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CHILD ABUSE AWARENESS

- MONTH—APRIL
- COLOR—BLUE
- 2010 THEME:
NURTURE OUR
CHILDREN FOR
TOMORROW



CHILD ABUSE AWARENESS MONTH



By: Lia Pelenato

At 6:30 a.m. on April 7th, a candlelight service was held at the Fagatogo CCCAS as an opening ceremony for Child Abuse Awareness in American Samoa. UCEDD staff was in attendance in support of Children with developmental disabilities as well as members from various agencies and the general public, wearing blue ribbons and praying for the safety and wellbeing of the children of American Samoa. The need to protect and keep our children with disabilities safe is an important mission.

At the Federal level the first child protection legislation, Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) was passed in 1974. Recently, CAPTA has been amended throughout the years, by the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003. Recognizing the alarming rate at which children continued to be abused and neglected in the early 1980's, Congress made a commitment to implement solutions to end child abuse. There was a growing need for innovative programs for families affected, and to raise awareness in the public.

In June 6-12, 1982 was designated by the U.S Senate and House of Representatives as the first National Child Abuse Prevention Week from President Reagan proclaiming for all government agencies and the public to observe and support the week for Child Abuse Prevention. April of the following year was proclaimed as the first National Child Abuse Prevention Month. States receiving CAPTA must implement procedures for referral of a child, from 0-3, who is reported on abuse or neglect to early intervention services under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for early evaluation. Part C and Child Welfare are required to collaborate in providing children who are involved in substantiated case of

abuse and neglect with referrals to receiving correct services as early as possible.

There are no differences in which kind of child can be abused, but an increase of abuse of children with developmental disabilities (DD) are often unreported. One in three children with a disability who receives special education is the victim of abuse, whereas one in 10 nondisabled children experience abuse (Sullivan & Knutson, 2000). Children with developmental disabilities may not report abuse because they do not understand what abuse is or what acts are abusive. Communication problems that are inherent in many disabilities also make it difficult for children to understand and verbalize episodes of abuse. One study found that children with DD were at twice the risk of physical and sexual abuse compared to children without DD (Nat. Research Council, 2001). Children with DD need early education about the risks of abuse and how to avoid it in a way that they can understand. CAPTA provides grants to support the improvement in preventing child abuse and neglect to children with DD. The Blue Ribbon Campaign to Prevent Child Abuse began in 1989 as a Virginia grandmother's tribute to her grandson, who had died as a result of abuse. She tied a blue ribbon to the antenna of her car as a way to remember him and to raise awareness in her community. The blue ribbon has since expanded across the country and in American Samoa as a reminder of children suffering from abuse, and in support of all programs and activities preventing child abuse.





Disability Policy Seminar

April 12-14, 2010 | Washington, D.C.

Simple Recommendation when Advocating for DD Community:

- Use connections & leverage in your community
- Use personal stories to get to the heart of legislators & people in power.
- Push for TOTAL FUNDING of all programs under the DD Act
- Push for funding programs allowing individuals with DD to live independently & work in the community.

By: Lia Pelenato

Every year, members of the Disability community make their way to Washington D.C to attend the Disability Policy Seminar. This year's seminar took place on April 12-14, and disability rights advocates as well as family members, the public and consumers from across the country participated. UCEDD is proud that Ms. Deanna Fuimaono, who is a



grandparent (also an Assistant Legislative Counsel to the Fono) of a child with developmental disability and a member of the American Samoa UCEDD Advisory council, was in attendance. The main point of the seminar was to show advocates how to: (1) Push for changes to the

current disability laws, (2) approach our legislators to support our issues, (3) explain why the President's budget and appropriations is important to us, and (4) clarify the importance of the recent Health Care Reform Law to individuals with developmental disabilities.

The ultimate goal is to target the budget. If the disability programs are included in the budget, increases for disability programs are made. On the third day of the seminar, participants were required to meet with their Congressman to advocate for various disability issues. Since Congressman Faleomavaega was not available, one of his staff, Leilani, met with Ms. Fuimaono, who handed over a package of disability issues and recommendations for the Congressman's review.

