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“Advancing to Success” in Developmental Disabilities and Employment Awareness Month (DDEAM)

(CNMI Disability Network Partners) – The CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities (CDD) and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), in collaboration the CNMI Disability Network Partners (DNP), coordinated training conferences on Rota, Tinian, and Saipan last month, in recognition of Developmental Disabilities and Employment Awareness Month (DDEAM).

DDEAM kicked off with a proclamation ceremony at the Office of the Governor on March 3,

2018. During the proclamation, Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Victor B. Hocog pointed out that “the CNMI is stronger when people of all abilities are included in community life and in the workplace. When people with developmental and other disabilities are included in the workforce, they have the opportunity to earn a competitive wage and to work as part of a team...and are more likely to give back to their communities.”

First Lady Diann Tudela Torres was the keynote speaker at the DDEAM conferences, having worked 11

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years with students with special needs at PSS, and having been very active and passionate about the transition of these students into college and the workforce. The conferences were attended by over 100 employers and job-seekers, and were held at the NMC Rota Campus on March 7th, the NMC Tinian Campus on March 14th, and the Fiesta Resort Saipan on March 21st.

In her keynote address, the First Lady said, “We know that students with disabilities often leave school early, and the few that make it to graduation end up staying at home. This means that most end up lacking the qualifications and skills needed to be workforce ready; and in higher education there is a persisting gap between students with and without disabilities. We should leave no one behind, and we should continue to break down the barriers that divide our communities.”

The goal of the conferences was to build capacity on disability awareness with our local employers, as well as to educate

job-seekers with disabilities on their rights and responsibilities. With the theme of “Advancing to Success,” presentations at the conferences included: “Disability Basics” presented by the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) at the Northern Marianas College (NMC); “Navigating the DOL/WIA System” presented by the Department of Labor’s (DOL) Workforce Investment Agency (WIA); “Assistive Technology and the Workplace” presented by the Assistive Technology Program (ATP) at the CDD, “Dress for Success/Mock Interviews” and “Resume Writing” presented by the Special Education Office at the Public School System (PSS).

In addition to the informative presentations mentioned above, the conferences also included panel discussions with members of the CNMI DNP on the topic of “Reasonable Accommodations.” During the conference, certain individuals were acknowledged and

presented with certificates of appreciation for their accomplishments in the CNMI’s disability community. Those in attendance were also given the opportunity to comment on the updates/modifications to the CNMI Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified State Plan. WIOA Core Partners include OVR, WIA, and the Adult Basic Education Program at NMC.

According to data from the DDEAM Conference Evaluations, over 80% of the employers who attended were satisfied with the effort of the CNMI DNP in helping to increase employers’ knowledge about disabilities employment issues; and 100% of those surveyed said the information presented was very useful.

Other disabilities-related events and activities included a special White Mass for People with Disabilities, Mental Health First Aid Certification Training, and Easter Egg Hunts for children with special needs.

Center for Living Independently

There are so many new and exciting things going on at The Center for Independently (CLI). Our consumers have the opportunity to learn, experience and try new things. This would not be possible without the help and support from our friends, neighbors and DNP cohorts.. We are forever grateful to all of you! We would like share some of our many fun moments!

Exciting Things...



Here we are learning how to make homemade pizza from scratch. We baked them in our new gas oven!



CLI received this brand new T.V. courtesy of T Galleria. Thank you!



Cooking some goodness using our new gas stove! Thank you to T Galleria!



Having a blast making Easter cards! Thank you Maureen Sebangiol for teaching us. We had so much fun!



We are incredibly grateful for our new furniture. Thank you to Bob Jones and Associates for the beautiful and comfortable furniture! (LEFT)

Thank you to Hyatt Regency Saipan for your very generous donation. The consumers at staff at CLI gratefully appreciate your donation! (RIGHT)



Thank you!

OVR Counselors Honored during DDEAM



Rehabilitation counselors Jane Tudela, Rose Ichiuo, and Shana Iguel including counselor aide Matilde Selepeo were recognized during the Developmental Disabilities and Employment Awareness Month “Advancing to Success” Conference held at the Fiesta Resort on March 21, 2018.

On March 22, 2018, U.S. Congress approved a resolution honoring rehabilitation counselors on a day known as “National Rehabilitation Counselors Appreciation Day.”

In part, the resolution states that “rehabilitation counselors support individuals with disabilities by conducting assessments; providing counseling; supporting families; and assisting in the development of individualized plans for employment for individuals with disabilities who are in need of rehabilitation.”

The resolution in its concluding statement “commends rehabilitation counselors for their dedication and hard work in providing counseling to individuals with disabilities who are in need of rehabilitation.”



