sea practical training and were deployed on vessels trading to/from the United States, where the US Coast Guard's presence is highly noticeable.

Commander Brian Lisko of the United States Coast Guard being presented with a memento of the MCAST Maritime Institute by Capt. R. Lanfranco, Director, Maritime Institute.



## PRESENTATION ON THE INTERNATIONAL SAFETY MANAGEMENT CODE TO MARITIME INSTITUTE OFFICER CADETS AND MEMBERS OF THE NAUTICAL INSTITUTE (MALTA BRANCH)

On the 26 January 2007, Dr. Phil Anderson, BA (Hons), D Prof., FNI, MEWI, AMAE, a retired Master Mariner who is currently the Managing Director of ConsultISM Ltd and outgoing President of the Nautical Institute (UK) gave a very interesting presentation on the International Safety Management (ISM) System and Code to Maritime Institute Officer Cadets and members of the Nautical Institute (Malta Branch) at the Maritime Institute in Kalkara. This presentation dealt mainly with the legal aspects of the ISM Code and Dr. Anderson also mentioned a few case studies involving ISM which were dealt with in court in the UK. Dr. Anderson is also the author of the Nautical Institute publication "The Mariner's Role in Collecting Evidence in Light of ISM," a copy of which was presented to the Maritime Institute Director by Dr. Anderson for the MCAST Maritime Institute library.



*Dr. Phil Anderson of ConsultISM Ltd being presented with a memento of the MCAST Maritime Institute by Capt. R. Lanfranco, Director, Maritime Institute after signing the Institute's visitor's book*

### OFFICER CADETS AT SEA

**The following Officer Cadets were at sea on the following vessels during the period this article was written:**

MSC Boston	Officer Cadet Emanuel Gatt
MV Costanza Star	Officer Cadet David Calleja
HSC Maria Dolores	Officer Cadet Matthew Vella
MSC Sarah	Officer Cadet Elenio Sciberras
MV Grande America	Officer Cadets Francesca Galea and Steve Azzopardi
CMA CGM Sambhar	Officer Cadet Steve Gauci
Eurocargo Valencia	Officer Cadet Roderick Borg
Maersk Itaqi	Officer Cadet David Mercieca
CMA CGM Wagner	Officer Cadet Pauline Bonnici
HS Challenger	Officer Cadet Mark Mercieca
MSC New York	Officer Cadet Carmen Darmanin
MV Grande Buenos Aires	Officer Cadets Jonathan Zahra and Remy Van Rooy
MV Grande Africa	Officer Cadets Gabriel Agius and James Spiteri
Grande Atlantico	Officer Cadet Julio Caruana

## APPRECIATION – CHRIS MICALLEF

On the 6 of January 2007, late in the afternoon, I received the sad news that Chris Micallef had passed away. An hour before I had visited him for the last time in hospital. Even though I was expecting the news, it was still a great shock, as I am sure it was for all those who knew Chris.

Chris was not just a colleague; he was also a great friend. He was respected and loved by everyone at the Institute of Mechanical Engineering as he worked hard to help both students and staff. He was always full of ideas and was involved in the organisation of many events at the Institute. Being a great lover of the outdoors he had come up with the idea of a Treasure Hunt Christmas activity for students. The students had really enjoyed themselves and the treasure hunt has since become a yearly appointment. He also took students camping, helped in the organisation of the annual BBQ and organised an abseiling fundraising event in Christmas 2005.

I remember the time when he delivered a lecture at the end of the first scholastic year on how to best use Microsoft word when setting exam papers. We had given him such a hard time! We had 'misbehaved' a lot and imitated all the things students do to us in class.

Then there are those little things that remind me of Chris. If I hear 'The Lord of the Rings' I cannot help but think of Chris with a grin. He was such an avid fan! He had told me that he reads the novel once a year and God knows how many times he must have seen the movie! In fact only a year ago he was very enthusiastic about an international Pringles competition as the winning prize was a trip to New Zealand to visit the studios where 'The Lord of the Rings' was filmed. Pringles became a staff room joke. He (and us!) ate Pringles everyday and during break we sometimes toured the



**'Make the most out of it and enjoy it while you can because life is too short to worry about.'**  
Chris Micallef

supermarkets to buy the last few Pringle cans. His determination was rewarded as he won the competition and he treated us to a Pringles party during break to celebrate. Unfortunately the trip to New Zealand was to be his last.

Chris was always full of positive energy which he transmitted to those around him. When last summer he was diagnosed with cancer he did not give up hope. He continued doing the things he loved most: going out

with his family, painting, reading, spending time with his friends and attending scouts meetings. He also made it to the graduation ceremony organised by MCAST last October during which he was awarded the BTEC Certificate in Further Education Teaching.

Chris fought his illness with a lot of courage and inner strength that made us respect and admire him even more.

He also had the incredible support of his wife Gina whom I hold in great esteem. She did everything she could and more to help him, always with a reassuring smile.

I found it hard to start writing this and I kept postponing it as it is still hard for me to accept that Chris has left us. Now I am finding it difficult to stop as I keep thinking of things I could write about him and of many anecdotes I could narrate.

I will close by quoting Chris himself. In a blog he was writing during his illness Chris wrote, 'When you're facing death you learn to appreciate the beauty of life, even simple things.' I am sure that this is the message that he would have wanted to give to his friends and students. Life is precious and beautiful, appreciate every moment and do not take anything for granted.

My deepest sympathy to his wife Gina, his son Andrew, his parents, sister and relatives. Chris will always be in our hearts and memories.

By Claire Abela  
Institute of Mechanical Engineering



A group of students who went badger karting

## CHRISTMAS

Christmas 2006 at the Institute of Mechanical Engineering was once again full of activities. Different classes were taken horse riding, badger karting, treasure hunting or hiking by their teachers. Some students also chose to do some voluntary work at a home for the elderly at Mtarfa.

A Christmas Football tournament was organized for the second consecutive year. The matches were held at the Hibernians' ground over two separate days. The ND1C team won the session held on the first day, while a team made up of students from A2 and ND1B won on the second day.

## ACTIVITIES

After last year's success, a second edition of the Arts and Hobbies Exhibition was held on Monday 18 December 2006 with the participation of the Association of Model Engineers. Lecturers and students exhibited some of their works which included paintings, photography, models of cars and planes, stonework, and more.

The activities came to an end on Wednesday 20 December 2006. The day started with Holy Mass at the Plant workshop celebrated by Fr. Ray Francalanza. Students and lecturers then gathered in front of the Institute for the annual Christmas barbecue which was organized by a group of HND students and lecturers.



National Diploma Students at Ghajn Tuffieha



Winning Team: Matthew Mark Abela, David Bugeja, Omar Toutoungi, Jake Buttigieg, Christopher Muscat, and Karl Carabott from ND1C



Horse Riding at Bidnija



Winning Team: from left Franklyn Cassar (A2), Andrea Briffa (ND1B), Wayne Parascandolo (ND1B), Hubert Farrugia (A2) and Richard Grioli (ND1B)



The Arts and Hobbies Exhibition



IME Staff Team: from left Leslie Bajada, Pierre Vella, Trevor Caruana, Adrian Borg, Manuel Gatt and James Camilleri



## SPORTS DAY

The MCAST Gozo Centre organised several sports activities during the last week of the first term.

The activities kicked off with a Charity Sports Day which was held at the Victoria Boys' Seminary Sports Complex. Each participant agreed to pay a 50 cent fee in aid of the Malta Community Chest Fund. Sports activities included: football, basketball, volleyball, billiards, table tennis and a Playstation 2 tournament.

A LAN Party was also held at the Xaghra Centre. The students were more than enthusiastic to participate. It was great to see the MCAST Gozo staff join in and go head to head against each other! Medals, which were donated by the Seminary Complex, were presented to all the winning teams. The day was a huge success as Lm60 was collected for the Community Chest Fund.

## STUDENT DINNER

For the first time the students had a chance to meet after school hours and socialize in a relaxed atmosphere. The much awaited dinner and disco was organized by Ms Carla Maree Vella and Mr Daniel Said at Palazzo Margherita.

The real party kicked off after dinner when everyone flocked around the dance floor to participate in the games organized. The games proved that MCAST

Gozo Centre has some prestigious belly dancers, break dancers and clubbers. This and the music provided by Dj Crickey and Dj Salazar, two prominent Gozitan Dj's, was more than enough to spark everyone present into action, keeping the dance floor alive for hours on end.

## VOLUNTARY WORK AT "DAR STELLA MARIS" AND AT "ARKA RESPITE CENTRE"

The Gozo Centre organised several charitable activities during the Christmas period. A group of students following the Foundation Certificate Course and the Electrical Installation Courses spent a day at the Dar Stella Maris in Zebbug. As major construction work has recently been done to refurbish this retreat house, all help was greatly appreciated. A group of students under the supervision of Mr John Mercieca performed maintenance work on a number of apertures. This task included the sanding and repainting of the apertures. Another group led by Mr Sammy Mifsud, Mr. Kevin Vella and Mr Jimmy Saliba cleaned a number of rooms from the construction debris, reinstalled doors and apertures and washed all the flooring.

Fr. Alfred, the retreat house Co-ordinator and the Gozo Centre's Spiritual Counsellor, thanked all the students and lecturers for their help. In effect, this work saved the MSSP order (the religious order that runs this retreat house) a lot of money.

Another group of students from the ICT courses, led by Mr Ian Attard and Mr Mark Falzon, spent a day at the Arka Respite Centre in Ghajnsielem. The group upgraded a number of computers with parts. The Respite Centre management was very grateful for this work and described it as a sterling service.



## CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR CHILDREN AT LOURDES HOME

The Gozo BTEC First Diploma in Care students took the initiative to organise a Christmas party for children at Lourdes home, Ghajnsielem. All the expenses involved came out of the students' pockets. They also took care of the logistics, working hand in hand with the sisters who run the home. The party reached its aim as most of the children at Lourdes home were overjoyed! One MCAST student dressed up as Santa Claus and at the end of the party presents were distributed to all the children. The other students took care of the food and beverages for the party and also organised a number of games to entertain the children.

## DONATION TO THE COMMUNITY CHEST FUND

Through the various fund-raising activities held in aid of the Malta Community Chest Fund, a global sum of **Lm100** was collected and donated to this organization.

## FORTY PERSONS FROM THE GOZO CENTRE DONATE BLOOD

Forty persons from the Gozo Centre donated blood during the Christmas period. The number of participants in this initiative is increasing year after year. This year, extra staff had to be mobilized by the Gozo hospital blood unit in order to cope with the number of donors in a relatively short period of time, considering that the blood had to be transported to the blood bank at St. Luke's Hospital by the early afternoon of the same day. If the participants continue to increase, similar future initiatives will have to be distributed over two morning sessions.

This initiative was highly praised by the staff of the unit and the Centre is determined to hold a similar initiative in Lent, before the Easter recess. The Gozo Centre is becoming synonymous with these successful blood donations.



## VISITS AT RESIDENZA SANT'ANNA

Foundation in Care and First Diploma in Care students visited the residents at Residenza Sant' Anna in Victoria. The aim of this visit was to provide company to the elderly residents during the festive season.

The students' main aim was to give individual attention to the most disadvantaged - those who felt abandoned. Students also provided cakes as a Christmas gift to all the residents in the home.

## CHRISTMAS CONCERT

"The show must go on", and it definitely did at the Xaghra Centre. The two hour concert was a mind blowing experience.