ARE YOU PREPARED? By: Ernie Seiuli



"Improving Preparedness by Incorporating Lessons Learned" was one of the main topics discussed during the "PACIFIC EMPRINT" Conference that was held on March 31, 2010

in Hawaii. The experience of the tsunami in September 2009 and other past natural disasters really makes one ask, "Is American Samoa improving its preparedness by incorporating lessons learned?" Vivid memories of the recent tsunami, along with the increase in natural disasters, have led a lot of people to ask that question to those who have dedicated their efforts to improving our Territory's readiness compared to previous years.

Are we well prepared?

What about our vulnerable population? which includes our senior citizens and individuals with disabilities? Are we well prepared for an emergency evacuation? Do we have enough materials and equipment for their needs during a disaster? The 9/29 tsunami raised many questions about what improvements are needed to help those with special needs. The main target and challenges for our people is to incorporate those lessons into actions that reduce injury and mortality in future disasters, to understand key outcomes, and to improve and increase our preparedness for any future catastrophes.

"I would think that any disaster preparedness center would address the needs of those who are most vulnerable. That was not the case here".

By: Stephen Thomas

BLUE WISHES BALLOONS

By: Lia Pelenato

In supporting Child Abuse Prevention Month, the UCEDD program hosted a Blue Wishes Balloon

Launch activity for the students with developmental disabilities as well their classmates at Lupelele Elementary school in Ili'i. The event was in collaboration with the DHSS- CPS unit, Mrs.

Frances Leau (RS) and Sped teachers of Lupelele. More than 200 students from K5 through level 3 joined in on the fun. The students participated in a presentation about Child Abuse awareness while level 4 student Lui Isa'ako (a child with special needs) read the National Poem in honor of all the children who died from abuse. The students drew pictures and wrote wishes that were attached to the

balloons before launch. All the children were excited, and screams of laughter were heard throughout the field once the balloons were launched into the sky. Representative Larry Sanitua of the Tualauta District was in attendance and assisted Lui Isa'ako in cutting the cake to celebrate the awareness activity. A special prayer for the safety and wellbeing of all the children of American Samoa closed the event.



Lupelele students getting reading to launch their blue wishes balloon into the sky.



CAN YOU SEE ME NOW?

By: Ernie Seiuli

The Lions Club of Pago Pago continues to provide relief to many residents who lost their eyeglasses during the tsunami last September. The Bay Outreach Clinic, offered to the residents of Pago Pago and Fagasa, provided eye-screening services that included complete eye examinations to evaluate visual health and detect eye diseases, prescriptions, and referral services.

The Lions Club Bay Outreach Clinic team was touched by the many expressions of gratitude and blessings patients bestowed upon them for their assistance during this time of need. Heartfelt stories about their journeys to the hospital eye clinic and limited services and access were shared with the Lion members. Residents were grateful for the clinic being accessible eastern Tutuila, which drastically reduced the cost to seek treatment. According to the American Samoa Lions Club President, Mr. Taotasi Archie Soliai, "The success of

the program was due to the support from several individuals and businesses that provided both financial and logistical help". The main purpose of this community service provided by the Lions Club of Pago Pago was to recognize and reinforce the importance of eradicating preventable blindness, and to educate our local communities about the need to conquer preventable blindness and preserve sight. A special acknowledgement and a fa'afetai tele from the University Center for Excellence on Developmental Activities at the Community College to all the Lions Club members for your endless support to our community, especially from those in the special needs population in American Samoa.



Signs of Eye Problems

- Difficulty focusing on near or distant objects
- Change in color of iris
- Red-dimmed, encrusted or swollen lids
- Recurrent pain in or around eyes
- Dark spot at the center of viewing
- Excess tearing or "watery eyes"
- Dry eyes with itchy or burning;
- Seeing spots, ghost-like.../images
- Unusual trouble adjusting to dark rooms

www.preventblindness.org



University Center of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities

**AMERICAN SAMOA COMMUNITY
COLLEGE—UCEDD
P.O. BOX 2609
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*If you would like to receive this newsletter
in an alternative format, please call
UCEDD staff.*

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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ACRONYMS/MEANINGS

ASCC: American Samoa Community College

CAPTA: Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act

CCCAS: Congregational Christian Church American Samoa

CPS: Child Protective Services

DD: Developmental Disabilities

DHSS: Department of Human Social Services

EMPRINTS: Emergency Management Preparedness and Response Information Network and Training Services

IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

PH: Physical Therapists

RS: Resource Specialist

SpEd: Special Education Programs

UCEDD: University Center of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities