

Art of Universal Language: Community group collaborates for education

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - Allen Collins began **Art of Universal Language** after years of caring for and educating his 32 godchildren.

Art of Universal Language is a community group led by Collins operating out of the **Deliverance Temple** on 6th Street in Alton. It is not officially part of the church, but

uses the space to instruct children in skills regarding art, education, integrity and technology. Collins said he started the organization to give children more opportunities to succeed.

"We teach them music and art, which is therapy," Collins said. "With therapy comes healing. As far as education, we want them to get the best education they can possibly get. We are here to enhance the education they receive from school and home."

As far as integrity is concerned, Collins said the organization teaches honesty, etiquette and respect. He also tries to teach children technology skills through up-to-date mechanical and technological systems. To better augment this instruction, Collins said the group collaborates with several local organizations.

Past collaborations have included working with the **Coalition of Concerned Citizens**, the **YWCA**, **Tammy Smith** and the **Sickle Cell Project**, **Alton Main Street**, several local churches and, most recently, **Grassroots Grocery**.

"We worked with them to create art designs on the building and allowing them to educate youth in health," Collins said. "We collaborated with them to teach youth and community about healthy food and its ability to prolong quality of life."

On June 18, Grassroots Grocery allowed the children of Art of Universal Language to use their resources to make salads to share with the community. Collins said as many as 64 members of the community came to join with them. He said the event acted as a sort of interactive health class outside the traditional setting of a classroom.

"We challenge the children to be able to perform different skills," Collins said of the program. "Our program is to add to what's already going on. I believe our community is doing a great job. We only want to enhance what is already going on."

Art of Universal Language is opened to children between the ages of 7-17. The group also has a Christmas event promoting positive potential and a school supply giveaway at the end of summer.

Further information regarding the program may be found by contacting Collins at AULevery1@yahoo.com.