All MCAST Gozo students gathered in the hall for an emotionally evoking mass celebrated by Father Alfred, the Spiritual Counsellor. This was followed by the opening item of the concert, which put the staff to the test. In fact, this first item was a quiz competition for MCAST staff, organized by the AAT first year students. The participants were drilled about various topics and some answers were surprising; who would have known that staff knew so much about celebrities! The winners were given a Christmas cake, which was donated by Rosie Bartolo's Catering. The next item was the comical reproduction of "Tista' Tkun Int", and what a comedy it was! The play saw students from various classes from Xewkija, who spent several breaks and free

lessons in the hall, rehearsing. It all paid off in the end because it was breathtaking. The AAT first year students also performed a contemporary dance. This was followed by the awaited 'Teachers' Awards', which was organized by First Diploma in Care and presented by the First Diploma in IT students. It was an excellent incentive to lecturers. The concert ended with a controversial song, 'Another Brick in the Wall' by Pink Floyd, by the Xewkija student choir led by Mr Joseph Gatt.

Every year we see students talent emerging and it is this talent that makes the concert the memorable experience that it has become.



### MCAST STUDENT COUNCIL LAUNCHES ITS LOGO

The first MCAST Student Council has recently launched its distinctive logo design. The design was the winning entry of the Logo Competition that the Student Council (SC) launched in December 2006. Glenn Grech, a 2006 MCAST student at the Institute of Art and Design, is the winner of the MCAST SC Logo Competition. He was short-listed from among other students who all submitted high-quality entries. Glenn Grech was awarded a LM 75 voucher from Bookmark on Campus.

The creation of the MCAST SC logo is part of MCAST SC's strategy to build a solid corporate identity. The choice of colours, orange and azure, while vivid and young, makes it a striking and significant logo.

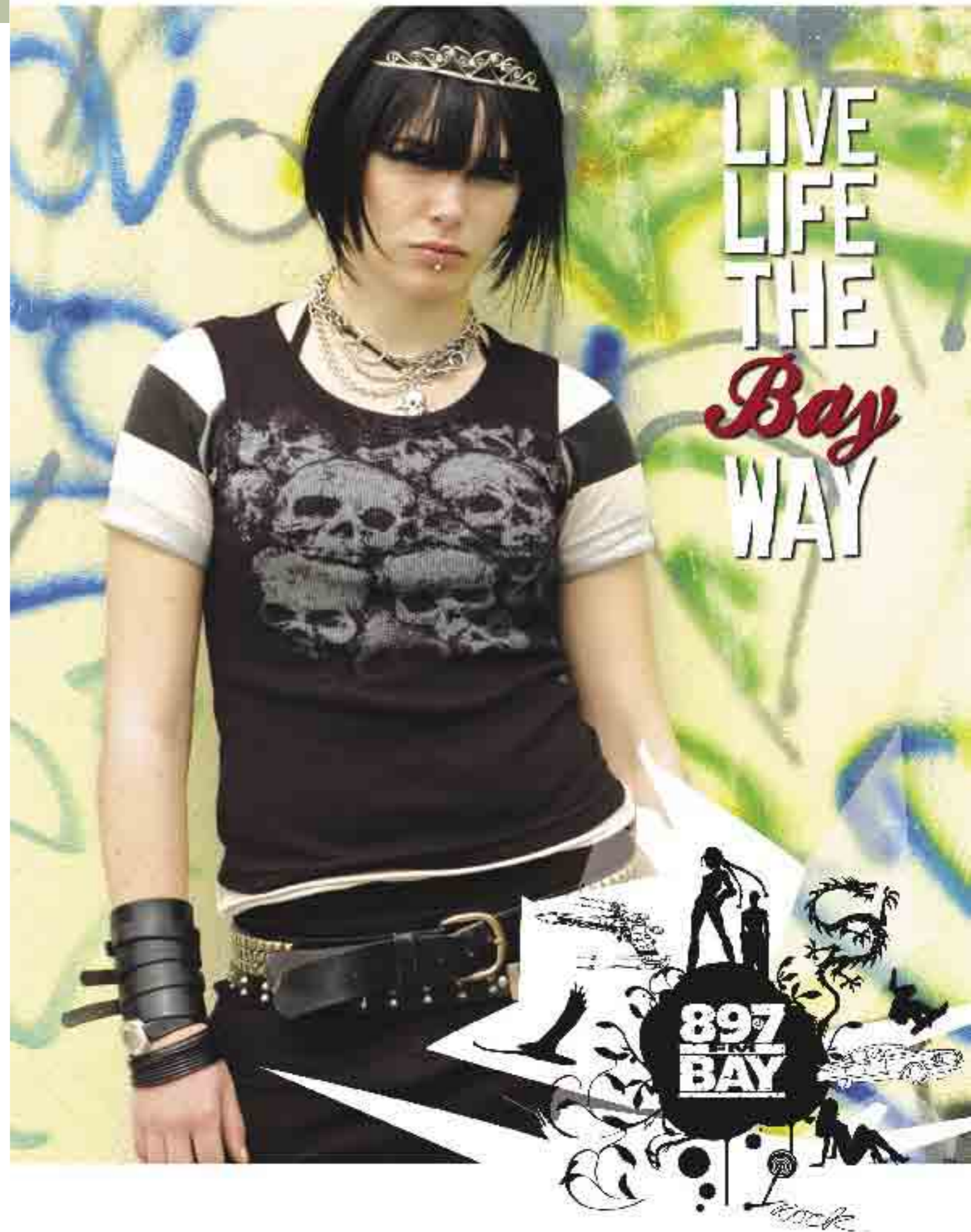
Commenting on the launch of the logo, MCAST SC Public Relations Officer Julian Portelli said: "The fresh and dynamic logo will be a powerful tool in communicating our mission i.e. to be the voice of the MCAST student body. In this regard we thank Bookmark on Campus who sponsored the logo competition and have supported our work from the start."



[student.council@mcast.edu.mt](mailto:student.council@mcast.edu.mt)



Glenn Grech, student at the Institute of Art and Design receiving his prize from Luke Cassar, General Secretary





SHOPPING & ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE IN FGURA

Galleria

For reservations & enquiries call 21808000  
www.tal-lira.com

Come and watch



TAL LIRA  
cinema

&

CONFIDENTIAL

on level 2

film for LMA only!

Open All Day!

other shops at the Galleria...

TAL LIRA SUPERSTORE

jojo's accessories

FOODS STORES AND COFFEESHOES

KIDS-UP KIDS WEAR

CAPT. A. CARUANA WINES, SPIRITS & TOBACCO

Monkey Mischief

BOOKENDS

Flashblack

THE GALLERY

Planet Fun

JB STORES

PUMA

SUBSCRIBE TO mcastlink

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Institute: \_\_\_\_\_  
 e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Receive a copy at home by filling in this form and sending it to:  
 The Communications Officer, MCAST  
 Main Campus, Corradino Hill, Paola, PLA 08  
 or e-mail: caroline.balzan@mcast.edu.mt

TAKE YOUR CAREER TO NEW HEIGHTS

# Get Certified!

ACHIEVE THE INDUSTRY'S MOST SOUGHT-AFTER QUALIFICATION

Microsoft  
 MICROSOFT  
 MCTS  
 MCP  
 MCITP  
 MCSE  
 MCSD  
 MCM

www.key.com.mt

## Key

3, MILLAR BUILDINGS,  
 C. DE BROCHDORF STREET,  
 MSIDA, MSD06  
 TEL: 21310750 FAX: 2131 0071  
 EMAIL: info@key.com.mt

Best Business Plan competition.  
 Your idea. Your Business.  
 Make it happen.

Junior Chamber International is a worldwide leader of young professionals and entrepreneurs between the ages of 18 and 40 who focus on business activities in more than 50,000 communities located in more than 100 nations and territories.

**The Event**  
 Can you turn your business idea into a fully fledged business plan?  
 Proficient people will teach you on how to structure a fully fledged Business Plan thus allowing you to apply this material to your own business idea. Individual consultancy time will also be provided. You will also have the opportunity to discuss your business idea to a panel of business and financial experts.

JCI Malta will also be presenting these plans to potential investors either via the Malta website or by conducting a co-financing event and thus providing the necessary funding which could turn your idea into reality.

The winner of event will receive 1000 Euro cash and the 1st runner will win 500 Euro cash. The winning business plan will automatically participate in JCI's International Best Business Plan competition with the chance of winning a further 25,000.

The competition is only open to entrepreneurs who are 18 years of age or older and who are Malta residents. Applications are available online. The closing date is the 15th April 2007.

For further information visit [www.jcimalta.org](http://www.jcimalta.org) or call on 0040 0400

JCI Junior Chamber International Malta

2007  
**BBP**  
 Best Business Plan  
 Competition

Event Partners.

Platinum Corporate

HSBC KPMG  
 Allied AIR MALTA

Gold Corporate

vodafone

**The new MCAST radio programme discussing the Institutes and vocational education and training courses offered to students of all ages**



**Every other Tuesday at 7.30 pm on Campus FM 103.7**

produced and presented by  
**CAROLINE BALZAN**



# READY STEADY GO!!



This issue of MCASTlink will be published during March – the month we celebrate **NATIONAL YOUTH DAY**. This is a day when we, young people, have the opportunity to portray how we can contribute to a healthier lifestyle.

Every individual's contribution is essential for the creation of a positive change around us. If we still would like to perceive the young generation as the time when young people can dream whilst creating a positive change, then it is essential that we actually be involved in healthy activities that promote the positive abilities each and every one of us has.

Self appreciation is the most important attitude towards life, as by means of acknowledging one's own abilities one can then continue to invest further so as to utilize the given personal resources in an effective manner. This investment can then lead to spur further initiatives taken by other individuals. In other words our own

attitude towards life leads to a ripple effect amongst the community we live in.

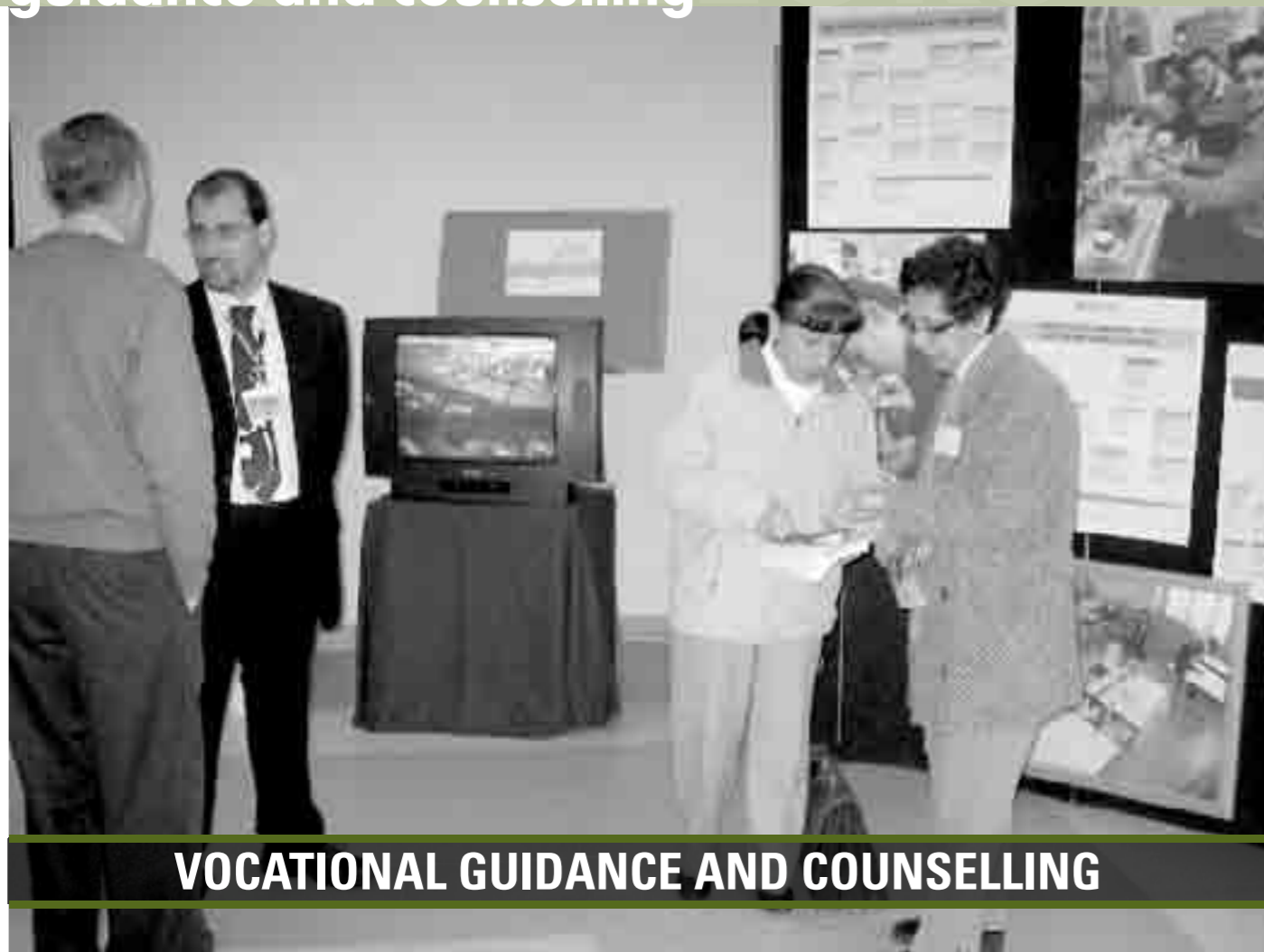
If we really want a better lifestyle and society we have to contribute to it! As young people we definitely can make it. We have loads of resources in our advantage such as energy, creativity and the willingness to create change. After all we are agents of change and so we must be ready to create as much positive change as possible.

