



# UCEDD *it!*

## AMERICAN SAMOA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)

#### How is autism diagnosed?

- No babbling or pointing by age 1
- No single words by 16 months
- No response to name
- Loss of language and social skills
- No smiling or social responsiveness
- Poor eye contact

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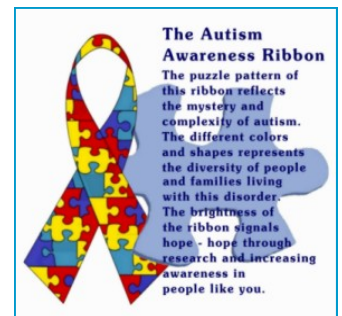
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## AUTISM AWARENESS

By: Lia Pelenato

April was Autism Awareness month. 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 (ASD) with the other two being Asperger syndrome and Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS). Autism is a wide-spectrum disorder which means

no two people with autism will have exactly the same symptoms. Children and individuals who are autistic do not interact differently to how the rest of society interacts. A person with autism will find it hard to understand the feelings of other people. Their ability to empathize with others is much weaker than most people. Also, many children with autism do not like cuddling or being touched like other children. However, not all children with autism are the same. It is UCEDD’s hope and goal that individuals and communi-



ties have a greater understanding of autism through outreach, education, and support. Today, research is ongoing to better understand the behavioral, biological, genetic and neurological basis of Autism and to develop appropriate treatments for individuals with it.

## CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AWARENESS

By: Lia Pelenato

April was also Child Abuse Prevention Awareness month. Increasing public awareness of the need to ensure the safety and welfare of our children is highly important. Children with special needs are more likely to be targeted and have become victims of child abuse. Prevention is the best hope for reducing child abuse and neglect, and improving the lives of children and families. Preventing child abuse and strengthening families requires a shared commit-

ment of individuals and organizations in our local government and communities. Together, we can make a major impact on the lives of our children while fighting to ensure that our local kids are never

abused physically, verbally, sexually, and mentally. Child abuse leaves more than just bruises. Long after children have recovered from results of abuse, they suffer from emotional and psychological trauma that can last the rest of their lives. American Samoa’s local government agencies and non-profit organizations stand together to support and promote this awareness for the safety of our children.





Brown paper bags with student's messages being used at KS Mart for local shoppers.

## “BAG ART” at KS Mart

By: Lia Pelenato

This month, students from ECE Tafuna, Part C program, Lupelele and Tafuna Elementary participated in the “Bag Art” activity to promote Autism and Child Abuse Prevention awareness. The ASCC University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) program hosted the “Bag Art” activity in which students utilize brown paper bags and crayons to draw or write messages. This activity will allow our local children to express how they feel about

child abuse. The Autism activity will promote early identification of signs and symptoms on one side, with children’s artwork on the other side of the brown bags. The students will be allowed to draw art or write an expression on the brown bags promoting awareness. As part of our activity, we partnered with KS Mart in Ili’ili to distribute the children’s artwork bags for shoppers. As people shop, their grocery bags will have Child Abuse and Autism awareness on each bag pro-



moted by local children. This is an effort in which our community will work

together in promoting awareness for our young children. A total of 1,200 brown paper bags with messages were distributed by KS Mart in the week of April 12-15, 2011 for local shoppers.

## “TAKE BACK THE NIGHT”

By: Lia Pelenato



April was also Sexual Assault Awareness month. Women and young girls with disabilities are highly targeted to be abused and/or assaulted. In the hope to support and promote awareness on island, ASCC University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) held a candle light event entitled “Take Back the Night” for women on

island. This activity allowed our local women to demonstrate against sexual assault awareness, as no woman should fear the dark. This was also enabled victims and/or survivors to speak out, stand up, and seek support services, as well as enhance networking and educate our young women about sexual assault and the services available locally. At

6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 12, participants lined up on the roadside with candles at Su’igaula Utulei Beach, sending out a message to our local women and young girls that no one should suffer alone.



