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GAIN Student Newsletter

Los Angeles Unified School District /Division of Adult and Occupational Education

February, 1990 No. 2

The GAIN Student Newsletter is a product of GAIN students in attendance at Los Angeles Unified School District's Community Adult Schools and Employment Preparation Centers. The purpose of the newsletter is to encourage GAIN students as they meet the challenge of reaching educational and career goals. Program participants offer mutual support by sharing their experiences. It is hoped that these insights will inspire participants, alleviate their fears, and ease their journey as they move toward greater self-sufficiency.

A MESSAGE FOR THE GAIN STUDENTS

Especially we the "older" students,
Don't feel sorry for me now, or for yourselves.
Don't feel sorry for the past.
Feel sorrow for our offspring if we surrender now.
You have not left one prison for another.
You have just entered the Avenues of Freedom.

Juan Tapia
Central Adult HS

THE PROMISE

As I was finishing homework at my old, cracked dinner table, I stretched out, took a deep breath, and said to myself it was time to get some rest. I looked at the right side of our only bedroom where Teresa and Abel were asleep. They could hardly fit on the small twin bed. Then I looked on the left side where Mama was breast feeding Benjamin, and Joel was asleep right next to them.

I felt tired and ready to relax, but there was no room for me except for the kitchen or the bathroom. As I was lying on the floor meditating about the situation, I made a promise. I promised myself that soon there would be enough room for even invited guests. There would be sufficient food to fulfill the sacred pleasure of sharing, instead of receiving. My family would have a garden with a plentitude of beauty for us to play in.

I am thankful for that day when I raised my sight to the mighty heavens where I received wisdom, and went to search for an education. In this great country there are schools. I went inside Central Adult High School and there were teachers with so many gifts. Among these were patience, kindness, and the willingness to share their talent.

It has been eight months since I began to go back to school, and five months since I made the promise. I am keeping myself set on accomplishing my promise. I shall not give up. I shall not rest my pen, nor my sight, nor any part of my body until I have accomplished my promise. I shall never surrender.

Juan Tapia
Central Adult HS

A Little Help From My Friends

This is a new feature of the Newsletter. It is designed to allow GAIN participants to get advice about specific concerns from other participants. All questions and answers are from GAIN participants.

I am 40 years old. How do you deal with the feelings and fears that come with being too old for the job market?

Participant
South Gate CAS

I believe you're never too old for anything you really want, if you believe in yourself. Besides, I heard from the employment office that the preferred age employers ask for is 40. They believe women who have raised their children are well set on what they want and will probably stay at the first job they get. Instead of training younger girls that will probably move on, employers would rather hire older women.

Helen Bustillos
South Gate CAS

I am much older than you are. I'm on the positive side of everything I do and say. I don't feel I am too old for anything. I feel so good now because of my positive attitude. Nobody will make me feel guilty about my age.

I used to feel negative and that was not even that long ago. To be exact, it took about seven months for me to feel good about myself. I do hope you will get over this insecurity soon. Forty is not old. When you get to be 80, then talk to me about old age. And then again, we are only as old as we feel. If it weren't for mirrors to remind me of how old I am, I would never know the difference.

Hannelore Carter
Van Nuys CAS

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LAST CHANCE AND DETERMINED TO SUCCEED

Before the GAIN Program started, I had very little hope of ever having independence and a positive self-image. I'm a high school dropout with almost no work experience at all. I looked for entry-level jobs, but who's going to hire a person with no experience and no skills? There was a time when those jobs were out there, but they aren't anymore, especially for someone my age. The most depressing part is that the jobs I qualify for pay less than my AFDC grant.

So, with all these strikes against me, and no will power to fight, I've adjusted my life to living from check to check. I'm grateful for my AFDC, but I'm not proud of it. You don't feel proud when you live on money others have worked for, while doing nothing yourself to earn the money you receive.

The grant they give you can be both good and bad. Those who can't work need the charity. For someone like me it's a handicap. It's just enough to keep you where you are and keep you from ever having anything. You get used to what's called "free money", while all the time it's taking your pride and dignity.

When I received a letter stating it was mandatory for me to participate in GAIN, I was furious. Can you believe I had the nerve to say they were trying to run my life by taking away my rights to do as I please, the right to do nothing except exist, with no hope or even a dream of a better life? However, since I've started school I find I enjoy learning. I am especially fond of math and English. Each time I conquer a new academic skill, I become all the more enthused about being in school again. Now I can see a better life for myself in the near future.