I augur all of you all the very best in your work within the community!

**Martin Chetcuti**  
**MCAST Prevention Executive**

**Should you have any initiatives do come forward so as to discuss further. We might be able to help!!!**





**VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING**

Work and related activities provide both a major source of personal identity and a medium through which the total personality can express itself. The choice of career path is a developmental process. It begins well before the entry into work and involves a series of decisions spread over a period of time. Accurate information and awareness of opportunities available play a crucial part in the decisions involved in the process. MCAST counsellors, through their work, are directly involved in this field and assist both prospective and MCAST students in this process of choosing their career path.

During November 2006 MCAST participated in a Careers Week held at St. Aloysius College. The whole activity was organized by the Guidance Section with the aim of reaching both secondary and sixth form students of the same College and their parents. All the participating firms / agencies / organizations exhibited material to promote their career opportunities. Personnel were manning the stands and explained the details of each and every career within their organization.

Another similar activity was held in January 2007 at the Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School, Naxxar. Since this is one of the main feeder schools of the College, MCAST counsellors contacted the Guidance and Counselling section of the school to work out an activity with the aim of promoting and disseminating information regarding courses and career opportunities at the College. The two nomadic stands with MCAST posters and flow charts of courses of the nine Institutes were put up in the Institute's new block for a whole week between Monday 22nd and Friday 26th January 2007. Leaflets with all MCAST contact details were also distributed. On Friday it was parents' day at Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School, so a large number of parents visited the new block and the exhibit. Counsellors answered queries of parents especially on Level 3 and Level 4 courses at MCAST.

These activities provided accurate information and awareness on possible career paths to be followed by the young students who are aiming at an exciting future career.

**GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING MEETING FOR STUDENTS**

On Thursday 1 February 2007, MCAST Counsellors together with the Administration of the Institute of Building and Construction Engineering worked out a two-hour programme for all students in the four Foundation Courses offered at the Institute. Being aware that some of the students in these courses lack confidence in academic performance, do not like to study, and are afraid of exams, MCAST Counsellors worked out a programme to help these students enhance their self-esteem and encourage them to view exams from a positive perspective. Thus the aim of the two-hour programme was twofold, that of furthering the students' awareness of how they can benefit from the Counselling service and how to prepare for exams.



**In the first part**

the Counsellors shared MCAST's vision in relation to their future, the support MCAST gives to all students, equal opportunities at MCAST and how students can communicate with them, when help (vocational or personal) is needed.

**The topic of 'Lifestyles' was tackled in relation to their past, present and future goals. Particular youth 'Lifestyle' issues were raised and discussed, included the use of substances such as nicotine and alcohol, sexual activity and reckless driving.**

**In the second part**

of the seminar / programme, the Counsellors led students to think about their study habits. After a short introduction, students were asked to group themselves in groups of not more than ten, and each group was to discuss three questions:-

- 1. The environment needed for studying;**
- 2. What helps / hinders concentration;**
- 3. What leads to good results and satisfaction after exams.**

MCAST Counsellors concluded the activity by pointing out some ideas and clues on how to study in an effective way. They also outlined the students' main ideas that came out of the discussion and distributed a handout detailing action on how to reduce anxiety before and during exams.

## THE EUROPEAN BUSINESS HANDBOOK FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

It has been a busy time for the MCAST Institute of Business and Commerce lecturers and students taking part in the Comenius 1 School Partnerships project which will culminate in the April 2007 publication of the first European Business Handbook for Young Entrepreneurs.

The participating schools hailing from the Netherlands (Roc Friese Poort), Norway (Glemmen Videregaende Skole) and Malta (MCAST IBAC and the Institute of Tourism Studies) are drawing up a Handbook, available through their school's websites, which will make it easy for young entrepreneurs to know all that there is to know on how to set up a business in their countries. Other European Schools are then expected to take up the challenge and complete this Handbook by providing the pertinent details relative to their countries.

During the past academic year, work has been going on in all the partner schools. However, coordination meetings were held in November 2005, April 2006 and November 2006. Between the 9th November and 11th November 2005 a Comenius Project Meeting was held in Fredrickstad, Norway. This was attended by Dr. Tonio Farrugia and Mr. Ivan Cauchi from MCAST and the teachers from the other participating schools under the Netherlands co-ordination. During this meeting the major details of this project were discussed and formally agreed upon.

Between the 25th and the 28th April 2006 a trans-national meeting with teachers and students of the participating countries was held in Malta, co-hosted by MCAST IBAC and ITS. An International Evening held at ITS provided the right occasion for the students and teachers from such different cultures to socialise and get to know each other better.

The next days were filled with various activities ranging from students' presentations about the business culture of their country to various meetings where the progress of the Handbook was evaluated and various deadlines for its completion set. Details about the November 2006

Project Meeting in Norway and the final meeting in the Netherlands in April 2007 were also worked out. The students had the opportunity to tour a local factory and a four star hotel as well as the facilities at ITS and at MCAST IBAC. On the cultural side all participants took part in a walking tour of Mdina and Valletta under the guidance of the ITS guide students.

From the 20th to the 27th November 2006 a final Comenius Project Meeting was held in Lillehammer, Norway attended by Dr. Tonio Farrugia. During this meeting, the final touches to the Handbook format were agreed upon. The participants also finalised the details of the last trans-national meeting with teachers and students to be held in the Netherlands in April 2007.

Comenius projects are not only about the trans-national meetings. They are mainly about the activities that each partner school undertakes in between the meetings. Local initiatives, aligned to the overall project objectives are shared among partners. The First Class internet software was chosen as the medium to communicate most efficiently to carry out projects duties in real time. the necessary controllers were then chosen from among the participating teachers.

**The Handbook will in fact be launched in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands in the April 2007 meeting and it is envisaged to be regularly updated on the participant schools' websites. It will be another example of the European 'United in Diversity' spirit and a very useful tool for young entrepreneurs.**

## EURO LANGUAGES NET PLUS MEETING IN SIENA

**A second meeting for the Euro Languages Net Plus (ELN Plus) project partners from 23 European countries was held in Siena, Italy from 16 to 18 November 2006. The meeting was held in the Università per Stanieri di Siena and co-ordinated by the Lithuanian Public Service Language Centre.**

ELN Plus is an internet portal designed to raise awareness and promote the teaching and learning of the less widely used European languages, one of which is the Maltese Language. The portal will provide information about effective methodologies, high quality resources and new initiatives in language teaching and learning. The portal encourages people from all across Europe to learn the less widely used languages. Students willing to learn European languages are invited to visit the ELN Plus portal <http://www.euro-languages.net/>.

Mr. David Muscat, MCAST Basic Skills C-ordinator, attended Siena's meeting and gave a short presentation about the teaching of Maltese to adults. He also shared experiences and good practices at the BSU Learning Support Centre and elsewhere with colleagues from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia.



# PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATES TO STUDENTS THAT PARTICIPATED IN AN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME



The Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and the Self Employed, Hon. Edwin Vassallo, presented a number of certificates to students who participated in an entrepreneurship programme organised by the Paulo Freire Institute, the MCAST Basic Skills Unit and funded by Discover Enterprise.

Also present for the presentation were Martin Bowerman and Daniel Debono from the Small Enterprise Directorate and Mr. Frank Edwards, Principal and CEO of MCAST and Mr. Paul A. Attard, President of the Board of Governors of MCAST. The Hon. Vassallo said that, "after the launch of the Discover Enterprise project last March, this project has been instrumental in helping to develop the concept of education in entrepreneurship, and a substantial number of schools have already benefited from assistance by participating in this project."

A number of books on entrepreneurship were presented together with the certificates.

Entrepreneurship education is about developing young people's attitude and skills to help them realise their own potential. This entails having the drive to turn ideas and opportunities into reality, enabling young people to be positive, proactive and successful in their approach to life and work. Disadvantaged or marginalized young people are at a greater risk of not knowing or not being able to find the support, skills and funding they need for business start-ups. This lack of knowledge and access is part of the vicious cycle that keeps so many young people from realizing their ambitions. Understanding this need, the MCAST Basic Skills Unit (BSU), the Paulo Freire Institute and the National Youth Information Centre (NYIC) joined forces to offer an entrepreneurship education programme tailored for disadvantaged youth. The programme was financed through the Discover Enterprise Project at the Malta Enterprise (Small Enterprise Directorate), which falls under the Parliamentary Secretariat for Small Business and the Self Employed.

Sixteen students participated in this programme, which was held between October and December last year. The ACRO (Attitude, Creativity, Relationships & Organisations)

Model was the adopted conceptual framework of entrepreneurship education programme. Such model presents four key dimensions of entrepreneurial behaviour:

Mr Paul A. Attard, President of the Board of Governors stated that entrepreneurship is a priority of the College. He thanked Malta Enterprise and the Parliamentary Secretariat for Small Business and the Self Employed for their support and for providing the funds. "This is very important for us at MCAST as we actively work to promote entrepreneurship amongst our students and eliminate the barriers that remain, be it in access to knowledge, skills, and gender discrimination. With Malta Enterprise's financial help we have made this project possible and also a success."

Mr Frank Edwards, MCAST Principal/CEO praised the 16 students and wished them every success for the future. He said that, "at MCAST we have embarked on a number of initiatives to embrace and promote Entrepreneurship as we believe that it is an important skill for our students and important for our economy."

This project is a further step in MCAST's route of becoming a Community College.

"These skills are essential not only in a business environment, but can be applied in all aspects of life. The students will be able to use the skills achieved through education in entrepreneurship in their everyday life. I hope that both the teachers and the students will take advantage of these opportunities and in this way we will start to truly develop an entrepreneurial mentality."

**The Discover Enterprise project is still open, and the Small Enterprise Directorate invites all local education institutions who would like to participate in this project to forward proposals for assistance. Interested Heads of Education are requested to contact Daniel Debono on 25423439 or on [daniel.debono@maltaenterprise.com](mailto:daniel.debono@maltaenterprise.com)**



## DOMT SIEGHA FUQ L-ISTEJĠ TAL-LINJA

**Maria Balzan hija studenta ta' l-MCAST li qed issegwi l-BTEC National Diploma fl-Istudji tas-Sahha fl-Istitut ghas-Servizzi fil-Komunita. Kemm ilha l-MCAST, Maria mxiet mill-Foundation Course, fejn kienet tattendi lezzjonijiet mal-BSU, ghal kors f'livell ta' Diploma u issa ta' National Diploma. Min bhal Maria jaghmel l-almu tieghu, jirsisti u jistudja, kapaçi jasal anke jekk jibda mill-ewwel tarġa tal-hiliet bażiçi.**

L-iżveljarin qajjimni mir-raqda fonda li kont fiha. Kont qiegħda nohlo sabih. Tellifni. Bhas-soltu dhalt ninhasel, hadt naqra ċereali u lbist għall-iskola.

Kien sar naqra hin. Jiena dejjem tard u b'hekk inhalli hafna storbju fil-kamra tiegħi, u ommi dejjem tgerger. Iżda l-garra ġejja u sejra fl-ahhar tinkiser. B'haxxa kbira ommi qabdet tghajjat aktar mis-soltu. Bhač-čwieč kelli nnehhi l-imbarazz min-nofs.

Il-hin beda jagħfas ġmielu. Tlaqt mid-dar b'heffa forsi nilhaqha, iżda arrali. Bhal hmar kelli nistenna li tiġi ohra, xi nofs siegħa wara. Biex jgħaddi l-hin intfajt nitkellem ma' wahda xwejha zghira bil-bastun f'idha u b'nuččali tax-xemx fil-ghodu kmieni, kienet ghadha qed tisbah ix-xemx! Kellha xagħarha twil miżbugħ kannella čar, liebsa pulit u sjut. Kellha tbissima fuq wiccha li jekk ikollok burdata hażina tbiddilhielek.

Il-paroli ma waqafx. Kellha lehinha jigbdek. Taf titkellem b'edukazzjoni kbira li għax-xjuħ ta' dik l-eta mhix komuni għaliex qabel ma tantx setghu jmorru jitgħallmu skola minhabba l-faqar u l-gwerer. Kellha naqra ta' ačcent Inqliż, iżda kienet taf titkellem sewwa bil-Malti.

**"Alla jeħodlok don u jagħtik ieħor",** qaltli din ix-xwejha meta saqsejtha fejn sejra fil-ghodu kmieni ghadha kif telgħet ix-xemx pulita, pulita. Dawk l-erba' kelmiet li qalet ma fhimtx x'riedet tghid bihom. Berraqt ftit ghajnejja u ma tajtx kas iżjed ta' kliemha.

**"Il-ħajja trid teħodha kif tiġi, iżda qatt m'għandek taqta' qalbek. Meta jigi jħabbat iftaħlu u ħallih jgħaddi."**

Għaliya dan il-kliem kien bič-činiż. Lanqas kont qiegħda nara sa faččata aħseb u ara kemm stajt nifhem.

It-traffiku ma waqafx. Il-karozzi bdew mixjin tlikki tlikki, bhal serbut nemel, li kieku kien jasal qabilhom. Bdiet tfeġġ tal-linja fil-bogħod. Kif waslet vičin hafna rajtha li kienet it-tliet mija. Ma kintx tajba għaliya. Ix-xwejha saqsietni liema karozza kienet ġejja kif semgħetha riesqa. Gheditliha li ma kintx tghodd għalina, għaliex kienet ta' l-università.

Ix-xwejha qamet bil-wieqfa u harġet il-bastun biex twaqqaf lil tal-linja. B'mistoqsija mistura saqsejt lili nnifsi għaliex kienet se titla' fuq il-karozza. Ix-xwejha rringrazzjatni u telgħet thabbat il-bastun biex tara li b'hekk setgħet turi li hija għamja.

Kif imxiet tal-linja jiena ččassajt għaliex bqajt sorpriża. Fuq wara tal-linja kien hemm riklam kbir ta' din ix-xwejha b'čertifikat tal-gradwazzjoni fl-Arti u taħt kien hemm miktub li "Alla johodlok don u jagħtik mija".

Novella miktuba minn Maria Balzan



## CHASING A FAR-AWAY DREAM

In October 2004, we both decided to apply for the BTEC National Diploma in Applied Science (Lab and Industrial) at MCAST, aspiring to start working in the industrial scientific sector once we would successfully achieve our diploma. We formed part of the first batch of students following this course, and certainly had no idea about the window of opportunities this course would bring along with it!

Our first year included theoretical studies in physics, chemistry, biology, and general laboratory practice, all of which were supported by laboratory sessions. At the end of our first year, we had interviews throughout the months of June and July with various employers from different industries and sectors in order to enable us to choose a suitable employer with whom we would be able to follow a two-year apprenticeship scheme. After considering all the options we had, we decided to accept an offer from Heritage Malta's Conservation Division, formerly known as the Malta Centre for Restoration, the main reasons for our choice being the state-of-the-art equipment found at their Diagnostic Science Laborato-

ries and our interest in the preservation of Malta's cultural heritage.

During our second year, we attended work at Heritage Malta twice a week, whilst we continued to attend lectures at MCAST three times a week. The modules covered incorporated all the theory we had learnt in our first year applied to industrial practices and processes. This year, being our third and final year, we work three times a week and attend lectures twice a week. Just as in our second year of studies, lectures are also related to science applied to industry.

Last summer we started to look at all the options available once we would

finish our diploma, and we both decided that furthering our studies would be the best option. We however realised that in Malta we would not be able to continue building on the knowledge obtained through our diploma in a way we would like to, and we therefore decided to start searching for degree courses in the UK where our British based diploma would be accepted as a suitable entry requirement. Our love for forensic science lead us to search for courses related to this subject, until we finally came across the BSc. (Hons) Applied Science and Forensic Investigation degree offered by the University of Teesside in Middlesbrough, England.

We decided to apply for this three-year degree course last November, and were honoured to be offered a place in December, on condition that we successfully obtain our BTEC National Diploma this summer. We are now eagerly awaiting to start this course later on in October this year.

This degree involves the application of science to criminal and forensic investigations. Some of the modules in this course relate to Evidence Procedures, Criminal Law, Forensic Analysis, Crime Scene Examination, Crime Scene to Court and Forensic Medicine Awareness. On a general scale, this degree is tailor made to prepare individuals to

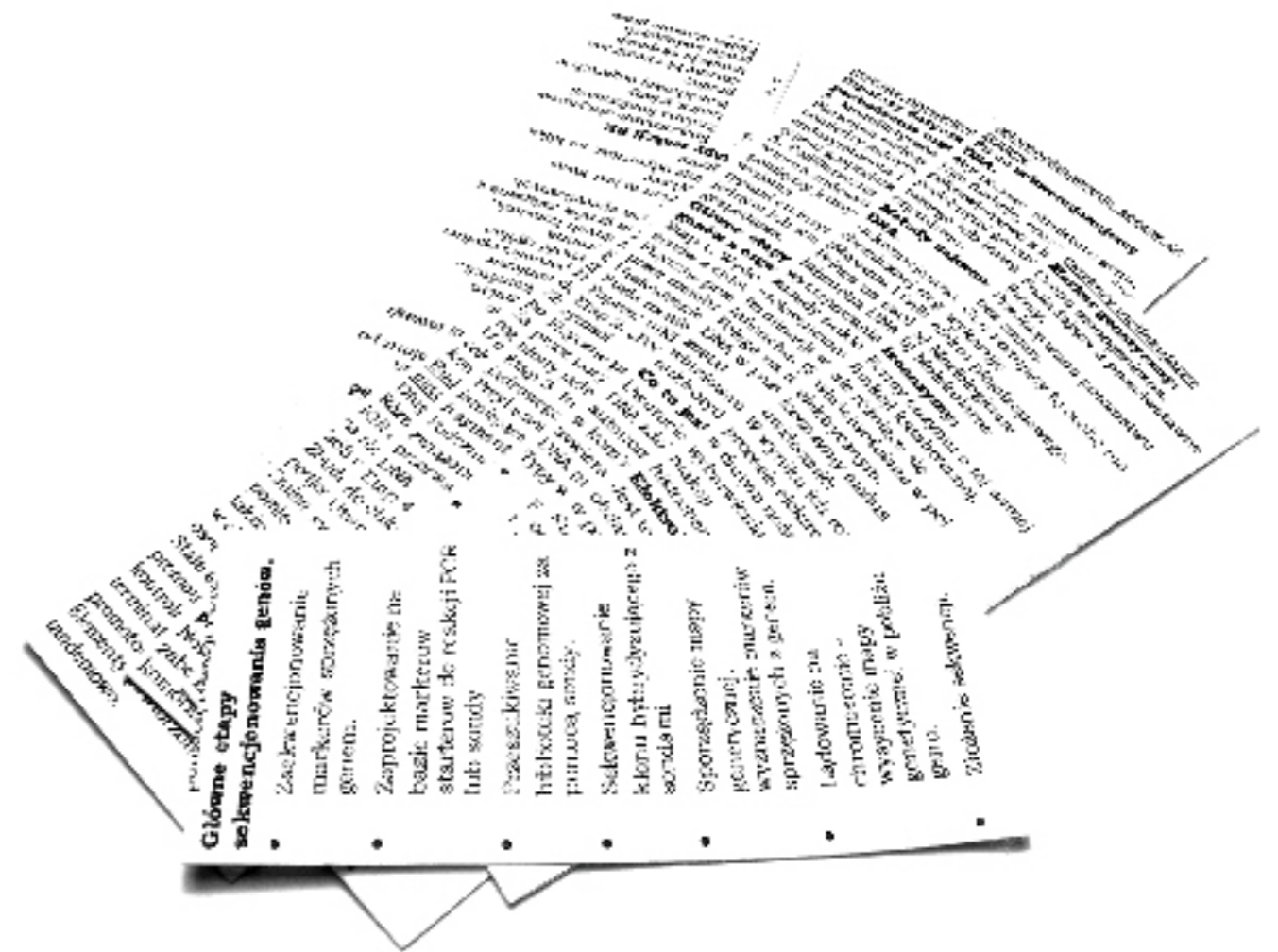
work as Forensic Scientists as well as for any other job that requires scientific and investigative skills.

The experience we gained from working in the conservation sector has provided an added bonus to us, since the techniques and equipment used to analyse for example an unknown compound from an artefact are very similar to the analysis of an unknown piece of evidence from a crime scene.

We would therefore like to conclude our input on this edition of MCAST Link by thanking Heritage Malta for giving us the opportunity to learn from our dedicated colleagues, as well as to work with such highly specialised equipment and techniques.

Our biggest thanks goes to MCAST and all the dedicated staff at the Institute of Business and Commerce, not only for providing us with the opportunity to pursue the BTEC National Diploma itself, but also for allowing us to follow such an apprenticeship scheme which has enriched our expertise in the field of science. Had it not been for MCAST, our possibility of studying abroad would only be a far-away dream!

Roslyn DeBattista and Matthew Grima



# POST-SECONDARY SCHOOLS SPORTS TOURNAMENTS



On the 23 January, MCAST together with Junior College, Higher Secondary and Gozo sixth form, organized a number of sports tournaments for its students. The tournaments held included football, basketball, snooker and table-tennis. There were students from the Institutes of Community Services, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Mechan-

ical Engineering, Information and Communication Technology and Business and Commerce competing in these events.

All students who would like to compete in such events are to contact the Sports Co-ordinator on her email: [adele.muscat@mcast.edu.mt](mailto:adele.muscat@mcast.edu.mt)

# UNIVERSITY SPORTS FEST



On the 23 November 2006 Sports Fest was once again held at University. MCAST students had the opportunity to attend. Students participated in foot-

ball, basketball, table-tennis, chess, abseiling and baseball. It was an enjoyable day out for all.

# BEACH VOLLEY AND CANOEING TOURNAMENT



On Friday 10 November students following courses at the Institute of Community Services Sports Students organized and participated in a Beach Volley Tournament which was held at Golden Bay. The

students were responsible for organizing the event, refereeing the games, making up the fixtures, erecting and dismantling of beach volley nets and getting permit for use of the beach.



## CLIMBING THE WORLD'S HIGHEST FREE-STANDING MOUNTAIN

It has now been a couple of weeks since my return from Africa and I finally feel that I have recovered from the climb. Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania was the hardest thing I have ever done. This was a true test of pain tolerance!

It immediately started off on a sore note. The night before we were to start the climb we were told that three people, including a guide, had just died on the mountain. This obviously caused a great deal of anxiety at a time when we surely did not need it. We later learnt that it was not altitude sickness they died of but a huge snowfall which buried them alive in their tents during the night.

The weather up there was terrible. We had to change our original route, the Lemosho route, due to the heavy

rain having caused lots of damage to the part of the forest we were to walk through. The first day was a nightmare right from the start... we were walking in huge mounds of mud, squelching in streams of water, and getting thoroughly soaked. That is when you learn that waterproof shoes and clothes are not actually waterproof. Little did we know that we were going to live in our ponchos for the rest of the climb and that we were to wear plastic bags on our feet so as not to get all our socks wet. We were all pretty down by the second day and were asking ourselves, 'what the hell did we get ourselves in for?'

But you start getting used to the rain and you continue trudging along, falling every now and then when you step on some slippery rock. But the atmosphere within the group got

better and better and although we were told that other climbers had not managed to reach the peak that week due to the heavy snowfall, we kept on hoping and giving it our best shot.

The nights were probably the worst. The tent was cold, our things were wet and I would try and cuddle up in two sleeping bags, 1 of 20, the other 4 together with a hot water bottle. But there is not much place to move in a sleeping bag and it slowly becomes very uncomfortable. It did not help at all that we needed to drink lots of water to prevent ourselves getting altitude sickness. We were also taking Diamox tablets, which help to speed up the process of acclimitization but which also work as diuretics. That meant that I was constantly waking up in order to go

to the toilet. Well none of us actually ever went to the toilet...it was too cold...we would have some kind of plastic bottle in the porch and would relieve ourselves there. Disgusting maybe but living on the mountain teaches you a lot of things. Sleeping was very hard due to the increased heart rate because of lack of oxygen in the air. You would have to sit up at times to take deep breaths as you would feel as if you were choking.

In the morning we used to be woken up with a mug of tea/hot chocolate and a small basin of lukewarm water which two of us needed to use to clean ourselves!

We used to make these moments as amusing as possible and hope that no porter would open the tent door. It is so easy to get sick on the mountain due to the lack of hygiene, lack of nutrients and the cold air. At some point all of us suffered from bad stomach upsets (one of us was even reported to have done the highest diarrhoea in the world at that time on the summit!)

Most of us were also suffering from some forms of altitude sickness at around 3800m. I myself had splitting headaches everyday. Others had nausea, were throwing up, had migraines etc.

On the 4th day we hit the snow. The snow line was way below what it usually is. The previous two Kilimanjaro Challenge groups had only had a little snow on the last few metres to the summit. And we had it at around 4200m. The breathing was becoming harder and harder and harder and you would need to walk very very slowly and stop for breathing breaks.

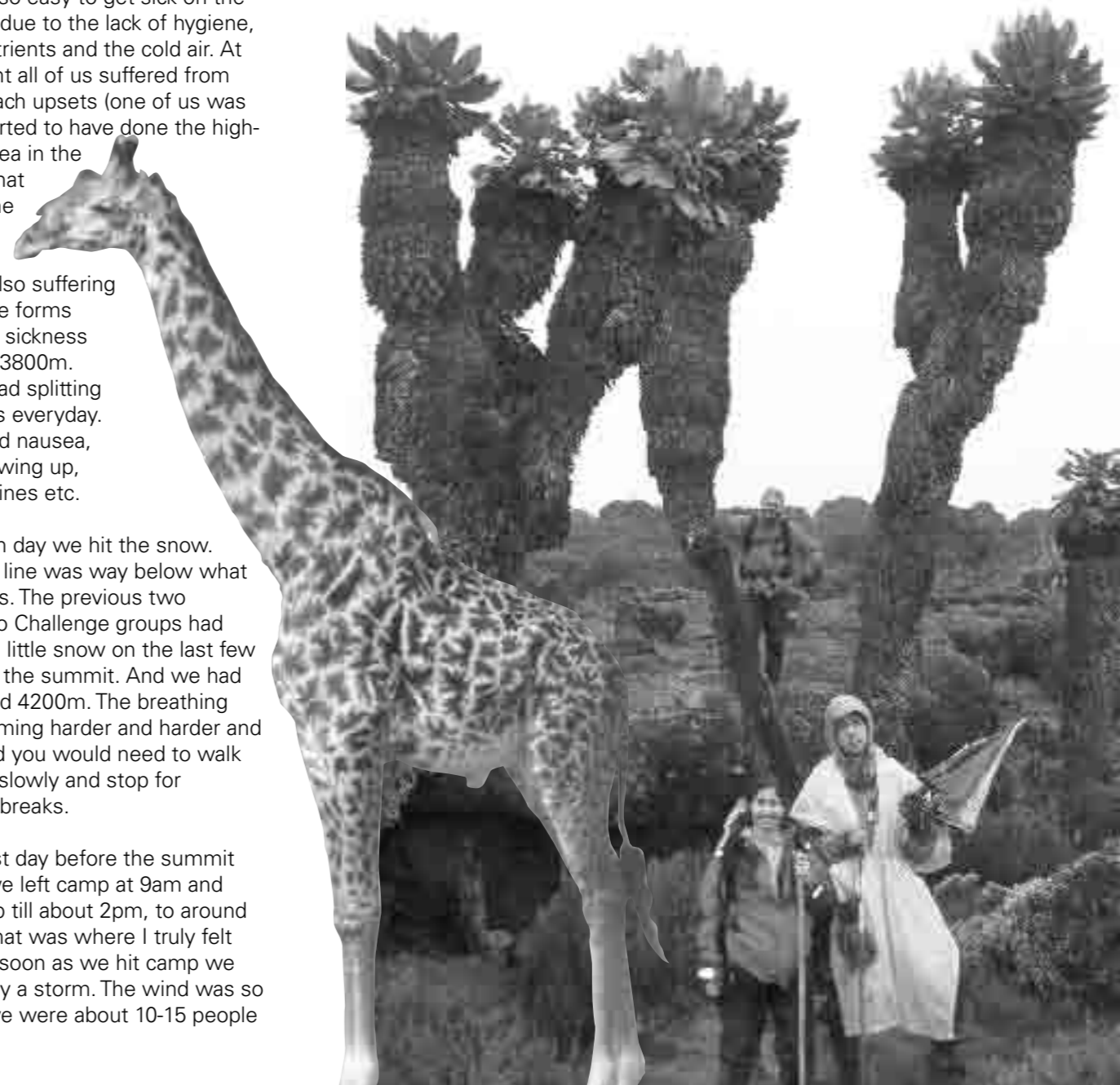
On the last day before the summit attempt we left camp at 9am and trekked up till about 2pm, to around 4600m. That was where I truly felt afraid. As soon as we hit camp we were hit by a storm. The wind was so strong...we were about 10-15 people

waiting in a tent and the tent was being shaken like crazy. There was a real blizzard outside, we were really cold and wet and afraid and I just kept on thinking...how are we going to get up there in the next few hours.

But the storm stopped just as suddenly as it had started and the sun came out. At least we could get warm and dry our stuff before the summit attempt. After eating we tried to sleep for a couple of hours. It was not easy...the adrenaline keeps you awake. Thoughts keep on entering your mind. We were woken up at 11pm and I started putting on my various layers - 2 thermal tops, my camel bak (water bottle) on my back, then a

We were woken up at 11pm and I thin wicking top, thin fleece, medium waterproof and windproof jacket and finally top waterproof jacket.... also thermal leggings, thick apex trekking trousers, waterproof shell for my legs and gaitors...three pairs of socks (2 very thick ), trekking shoes and 3 pairs of gloves, 1 balaclava, 1 thick beanie, and ski goggles. I felt very heavy..especially with the sweets, pieces of chocolate and carbo gel in my pockets!

We met outside at midnight after having swallowed a hundred and one pills I think.... for altitude sickness... for headaches...for pain.... for stomach upsets...cramps (you get incredible cramps and wind at altitude) and more. We then set off with our 9 guides.





I started suffering big time from the start of the climb. My breathing was a mess...I had to slow down and could not keep up with the main group. This alarmed me tremendously as I was one of the better climbers. The first 4 hours were pure pain.... I was going to stop so many times....my head was filling up with fluid...I was feeling the pressure at the back of my head...I was scared.... I was terrified of getting cerebral oedema....this could be fatal. I told my guide, Michael. He told me drink loads of water. I kept on asking myself, 'what colour is an orange?'... this is one of the basic questions you ask yourself to see if you are getting cerebral oedema. But I was sane though I was not walking in a straight line at times (another sign of sickness due to the lack of oxygen). At some time I met up with a teammate coming down...she told me that she was in pain, she had water

“Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania was the hardest thing I have ever done. This was a true test of pain tolerance!”

in her lungs...pulmonary oedema... and had to go down...we hugged and cried together..... that shook me.... after a while I had a look at my watch and noticed that I had already done 4 hours. I took a sigh of relief and kept trudging along.

At about this time I came across part of the group. My buddy was suffering badly, more than I at that stage due to her bad cough. But my guide did not allow me to fall behind and I kept on pushing ahead. The sounds of the first group could be heard and I felt better...so I was not that far off after all. Some time later, it started to get light and it got so much better. I reached Stella point, about 200m from the summit, in great physical pain. I was hoping my guide would tell me to go down...at the same time I wanted to continue going up and reach the proper summit.... and Michael pushed me on. Just a

few metres away from the summit I met the first group. We hugged and I was alarmed when I saw some of the guys rushing past me with an unconscious team mate. She does not remember anything of the summit. Another two of the guys fainted up there too. I made it to the summit at about 8am...8 hrs from departure time.....but just....I was feeling very ill.... it is a different kind of pain..... my head felt about to burst. I knew that I was very unwell and I told my guide that I needed to rush down.... arm in arm we started running down and came across the second group who were still on the way to the summit. They looked at me in alarm and later told me I had a huge bloated green face, my eyes were dazed, my lips were swollen and messed up big time. I reached Stella Point very quickly...in fact I caught up with the others. Then Michael got me to sit down behind him and

we slid down the mountain on our backsides...full speed ahead...it was exhilarating! Quite dangerous but it was good to be sitting down and going down fast. In fact I was one of the first down to our last camp. There we had to eat quickly at around midday and we were told to continue going down. By this time you are totally exhausted....all those hours .....but it is dangerous to sleep at that altitude....so down we had to go and it was not easy. No sitting down and sliding down here. That night we slept so much and woke up feeling very happy that we had achieved our goal. We still had quite a walk down, and with our body feeling so exhausted it was not easy.

We were told that it would take us a month to fully recover. In fact I developed bronchitis, stomach problems and overall fatigue and for a few days after the climb we were trying to re-

cover. I ate and slept so much during these few days but now I am back, feeling good, invigorated and with a new energy and drive.

When people ask whether I would do it again I say 'no'. All of us actually said no. It was tough and I realised that anything over 4000-4500m is a no no for me. Feeling out of breath all the time is no joke. But this was a pure test of mental strength for me and I am glad I went through the experience. Now it is time to get back to business, back to work, back to getting my life sorted out for the next couple of months until I invent something new!

by Adele Muscat





## VIDEO CONFERENCING LINK

### MCAST BREAKS NEW FRONTIERS IN STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNOLOGY

MCAST's Professional Development Centre through its Vocational Teacher Training Unit has embarked on yet another of its innovative developments in enhancing the learning environment and expanding its learning communities. Using one of today's modern technologies of telecommunication – video conferencing – the taught part of the BTEC Certificate in Further Education Teaching - Level 5 - (Stage 3) is being followed by our Gozitan assistant lecturers from within our sister island. In all, seventy-eight candidates are benefiting from the programme and this new technology. Twenty-three of these are part-time instructors in full-time employment with the Education Division.

