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## DOE Culminates First Cycle of the Mental Health Community Outreach Program

*"To help our children with their mental and emotional health, it must be a collaborative effort between the Government, Churches, Villages, Leaders, and the Youth. We are all responsible for this task."*



The Department of Education held a Culminating Event to conclude the first cycle of the Mental Health Community Outreach Program on Saturday, December 17, 2022 at the Rex H. Lee Auditorium in Utulei. The auditorium was filled with leaders, clergymen, DOE staff, and youth from five different villages.

Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga conveyed an important message to families and leaders of the community in his remarks:

There are two fundamental pillars that I believe us parents and family leaders must uphold for our children if we wish to prepare them for the future.

The first, a familial relationship with God. How are you incorporating the presence of God in your family? How many can say they still have family prayer in the evening? Do you exemplify God's teachings so that your family may come to know Him through you? Do children understand the importance of family structure?

One effective tradition our forefathers created was a village curfew or *Sā* to designate a time where the families return to their homes to pray together and fellowship. We continue to have the designated curfews within the village, however it is no longer fulfilling its purpose within the homes. Do we still use this to our advantage as parents to bring our children together? On the contrary, the *Sā* is being used to show off our *Lotonuu*. I highly encourage our community leaders and parents to revisit the purpose of the *Sā*. This important time should be used to teach our children familial values, to pour into them knowledge and wisdom, and check on their emotional health.

The second pillar is the Samoan Culture. Are we teaching our children the Samoan way of life and the values they withhold? The world is advancing at a fast pace and we need to prepare our youth for what is to come by making sure they are rooted properly. How we nurture our children when they are young determines the outcome of when they grow older.

In the Samoan household parents lead by example, the father and mother are their first role models. Your roles in the home, work, your *tautua* in the village and church, and how you prioritize your family contribute to the mental and emotional stability of your children. The environment we parents and household leaders provide them is a factor in the decisions they make and what their coping mechanisms will be.

In conclusion, we are all responsible for the task of helping our children with their mental and emotional health, however, I suggest it'd be done early on in a child's life. As the saying of old goes, it takes a village to raise a child. In this new age, it must be a collaborative effort between the Government, Churches, Villages, Leaders, Parents and the Youth. I commend you all for giving our children the love and support they need. Thank you for all that you do. Soifua.

DOE Director Talauega S. Asaeli emphasized the importance of Student Emotional Learning this school year by integrating learning activities to help develop students' social, emotional and positive relationship skills. The Guidance and Counseling division teamed up with DOE stakeholders to conduct a five week Mental Health Outreach in the community concentrating on five issues commonly inflicting the youth of American Samoa: suicide, bullying, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse.

The five village sites consisted of the following Youth groups:

**1. Fagaitua Site:**

- a. CCCAS Youth
- b. Catholic Youth

- c. Methodist Youth
- d. Assembly of God Youth
- 2. Fagaloa Site:**
  - a. CCCAS Fagaalu Youth
  - b. CCCAS Gataivai Youth
  - c. CCCAS Utulei Youth
- 3. Nuuuli Site:**
  - a. CCCAS Nuuuli Youth
  - b. Catholic Youth
  - c. CCCAS Ma'ama'a Youth
  - d. Assembly of God Youth
  - e. Church of Christ Youth
- 4. Futiga Site:**
  - a. Methodist Youth
  - b. CCCAS Youth
  - c. Catholic Youth
- 5. Malaeloa Site:**
  - a. Methodist Youth
  - b. CCCAS Youth
  - c. Catholic Youth
  - d. Miracle Temple Youth

Each site group performed beautiful musicals, themed skits, and expressed their gratitude to DOE and their stakeholders for giving them the opportunity to learn more about mental health and emotional well being, and for providing new ways to overcome obstacles in life.

DOE will begin a new 5 week cycle in January 2023 in other village sites.









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