Linda C. Dandridge
Central Adult HS

LOVER TEMPTATION

Hugging is a disgrace,
kissing is a shame.
The dude gets the action,
but the young lady gets the blame.

The dude says he loves you,
and you say it's true.
But when you're nine months in pain,
he says, "The hell with you."

So take my advice.
I may save your life.
Don't become a mother
before you become a wife.

Rose Alonzo
Van Nuys CAS

I'M GOING TO MAKE IT

I always thought of going back to school, but I was afraid. I didn't want to go alone and I felt I couldn't do it. But when GAIN came into my life, it was the push that I needed to get me back to school. I was always at home doing really nothing to change my life. Now I have something to look forward to. I have a future to plan, things to learn, and a life to change.

I know now I'm a worthwhile person. The concern of the teachers at Wilson-Lincoln Adult School motivates us to go out and make it in the working world. Now I want my children to see, through me, that education is important if we want to make it in life now. I can sit and help my children with their school work, and vice versa. Our family has gotten closer, and I have a different outlook on life.

I'll close with this: take care of education and someday it will take care of you.

Julie Nunez
Wilson-Lincoln CAS

FINALLY, I HAVE A FUTURE

Dear GAIN,

My name is San Juana Canizalez. I am 31 years of age. I have four children and am on welfare. I'd like to tell you about how I felt in school when I was young.

I started school when I was 11. The teachers kept on putting me in higher grades because I was too old for those grades. I didn't know anything. I didn't learn anything by the time I got to 7th and 8th grades. I knew a little bit of math, adding and subtracting. The teachers gave me good grades without my even trying because they didn't have time for me. I was so behind that I got tired of trying to do my best.

So I got married. That wasn't the answer, so I had kids. That wasn't the answer, either. So I left my husband because he was so bad with me and the kids. I got on welfare a couple of years later.

Here comes GAIN into my life. I was scared because I didn't know anything and GAIN was going to put me to work. But I was wrong. GAIN put me back to school. I was frightened. I cried every day and night. I didn't think I would make it.

But I was wrong. The teachers there help me a lot to improve and give me confidence in myself. It's been seven months now, and let me tell you this. I know my times tables, my fractions, and even algebra. I know a lot of other things that I learned in Life Skills. My life is a lot better now than it was when I was young. I even help my own children with their homework. I know I am making it in this world. I am going to have a job soon after I finish school. I feel great! Thanks to GAIN for making my future a lot better. I won't disappoint you at all. I love you all.

Sincerely yours,

San Juana Canizalez
Van Nuys CAS

A Little Help *(Continued from page 1)*

How can we enjoy ourselves in Los Angeles without spending a lot of money?

Participants
North Hollywood CAS

I think there are a lot of ways to enjoy yourself without money. Money doesn't make fun. It just adds to the expense.

First of all, I think you have to be happy with yourself, no matter what your life situation is at this time. There are so many ways to enjoy yourself. You could go to the library with your children and check out some books. Take them home and every night set aside thirty minutes to share reading together. Maybe even ask questions about the story after each page. Another thing you can do with your children is simply share time with them and make the most of it. So my advice is that you don't always look for money to make your life fun.

Daniele L. Woodrow
Van Nuys CAS

In Los Angeles, there are several inexpensive things to do. You can go to a friend's house to listen to music and talk about clothes, jewelry, and hairdos. You can go to the park to run, walk, practice sports, and relax. Why not go to the beach to get a suntan and play in the water and sand?

In addition, you can go to a museum to learn a lot of interesting things about history, geography, art, and music. You can go on a picnic in the park to play and eat delicious food. The zoo is a great place to see different animals and the way they live. Finally, you can go to the theater to see movies.

Abigail Cervantes
South Gate CAS

I like to have the house in order most of the time. Yet my two daughters are very disorganized. I tell them all the time to put things where they belong. What should I do?

Participant
South Gate CAS

I suggest you discontinue to be passive with your children. Remember, never bribe them because they will never learn to do things on their own. Not only that, you will not always be there to bribe them. I also suggest that you become a little more strict and restrict them from certain things they enjoy.

Antonia Pimental
South Gate CAS

I have an 11-year old daughter who does not like to clean up. When I ask her to clean up, she storms out of the room. I then tell her that there will be no more company until the house is cleaned. She can't go anywhere for a week or two. She knows when I say this that I mean business. When she tries to talk back, I give her that look. She knows not to. I tell her this only one time, that's all. I let her know this when she disagrees with me.

Cynthia Bridgeman
Venice Skills Center

I have two grandchildren that live with me. I have the same problem with them. They don't like to help me clean the house or pick up their dirty clothes or toys, and they argue a lot.

So I tried not letting them watch TV, or I kept them in the apartment and didn't let them play. It didn't work, so I just got tired and told them that when I ordered them to do something and they didn't do it, the next household chore would be doubled and hard to do. It would be doubled every time that they answered back or didn't do the work. Now they have been doing their work and are even making their beds before going to school of their own free will!

Margarita Martinez
Fairfax CAS

One day they will have a house of their own. Ask them if they would keep their houses clean, because if their houses looked like mine, I would not visit them. You should have started helping them learn to take responsibilities when they were very young. You should have family group sessions to discuss this matter. But don't give up. Just keep talking to them. And don't raise your voice.

Participants
Maxine Waters EPC

Everybody makes mistakes. You have to tell them and show how you want them to do what you want them to do. The biggest word here is LOVE. You have to do it with love.

Heriberto Martinez
North Hollywood CAS

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ANOTHER CHANCE

Before enrolling in the GAIN Program, I used to sit around and watch TV. My kids were so young that I felt that I had to stay home and care for them. Although I graduated from high school at 17, I got married and never went to college. This was really devastating to my parents because they had high hopes and big plans for me.

When I received my notice that I had to return to school, I was angry at first. It meant that I would have to change my routine and entire life. But once I started school, I started feeling better about myself. I realized that I wasn't wasting my time anymore.

So, now that I am refreshing my memory and learning a lot of new things, I have a much more positive outlook. Before I had my first child, I had planned to go to college. Now I have another opportunity to pursue the career in business that I've always wanted.

Louise Brown
Crenshaw-Dorsey CAS

MY EXPERIENCES WITH GAIN

My name is Librada Vizcaino. I started school last year on January the 18th. Since that time, I've been attending school almost every day.

At first I was afraid and nervous. But nothing bad has happened to me, only good things. I am learning math and English and I get along with people. I also have gained confidence and I'm not shy anymore.

Thank you, people from the GAIN program, for giving me the opportunity to learn.

Librada Vizcaino
Jordan-Locke CAS

My experience in this program is that I have been learning what they teach me. Therefore, I'm happy for the well-being of my family.

Esperanza Larios
Jordan-Locke CAS

HANGING IN THERE

To all my fellow GAIN friends,

Hi! My name is Brenda and I hope everyone is doing as well as I am. It is so hard starting all over, especially when you are in your forties. All my life I have compared myself to my brother. He is so smart. I always thought he was gifted. I never could understand what happened to me. I couldn't seem to learn. I honestly thought I had a learning disability. Now I know I couldn't make it in school in the past because I never applied myself. I was always doing everything but being in class.

When I got that letter telling me I had to go back to school, that I had no choice, just go or else, I wanted to cry. I thought it was the end of the world. I was sure I couldn't make it. I couldn't imagine sitting in anybody's school. No more kicking back, no more doing anything that I wanted to do. I was angry and bitter.

I got my first letter in February. I stalled until June 13. I had such a bad attitude when I got to the GAIN office that I was rude and nasty. I had to apologize before I left because I was too ashamed of myself. They had been so nice to me.

Well, now I have come a long way. I know I can learn and do well. I can help my daughter with her homework for the first time in my life. The first time I took the math test, I opened the book, took a look, and closed it. A couple of weeks ago, I took the test again, lacking only five points from passing. I know next time I will pass.

I have come a long way in six months. My GAIN worker, Miss Mitchum, is a gem. Mrs. Serxner, the Life Skills teacher, is also wonderful. Mrs. De la Rosa, my English teacher, has let me know I can do anything I start out to do.

I want to thank them for being there for me. So, everyone, hang in there. Let's make it a brighter and better future for all of us.

Brenda Cooper
Central Adult HS

A MIRACLE CALLED GAIN

My name is Pam and I'm a single mother with two girls. I'm also a proud student at Pacoima Skills Center, thanks to the GAIN Program. But I'm not wasting time. I've started studying for my diploma.

The GAIN Program has been a wonderful opportunity for me. I wanted to go back to school for a long time. There was just no way I could afford it. Then a miracle came along: GAIN. It set up transportation and child care for me. It gave me some very supportive teachers who have been there when I needed someone to talk to. I have gotten the support and understanding I needed.

I would like to say thank you to the GAIN Program, to my teachers, and to all my newfound friends, my classmates. You all mean many wonderful things to me.

G gives
A any
I individual
N new beginnings

Most of all, you've made a new beginning for me and my girls.

Pamela Meadows
Pacoima Skills Center

THE GAIN PROGRAM

My dream is English. English represents opportunities in my life. When I understand English, I can get a good job. The job represents more money for my family. This is my opinion. My opinion of the GAIN Program is very, very good because it is my opportunity to study English.

Pascacio Medina
Jordan-Locke CAS

SUCCESS AFTER FAILURE

When I first came to Central Adult, I was unhappy and confused, and a bit angry, too. I didn't expect to have to go back to school at 37, but I had to. I wanted to just stay home and take care of my kids. I enjoyed doing housework and cooking and letting time go by.

Coming back to school was like turning back time. I hated it. I didn't want to be at Central Adult. I always had a long face, and I hardly even smiled at anybody. "This is not the place for me," I thought. I felt I wasn't going to be able to function. In high school I had a learning disability. I couldn't do anything right. Now I think it was because I was young then, and that I didn't want to learn. My grades had been very low, so I thought that by being back in school it would happen to me all over again.

Well, I'm older now and I do have to make a choice between getting my high school diploma, or going to work, earning only the minimum wage. I decided to stay and finish school on my own. When I started my classes, I said to myself, "This is going to take forever." I used to think so negatively. But not anymore, thanks to my GAIN teacher, Ms. Serxner, who taught me to think positively.

But she's not the only teacher who has given me encouragement and made me feel good about myself. When I started my English class, I didn't know anything about grammar and writing. I didn't realize how important it was to know about English until now. Thanks to my teacher, Ms. De la Rosa, who has helped me so much that in English 1, I've earned my five credits. I received an A and now I'm in English 2. I'm so proud of myself.

Math is another subject I thought I couldn't learn. The first day I started math I didn't know my subtraction. I was very ashamed of myself. Thanks go to Ms. Roberts and to Tom, who have helped me to get to where I am now. I really feel good about myself. I have new friends, and my teachers are all very good to me. My future is here at Central Adult. This is a second chance for me. It's an example to my children, too. I'm happy now because I'm earning one important thing: my diploma. I must succeed where I failed. I shall go for the gold!

Helen Salazar
Central Adult HS

WHAT A DIFFERENCE GAIN HAS MADE

Throughout my high school years, I let my friends influence me into cutting classes, so I fell behind. The more I missed, the harder things got. When I did go to class, other students made fun of me if I got the wrong answer or didn't understand. So I stopped liking school and eventually dropped out. At 20 years of age, I had my only daughter whom I have supported on my own. It has not been easy. After my daughter was born, I regretted quitting school.

When the GAIN Program came along, I was excited because I felt that I was given another chance to improve my life and the life of my 11-year-old daughter. I have learned not to be afraid of challenges, but to meet them head on. I used to hate reading because I was slow. But now I even like reading out loud. I am reading a lot faster than before. Now I notice that when I go out for an appointment, instead of sitting down and getting impatient, I take a book with me to read. I am not the easiest person to work with, but I have learned that being negative is self-defeating.

The GAIN Program has made a difference in my life. I enjoy being in school and I won't let anyone or anything get me down again. I feel good about myself, a feeling I've never felt before. My self-image is high and I'm proud of myself and my accomplishments.

Angela Cameron
Crenshaw-Dorsey CAS

I'M HAVING A DREAM

GAIN, where did you come from? I didn't expect you to come knocking at my door. But, to my surprise, you did. Now that you're here, it just doesn't seem as though I can get you out of my sleep. Don't misunderstand me. It's not a nightmare. It's just something I have to lie down with and awaken to. Oh, it feels so hard. Many mornings I just want to lie there and just say, "No, I'm not ready for this at all." But then, I pull up from my bed to face the challenges that are ahead.

I'm rushing against time to get the boys off on their day, and then I'm on my way to GAIN. Since I've become a part of the GAIN Program, I have felt no regrets. I really feel great, as a matter of fact. I really appreciate your coming to my door. It was smart of me to let you in. Because of GAIN I have gained a joy for learning again. Coming back to school is one of the best things that could have happened to me. You have a really wonderful setup, and the people who support what you stand for are the greatest team.

Everyday is not that great for me. A special quote comes to mind: "Today is my day, I own this day." I will practice this affirmation until it becomes part of me. Then surely I will begin to pull sunshine from my life, no matter how dark the clouds may seem.

Is it time to wake up? No, no. Why? Because this dream is not over. The dream is not over, Deborah, until you have received your high school diploma. The dream is not over until you've become a part of that work force. You cannot stand still while life moves around you. You will move with life, too. This is the start of a new beginning. So sleep until the very end. Okay, I'm off to GAIN's dream world again. Good night.

Deborah Jones
North Hollywood CAS

A Little Help *(Continued from page 5)*

I have a problem and I need your help. My best friend has a drug problem. How can I help her without losing her as a friend. Please tell me what to do?

Participant
South Gate CAS

A true friend will help a friend in need. Give her lots of support and help her see a drug counselor.

Victor Dominguez
South Gate CAS

Let me tell you a little about people on drugs. They lose all self-respect. They don't care who they hurt. They get into their own world. You have to realize they will hurt you and not even notice it. You will be wondering what you did to deserve this. If you get hurt in the process, it's your own fault; you let it happen. You have to ease away from her, yet you should be there for her.

You can suggest a drug rehabilitation center. You can tell her that she needs help. She will deny it and know it's the truth. Yet tell her you will be there for her. If you can stand it, be there. But it will be a bumpy ride. You will need a lot of strength which I know you have since you wrote your letter. All you have to do is dig deep down into yourself and ask God to give you the strength to be there for this person.

Finally, let me give you an old saying my mother and father used to tell me all the time: "God never gives you more than you can handle."

Ruby Harris
Venice Skills Center

Well, if you are a true friend, I believe that you would tell her that taking drugs is not helping her at all. I would rather take the chance that I might lose a friendship and know that I cared enough to try and help her, rather than hearing about her dying and knowing that I didn't even try at all. If you care, you'll try.

Cecilia Balderrama
Van Nuys CAS

What can I do to stick on my diet? I tried so many times. It worked for the first week. After that, I started to eat a lot of food again.

What can I do to lose some weight?

Patsy Snider
Van Nuys CAS

First of all, go to the doctor. Then eat a lot of healthy food and don't eat between meals. Drink at least eight glasses of water a day. Don't eat at night because that is what makes you gain more weight. Finally, get lots of exercise.

Yolanda Saptho
Garfield CAS

The best way I can think for you to stay on your diet is to find someone else who is also on a diet. Be a support to each other. This way you can sort of be there for each other.

Rosa Hunt
South Gate CAS

GAIN PROGRAM LOCATIONS

Abram Friedman OC
1646 South Olive Street
Los Angeles, California 90015

Central Adult HS
211 West 17th Street
Los Angeles, California 90015

Crenshaw-Dorsey CAS
5010 11th Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90043

Fairfax CAS
7850 Melrose Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90046

Garfield CAS
5101 East Sixth Street
Los Angeles, California 90022

Jordan-Locke CAS
325 East 111th Street
Los Angeles, California 90061

Maxine Waters EPC
840 East 111th Place
Los Angeles, California 90059

No. Hollywood CAS
523 Colfax Avenue
North Hollywood, California 91601

Pacoima Skills Center
13323 Louvre Street
Pacoima, California 91331

San Pedro CAS
1001 West 15th Street
San Pedro, California 90731

South Gate CAS
3351 Firestone Boulevard
South Gate, California 90280

Van Nuys CAS
6535 Cedros Avenue
Van Nuys, California 91411

Venice Skills Center
611 Fifth Avenue
Venice, California 90291

Wilson-Lincoln CAS
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Los Angeles, California 90023

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