The video-conferencing link was set up and actively established between the Main Campus in Paola and

the Xaghra branch of the Gozo Centre. Through this investment, MCAST has provided a means for interactive learning for candidates and students who live in Gozo with those located in Malta. This link has drastically reduced the need for lecturing staff and students to travel between the two main islands of the Maltese archipelago. Although MCAST has concentrated this technology on the direct delivery of pedagogical knowledge and expertise for the BTEC Certificate in Further Education Teaching through distance interactive learning, cost-benefit analysis in this respect renders an outcome on the plus side. Moreover, in the near future this technological resource might be utilised by other institutions within our organisation which will obviously make the investment even more cost-effective and sustainable than it is today.

### ANOTHER MILESTONE IN THE ANNALS OF MCAST

The Professional Development Centre together with Mr Frank Edwards Principal/CEO, had been intensely discussing the dissemination of the BTEC Certificate in Further Education Teaching through distance learning for the benefit of our Gozitan colleagues; since all assistant lecturers at MCAST are required to further their studies in pedagogy for progression to the lecturing scale on agreement with the Malta Union of Teachers.

Apart from heavily investing in the staff at the Professional Development Centre and the setting up of their offices as well as a Learning Centre, MCAST also sponsors candidates' registration fees, lecturing costs, and has committed itself to the fact that part of the lecturing/tutoring hours of this certification will be delivered during College time. The rest of the commitment will have to be shouldered by the candidates reading the certification on their own time. As it was agreed that lectures are delivered on Mondays

between 15.00 hrs and 19.00 hrs it would, undoubtedly, have been a hardship for our Gozitan colleagues to follow the course should the videoconferencing link not have been installed. Not only would they and MCAST have been burdened with time consuming travelling arrangements and costs, but their students at the Gozo Centre would have less exposure to their expertise.

When considering the projections of the recently published 2007-2009 MCAST Strategic Plan which emphasises the training and continuous professional development of staff for the benefit of the student population, one clearly understands why certain decisions were taken by those involved in the MCAST administrative arena. Video Conferencing undoubtedly enhances learning quality as it assists and improves the full use of our infrastructure and human resources while reducing the pressure on our educational staff.

### FACING THE REALITY OF TODAY TO BE EQUIPPED FOR TOMORROW'S NEEDS

In the recent years there has been an enormous amount of emphasis seeking to construct and monitor teacher and pupil standards. Video-conferencing is one way of enhancing the learning experience while reducing costs. This automatically implies that funds can be freed and used to purchase other learning resources or to develop other programmes and initiatives.

Findings indicate that students at the remote site have to develop learning strategies and skills for dealing with video-conference lecturing. For this reason, it was decided to provide tutoring assistance, especially in the initial stages; a member of the VTTU team is thus travelling to Gozo providing mentoring on a regular basis to assist these candidates in person. Through the initiation and introduction of these new technologies it is envisaged that MCAST lecturing staff will become more culturally attuned to the modern technologies available and better able to deal with similar situations in the future.

As they say, 'it's easy when you know how! The resources are now available! thanks to the highly dedicated MCAST personnel in both Malta and Gozo who were eager to make the facility of the video conferencing link a reality. Its use will provide opportunities for professional collaboration and sharing between and among staff and students without the limits of time and space which are traditional constraints in the practice of conventional teaching.

To achieve the standards and future projections which MCAST is working on today is not an easy task. However its dynamic momentum is providing it with the impetus to be proactive in finding alternate avenues to meet the socio-economic demands of our islands. On behalf of all the candidates, present and future, undertaking the BTEC Certification in FE Teaching, the PDC-VTTU thank all those who have worked hard in making this project a reality.



by Ing. Mario Cassar

## WHY? WHEN? WHAT? WHERE? HOW?

### WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE ICE CAPS MELTED?

The earth areas carry a load of nearly 36 million cubic kilometres of ice (about 85 per cent of it on the continent of Antarctica). Since water is somewhat denser than ice, this load of ice would melt down to 32 million cubic kilometres of water.

Naturally, if the ice melted, almost all that water would run off the land areas into the oceans. The oceans have a total surface area of 360 million square kilometres. If that surface area remained constant and the 32 million cubic kilometres of melted ice were to spread out evenly over the tops of the oceans, it would be 91 metres thick.

However, the surface area of the oceans would not remain constant, for if its level rose it would spill out over a couple of million square kilometres of the low-lying land areas along its shores. This means the oceans' surface area would increase and the layer on new water would not be as thick. Furthermore, the added weight of water would depress the ocean bottom somewhat. Still, the ocean level would probably rise

60 metres, enough to reach the twentieth storey of the Empire State Building and to drown much of earth's most densely populated areas.

Throughout the earth's geologic history, the quantity of land ice has varied considerably. During the height of an ice age, kilometre-high glaciers advance over millions of square kilometres of land and the water level of the oceans drops so much that the continental shelves are exposed as dry land.

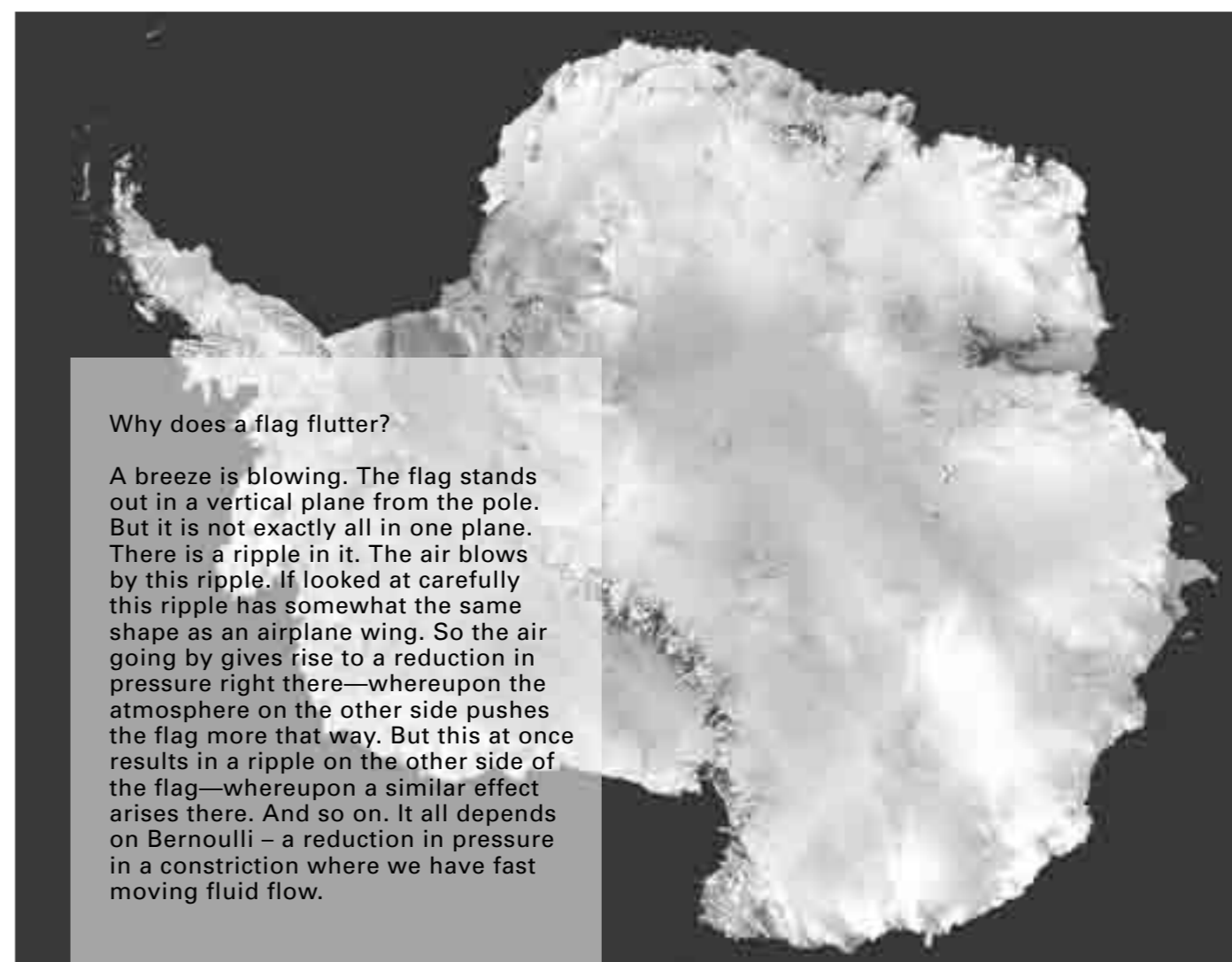
On the other hand, when the ice load is virtually zero, as it has been for tens of millions of years at a time, the ocean's levels are high and the continental area small. Neither situation is necessarily catastrophic. At the height of an ice age, millions of square kilometres of land are covered by ice and are uninhabitable to land life. On the other hand, millions of square kilometres of continental shelves are exposed and habitable.

If, contrariwise, the ice is gone, millions of square kilometres of land are covered by water and are uninhabitable to land life.

On the other hand, without ice, and with smaller land areas, the climate is more equable and there are few deserts, so that a larger percentage of what land surface is left is habitable. And the change in total ocean volume is comparatively small (6 to 7 per cent at most) so sea life is not much affected.

If the change in sea level were to take place over thousands and tens of thousands of years, as it always has in the past, man could well cope with the change. The difficulty is, however, that man's technology is pouring dust and carbon dioxide into the air. The dust tends to cut off solar radiation and cool the earth, while the carbon dioxide tends to trap heat and warm the earth. If one effect predominates much over the other in times to come, earth's temperature may fall or rise comparatively rapidly. Continental glaciers may form or the ice cap may melt in a matter of 100 years or so.

It will then be the rapidity of the change, not so much the change itself, that will be catastrophic.



#### Why does a flag flutter?

A breeze is blowing. The flag stands out in a vertical plane from the pole. But it is not exactly all in one plane. There is a ripple in it. The air blows by this ripple. If looked at carefully this ripple has somewhat the same shape as an airplane wing. So the air going by gives rise to a reduction in pressure right there—whereupon the atmosphere on the other side pushes the flag more that way. But this at once results in a ripple on the other side of the flag—whereupon a similar effect arises there. And so on. It all depends on Bernoulli – a reduction in pressure in a constriction where we have fast moving fluid flow.

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION



The days when education and entrepreneurship were two separate worlds with little in common are a thing of the past. Now, to their mutual benefit, more and more bridges link the two. A recent European Commission communication, "Fostering entrepreneurial mindsets through education and learning", presents the case for a systematic approach to entrepreneurship education from primary school to university.

The arrival of entrepreneurship studies in their widest sense on educational curricula is a relatively recent phenomenon in Europe. The term 'entrepreneurship' itself can give rise to misconceptions. With their respective backgrounds, parents, the business community and the educational establishment almost certainly have a different initial understanding of what the concept involves.

However, in the world of education, the concept should be far wider than simply making money. It is about giving young people the personal management skills that will serve them well in their lives ahead. The European Commission communication describes entrepreneurship as referring "to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports everyone in day-to-day life at home and in society, makes employees more aware of the context of their work and better able to seize opportunities and provides a foundation for entrepreneurs establishing a social or commercial activity".

