



UCEDD *it!*

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**University Center for
Excellence on
Developmental Disabilities**

SELF-ADVOCACY SUMMIT

By: **Lia Pelenato**

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American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Guam and Hawaii were among the Pacific Islands that attended the Self-Advocacy Summit held at the Ala Moana Hotel in Hawaii on March 28-29, 2012. American Samoa was represented by youth self-advocates Lauren Meredith (Poly Tech High School), Fausaga Taufete'e (Leone High School), Marty Jr. Mamea (Tafuna Elementary), and Josephine Stanley (20 yrs. Old). The American Samoa team provided a presentation on American Samoa's disability community as well as initiating a

self-advocacy group at home. Also in attendance were Developmental Disability Planning Council (DDPC) Director Norma Smith, Office of Protection & Advocacy (OPAD) Director Dr. Uta Tagoilelagi, University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disability (UCEDD) Director Tafa Tu-puola and staff Lia Pelenato as well as parents of the American Samoa self-advocates group. The two-day summit provided breakout sessions for each island to discuss issues that can be addressed at both local and

federal levels. The discussions were geared to the needs of the self-advocates and finding solutions on how to address these issues. The American Samoa self-advocates team were very vocal in their opinions and perspectives. After each session, the Pacific Island groups held discussions, and American Samoa's young self-advocates presented the information discussed in each individual session.

The Self-Advocacy Summit has helped our young advocates initiate a self-advocacy group in American Samoa.



AUTISM AWARENESS

By: **Ernie Seiuli**

April, 2012, is Autism Awareness Month, a chance to highlight autism, a condition that affects 1 in 88 American children across the United States. Autism is a "disorder of neural development" characterized by impaired social interaction and communication difficulties, and restricted, repetitive, and

stereotyped patterns of behavior. These signs all begin before a child is three years old. Autism is one of three recognized disorders in the autism spectrum, with the other two being Asperger syndrome and Pervasive developmental disorder. Studies show that autism is three to four times more common among boys

than girls. According to the Autism Society of America's statistics in the year 2003, the number of autism cases among children aged 3 – 22 in American Samoa are 2, which affect 0.345 in 10,000 people. The brightness of the commemorative ribbon signals hope that people with autism will lead fuller, more complete lives.



PACIFIC RIM CONFERENCE

By: Lia Pelenato

The Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability and Diversity (Pac Rim) was held at the Hawaii Convention Center on March 26-27, 2012. The University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disability (UCEDD) Director Tafa Tupuola was in attendance and staff Paulia Pelenato was a presenter. The American Samoa Tri-Agency and the Self-Advocates group as well as their parents were also in attendance. The Conference focused on the program areas of foundation, exploration, and innovation, which engage, advocate,

and innovate for people with developmental disabilities (DD). UCEDD staff Paulia Pelenato presented on "Interviewing Samoan Victims with Disabilities". The presentation discussed ways to assist a service provider during an interview. Once a victim is identified the service provider must understand the cultural barriers which can hinder the interview process if the culture of the victim is either ignored or misunderstood. The Conference provided a wide range of presentations, exhibitions, a film festival, keynote speak-

ers, forums, and symposium's on issues regarding the disability community and the services provided to this population. There was a diversity of attendance from around the world with the common passion of supporting disability needs in each country.



AUTISM AWARENESS FILM FESTIVAL

By: Ernie Seiuli

The University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) hosted a film festival dedicated to supporting and promoting Autism Awareness for the month of April. The film festival was held at the American Samoa Community College (ASCC) Lecture Hall on April 19, 2012 from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. It was free and open to the general public, and more than 20 people were in

attendance including Special Education teachers from Lupelele Elementary school. The featured film was a documentary called "Wretches & Jabberers". It documents the life of two men with autism who embark on a global quest to change attitudes about disability and intelligence. Tracy Thresher, 42, and Larry Bissonnette, 52, travelled to Sri Lanka, Japan and Finland and were determined to put a

new face on autism. At each stop, they addressed public attitudes and issues about autism and provided a new perspective in understanding people with Autism. The attendees were very emotional as the film detailed their struggles and allowed others to get a first-hand look at the intelligence and perseverance of individuals with disabilities as they struggle to be treated as equals.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?

