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DEAF AWARENESS

COLOR: PINK

MONTH: MAY

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COLOR: GREEN

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DEAF AWARENESS MONTH By: Lia Pelenato

This year, American Samoa will celebrate Deaf Awareness Week from May 24-28 with an opening ceremony joined by the Governor, local agencies, Deaf community and the public. May is a month dedicated to a group of individuals who have been almost invisible in our communities. Deaf Awareness is celebrated in the month of May and it is about recognizing the deaf people in our community as well as looking back at the achievements of pioneers in deaf culture. May 1927 was designated as the first National Deaf Awareness Month for hearing and speech issues. Deaf individuals share a world without sound, so they chose to speak with their hands. This year's theme is *"Love In Any Language"*. This theme aims to improve understanding of deafness by highlighting the range of communication methods

used by deaf children and adults, such as sign language and lip reading. The word deaf is used to describe a whole range of conditions relating to deafness: according to figures from the World Health Organization, there are currently 278 million deaf people across the world. American Samoa has long shared this passion to support our children and adults who are deaf. The spring of 1999 was the first ever island-wide Deaf Awareness Week in American Samoa that was celebrated and supported by an unexpectedly large number of people.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS By: Lia Pelenato

May is National Mental Health Awareness Month, a time when mental health agencies and organizations around the world come together to promote awareness of the importance of maintaining good mental health and celebrating individuals in our community who are diagnosed with mental health illness. The theme for this year's May 2010 awareness is *"Live Your Life Well"*. This theme helps remind us how to promote health and wellness in our homes, communities and schools. The Mental Health Act of 1983 refers to patients who have been compulsorily detained— not those who seek voluntary admission for mental health treatment. The Act covers compulsory admission

to hospital, consent to treatment, mental health review tribunals, removal of patients, and the management of property and affairs of patients. The Mental Health Act of 1983 has since been amended many times to accommodate the needs and benefits of individuals with mental health illnesses. American Samoa has joined in promoting Mental Health Awareness by supporting activities scheduled this month to raise awareness of mental health issues.



Love In Any Language By: Lia Pelenato



Jan Fried, Moeolo V., intern Tiffany C., and Honorable Gov. Togiola Tulafono.

At 9a.m on Monday, May 24, a large crowd gathered at the Executive Office Building (EOB) in Utulei for the Deaf Awareness Week opening ceremony. In attendance was Honorable Governor Togiola T.A. Tulafono, Tualata representatives Larry Sanitua and Galu Satele, as well as Ms. Jan Fried, a professor from Kapiolani Community College in Hawaii. The opening ceremony is the kick off for activities and events promoting deaf awareness on island, and especially in out schools. Governor Tulafono expressed his

fascination with and need to learn the ASL language to communicate with our Deaf and H.H people on island. Ms. Jan Fried was accompanied by Ms. Tiffany Cassner, who is a Deaf student from the Gallaudet University and also an intern in American Samoa for 10 weeks under the D.O.E SpEd program. The Deaf and H.H students of Matafao Elementary and Voc. Tech High School performed two musical selections in ASL language. The UCEDD program supported deaf awareness by pro-

viding gifts of T-shirts with ASL art incorporated into UCEDD's name. After the ceremony, the deaf community participated in a Wave at Faga'alu road which the public supported by honking their car horns when passing by. On May 27, the deaf community gathered once more at Rigs Hang Out in Nu'uuli to close the Deaf Awareness week. DOE Director, Dr. Claire Poumele and Tualata representatives Sanitua and Satele celebrated the efforts of deaf children while motivating them to achieve their dreams.



Nurse Ma'elega Amani from Mental Health Clinic during her presentation.

On Friday, May 28, the Pua Center program under the Department of Human and Social Services held an in-service workshop to close Mental Health Awareness month. This in-service workshop included a presentation entitled "Learn How to Relax" by Nurse Ma'elega Amani of the Mental Health Clinic at LBJ Hospital. Nurse Ma'elega expressed how vital it is for ser-

vice providers to learn how to relax and relieve stresses before dealing with clients. She also did a couple of relaxation activities for the participants to be used during stressful times during working hours. The second presentation was from Ms. Tafa Tupuola of UCEDD on recognizing the importance of receiving early intervention programs for children with developmental disabilities in

our communities. This workshop follows a month of activities hosted by Pua Center for Mental Health clients and their families. Yesterday, the clients of Pua Center and their families, together with staff and members of the ASCC-Land Grant program, celebrated the completion of the first cycle of the day treatment program which will open its second cycle in the fall 2010.