The description is deliberately broad. It is the result of widespread consultation with a range of experts from the worlds of business, academia, national ministries and non-governmental organisations. It also reflects a clear meeting of minds between two Commission Directorates-Gen-

eral – one in charge of Enterprise and Industry, and the other Education – with their very different constituencies.

## A broad impact

From the point of view of Enterprise and Industry, the imperative of acting quickly and introducing basic entrepreneurship learning into schools and universities is a vital part of the European Union's overall economic reform programme.

To create jobs and to increase economic growth the EU needs to nurture generations of business people who are prepared to innovate, experiment, spot commercial opportunities and take risks.

Providing students with a taste of this world when at school or university can help to develop an interest in such activities and raise awareness of career prospects that might otherwise not have been considered. But entrepreneurship teaching is not simply an updated version of business studies. It is one of eight key competences that the Commission identified in its recent draft recommendation on lifelong learning. It implies a more holistic approach and can develop students' self-esteem, boost their confidence and skills and give them an insight into the world outside the classroom.

Precisely because the subject tends to be taught in ways that are different from more traditional disciplines – there is great emphasis on doing things instead of simply learning – it can frequently appeal to students who might otherwise have little interest in school and want to drop out as soon as possible.

The importance of helping students to develop their full potential cannot be underestimated. By 2010, half the jobs available in Europe will require people with high skills. Only 15% will be available to those with just basic

schooling.

## Collective action key to success

If the fusion of education and life-management skills is to be successful, it must be accompanied by real support among all those concerned – school teachers and administrators, parents and the business world – in showing an interest in preparing young people to be better persons and more employable.

Action is necessary at many different levels. Special responsibility falls on teachers themselves. They are the ones who can stimulate enthusiasm among their students, but many of them have never received the training needed to master the new subjects. To overcome this hurdle, many schools are turning to business entities' support such as the Small Enterprise Directorate (Malta) which offers both financial and other assistance under the Discover Enterprise Project.

Parents also have a role in encouraging their offspring to benefit from the new activities, which they themselves did not have the opportunity of pursuing, and many of which take place outside normal school hours.

## Spreading good practice

While emphasising that the organisation of education systems remains firmly a matter for Member States, the European Commission has set out a series of recommendations based on the good practice already identified in Europe. Many governments are looking to reform their existing systems to place greater emphasis in schools on equipping students with skills and attitudes, not simply knowledge. Entrepreneurship fits into this pattern.

The starting point is the need for a far more systematic approach towards entrepreneurship education.

This can be achieved by ensuring full cooperation between national and regional authorities – as is increasingly happening throughout the Union – in developing a strategy that will cover all stages of education, from primary to university. This would allow entrepreneurship to be an integral part of the school curriculum.

To help schools and teachers handle this extra responsibility, the European Commission is urging governments to make more resources available in the form of practical support and incentives. These could include initial and in-service training for staff and moves to make sure that headmasters/directors and board of governors are fully aware of the importance of entrepreneurship education.

The local community also has a role to play. As a focal point for activities in their areas, schools are well-placed to develop links with nearby organisations and businesses, and construct practical projects for their students. For companies, there are advantages in such links. On one level, they reflect well on a firm's corporate social responsibility, enhancing its reputation for caring for the environment, social issues and its neighbours. On another, they offer a practical way of demonstrating what they do and perhaps of stimulating interest among future employees.

The communication also addresses university administrators and is looking to redress the balance with the US where four times as many professors teach entrepreneurship studies as in Europe. It recommends that entrepreneurship should be integrated across different subjects and courses. This could be especially beneficial for scientists who tend to operate in an environment where they are not encouraged to consider the potential commercial benefits of their work.

## Schooling budding entrepreneurs

It is never too early to start. Although explicit examples of entrepreneurship studies are few and far between in Europe's primary schools, there is growing emphasis on classes that encourage youngsters to show their

initiative and take on responsibility. Schools in Luxembourg use the story of a young boy who develops a simple business idea to raise money to buy a bicycle in classes for eleven and twelve year olds. The aim is to raise awareness of the possibility of a business career, but the text also doubles as a tool for introducing basic financial analysis in maths classes. On a wider scale is the Young Inventors Competition aimed at children from six to sixteen years of age. It encourages them to develop their ideas and creativity.

Entrepreneurship in its widest sense is far more common for teenagers as schools look to raise their students' awareness of the employment possibilities that lie ahead. Most curricula include subjects that are sufficiently broad (such as geography or social studies) to allow for some learning about entrepreneurship. However the concrete implementation of these activities depends very much on the good will and motivation of schools and teachers. Ireland has gone a stage further with its Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and Leaving Certificate Applied which enable students to gain work experience first-hand. Germany's Vocational Training System, which combines work in schools and businesses, helps students to acquire management skills and develop entrepreneurial attitudes.

## Student mini-companies, an introduction to the business world

Mini-companies that develop a real economic activity or simulate the workings of an actual firm are one of the most successful and practical ways of introducing teenagers to the world of business. They can be adapted to different types of education and are officially part of the curriculum in Ireland, Latvia, Austria and Norway and actively promoted in Belgium and Finland.

Over 200,000 students and some 15% of secondary schools in the EU and Norway participate in the programme every year. The figure is impressive, but still has great potential for growth, particularly if more public support is invested in the many projects.

Successful mini-companies can be the catalyst for many developments. They encourage strong links between schools and business and the local community, and can provide the stimulation that may be lacking in more formal classrooms. The companies are operated until the end of the school year and exist in a controlled pedagogical environment, but this does not prevent students from producing and selling real products and services if they wish. Recent innovations have ranged from a multi-purpose tool for changing studs in horseshoes to entertainment services for the elderly.

Apart from being fun, the exercise exposes students to business practices, procedures and techniques. It helps them to develop their self-confidence, learn how to work in a team, become more willing to take responsibility and use their initiative. Particularly encouraging is the fact that roughly one in five participants goes on to create their own company after leaving school.

## Investing in the future

Malta needs more entrepreneurs willing to innovate and set up their own businesses if it is to sustain economic growth. Providing students with some basic skills can help achieve this, while alerting them to the wide-ranging opportunities that lie ahead. However, entrepreneurship studies are not simply an exercise in creating a new generation of business people. They can also help make students more creative and self-confident, ready to cope with today's fast-changing world.

Further information about Entrepreneurship Education is available by contacting Mr. Daniel Debono Manager - Small Enterprise Directorate & E.U. Project Coordinator - EQUAL, on 2542 3439.

**Small Enterprise Directorate, Malta Enterprise, Industrial Estate, San Gwann SGN 09**  
**Tel: (+356) 2542 0000**  
**Website: [www.maltaenterprise.com](http://www.maltaenterprise.com)**



## GUARDIANS OF THE WATERCOURSE (VII) – MALTA'S OAK TREES - LADIES OF THE WOODLAND

Trees are, perhaps, as diverse as people. The trunk is one distinguishing feature of many trees. The Olive is particular for its gnarled trunk with its characteristic cavities, valuable in reducing weight. The Poplar's trunk is remarkable for its straightness, the Willow's for the acute angles it makes with its branches. Aleppo pines often have trunks which are contorted or slanted. Indeed, all of these are the result of evolution and radiation – the gradual but progressive adaptation by trees for survival in different habitats.

And the Holm Oak is no less remarkable in this respect. The trunks of such trees, well over a metre in girth, rise a metre or two and then send out branches in random directions to give the wild, mature specimen a feral, umbrella-like aspect. The tree looks like a giant upside-down octopus! The bark covering the trunk is of a characteristically striped texture.

And some of these trees are indeed mature! The Holm Oak is one of the most long-lived tree in our islands, one of few to challenge the Olive in longevity. Several individuals found here and there around Malta are about 1,000 years old! These trees definitely have long stories to tell. Growing extremely slowly, they reach back in time to the Middle Ages, to Arab Malta about to fall to the Normans.

In fact, the history of oak trees in Malta goes further than that. Oak trees are indigenous – they came here before people did. One way of confirming whether a tree is indigenous or not is through the study of quaternary deposits: fossilized soil deposited in various locations around Malta, such as Munxar and Ghar Lapsi, about 100,000 years ago. This as a result of the heavy, continuous rains of the period. This soil holds the fossilized pollen of trees and other plants, affording scientists a primordial snapshot of the floral history of the time!

The Holm Oak appears to have then been dominant in many areas. Forests of Holm Oaks, tens-of-thousand strong, evidently spread from Wardija to Ġebel Ghawżara, close to Burmarrad; from Selmun, all the way along the Mġiebaħ Valley down to Ghajn Hadid, and in most of Wied il-Luq, underlying Buskett. However, many place names – il-Ballut ta' Marsaxlokk, il-Ballut ta' San Ġiljan – indicate that Holm Oaks were far from restricted to the North of Malta.

The Holm Oak shows preference for habitats where there is some availability of water, but which is not too wet, and where there is some shelter, good drainage and plenty of sunlight. An ideal habitat of this kind would be found in the rocky areas of the upper



valleysides. They are not too demanding on soil – the shallow, chalky soils of such Maltese habitats is fine for them!

Like any large tree – oaks grow up to 30 m in height – the oak tree needs a minimum of water to survive – though not too much of it. Oaks show great resistance to high temperatures, intense sunlight, and drought. The leaves are hard, oval-shaped, glossy and greyish-green in colour. Young leaves, such as those emerging from suckers, have serrated edges which become less pronounced with growth and age. The underside of the leaves are brownish-white: this due to thousands of fine, microscopic hairs which prevent the leaf losing too much moisture. All these characteristics contribute to resisting the long and intense Mediterranean dry season, and to discourage herbivores. Young Holm-Oak leaves closely resemble those of the holly – hence the scientific name *Quercus ilex*: Holly Oak. Like most other Mediterranean trees of dry habitats, Holm Oaks are evergreen. Oaks also have powerful root systems which can penetrate the soil to a depth of 30 m in search of water.

The Holm Oak Tree is one of the trees belonging to the Mediterranean Evergreen Schlerophyll Woodland / Maquis – habitats also hosting Olive and Carob

Trees, as well as conifers such as the Aleppo Pine. These are the trees best adapted to life in the Mediterranean – which is not at all easy for plants. 'Evergreen' - because such trees do not drop their leaves in winter: the Mediterranean winter is quite benign in comparison to the Atlantic, continental or northern winter. In the Mediterranean, the winter and the early spring constitute the main growing season: temperatures are mild, and water is widely available. In the summer, while Mediterranean trees are in survival mode, their northern counterparts are in full bloom.

'Schlerophyll' – the leaves are hard, and feature a wax coating or 'sclera' – this in order to minimize the loss of moisture and resist drought. If people behaved otherwise, many of the lands surrounding the Mediterranean would be mostly covered with forests of these trees.

Oaks have tiny flowers which are borne on branched spikes, in hanging clusters known as catkins. Each tree bears male as well as female catkins – oak trees are therefore dioecious. The pollen is wind-dispersed, but the seeds subsequently germinating from the florets are dispersed by animals (those which do not get eaten).

The seeds of the oak tree are, of course, known as 'acorns.' Shaped like a pointed olive, each acorn is initially green and grows out of a scaly golden cupule. Reaching a length of 2 cm, it ripens to brown. Ripe acorns fall onto the soil – to be picked by animals and by people. Acorns are not commendable to human taste: but pigs love them! In the wild, squirrels and birds such as jackdaws collect them in large numbers and carry them to their nests or hide them in the ground. However, many are dropped or lost along the way, and the animals sometimes forget the location of their acorn caches! Many of the lucky ones germinate into saplings. In this way, the oak tree distributes its progeny to new habitats.

Unfortunately, here in Malta, we do not have any squirrels and jackdaws in the wild. Oaks are almost totally dependent on planting by humans for the propagation of their kind. Children from Rabat often make a simple toy out of the acorn. Easy ... Select a well-shaped acorn and cut it into two. Take the pointed half, and cut a slit into the flat circular face obtained. Stick in two centimetres of a match-stick, and you get a tiny spinning-top, ready to go!

So how come, today, we do not have so many oak trees? What happened to them? The greatest enemy of the oak tree has proved to be the usefulness of its wood. Large amounts of oak wood was widely used by Romans and by successive powers to make ships. The Romans also used oak wood to fire the furnace of the (Roman) baths at Ghajn Tuffieha. People would cut up branches of the trees to make handles for tools, or for firewood. In the North, oak was used to build houses.



In more recent centuries, people used to let goats and sheep graze free in woodland or maquis – such herbivores make short work of most saplings and treelets. This is partly to blame for the deforestation of Malta. This type of grazing pressure has, however, decreased in recent decades.

Oak is still widely sought to make furniture, as well as for tannins to treat leather and veneers for wood.

Luckily, a few of these courageous veteran trees have fought it out and survived it to our day, when trees are less common but rather more appreciated. Patches of oak woodland, each numbering ten or twenty head – vestiges of the once-extensive Maltese forests – thrive in two locations in Wardija, as well as in Buskett and in Mgiebah. As from 1933, the remaining oak trees are protected by law. Indeed, they are living monuments.

#### Other Oak Trees found in Malta

In all there are some 600 different species of oak tree, all inhabiting the temperate zone in the northern hemisphere, of which 27 are found in Europe. The Holm Oak is the only indigenous Oak of the Maltese Islands. People have, however, introduced other oaks, including the cork oak tree, *Quercus suber*. Closely related to the Holm Oak, it is widely grown in Spain. It produces a thick, spongy bark, sections of which are occasionally stripped to reveal the red trunk below. This is no way detrimental to the tree, however, and the bark grows back within a few years.

One eastern type of oak tree, with very deep serrations and even more resistant to drought and heat, has been planted in a couple of locations.

Another very important oak, however, is the English, or Pedunculate oak. These are the oaks revered by the Druids of ancient Britain. The leaves of this tree are very markedly different from those of the Mediterranean oaks – the leaf is soft and light green, elongate, and its edge divided into large lobes, like fingers. English oaks are imposing trees, notable for their robust, striped trunks growing somewhat higher than in Holm Oaks before branching out. English oaks are deciduous, and need more water than Holm Oaks. As their name suggests, they come from more northerly climates, yet, those in Buskett, have been quite happy for the last few hundred years!

We should feel more than lucky that history has spared us a few of these living wonders: celebrations of God's ceaseless creativity wrought in hard substance through the instrument of evolution. His passion for beauty and vitality.

By Ferdinand A. Demicoli - Assistant Lecturer



## LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCE CENTRE

### YOUR COURSE AND THE LIBRARY

Recently the Library launched a new service to all students and lecturers that should make it very easy to find out what the library offers for each course.

Through this service we have created a direct electronic link between each day course and the On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) found at [HYPERLINK "http://www.mcast.edu.mt/llrc/"](http://www.mcast.edu.mt/llrc/) [www.mcast.edu.mt/llrc/](http://www.mcast.edu.mt/llrc/). For every course we have listed the Study Units found in that Course and for each Study Unit we have identified the Class Numbers of library items as found on the shelves. All of this is presented as a PDF File which if opened electronically has embedded in it active links to our OPAC.

For example if you are a Business and Commerce student following Course 06/06/05 MCAST Certificate in Marketing Studies, one of your Study Units is Advertising. You can locate all the important library items relevant to this subject by going to the shelves that are marked 658.8 Management of Marketing and 659 Advertising and Public Relations.

All this information is found in the form of a PDF file that has already been e-mailed to all registered library users who have given us a valid e-mail address. If you have not already received

this file, just send an e-mail to us at [HYPERLINK "mailto:laurence.zerafa@mcast.edu.mt"](mailto:HYPERLINK ) [laurence.zerafa@mcast.edu.mt](mailto:laurence.zerafa@mcast.edu.mt) making sure you give us your name, surname, ID number, Institute and Course code as found in the Prospectus. We will then e-mail you the relevant PDF file (or files in the case of lecturers). In the future these files will be placed on the Library web-page. If you do not have an e-mail account go to library and ask for a print-out of this file that will save you a lot of time finding what you need.

by Laurence Zerafa, Librarian



## MY EXPERIENCE AT THE LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCE CENTRE

It seems as if it was only yesterday. One year has already passed since I was employed at the MCAST Library and Learning Resource Centre. Since then I have found the job very interesting. As a matter of fact, throughout my years of work I always dealt with books which are a great asset to one's individual benefit and to increase his/her general knowledge.

The ground floor of the library is divided in two Halls: A and B. In Hall A one can find fiction books, non-fiction subject books, periodicals and magazines which can be borrowed. Hall B contains reference books which one can use only in the library. Fiction books are shelved according to the author. Non-fiction subject books, reference books, periodicals and magazines are shelved according to a subject class number from 001 to 599.

On the second floor one also finds the Intermediate Sections which support the Basic Skills Unit, which is also situated on the second floor.

In my opinion, many students and lecturers make use of the library and loan books on the subjects they teach. As a matter of fact, all the books loaned pass through the circulation desk where I work. All are recorded on computer.

On the top floor there are eighty-three computers which are used frequently by students to conduct research on the Internet

for free to prepare assignments and to view CDs and DVDs. There is also a Teachers' Resource Area which is also used regularly. For those who have some free time there is an Audio Visual Department which includes films on DVD and videos.

As you can see, at the Library and Learning Resource Centre there are many information items that students and lecturers need during the academic year. My colleagues and I are ready to help and assist in your searches.

We would like to thank you also for your collaboration and for reading this article.

by John Vella, Clerk

# MEET THE ARTIST

meet the artist



## MEET THE ARTIST

"SALVATORE MONTANUCCI IS A RARE BIRD, UNIQUE IN HIS EFFORTLESS ABILITY, LIKE MIDAS TO TURN DROSS INTO GOLD. HIS GREATEST ASSET IS HIS ALCHEMIC POWERS. HE IS BEST DESCRIBED AS A GORGEOUS MAGICIAN AS HIS PAINTINGS PLUMB THE DEPTHS OF MYSTERY AND ENIGMA. HE HAS A COLOURFUL AND CHARISMATIC PERSONALITY, IS GENTLE, PRUDENT, HUMBLE AND KIND AND LOVES LIFE SO MUCH THAT HE DEPICTS IT IN VIVID COLOURS AND GLAZES IT OVER LUSTROUS ENAMEL."  
(E.V. BORG)

# INTERVIEW WITH SALVATORE MONTANUCCI



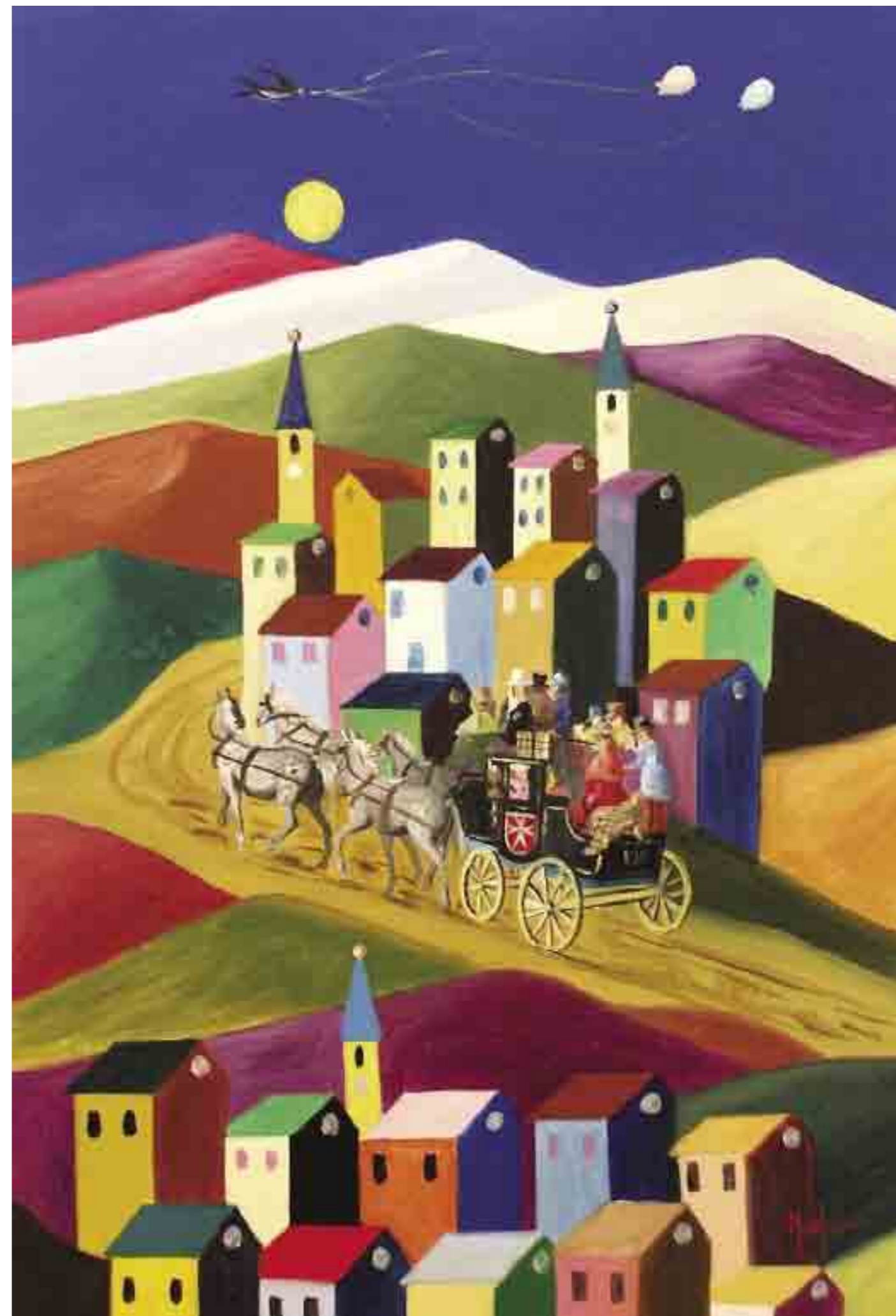
**Born in Acicatenà (Catania), Salvatore Montanucci became a professional painter/artist in 1986. He obtained his Diploma from the Istituto d'Arte FIDIA di Agrigento in 1990. In spite of his young age, Montanucci already held several personal exhibitions in Italy and foreign countries including the United States, Spain, Germany and Malta.**

For many years he painted architecture and landscapes. In 2001 he started working on a new style, a style which

**The College will be offering two new courses delivered by Salvatore Montanucci:**  
**Painting Course**  
**Oil Technique and Painting Course**  
**Oil Technique using Palette Knife.**

For further information one may e-mail: [information@mcast.edu.mt](mailto:information@mcast.edu.mt) or Tel: 23987100.

became associated with his name. He described his style as being fable-like. Montanucci decided to adopt this style as he believes that everyone wishes to return to their childhood days that were full of innocence. He uses bright colours to transmit his positive energy. He wants his art to be portrayed as therapeutic. Montanucci is presently writing a book on drawing which he hopes to publish this year. This book provides valuable information on painting techniques.





# Start your Business



**Have you thought of being your own boss?**



## Entrepreneurship

To find out what it takes to start and develop a business, kindly contact The Small Enterprise Directorate on the following:

Mr. Daniel Debono - Manager - Small Enterprise Directorate  
Malta Enterprise, Industrial Estate,  
San Gwann SGN 09 - Malta  
Tel: 2542 0000, 2542 3439  
Fax: 2542 3401  
email: [daniel.debono@maltaenterprise.com](mailto:daniel.debono@maltaenterprise.com)