In a framed certificate of appreciation on behalf of the CNMI Disability Network Partners, Tudela, Ichiuo, Iguel, and Selepeo were recognized for their “hard work and dedication to ensuring the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce.”



The newest addition to OVR is counselor aide Barbara P. Cabrera, who is no stranger to the agency as she is a returning staffer after a couple of years hiatus. Welcome back to OVR, Barb!

DDEAM CONFERENCE 2018

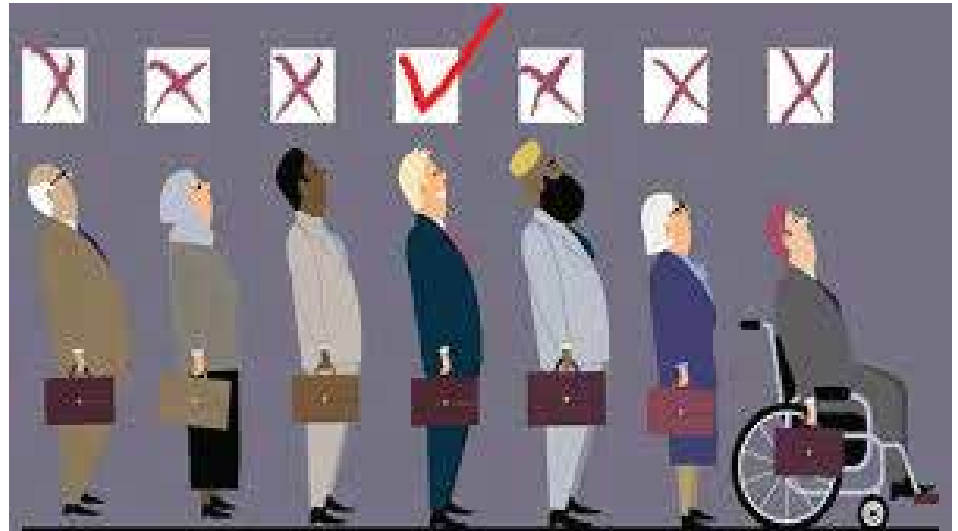


Employment Discrimination on the Basis of Disability

By: Jim Rayphand

[Note: The bulk of following text is copied from an article (author unclear) received via a company called My Employment Options – contact information is included at the end.]

Some would be surprised to learn about the real-life challenges people with disabilities face in trying to get a job. Certainly the disabilities, in some cases, make it difficult to attain particular jobs – a person who is blind is not likely going to get a job as a bus driver or someone who uses a wheelchair isn't likely to make it in the NBA – but in many cases the barriers to employment for people with disabilities come about as a result of a lack of understanding or awareness about disability-rights by employers and the job hunters themselves.



Even though the civil rights protection covered by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other employment-related laws have been around for decades, many employers and job hunters with disabilities still do not really understand how such laws impact them.

Did you know, for instance, that it is illegal for employers to discriminate because of a person's race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age or disability when hiring? Some examples of illegal questions that may be asked during an interview which could be used to discriminate include:

What is your race? / What is your age? / What is your religious background? / Do you have a back injury? / Have you ever been on Workers' Compensation? / Are you disabled/do you have a disability? / Do you take any medications? / How many sick days did you take last year? / How long have you had your disability?

For emphasis, employers may not ask you questions

about your disability, but not all employers know or follow the law. So, if a potential employer “accidentally” asks an illegal question in a job interview, one of the best ways to protect yourself against discrimination is to always address the concern, not the question.

Disability-related questions in an interview may reflect concerns or negative stereotypes regarding hiring people with disabilities, such as their being too difficult or costly to accommodate, driving up health insurance costs, re-injuring themselves on the job, being frequently absent due to their disability or being a danger to themselves or others.

In addressing an interviewer's concerns, not his or her questions, your responses may sound something like this: “I understand that you might have concerns, but I had a great attendance record at my past job,” “I might need a little help with ___. Would that be a problem?” or “I am able to perform all of the essential duties of this job.” Another approach to try is, “I have had this disability my whole life and I have

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individual and group efforts, people are becoming free to live without fear, practice their religions, vote, travel and work without imposed barriers due to race, sex, nationality, sexual preference, age or physical and mental disabilities.

It is important that you stand up for your rights as a person with many different abilities and assets. Discrimination laws can take many years and much individual effort before they are truly accepted. If getting a job is on your list of resolutions, do not let discrimination get in the way!

For more information regarding employment discrimination and/or filing a complaint with the **Equal Employment Commission**, please contact the **NMPASI office** at (670) 235-7273/4 [voice] / 235-7275 [fax] / 235-7278 [tty] or via the internet at www.nmpasi.org.

