



Providing Career Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

According to the Office on Disability Employment Policy, about 44% of individuals with disabilities between ages 16-64 nation-wide are unemployed. Many of these individuals wish to work and have the ability and ambition to work, but have had limited opportunities as many potential employers assume that people with disabilities do not make good employees. Research has shown that this is simply not true, and is *definitely* not true in the case of two Hilton workers.

Juanilo Bermudez and Sherwin Munoz are both long time employees of the Hilton Guam Resort and Spa. They are skilled workers who are good at what they do. Over the years, because of their dedication, work ethic, and skills, they have received well-deserved promotions. They are obviously highly valued members of the Hilton team and they love their jobs. When they started out, however, they both approached their initial employment with more than the usual first-time on-the-job jitters. This is because they both have a disability.

Bermudez, 56, who is known to his colleagues as "Nilo," first came to Guam in 1985 from the Philippines for a visit with his sister, leaving behind a job that paid him the equivalent of \$20 a month. His sister introduced him to Father Marcial, a counselor with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, who noticed his limp, which was a result of polio that he had as a child. It was Fr. Marcial who assisted Bermudez in getting placed as a linen runner at the Hilton for a trial period of employment where he received training and a \$10 a day stipend for food. This kind of arrangement typically lasted for three months during which it was determined whether the placement was a "good fit." In Bermudez' case, the placement lasted for only two months because the Hilton decided to hire him as a regular employee. Twenty-two years later, he is still there, but now as the administrative assistant in the Housekeeping Department.

Bermudez beams when he talks about his employer. "Hilton has been very supportive with their employees. They have provided me many opportunities. From a linen runner, where I received an award as "Courtesy Employee of the Year" in 1985, I've received promotions to a secretary, and administrative clerk positions. Their in-



Juanilo "Nilo" Bermudez, Housekeeping Department administrative assistant, juggles the work schedules of over 100 employees from his office in the basement of the Hilton Guam Resort & Spa.



Sherwin Munoz shows his work as a cook in the Food Service Department of the Hilton Guam Resort & Spa.

house training programs have been very good. Before, I didn't know anything about computers, but they sent me to training and now I've been promoted.

Bermudez' supervisor, Patty Perez, sings praise for his job performance. "He is responsible for all the administrative duties for the department, with probably the most difficult part being the scheduling and tracking of 110 employees. He does a great job! I don't know what we'd do without him."

Even with all the challenges that he has to face, Bermudez, who is happily married with a high school-aged daughter, says that what he likes most about his job is that "people here appreciate what I'm doing. I feel very blessed to be employed by the Hilton."

Munoz, 30, a 12-year employee at the hotel who got married two years ago, has a similar story. Born with a significant hearing loss in the

Cochlear Implants Now An Option For Guam Residents

Guam residents with significant hearing loss have something to celebrate: the option of receiving new technology to help them hear. Thanks to University professor Dr. Richard W. Fee and his international contacts, cochlear implants will soon be available for those who meet certain qualifications. Three individuals have already met the criteria to receive the first implants, which are scheduled to take place this summer.

What is a Cochlear Implant?

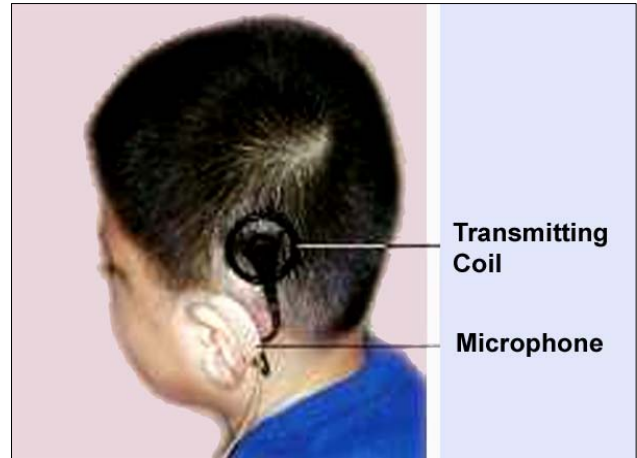
It is an assistive technology device that is used to help people who are deaf to hear.