## COLEMAN “BALLOON LAUNCH”

By: Ernie Seiuli



Coleman students and teachers lining up to launch Balloons

April is National Abuse Prevention Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect and create strong community support for children and families. The University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), partnered with Child Protective Services (CPS) at the Department of Human Social Services (DHSS) to host the Child Abuse “Balloon Launch” activity at Coleman Elementary School on April 14th,

2011. Representative Va’amua Sesepasara was the main speaker, and delivered an effective message to young students about Child Abuse and neglect. Ms. Celestine Nix also delivered a presentation to students on how to open up and communicate if they’re being either sexual or physically abused by anyone. The event concluded with the students releasing the balloons to symbolize the releasing of any frustration of reporting and acknowledging any form of abuse.

This was also to inform our community of the effort to prevent child abuse. Representative Va’amua and a Pago student ended the event by cutting the “Prevent Child Abuse” cake, which was shared with everyone in attendance before the launch closed with a song and prayer.



## EVACUATING STUDENTS WEBINAR By: Ernie Seiuli



“Evacuation of Students with and without Access and Functional

Needs” was the main topic discussed during the webinar that was held on April 25th, 2011. Mrs. Marcie Roth, Director for FEMA Special Needs population

collaborated with the Office of Disability Integration and Coordination to provide guidance, tools, methods and strategies to integrate and coordinate emergency management inclusive of individuals with developmental disabilities (DD) with access and functional needs when a disaster strikes. Also assisting on this webinar was Mr. Richard Devylder, a senior advisor for Accessible Transportation of the

U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of the Secretary. This webinar stressed the importance of having available transportation accessible for students and people with disabilities during evacuation. It is vital that individuals with DD be evacuated with their wheelchair and/or durable medical assistance as this is part of the individuals’ identity, independence, mobility and means of support.



Image of an evacuation site during times of a disaster

## 2011 PAC RIM CONFERENCE By: Lia Pelenato

The Pacific Rim International Conference on Disabilities has been widely recognized over the past 25 years as one of the most diverse gatherings in the world. This event encourages and respects voices from “diverse” perspective across numerous areas. Each year the conference hews to its traditional areas which have bred much of the

interdisciplinary research and educational advances of the past decades. ASCC University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) Director Ms. Tafaimamao Tua-Tupuola attended and presented at the Pac Rim 2011. Ms. Tua-Tupuola presented on “Navigating the cultural landscape in American Samoa” which is about self de-

termination of individuals with DD. It is the belief that individuals with DD have the right and ability to choose and control their own quality of life, their own goals and dreams, and what services they need to obtain them. This is where a full life comes in and it makes all the difference for individuals with DD and their families

*“Every child is gifted. They just unwrap their packages at different times.”*

*~Unknown*

## FYI: DID YOU KNOW?

Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) gave the keynote address last week at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Corporate Disability Employment Summit. A longtime champion for people with disabilities, Harkin sponsored the Americans with Disabilities Act, and as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and

Pensions, he recently held a hearing to identify barriers to employment for people with intellectual disabilities and strategies that have successfully improved employment opportunities. Today, he sounded the alarm on a disturbing trend: more than two thirds of Americans with disabilities are without a job, and adults with dis-

abilities are leaving the labor force during this recession at more than 10 times the rate of adults without disabilities. Harkin called on the CEOs and business owners in the audience to join him in his goal of increasing the number of disabled Americans in the workforce from 4.9 million today to 6 million in 2015.



A photo of Senator Tom Harkin (D) from Iowa State



*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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**ACRONYMS/MEANINGS**

- ADA:** Americans with Disability Act
- ASCC:** American Samoa Community College
- ASD:** Autism Spectrum Disorder
- CPS:** Child Protection Services
- DD:** Developmental Disabilities
- DHSS:** Department of Human & Social Services
- D-IA:** Democratic party—Iowa
- PDDNOS:** Pervasive Development Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified
- UCEDD:** University Center of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities

*Please consider our environment before printing, keep it GREEN!*

**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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