Additionally for answers to questions about employment-related protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act, call the **Department of Justice ADA Information Line** at 1-800-514-0301 (800-514-0383 TTY). ADA specialists are available Monday- Friday from 9:30 AM-5:30 PM Eastern, except on Thursday when the hours are 12:30 – 5:30 PM.

For more information about My Employment Options: Visit the company's website at www.MyEmploymentOptions.com.



CNMI Disability Sports Festival

"Opportunities for All"

July 5-8, 2018

Sports venues will be at Marianas High School gym and facilities.

Come out and learn about exciting new sports or modifications and adaptations to some of your favorite sports. The Disability Sports Fest is an opportunity for students and members of our community with physical and/or mental disabilities to learn about and participate in four exciting sporting events.

Our sports for this inaugural event include:

- ATHLETICS:** The sport offers a wide range of competitions and events, like Track (Sprint, middle distance, long distance, and relay races), and Field events (shot put, Javelin, long jump).
- BOCCE:** The basic principal of the sport is to roll a ball closest to a target ball, the palina or jack. This sport provides athletes an opportunity to have social contact, develop physically and gain confidence.
- BOCCIA:** The adaptive form of Bocce, it is a game of strategy and accuracy, like Bocce, that is played on a flat, smooth surface that is designed for people with impairments that affect motor skills and mobility.
- ADAPTIVE SOFTBALL:** A sport designed for athletes with spinal cord injuries and lower extremity impairments. Rules and play area are modified to allow easy maneuverability in a wheelchair to keep the fast pace of softball. The game are played on hard surfaces, and uses accommodated equipment to provide access to more individuals.
- SITTING / PARAVOLLEYBALL:** A team sport in which two teams of six players play on a size reduced court with a lowered net while sitting.

Other events will include **OUTRIGGER PADDLING** and **HYDRO THERAPY**. These events will provide additional opportunities for athletes to enjoy socializing and sport as leisure.

Come & Join

For more information about the Disability Sports Fest or to Register to participate, contact Nick Gross at nick.gross@cnmipss.org
To volunteer for the event, please contact Greg Borja at gborja@nmpasi.org

Participants are limited. Register today to reserve your place in the first CNMI Disability Sports Festival!

Schedule of EVENTS

JULY 5:
1:00pm-5:00pm:
Athletes arrive from Tinian and Rota
5:00pm-8:00pm:
Welcoming Ceremony (PIC)

JULY 6:
9:00am - 9:30am
Opening Ceremony
Session Rotation (a.m.)
9:30am - 12:10pm
Session Rotation (p.m.)
1:50pm- 4:30

JULY 7:
Open Sessions
9:00am-12:00pm:
1:30pm-5:00pm:
Waterpark Hydro Therapy (PIC)
5:00pm-8:00pm:
Closing Ceremony and Dinner (PIC)

JULY 8:
8:00am-12:00pm:
Tinian and Rota Athletes Depart



May 21, 2018 – DFEMS Firefighters conducted Adult & Infant CPR and AED certification courses for NMPASI Staff in conjunction with May as EMS awareness month.



May 22, 2018 – Collaborating partners gather at NMPASI conference room for their weekly planning meeting for upcoming Disability Sports Fest (July 6 – 8, 2018)



May 23, 2018 – Members of the State Behavior Health Planning Council gather at NMPASI Conference Room for a Planning Council 101 training.

Pacific Basin UCEDD Director from UH Manoa's Center on Disability Studies, Dr. Kiriko Takahashi (seated right), meets with NMC President, Dr. Carmen Fernandez (seated left); Interim Vice President of Learning and Student Success, Cynthia Deleon Guerrero (standing left); and Interim Director for the NMC University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Jennifer-Eilleen Castro (standing right); on disability matters and concerns in the CNMI.



Dr. Takahashi also met with NMPASI Director James Rayphand, and his staff, and commended the CNMI's Disability Network Partners (DNP) for their successful collaborations to support individuals with disabilities, and to promote disability awareness. She also expressed her support for the Lady Diann Torres Foundation's (LDTF) current collaboration with the DNP toward the creation of a One-stop Disability Center on Saipan, a resource and training center she believes will greatly benefit the community.

Agency UPDATES



SYSTEMS OF CARE

CLEO NENING is the contact person for the Disability Network Partners.

JENNIFER-EILLEN E. CASTRO is the new UCEDD Interim Director. Please refer any UCEDD-related matters to her. The contact information for our office is: Telephone (670) 234-5498 ext. 6801/6808, and email cnmi.ucedd@marianas.edu.

SYSTEMS OF CARE office has moved to San Antonio, next to the basketball court and there telephone number is (670) 664-4607. The Program Manager is VINA AYUYU.