By: Ernie Seiuli

On April 24, 2012, UCEDD trainer Mrs. Paulia Pelenato provided a training for the parents and staff of the Department of Health Part C Program in Fagaima. The presentation was entitled "People First Language & Child Abuse of Children with Developmental Disabilities (DD). More than 20 were in attendance and the presentation was geared specifically for parents and staff on how to utilize person-first language. Mrs. Pelenato discussed various ways and techniques

of communicating with a child or an individual with DD and making sure that they are included in all facets of life in school, church and at home. Several child-centered approaches were discussed to help parents and staff build rapport and trust in order for the child to open up. It is also important to understand a child's disability and how to make the instructions short and simple. The second part of the training was the "Child Abuse of children with DD".

Abuse is widespread in children of all ages, however the increasing abuse of children with DD is often unreported. Children with DD may not report abuse because they do not understand what abuse is or what acts are abusive. Communication problems inherent in many disabilities make it difficult for children to understand and verbalize episodes of abuse. The training ended with parents discussing various ways to detect signs of abuse in children.

IS YOUR EVACUATION PLAN CURRENT? By: Ernie Seiuli

The University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) staff conducted an emergency preparedness training at Hope House Care Unit in Fatuoaga on Friday, March 24, 2012. More than 20 staff members were in attendance. The purpose of the training was to revisit their emergency and evacuation plans, review what works and doesn't work in procedures, and introduce preparedness checklists to evaluate and improve their disaster preparedness plans for patients with developmental disabilities (DD). The training was

focused primarily on the role of caregivers preparing and creating an emergency plan for their patients. UCEDD staff also encouraged the staff of the Hope House Care Unit to continue their efforts with their preparedness plans by regularly using the procedures, as this will make clear to the staff what works or does not work. They were also taught accurate information on saving lives. The staff of the Hope House Care Unit reviewed steps

to be taken during a mandatory evacuation, as well as needed equipment. For many who were unaware of the types of items required during such an evacuation, this training, became a guide. While caring for the elderly as well as individuals with developmental disabilities, the staff is required to be prepared to evacuate with many of the necessities such as medicine, water, canned food, important documents, oxygen tanks, etc. At the end, participants were familiar with the basic aspects of emergency preparedness.



WEAVING THE FOUNDATION OF OUR FAMILIES By: Lia Pelenato

The Amerika Samoa Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Against Family Violence held its "Weaving the Foundation of our Families: Culture, Church & Law, to end Family Violence Conference" on April 12-13, 2012 at the Department of Agriculture Conference Room in Tafuna. The



Conference rallied together leaders from religion, culture, and the law to discuss issues regarding family violence in American Samoa. The role that religion and culture play during the report of family violence greatly affects the law and the victim. Issues of misinterpreting the law were also addressed by officials from

the Judiciary such as Judge John L. Ward and Probation Director Tauili'i Iosefo. Family violence has been a rising issue on our island, and people with disabilities have also fallen victim. April is also Sexual Assault and Prevent Child Abuse Awareness Month, which was also discussed during the conference. UCEDD's role in the MDT is to provide technical assistance for the disability victims.

TRI-AGENCY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE By: Lia Pelenato

The Directors of Developmental Disability Planning Council (DDPC), Office of Protection & Advocacy (OPAD), and the University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disability program make up the American Samoa Tri-Agency, which works for and/or with people with developmental disabilities. On March 30, 2012 The

American Samoa Tri-Agency joined with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Tri-Agency to attend a technical assistance meeting with the Administration of Developmental Disabilities (ADD) Commissioner Sharon Lewis, and members of the Association of Universities of Centers on Disabilities

(AUCD), National Association of Council on DD, and the Association of Protection and Advocacy agencies from the federal level. The meeting allowed the two Tri-Agencies to present ideas on how to share information and design a better working relationship with its representatives from the respective agencies at the federal level.



We are on the Web!
<http://asucedd.org>

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

ACRONYMNS/MEANINGS

- **ADA:** Americans with Disabilities Act
- **ADD:** Administration of Developmental Disabilities
- **ASCC:** American Samoa Community College
- **ASD:** Autism Spectrum Disorder
- **AUCD:** Association of University Centers on Disabilities
- **CNMI:** Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
- **DD:** Developmental Disabilities
- **DDPC:** Developmental Disability Planning Council
- **MDT:** Amerika Samoa Multi-Disciplinary Team
- **NACDD:** National Association of Council on Developmental Disabilities
- **OPAD:** Office of Protection & Advocacy for the Disable
- **UCEDD:** University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities

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

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