

# I Liná' Iá-ta (Our Life)

A Newsletter For Individuals With Disabilities



## Governor Proclaims March as Developmental Disabilities Month

Acting Governor Michael W. Cruz, M.D. proclaimed March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month during a proclamation signing held at the Governor's Complex in Adelup on March 3. As stated in the Proclamation, "this year's theme, "Success! When Doors Open — We Succeed!" reflects the determination of our individuals with developmental disabilities to be active and productive members of our community."

Acting Governor Cruz urges the people of Guam to support the visions of self-determination, independence, productivity, integration and inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families into our island community.



Attending the signing ceremony were (seated L-R) Vangie Cepeda, Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority (GHURA), Dr. Heidi San Nicolas, Guam CEDDERS, Manuel Cruz, Guam Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC), Acting Governor Michael W. Cruz, Evelyn Duenas, & Benny Pinaula, GHURA. (Standing L-R) Tevid Davis, Department of Public Health & Social Services (DPHSS), Carol Cabiles, Guam Legal Services, Elisabeth Cruz, Community Integration, Office of the Governor, Julie Laurante, Department of Integrated Services for Individuals with Disabilities (DISID), Evelyn Manibusan, DISID, Lisa Ogo, Lou Bitanga, Catholic Social Services (CSS), Josephine Cortez, Lourdes San Nicolas, CSS, Christina Perez, DDC, Marie Libria, DDC. (Back Row) Mike Terlaje, Guam System for Assistive Technology (GSAT), & Allen Alexander, CSS.

## Tri-Agency Partners Sponsor Disability Community Conference & Exposition

Guam Legal Services, the Guam Developmental Disabilities Council, and the University of Guam CEDDERS combined efforts to host the 2008 Tri-Agency Disability Community Conference & Exposition held on March 8 at the Westin Resort Hotel. The Conference provided an array of sessions to bring information ranging from services currently available to efforts being taken to improve the quality of life for the community of individuals with disabilities and their families.

There were nine individual sessions held during the conference, with the largest number, three, devoted to transportation. These sessions included "Public Policy: Bill 203," "Self-Advocacy in the Guam Public Transportation System," and Accessibility on Public Roads." Lively discussions took place with consumers expressing their frustrations with the current systems. Numerous suggestions were made to improve the public transit and paratransit systems. Policymakers, including Senators Ben Pangelinan, Frank Ishizaki, Benjamin Cruz, Judy Won Pat, Tina Muna Barnes, as well as Department of Administration personnel were on hand to participate

and hear the valuable input.

Other sessions included "Parent Rights in Special Education," "Transitioning from Part C to Part B," "Success in Post Secondary Education at Guam Community College," "Organizing Non-Profits to Support Individuals with Disabilities," "Guam Positive Parents Together," and "Addressing Guam's Special Needs Population During Emergencies."



Senator Frank Ishizaki spoke with several members of the deaf community during the Tri-Agency Disability Community Conference & Exhibition. (L-R) Fred Castro, President of Guam Association for the Deaf, Eufrocino Porto, Bryan Euen, John Felipe, Senator Ishizaki, & Richie Abastas.

## Transit Talk

Your transit drivers, dispatchers, schedulers and managers beefed up their skills on how to safely secure your wheelchair on transit buses to ensure that you get a safe and secure public transit ride. Forty-nine of the fifty-five personnel who completed Wheelchair Securement refresher training in January 2008, then took a test to demonstrate their knowledge. Twenty-six percent tested out with excellent scores! If you see an improvement in their performance, let them know how much you appreciate the service.

You might also notice improvement in their understanding of disabilities and sensitivity to your issues, as fifty-one persons completed a Sensitivity Training session in February. Your drivers had the opportunity to step in some of your shoes by having to use wheelchairs, reachers, pens with adaptive grips, and blackout blinders during the training and session breaks. I think many of them now understand why it is necessary for many of their passengers to carry additional items to support their needs throughout the day.

Drivers also brought up some policies that need greater rider awareness. ***Did you know that you have to cover open wounds and sores before you can ride the bus?*** This regulation protects your driver and the other riders from being exposed to harmful germs that can be present in body fluids. Your driver has the right to deny you the ride if you do not meet this basic safety rule, so make sure that you

have clean bandages or coverings for any exposed wounds you may have.

Many of you now hold the new Paratransit ID card. Congratulations on keeping your card up to date! Even though you may have a permanent disability, the regulations require a period of review to ensure that you are still eligible for the service. The Division of Public Transportation Services has a new perk for you and your new card — a ***Nihi Tafan Hanao*** themed lanyard and ID card badge holder. Now you can find your ID card easily by wearing the card or locating the tropical floral lanyard badge holder with the latest message from public transit ***Nihi Tafan Hanao, Let's Go!***

This month you will see another ***new feature*** appearing at some of the shelters and transit stops: islandwide service and route maps as well as route schedules. Look for the ***Nihi Tafan Hanao, Let's Go!*** themed stickers and you will find the maps and schedules. This should make the fixed routes easier to use and easier to identify bus stop locations.

Next quarter, the 2030 Master Highway Plan will take a look at our transit schedules and provide some recommendations for improvement. The Mobility Planning Team has also asked the contractor, Parsons and Brinkerhoff, to focus on pedestrian accessibility for our public roadways. Stay tuned for some of their ideas for improvement. Until the next issue, ***Nihi Tafan Hanao, Let's Go!***



Fifty-five managers, dispatchers, operators and transit personnel received training in Wheelchair Securement and Safety from CEDDERS instructors Mike Terlaje and Ginger Porter during January 2008. Assisting with the hands-on training was Transportation Commission Vice President, Evelyn Duenas, who provided insight on differences of securement strap systems and techniques for meeting the standard of achieving less than two inches of easement. Three weeks after the training, all operational personnel were tested in their proficiency of securement knowledge, of which, twenty-seven percent achieved proficiency above ninety percent. Shown at one of the training sessions are: (*Front row, L-R*) Jose Reyes; Benito Santos; Instructor Evelyn Duenas; Teddy Saguilla; Vincent Salas; Douglas Racelis; & Eugene DeGuzman; (*middle row, L-R*) Norio Nakajima (Manager); Instructor Ginger Porter; Ricardo Auayan; Alberto Fejeran; Phillip Cruz; Remy Aguon; Etsuo Watabiki (Manager); & Clarissa Pocaigue; (*back row, L-R*) Lawrence Nelson; Joseph C. Manibusan (Deputy Director, DOA); Instructor Mike Terlaje; Rudy Cabana (DOA Planner); & Darrell Materne.

# Opening Doors: Make Sure Your Voice Is Heard



Cecilia "Lee" Cruz

People are helping people by knocking on doors. The doors of Guam senators, that is. "People Reaching Out for Advocacy for Individuals with Disabilities," also called PROA, is working hard to educate the senators and lobby for new legislation and the enforcement of existing legislation, that can serve the needs of individuals with disabilities on-island.

PROA is an informal coalition of volunteers that has been meeting for about a year now, according to John Weisenberger, Guam's Public Guardian and a PROA member. This group espouses the true meaning of a community, in its actions to improve the quality of life and ensuring dignity to those in our island community who are disabled and as a result of this, poor. PROA members are all volunteers by choice and do not operate as a non-profit organization, according to Maria Espinoza, another active volunteer who is the mother of a 19-year old son with anophthalmia, a condition in which the individual is born with no eyes. Her son also has other learning disabilities.

Espinoza describes the group as being "more spontaneous. We want to address issues that are important to us,"

## PROA (People Reaching Out for Advocacy) Talking Points

1. We request fairness in addressing the increased cost of living.
  - Increase Public Assistance to persons who are disabled, blind, or elderly. (Aid to the Permanently & Totally Disabled; Aid to the Blind; Old Age Assistance)
  - There have no increases since 1989.
  - We request equity with SSI.
2. We request that 'Earned Income' in Public Assistance calculations be counted as \$1 for every \$2 earned.
3. Medicaid and MIP are not available to disabled persons and elders if Health Care Providers do not accept these plans due to non-payment.
  - We request that adequate funding be available to pay off all past due billings in both programs, and future funding be adequate to ensure timely payments in these essential programs.
4. We request that Therapeutic Home Care Services be funded.
5. We request that preventive dental care be provided.
6. We request that oversight hearings be conducted to make sure that government agencies are in compliance with the 2% Employment of Individuals with Disabilities Law.

she said. PROA members shared their concerns during a recent conference sponsored by the Tri-Agency whose members are Guam Legal Services Corporation, Guam Developmental Disabilities Council, and UOG CEDDERS.

PROA's strategy is to meet with each senator face to face to candidly discuss issues affecting the disabled community as outlined in the "Six Talking Points" (see "PROA Talking Points" in yellow box below, left). Members broke into teams consisting of both service providers and individuals with disabilities, and met with all but three senators, according to Espinoza. She noted that on issues concerning persons with disabilities, senators' knowledge base ranged from well informed to unfamiliar with challenges that persons with disabilities face on a daily basis.

"We have a role as advocates to educate the legislators," Guma' Mami, Inc., Executive Director Berni Grajek said. We have policymakers who come in... and I just expected they would know these things, and they don't." she said.

Weisenberger shared that, "I have asked the senators in the last two budget cycles to address these issues in the Talking Points. I was treated very nicely and then they did nothing." He feels that the effort should continue in this budget cycle but with a greater presence. The goal is "to increase the budget for people who just happen to be disabled and are, as a result of that, poor," he said.

PROA welcomes new members to volunteer their time, services and support to this vibrant coalition. Please call Maria Espinoza at 734-4355 to volunteer!!!



John Weisenberger, Guam's Public Guardian, spoke about PROA's activities during the recent Tri-Agency Conference.

## *I Famagu'on-ta* Guam's System of Care Conference Announcement

*"Transforming Children's Mental Health in the Pacific Islands: Celebrating Our Progress & Sharing Our Knowledge"*

**September 15-17, 2008**

For more information, contact  
Annie Unpingco at

**477-5338**

# Project GATE Update



(Right Photo) Island-wide and area transit maps and schedules were presented to Joseph C. Manibusan, Deputy Director, Department of Administration, Division of Public Transportation Services, as part of the final piece of the United We Ride Coordination Planning Grant known as Project GATE (Guam Alliance for Transportation Efficiency). Beginning in March 2008, the map & schedule decals, along with *Nihi Tafan Hanao* – *Let's Go* theme stickers, will be affixed to shelters and other physical structures as a temporary measure to identify designated stops along the four major fixed routes. Eligible paratransit riders will also receive *Nihi Tafan Hanao* lanyards for their new ID cards. Presenting the items to Mr. Manibusan is Ginger Porter, Project GATE Director.



## Committee Chairpersons Appointments



The Guam Developmental Disabilities Council Executive Committee made the following appointments of Chairpersons for the three Guam DD Council Standing Committees.

**Children and Family Issues Committee**  
Joseph Mendiola

**Adult Issues Committee**  
Tom Manglona

**Cross-Cutting Issues Committee**  
Elisabeth Cruz

### Upcoming Events

Guam Developmental Disabilities Council  
**General Membership Meeting**  
Wednesday, May 14, 2008  
11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
Marriott Resort, The View

For more information call Kristina Perez at  
**735-9127**



**I Liná'lá-ta** is a quarterly publication published and funded through a Tri-agency collaborative partnership between the Guam Developmental Disabilities Council, Guam Legal Services Disability Law Center, and the University of Guam Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, & Service (Guam CEDDERS).

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](mailto:fejarang@ite.net)

Guam DDC Executive Director: Manuel Cruz  
GLS-DLC Acting Director: Rebecca Perez Santo Tomas, Esq.  
Guam CEDDERS Director: Heidi San Nicolas, Ph.D.  
Editor: Cecilia "Lee" Perez Cruz  
Assistant Editor: Terrie Fejarang  
Layout & Design: Margaret Johnson

This issue of **I Liná'lá-ta** was made possible by contributions from the following individuals: Bonnie Brandt, Lee Perez Cruz, Terrie Fejarang, Ginger Porter, & Heidi San Nicolas .

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.

The University of Guam is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Provider.