WOOOOSAH!! By: Lia Pelenato

ASL to Faith-based Organization BY: Ernie Seiuli

The American Sign Language (ASL) basic course was introduced at the Satala Seventh-day Adventist Pathfinder Club as one of their core requirements for their Master Guide Program. Ms. Tafa Tupuola, Director of UCEDD and an ASL Instructor at the American Samoa Community College (ASCC) introduced the basics of ASL to 8 Pathfinder students and 4 adults. The main

goal and mission for these students is to learn the ASL language, so it may be used to augment communication. In addition, it can be used as another form of communication in providing assistance for someone who is deaf. The Satala Pathfinder leader Mrs. Tilomai Iosua, believed that learning the sign language can be more effective as part of their project and to accom-

pany songs in Pathfinder school clubs or church ceremonies. The training covered the basics, and the club learned the ASL alphabets as well as common words used in everyday life. Special acknowledgements to Pastor Pa'u Fatu Tuavela and the Satala Seventh-day Adventist Pathfinder club for taking a huge step in learning the ASL language to communicate with deaf individuals.



Satala Seventh-day Adventist Pathfinder Club learning the ASL language

CONGRATULATIONS TO SpEd TEACHERS

By: Ernie Seiuli

Fourteen teachers received their Bachelor Degree in Education during the University of Hawaii-Manoa COHORT XX Commencement Exercises held on Friday, May 14, 2010. Of the fourteen teachers graduated, six of the Bachelor Degree recipients received dual preparation in Special Education (SpEd). Teachers with an emphasis in SpEd have met the requirements of working and teaching students with developmental disabilities in an educational setting.

Congratulations to all fourteen

teachers, especially to our six teachers who received dual preparation in Special Education.

1. Julia Tamafili Seiuli Ierome
2. Dana Martine Love-Ili
3. Sianiga Aumoeualogo Mauigoa
4. Sala Palesoo-Godinet
5. Melissa Lupelake Togiai
6. Nada Litea Tuamasaga

Also, a special acknowledgement to Ms. Dana Martine Love-Ili who scored the highest on the PRAXIS Exam.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the graduating class sang in their farewell song: "As we grow, we remember....strengthen, teach, inspire....helping others, friends and families, we're united COHORT XX...". Once again, congratulations to the graduates of 2010.



UH 2010 graduates during graduation ceremony in Utulei

INTERVIEW WHO? By: Lia Pelenato



Child abuse is a problem increasing at an alarming rate in the territory. There are no differences in which form child abuse occurs, and children must be educated to report any kind of abuse. Children with developmental disabilities (DD) of any kind are also victims of abuse. Children with DD may not report abuse because they don't understand what abuse is or what acts

are abusive. It is also important that service providers understand how to interact with a child with DD during an interview once a case is reported. On May 11, the UCEDD program hosted a training for the DHSS—CPS, VOCA, and Adoption units on interviewing children with DD. Information such as interview recommendations (Attention Span, simple language,

and taking breaks) was the focus of the training. It is also important for the interviewer to understand his/her comfort level and realize when they need to refer the child to a specialist. A legal complaint must also be filed with the office of P&A during the interview process, and the entire interaction must be documented for record keeping.



DHSS-CPS & VOCA staff during the training held by UCEDD.

THE 7 HEALTH ISSUES By: Lia Pelenato

On May 11-12, from 8a.m to 4p.m members from various agencies participated in the final installment of the DOH-MCH Needs Assessment Training that was first initiated in August 2009. The Needs Assessment was held at Sadie's by the Sea and was conducted by Dr. Henry Ichiho from Hawaii. The participants of the training came together for the last session to

compile data collected from surveys and interviews of the focus population each group was given. The focus groups were assigned to collecting health care needs/ services data from (1)Prenatal Care, (2) Youth & Teens and (3) Children with special needs –CSN. During the first day of the training, the participants compiled the collected data and narrowed it down

to the seven most needed health care issues. These issues are 1) Immunization, (2) Inadequate prenatal care, (3) Dental care; (4) Breast feeding; (5) Child obesity; (6) Anemia and (7) Injury & Violence—Teens. The seven known health problems will become American Samoa's focus for the State Performance measure during the next five years.



Participants ranking health issues in American Samoa.

University Center of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities

American Samoa Community College
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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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ACRONYMS/MEANINGS

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act

ASCC: American Samoa Community College

ASDOE: American Samoa Department of Education

ASIC: American Samoa Interagency Council

ASL: American Sign Language

CPS: Child Protective Agency

CSN: Children with Special Needs

DD: Developmental Disabilities

DHSS: Department of Human Social Services

DOH: Department of Health

EOB: Executive Office Building

H.H: Hard of hearing

MCH: Maternal and Child Health

P&A: Office of Protection & Advocacy

SpEd: Special Education

VOCA: Victims of Crime Advocacy

UCEDD: University Center of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities