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DD AWARENESS

COLOR: SILVER

MONTH: MARCH

2010 THEME:

*PATHWAY TO
SELF
DETERMINATION*

OPENING CEREMONY FOR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH



Activities are underway this month to address Developmental Disabilities Awareness. The opening ceremony for the awareness was on March 8 at the Executive Office Building (EOB) in Utulei. The Master of Ceremony, Tauileave "Tonka Man" Toluono, greeted the audience of parents, individuals with disabilities, service providers and the general public who were present. As is cultural practice, the opening prayer and benediction was given by Rev. Tinei Malepeai. Focusing on the theme "Pathway to Self Determination", the proclamation was read by Ms. Tualele Samau, an ASCC graduate with a developmental disability, who has been empowered by an inclusive community at ASCC. Special remarks from the Lt. Governor Faoa A. Sunia on the issue of disability were given in Samoan. His statement that, "People with disabilities are not people with illness, but are people in need of appropriate accommodations in order to have access to an inclusive access



into the community" gained much respect from the audience. Special musical items from the Office of Special Education and the Deaf Program were performed. Sponsored by the AS-DOE Office of Special Education and the UCEDD, the purpose of the ceremony was to empower individuals with disabilities to become leaders in addressing issues with the government and the community. The awareness activities for the month were planned by the American Samoa Interagency

council, parents, family members and individuals with disabilities. The first National Developmental Disabilities Month was declared by Congress in March, 1987, and has been observed regularly since then, by annual proclamation. The



National Developmental Disabilities Awareness proclamation was signed by President Ronald Reagan on February 26, 1987, but in 1990 President George H. W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Most people however, are unfamiliar with the events which led to the signing of the proclamation. Disability leaders held sit-ins in federal buildings, blocked inaccessible buses from moving, drafted legislation, and protested in the streets, all in an effort to educate the public about the needs of people with disabilities. The public needs to be aware of the capabilities, value, and potential of persons with DD. Individuals with DD are family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, volunteers, and teammates. People with DD are just like you. During the month of March, we ask that you get to know someone with a disability, and participate in activities in your communities to promote awareness about Developmental Disabilities. You'll see that everyone has something to offer. Let us celebrate the self determination of these individuals in our homes and communities.



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PROCLAMATION

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH
March 2010

WHEREAS, Proclamation 5613 was signed in 1987 designating March as the "National Developmental Disability Awareness Month" by former U.S. President Ronald Reagan; and

WHEREAS, American Samoa continues to celebrate and recognize people with developmental disabilities by the Governor of American Samoa; and

WHEREAS, developmental disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, contribute to society and participate fully in the economic, political, social, cultural and educational mainstream of our society; and

WHEREAS, family members, friends and members of the community can play a central role in enhancing the lives of people with disabilities, especially when the family and community are provided with necessary support services; and public and private employers are aware of the capabilities of people with disabilities to be engaged in competitive work in inclusive settings; and

WHEREAS, the goals of this Territory properly include providing individuals with developmental disabilities the opportunities and support to make informed choices and decisions; live in homes and communities where such individuals can exercise their full rights and responsibilities as citizens; pursue meaningful and productive lives; contribute to their family, community, Territory; have interdependent friendships and relationships with others; and achieve full inclusion in society.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, FAOA A. SUNIA, Lieutenant Governor of American Samoa, do hereby proclaim the Month of March, 2010, as Developmental Disability Awareness Month in the Territory of American Samoa, and call upon our people to observe the month with appropriate programs and activities. Furthermore, I encourage the people of the Territory to seek counsel and input from any person or group with knowledge and expertise in matters concerning disabilities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affix the Seal of my office on this 8th day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand ten.

FAOA A. SUNIA
Lieutenant Governor of American Samoa

WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE! Addressing People First Language

By Tafaimamao Tua Tupuola

Words can send a powerful message. When used to describe someone, words can give the listener a descriptive image of how an individual may appear. Politicians and directors, just to name a few, regularly stumble over the right words to say when addressing ‘disability’. You’ll hear handicap, retard, disabled, ‘those kind’ or ‘these kind’ of people, cripple, deaf and dumb.

It is in the same context when referenced in Samoan. Finding the right word to translate with the correct meaning can be challenging. There’s *ma’i* (ill), *le atoatoa o le tino ma le mafaufau* (not fully developed), or even *gasegase* (health). But do any of these terms, English or Samoan, reflect a positive image of a person with a disability? Does it describe or identify the person first before their disability?

Common phrases such as ‘suffer from’, ‘physically challenged’, ‘victim’, or to *overcome* also give negative perceptions of a person with a disability. Society continues

to identify them with their disability first and as people second through descriptions like *disabled people* or *autistic kid*.