How is it used?

One part of the device is surgically placed under the skin, behind the ear. Another part is snapped on to the device on the outside of the skin. The device is activated with the assistance of an audiologist and speech therapist.

How can I find out more about Cochlear Implants on Guam?

Contact Dr. Richard W. Fee at the University of Guam at 735-2421.



This young man uses a Cochlear Implant.

Transit Talk....Did you Know?...

We all know that transit is a shared ride service, but sometimes riders forget that what they do affects other riders. For instance, **what happens when a rider decides not to take their scheduled ride and fails to cancel their reservation?**

Travel time is being wasted that can be used by someone else. A cancellation could save the driver travel time and the space available could be used to assist other drivers or passengers. It also helps the drivers stay on schedule, meaning that other passengers will be picked up on time.

Did you know that the practice of not canceling your ride at least one hour before your pickup is considered a "no show?" Did you know that "no shows" can jeopardize your future service?

Transit rules and Regulations state that a passenger who is a "no show" three (3) times in a month may be subject to suspension of public transit service at the discretion of the Director of Department of Administration-Division of Public Transit. You must first receive a written warning, but first suspensions can be up to 30 days!

So as a courtesy to all the other riders (and the drivers too!), remember to cancel those rides when you first know your travel plans have changed. Let's work together to make everyone's ride better!

Q: If I am unable to cancel my ride, can someone do it for me?

A: Yes. But only if you cannot do this because of your disability, not because of convenience. Any person responsible for the cardholder or a sponsoring agency, may do so on behalf of the cardholder by

providing the trip information and the Special Fare Card number. Fax requests are accepted, provided the person making the request has a contact number.

Q: Do I need to renew my transit ID card?

A: Yes. Emeline Pereira, Guam Transit Ombudsman, is updating the listing to determine who is traveling with expired Special Fare ID cards. Don't get caught with an outdated card, because you may find yourself having to pay the regular fare of \$1 per trip! Only valid card holders qualify for special fares.



Transit drivers underwent training in January on the proper ways to provide securement for wheelchair users.

Opening Doors

by Cecilia "Lee" Perez



For most people, opening a door is one of the easier tasks in life. Doors bring us into many different places: homes, offices, churches, shops, movie theatres, and even bathrooms. Not so for a person with a disability that prevents them from opening a simple door.

This is the first in a series of articles that will visit the issue of accessibility throughout the island. Over the coming weeks we will visit various places, stores, libraries, transit stops, hotels and even community centers and parks. Come with us and see how the world is for persons with disabilities.

We will talk to different people just like you who have places to go, people to see, and things to do.

We will talk to people just like you who have to go to different places everyday to go about the business and pleasures of life. We will introduce you to the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 and how it provides the framework of accessibility for individuals with disabilities in all realms of life.

We will talk to persons with different types of disabilities to give a fuller view of the challenges unique to each person and how they meet these challenges.

Sometimes barriers are physical, sometimes technical, at other times needing a slight behavior or attitude modification. If we all work together we can overcome barriers and open doors. Opening doors is possible.

Where Eagles Dare: Tips for Travel



Dare to dream and follow your dreams to far away places. Summer is coming up quickly and this is the time many island residents take to the skies. Unfortunately, for those of us with disabilities, we have more to consider than just the cost of plane fare or where to travel.

What may seem simple to others may be a significant obstacle to a person with a disability. Will I have the mobility to get to the airport and move about within the facilities? Will I be able to find my gate within the allotted time? How will I retrieve my bags from the baggage area? Will I be able to find and access bathrooms in the airport or on the plane? How will I fill in the necessary forms during the flight?

Don't let these travel worries stop you from taking your trip. Each of us have concerns specific to our disability. Take the time to anticipate and identify what kind of assistance you might need while traveling. If you are unsure, talk candidly with an airline representative to let them know what your concerns are. Talk with friends and family members who have traveled and may be able to give you an idea of what to expect getting to and from, and while at the airport. Be your best advocate while making arrangements and while traveling. Be as specific as possible in your requests.

Hotels in most major cities have rooms that are accessible. Occasionally, they will have rooms available that are near the check-in counter. Again, make your needs known to the hotel reservation representative. They will be a good point of contact for ground transportation and tour guides that may cater to your specific needs.

The internet is a good source of information on accessible travel. There are many companies that arrange tours specifically geared to persons with disabilities. Take the time to research to find the best travel itinerary and accommodations available for you.

Travel Tips

- Identify yourself as a person needing assistance when making plane reservations.
- Request that there be a note of your needs in your electronic record.
- Take additional time to check in at the airline counter if you need personal assistance.
- Request that airline personnel escort you through security and to your gate.
- Make sure you receive information on where you can call for assistance if you are left alone or waiting for connecting flights.



Career Opportunities

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Philippines, educational opportunities were limited for him until he arrived in Guam in his early teens. It was while he was a student in the Deaf Program in the vocational high school at Guam Community College that he began exploring job possibilities with their work experience program. He was placed at the Hilton after a couple of other job assignments. A job coach helped him initially, but was soon faded out after a short time on the job. He then became a regular employee and following stints in the salad preparation station, he was promoted to short order cook and is now in a cook position.

Through the assistance of a sign language interpreter, Munoz expressed a high level of job satisfaction. He said, "When I first worked at the Hilton, I just wanted to be paid. But now, I am happy. I like everything. I have no worries about cooking. I really like the Christmas benefits!" Co-workers say he does his job well, is easy to work with, and although he uses sign language, they all know how to

communicate with him.

Based on the national data reported by the Office on Disability Employment Policy, the career opportunities provided to Bermudez and Munoz place them within the 56% of employees with disabilities contributing to the workforce. Their successful employment is an example of how employers, such as the Hilton Guam Resort and Spa, can provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to demonstrate their aptitude for work and to successfully contribute to the workforce. As expressed, Bermudez and Munoz both appreciate the opportunities provided to them by Hilton but it is also apparent that the appreciation is mutual given the dedication, work ethics, and skills that they both have demonstrated throughout their years contributing to the Hilton family.

This article also appears in the March issue of Guahan Magazine.



March is Disabilities Awareness Month!!!



Guam System for Assistive Technology (GSAT)

2007 Annual Activities

5K/1 Mile Walk, Wheel, Run Event

Saturday, April 14
Go time: 6:00 a.m.

13th Annual Assistive Technology Conference

Friday, April 20
&
Saturday, April 21

7:30 am — Registration
8am—9am — Commissioner's Forum
9am—12 Noon — Workshop Sessions

For more information

Call 735-2490 (v); 735-2491 (TDD); or
Email mterlaje@ite.net



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Comments may be sent to:

Guam CEDDERS

Office of Academic & Student Affairs

University of Guam, UOG Station

Mangilao, Guam 96923

Phone: 735-2480/1

Fax: 734-5709

TTY: 734-6531

Email: fejarang@ite.net

Guam DDC Executive Director: Manuel Cruz

GLS-DLC Executive Director: Daniel Sommerfleck, Esq.

Guam CEDDERS Director: Heidi San Nicolas, Ph.D.

Editor: Cecilia "Lee" Perez

Assistant Editor: Terrie Fejarang

Layout & Design: Margaret Johnson

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Alternative formats (e.g. Braille, large print, or audio tapes) of **I Liná'lá-ta** will be made available upon request. Please contact Margaret Johnson at 735-2477 (v), 735-6531 (TTY), or 734-5709 (fax) for more information.

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