

University Center for  
Excellence on  
Developmental Disabilities  
(UCEDD)



AMERICAN SAMOA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

UCEDD it!

# Investing in workers with Disabilities.

By: Ernie Seiuli

The American Samoa Community College (ASCC) lecture hall was filled with local participants from non-profit and government agencies on a two-day seminar on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) held on October 12 – 13, 2011. The seminar was led by San Diego State University Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Program for Region IX, Dr. Chaz Compton. Titled, “American Samoa Disabilities Act and Disability Employment”, the month’s theme was “Profit by Investing in Workers with Disabilities.” The seminar was planned and coordinated under the auspices of the Office of the Governor, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR); in addition, other government agencies such as the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC), Office of Protection and Advocacy for the Disabled (OPAD), Special Education (SpEd), University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) at ASCC and other non government agencies joined the seminar. The topics included the definition of disability, the ADA, and employment of

individuals with disabilities and employer’s responsibilities. Dr. Compton provided a comprehensive statewide need assessments in American Samoa, which is a procedure required by the federal government every three years to identify the needs of people with disabilities in every state and territory. He also emphasized a problem the disability groups faced today when applying for jobs. Part of the problem is dis-



Dr. Chaz Compton presenting on ADA

crimination. Discrimination against people with disabilities unfortunately exists despite the legal ramifications against discrimination in hiring people with disabilities. According to studies and statistics by the “Center for An Accessible Society,” about “seventy-nine percent of people with disabilities who are employed cite discrimination.” The studies has also shown that people with disabilities who find jobs earn less than their co-workers and are less likely to be pro-

moted. The seminar ended with questions and answers by the participants about the ADA and the disability employment. The seminar further enhanced this year’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month theme, “Profit by Investing in Workers with Disabilities.” The theme honored the contribution of workers with disabilities and served to inform everyone that they represent a highly skilled pool that can help employers to keep our economy strong by reaffirming their commitment to ensure equal opportunity for all nations. It also accentuates the rich diversity and talent that workers with disabilities bring to the workplace, and how they contributes to the output of any organization, and makes sure they have a voice and presence in the work force. Elizabeth Mavaega from the Vocational Rehabilitation Division, stated that “our local businesses and government agencies will practice reasonable accommodations and everyone with or without disabilities will be equally and fairly as stated in the ADA of 1990”.

## Inside this Issue:

UCEDD’S 5 YR. PLAN MEETING	2
NATIONAL EPILEPSY AWARENESS	2
SPECIAL OLYMPICS IS BACK	2
MOURN, CELEBRATE, & CONNECT	3
FYI CORNER: DID YOU KNOW?	3
Acronyms, Directory, & UCEDD Mission	4

*“Being disabled should not mean being disqualified from having access to every aspect of life”*

*~Emma Thompson*

## UCEDD'S 5 YR. GRANT MEETING

By: Tafa Tupuola

The University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) is approaching the ending of their 5 year funding cycle and data is needed from the disability community, parents, family members and agencies. A meeting was held on October 20, 2011 with approximately 25 family members, consumers, and some agencies on completing a survey. Having more individuals with disabilities, parents, and family members was a plus considering they are



Members of the disability community during the

the community impacted by services and barriers.

Agencies present identified needed training, technical assistance, in-service and pre-service needs within their departments to enhance services to individuals with disabilities and their fami-

lies. Alefa Afa-lava from the Territorial Emergency Management Coordinating Office (TEMCO) at Department of Homeland Security also

shared their efforts in establishing American Samoa Mass Care Task Force in addressing functional needs, a component that focuses on individuals with disabilities.

UCEDD addresses related activities in education and early intervention, employment, transportation, quality assurance, health, recreation, child care, emergency preparedness, aging, and community support through their four core functions. It is crucial that UCEDD identify the main needs and plan with individuals with disabilities and their families.

## NATIONAL EPILEPSY AWARENESS

By: Ernie Seiuli

November is Epilepsy Awareness month. Epilepsy is a general term that includes various types of seizures. It is a brain disorder that causes people to have recurring seizures. The seizures happen when clusters of nerve cells, or neurons, in the brain send out the wrong signal. A seizure happens when abnormal electrical activity in the brain causes an involuntary change in body movement or function, sensation, awareness, or behavior. Seizures may also result from illness including high fever, head trauma, stroke, brain tumor, poison-

ing, infection, inherited conditions, brain disorders, or problems during fetal development. Epilepsy is a disability when it substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities. Major life activities are basic activities that an average person can perform with little or no difficulty, such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, performing manual tasks, caring for oneself, learning, and working. Doctors use brain scans and other tests to diagnose epilepsy. It is important to start treatment right away.

There is no cure for epilepsy, but medicines can control seizures for most people. When medicines are not working well, surgery or implanted devices such as nerve stimulators may help. If you or someone you know experiences two or three seizures per month, contact the Lyndon B. Johnson hospital at 699-1222, or visit [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/epilepsy.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/epilepsy.html) or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at <http://www.cdc.gov/Epilepsy/> for more information.

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS IS BACK!

By: Tafa Tupuola

Inactive for more than 10 years, the Special Olympics was once acknowledged with great prestige for its annual local competition. After several request from parents, agencies, and the community, the UCEDD has taken the initiative to help bring back the Special Olympics. In September, the Special Olympics Headquarters in Washington D.C. gave the green

light after meeting regarding American Samoa's interest. The accreditation and request to be part of the Asia Pacific Region is currently pending approval. Special guest Bruckner Chase joined the Special Olympics American Samoa (SOAS) first official meeting. Mr. Chase is the Special Olympics Sports Ambassador and is recognized locally as the indi-

vidual who swam from Aunu'u to Tutuila. His purpose in the territory is to implement an initiative from Governor Togiola to develop the Toa o le Tai program with the Department of Education. The SOAS committee took advantage of his presence to provide more information about open water swimming as a sport event for SOAS.

# MOURN, CELEBRATE, AND CONNECT

By: Lia Pelenato

October is designated as Domestic Violence (DV) Awareness month since the U.S. Congress passed the legislation in 1989. American Samoa joined in the fight to stop domestic violence and observed the month of October for DV as Honorable Governor Togiola Tulafono signed



During the opening ceremony in Tafuna

into declaration. The Victims of Crime Advocacy (VOCA) program and Le

Manaia Shelter under the management of Mrs. Tufa Avegalio and the Department of Human & Social Services (DHSS) held a roadside candlelight service in the evening of Monday, October 3, 2011 to open the DV month. Representatives from various departments and local denominations as well as members of the public were in attendance to promote and support the awareness of DV. UCEDD Director Ms. Tafa Tupuola recited the DV poem for women of American Samoa while Assistant District Attorney Mitzie Jessop Folau lighted the first candle and the keynote speaker for the night was Mrs. Fa'aalu Iuli. The intent was to connect service providers and advo-

cates for battered women who are working to end violence against women and children. It was also to enable our local women to be aware of DV and the services that are available on island. The VOCA program had various booths stationed around the island during the month of October as well as publications and media appearances to promote and support the cause of DV awareness. UCEDD staff member Lia Pelenato attended the DV awareness walk from Avau-Nu'uli to Faga'alu which was the final event on Thursday, October 27th.



## FYI CORNER: DID YOU KNOW?

By: Lia Pelenato

### DEAR MR. PRESIDENT

The National Council on Disability (NCD) sent a letter to President Obama, urging him to oppose repeal of the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Program and to continue its implementation. In the letter, NCD states that community-based long-term services and supports are absolutely essential to maintain the

health, independence, and community participation of individuals with disabilities. The disability, aging and faith communities supported the CLASS Program and actively worked with Congressional leaders and the Administration to ensure its passage with the Affordable Care Act. They did so because they deeply understand the promise this

program holds for improving the lives of millions of Americans and family members with disabilities. The CLASS Program provides a structure for the country to better address the financing of long-term services and supports in a manner that is fiscally responsible and can produce significant savings to Medicaid.

### THE CHAMPION ON OUR BEHALF

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) honored Senator Tom Harkin with its 2011 Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award. This award is given to an individual or organization making distinguished lifetime contributions to people with developmental disabilities and their families. Senator Harkin has worked tirelessly for

over 40 years fighting for policies that promote equal opportunity, full participation, self-determination, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities and their families in Iowa and across the U.S. Even in these tough economic times, he continues to fight for support for a wide range of effective programs

that enable people with disabilities to live, work, and play in the community as well as support for the professionals who work on their behalf. Senator Harkin continues to be a champion at the center of our national disability policy making process. For all your hard work, we thank you!



### ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY

The White House Internship Program provides a unique opportunity to gain valuable professional experience and build leadership skills. This hands-on program is designed to mentor and cultivate today's young leaders, strengthen their understanding of Executive Office and prepare them for



future public service opportunities. The application period for the Summer 2012 White House Internship Program is now open. Applicants have until January 22, 2012 to apply for the White House Internship which is a public service leadership program.

For more information on eligibility and the application, please visit:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/internships/apply>



### *SEND US YOUR COMMENTS*

We would love to hear from you if you have comments about our newsletter, or if you would like to be added to our newsletter list!

Drop us a line at: [ucedd@amsamoa.edu](mailto:ucedd@amsamoa.edu)

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**We are on the web!**

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## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*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.*

### **ACRONYMS/MEANINGS**

- ADA:** Americans with Disabilities Act
- ASCC:** American Samoa Community College
- AUCD:** Association of University Centers on Disabilities
- CDC:** Center for Disease Control
- CLASS:** Community Living Assistance Services and Supports
- DD:** Developmental Disabilities
- DHSS:** Department of Human & Social Services
- DDPC:** Developmental Disabilities Planning Council
- DV:** Domestic Violence
- NCD:** National Council on Disability
- SOAS:** Special Olympics American Samoa
- SpEd:** Special Education
- TEMCO:** Territorial Emergency Management Coordinating Office
- VOCA:** Victims of Crime Advocacy
- OVR:** Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- UCEDD:** University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities

**KEEP IT GREEN & KEEP IT ON THE LINK**

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