People First Language is strongly encouraged as a reminder that despite our diverse society ‘we are people first’. Recognizing individuals with disabilities as people first promotes respect and dignity with a positive perception. Looking ‘beyond’ the disability and referring to them as an individuals sets the tone for looking at what they can do and not at what they cannot do.

So why the labels and categories in the first place? Labels and categories identifying the different types of disabilities is a sociopolitical ticket for services and accommodations. When we address an individual by a label or medical diagnosis, we devalue and disrespect them as an individual.

A common label in the education forum is “SPED Student”. The Office of Special Education provides various programs and services. When a

student requests these services, they are ‘students receiving special education services’. Identifying them as ‘SPED students’ gives the impression that Special Education is an education institution.

What appropriate term do we use when referring to people with disabilities? You could use *people with disabilities*, *employee with a disability*, *student with a disability* and etc. Identify them as a person first. Many times, society gets so caught up with categories, ethnicity, social status and other classifications to identify or describe an individual that we forget that they were born with a first and last name that identify who they are.

So the next time you have a conversation or address the topic of disabilities, remember to use People First Language.



RIDE THE WAVE By Ernie Seiuli

“Honk! Honk!” “Beep! Beep!” was all you could hear on Wednesday, March 10, in front of Special Education Office from 2:00 —3:00 p.m. Everyone passing by was curious: “What’s happening?” “What’s going on?” “Is it another fundraising event?” It was actually the “**Developmental Disability Awareness Month Wave**”, supported by AS Interagency Council and sponsored by the ASDOE SPED. The Wave promoted awareness that people with disabilities have a right to be fully included into the

community. One highlight of the event was when Ituaumalosi Representative Taotasi Archie Soliai took time from his busy schedule to join in and show support. Taotasi displayed a compassionate devotion to spreading awareness by standing and waving to drivers with the other participants. A light shower of rain came their way, but this did not deter the wavers nor the famous *faipule* in the least. “This is great to have policy makers really taking an interest in our activities,” said an employee from SPED.

Appreciation goes out to all the drivers who took a moment to honk in support of children with DD.

Special acknowledgements to Rep. Taotasi Archie



Soliai, SPED, CFIDD, UCEDD, and parents who joined together for the “Ride The Wave Activity”.

Inquiring Minds Want To Know: Social Security Entitlements

By Tafaimamao Tua-Tupuola

American Samoa may not be entitled to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), but your adult child with a disability may be eligible to receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits if the disability existed since childhood.

An adult child who has a disability that began before the age of 22 may be eligible to receive SSDI as a “child’s” benefit because it is paid from a parent’s Social Security earnings record. In order for an adult child with a disability to be entitled to this “child” benefit his/her parent/s must meet one of these requirements:

1. Currently receiving a Social Security retirement; or
2. Currently receiving a disability benefit; or
3. Died and have worked long enough under Social Security to qualify.

The Social Security Administration determines if the individual meets the qualifications for disability. The benefit continues as long as the individual dis-

ability exists. The disability is evaluated in the same manner as they would evaluate a disability for an adult. This requires information from your medical doctor regarding your medical condition and further information to determine your eligibility status.

The SSI program provides monthly payments to people with low income and limited resources who are 65 and older, blind, or have a disability. Children who are blind and meet the definition of disability can qualify for SSI up to the age of 18 if your income and resources are within the eligibility limits. American Samoa, Guam, and Puerto Rico currently do not receive this Social Security entitlement. In the meantime, the dialogue is taking place at the Congressional level regarding SSI benefits for American Samoa.

For more information on SSDI for an adult child with a disability, you can log onto www.ssa.gov

ADVOCATE & VOLUNTEER: ADA Subcommittees

By Lia Pelenato

The American Samoa Inter-agency Council (ASIC) is in preparation to address the Fono concerning issues within the American Disability Act (ADA). There is a need for the American Samoa government and public to be aware of these concerns. It is important that a person with developmental disability should not experience any barriers when accessing public facilities, seeking employment, pursuing higher education, and other major life activities.

In this effort, the ASIC has been divided into subcommittee that will focus on addressing ADA issues, for example:

1. *Accessible Facilities*: It is imperative that all facilities are accessible by elevators, lifts and doors. Buildings must also have reserved parking for individuals with DD. This applies to all government

buildings, health care sites, hotels and shopping centers.

2. *Employment*: Issues such as discrimination when hiring and reasonable accommodation, as well as interpreting, must be available or these become barriers to individuals with DD seeking employment.

The subcommittees consist of representatives of local agencies working for the developmental disability population, as well as parents of and individuals with DD. The subcommittees will meet to research information concerning the issue they have been assigned to. The purpose is to promote consistency with issues arising from not adhering to ADA policies

The Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law on July 26, 1990 by President George H. W. Bush and was later amended

with changes effective Jan. 1, 09. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on “disability”. The purpose of the ADA is to protect the rights of individuals with DD when seeking employment, education and other major life activities. The next ASIC ADA subcommittee meeting is scheduled for early April.



Needs Assessment Training *By: Lia Pelenato*

The Maternal and Child Health (MCH) program under the Department of Health (DOH) is conducting a series of "Needs Assessment Trainings" in order to continue providing necessary services to the community. Various representatives from local agencies participated in the training series. The technical assistance workshops began with general concepts of needs assessment and ended with work plans for data

collection and strategies. All participants have continued to meet with assigned MCH staff since the first training in August 2009. The participants have been divided into groups of three, focusing on prenatal care, children with special needs and teenagers at risk. These three groups have been conducting a survey of families within their focus areas and are collecting data. The UCEDD is represented within the special needs

group collecting data on quality of life and correct services provided to children with special needs and their families. This training is conducted by Dr. Henry Ichiho, who is a private consultant from Hawaii. The next and final training is scheduled for late April/early May 2010 to collect and compile the data. Once this information is received, the MCH will be able to better serve our community.



During the training at Sadie's by the Sea Conference room

Can You Hear Me Now? McDeaf Nite *By Tafaimamao Tua Tupuola*

While most were celebrating St. Patrick's Day, the Deaf Community celebrated "McDeaf Nite" at McDonald's in Fagatogo. Close to 70 family members, agencies, and the Deaf Community showed up to enjoy themselves and the silent entertainment.

Many students signed deaf jokes, told stories, and performed the Haka. Deaf adults who had not seen each other for some time were able to reminisce and share their life stories. Siblings, friends and family members participated in several raffles, with prizes courtesy of ASCC or UCEDD.

Michella Maiorana from the Kapiolani Community College, who is currently on – island teaching a Deaf Program course, was able to join in on the McDeaf activity. For a long time, the Deaf Community did not officially exist, and several efforts in the past to form one were difficult and inconsistent.

To prepare for A"McDeaf Nite", several teachers from the Deaf Program contacted deaf people and invited them to a night out where they could also establish a sense of community amongst other deaf people of all ages.

Much appreciation goes to Tualauta District Representative Larry Sanitoo, who stopped by to say hello to all the children and give a short speech. The Deaf Community appreciates any attention from policymakers and the government. Also present to show support were Mrs. Saouila Kava, Principal of Nuuli Voc-Tech. McDeaf Nite was sponsored by the AS-UCEDD.

For more photos of McDeaf Nite, log onto the UCEDD website.



TIPS WHEN SPEAKING TO A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

- Speak directly to the individual
- Presume Competence
- Listen attentively
- Place yourself at eye level
- Use a normal tone of voice

Reference: Maine Developmental Disabilities Council

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OUR MISSION

The University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) assures that individuals with developmental disabilities of all ages and their families participate fully in activities that will design and promote self determination, independence, integration and inclusion in all facets of life in American Samoa. The UCEDD will ensure the delivery and purpose of the Developmental Disabilities Act through culturally competent activities.

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Activities for DD Awareness Month

- **March 17, 2020**— Silent Day at McDonalds in Fagatogo. Sponsored by UCEDD
- **March 19, 2010**— Staff Development for SpEd Bus drivers. Sponsored by SpEd
- **March 20, 2010**— Shriners Golf tournament. Sponsored by Shriners.
- **March 29-31, 2010**— Shriners Clinic for children with orthopedics. Sponsored by Shriners.
- **March 22-24, 2010**— Training for counselors. Sponsored by the office of the Governor: Vocational Rehabilitation
- **March 25, 2010**— Tri-agency Leadership council training. Sponsored by Tri-agency council.
- **March 29—April 02, 2010**— Developmental Disability Awareness in Manu'a. Sponsored by the ASDOE SpEd program.

ACRONYMS/MEANINGS

- ADA:** Americans with Disabilities Act
- ASCC:** American Samoa Community College
- ASDOE:** American Samoa Department of Education
- ASIC:** American Samoa Interagency Council
- DD:** Developmental Disabilities
- DHSS:** Department of Human Social Services
- DOH:** Department of Health
- MCH:** Maternal and Child Health
- SPED:** Special Education
- SSDI:** Social Security Disability Insurance
- SSI:** Supplemental Security Income
- UCEDD:** University Center of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities