



# UCEDD *it!*

## AMERICAN SAMOA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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

### DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH

By: Lia Pelenato



March is Developmental Disability awareness month and this year's theme is entitled **"Captive Inclusion."** This theme collectively sums up the efforts to promote and include all individuals with DD in all that happens within our communities. Each individual with DD has a talent and/or gift that could be used to help others and can also motivate other individuals with DD to step up and participate in what is happening in our communities. Here are ways we can help promote and support our people with DD:

**The person comes first**  
**"People-first Language":**  
When speaking or writing about an individual with DD, it is important to put the person first, to focus on the person, not the disability and it is important to use words that reflect individuality, equality and dignity. For example: The individual who is blind, the child who is deaf and so on.

**Communicate with respect and courtesy:** When speaking to a person with a DD, talk directly to the person, not his or her companion.

**Wait for Permission:** If you believe that an individual with a DD needs assistance, go ahead and offer the assistance, but wait for your offer to be accepted before you try to help.

**Be respectful:** If you wish to get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap the person gently on the shoulder or arm. Look directly at the person, and speak clearly in a normal tone of voice.

**Wheelchair etiquette:** If you are having a conversation with a person who uses a wheelchair, if at all possible put yourself at the person's eye level. Never lean on or touch a person's wheelchair or any other assistive device. A person's assistive device is part of the person's personal space.

**Listen, don't pretend:** If the

person with DD has a speech impairment and you are having difficulty understanding what he or she is saying, ask the individual to repeat, rather than pretending to understand.

We need to take time not only this month but every month to reflect on how we as a human race and as a nation, recognize, celebrate, and rely on the contributions that are made by all our citizens, including people with developmental disabilities, so that we can build strong communities, a robust economy, and a bright future for local community and our island.

Take this time to cultivate inclusion. Defining people only by their dis-



abilities can be hurtful and limiting. See others for who they really are and learn about their true character as an individual.

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**Top:** Matafao VP Coffin, Rep. Amituana'i, UCEDD Director Tupuola, Deaf student Aegean Sanitoa  
**Bottom:** Matafao students singing during Balloon launch event

## MATAFAO "BALLOON LAUNCH" By: Lia Pelenato

March is Developmental Disability awareness month and this year, the University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) hosted an event with Matafao Elementary School in Faga'alu. On the morning of Thursday, March 24th, Matafao students gathered under a tent filled with balloons, anchored with personal messages from students. Each student from level one through six wrote messages in regards to labels that are being used against

children and individuals with developmental disabilities (DD). Representative Vailoata Amituana'i was in attendance and made special remarks about how we are all the same and how even if you have a disability, you are still able to learn and should be treated fairly. Deaf students from Matafao performed a song "Tasi le fatu" in the ASL language while all the students and those in attendance were singing along. The event ended with the students releasing the balloons to



symbolize the release of labeling children and individuals with DD in our communities and our home island. Rep. Amituana'i and a Matafao student with DD ended the event with cutting the DD Cake, which they shared with everyone in attendance.

*The only disability  
in life is a bad  
attitude.*

~ Scott Hamilton



By: Ernie Seiuli

UCEDD Director Ms. Tafa Tua-Tupuola and UCEDD interdisciplinary Trainer Ernie Seiuli went on air on March 10, 2011 during the KHJ 93.1 morning show, advocating for Developmental Disabilities Awareness. Their purpose was to promote the month of March being declared by the Acting Governor of American Samoa, Hon. Faoa A. Sunia as a "Developmental Disability Awareness Month."

They disseminated information on how to advocate in collaboration with and on behalf of people with developmental disabilities (DD). As individuals with DD seek to further their independence, productivity, and integration, they would need the support of our local agencies. Their second purpose was to discuss the use of "People First Language" for individuals with developmental disabilities. We all

understand that language is a reflection of how people see each other. That's why the words we use can hurt. It's also why we should choose language which reflects the dignity of people with disabilities—words that put the person first, rather than the disability. *For example:* We should use "people with disability" instead of "the handicapped" or "the disabled".

## LE MANAIA SHELTER TRAINING By: Lia Pelenato



**DHSS VOCA program & Shelter staff members after the training**

In support of the Developmental Disability (DD) Awareness Month, University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disability (UCEDD) trainer Paulia Pelenato hosted a training on people-first language, accommodation, considera-

tions during interviews, and working with individuals with DD for the staff of the Victims of Crime Advocacy (VOCA) and Le Manaia shelter under the Department of Human & Social Services (DHSS). This training was held Monday, March 28th,

with more than 15 staff attending. Le Manaia shelter Supervisor Mrs. Sandra Herrera organized this training with UCEDD for the benefit of those on her staff who work with children, women and individuals with DD who are victims.

## Multidisciplinary Response Team By: Lia Pelenato

The American Samoa Multidisciplinary Response Team (MDRT) is made up of various local government agencies and non-profit organizations that have recently come together to serve victims of violence. The MDRT chairperson is Assistant Attorney General Ms. Mitzie Jessop-Folau from the Attorney General's Office, and the organization includes representatives from the Department of Human & Social Services, LBJ Social Services, De-

partment of Public Safety, Department of Education, ASCC-UCEDD, Department of Homeland Security, Alliance for Strengthening Families, TAOA, Attorney General's Office and American Samoa's Coalition against Domestic and Sexual Violence. This group of professionals from various organizations and agencies works in a coordinated and collaborative manner to ensure an effective response to cases of child, do-

mestic and sexual violence. The MDRT meets once a month and is in the process of introducing a child abuse bill to the House of Representatives in the next session. This bill would help Prosecutors to put offenders behind bars and protect the rights of the victims. The next MDRT meeting is scheduled for May 4, 2011 at Fagatogo McDonalds at 2 p.m. For more details please contact Ms. Mitzie JessopFolau or Mrs. Fa'aalu Iuti.



Lupe Fiso, Lina Chang, Lia Pelenato, Mitzie Folau, and Fa'aalu Iuti members of the MDRT with Mrs. Chang, President of Samoa Victim Support

## FYI CORNER: DID YOU KNOW?

### Statement for Citizens with Disabilities

On April 13, 2011 United States President Mr. Barack Obama spoke of the need to reduce the nation's deficit while protecting the nation's most vulnerable citizens including those who live with developmental disabilities (DD). It is important that the White House and

Congress work together to develop a budget plan that will truly address our nation's needs while at the same time provide support through critical programs for individuals with developmental disabilities. The President has stated that he will not dismantle these pro-

grams or shift the burden to the states—many of which are dependent on federal support due to their own budget shortfalls. Additionally, the President specifically stated that he will not tell families with children who have developmental disabilities that they have to fend for themselves.

*“Individually,  
we are one drop.  
Together, we are  
an ocean”*

*~ Ryunosuke Satoro*

### AUCD Applications for Virtual Trainee

With Association of Universities on Disabilities member programs in every US State and territory, as well as internationally, its trainees exist all across the world. The AUCD Virtual

Trainee works to build a virtual network among these trainees. The Virtual Trainee works remotely from his/her home Center/Program for one academic year to build and enhance a network among

trainees at AUCD's UCEDD Centers and LEND Programs. The ideal candidate will be a second-year trainee in the 2011-2012 year. For more information, please visit:

<https://www.aucd.org/>





*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
- AUCD: Association of University Centers on Disabilities
- CPS: Child Protection Services
- DD: Developmental Disabilities
- DHSS: Department of Human & Social Services
- MDRT: Multidisciplinary Response Team
- UCEDD: University Center of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities
- VOCA: Victims of Crime Advocacy

*Please consider our environment before printing.*

**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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