New RST Cohort in CNMI

Twenty-seven new RST students began their certificate program at Northern Marianas College in May, 2007. The semester began late due to administrative difficulties; however, the students are all planning to graduate on time in November, 2007. The new RST students hail from all three of the main islands in CNMI, Saipan (18 students), Tinian (7 students), and Rota (2 students). To the right are some of the new students practicing their equilibrium responses. The students are:

Ray Aguon (Saipan)          Mike Aguon (Tinian)
Amy Babauta (Saipan)        Janeth Barcinas (Tinian)
Mary Anne Cabael (Saipan)   Joseph Delacruz (Tinian)
Nida Dosalua (Tinian)       Frances Hosono (Saipan)
Bensalina John (Tinian)     Luzviminda Mack (Saipan)
Zina Nekaifes (Saipan)      Roderick Osorio (Saipan)
Anita Perez (Saipan)        Roque Puludo (Saipan)
Evelina Quinata (Rota)      Rena Reftang (Saipan)
Joseph Reyes Jr. (Saipan)   Teresita Sanchez (Tinian)
Noel Santa Maria (Saipan)   Faustina Santos (Saipan)
Balbina Solberg (Saipan)    Jesse San Nicholas (Rota)
Dominica Tebuteb (Saipan)   Jesse Taisacan (Saipan)
Jason Teregyo (Saipan)      Shirley Terrobias (Tinian)
Herman Villagomez (Saipan)  

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In order to accommodate students on Tinian and Rota, most RST classes are via televideo in CNMI.
Veteran Site Visit to Chuuk

Kathy Ratliffe

We (Kathy Ratliffe, PT, and Margo Wray, PT) visited Chuuk in May, 2007 to provide support for the veteran RSAs there. We were able to spend time with Karsy Mefi RSA, Charles Sinem RSA, Manner Namelo RSA, and Anden Nifini RSA.

We held a five-hour long workshop on measuring range of motion using goniometers. Sixteen people participated in the workshop including RSAs, teachers, and administrators. We made our own goniometers using sturdy cardboard, and learned terms to describe range of motion as well as techniques for measuring accurately.

We spent two days visiting children on outer lagoon islands, and two days visiting children on Weno. We were able to see 18 children in total. In addition, we visited some children in the hospital for acute head injury and spinal cord injury and were able to teach the parents of these children some activities to promote their rehabilitation and also to minimize secondary disabilities such as skin breakdown and loss of range of motion.

We brought two donated wheelchairs and three pairs of pediatric sized Lofstrand crutches (forearm crutches), (along with many pairs of axillary crutches and other donated goods), with us and were able to work with the RSAs and also Kathy Mori and Dr. Anna Maria from the Children with Special Health Care Needs branch to distribute them to appropriate children who needed them.

The RSAs in Chuuk are working hard with few resources to deliver services to their children. During the week that we were there the power was off every day in the special education office. Gasoline prices have gone up everywhere, but even more in the Pacific, stretching already thin budgets. Administrative changes in fiscal procedures caused all special education and other federal grant employees to miss two pay periods of pay, although they eventually received their pay just before we left.

Ary Kumos, Special Educator Coordinator in Chuuk, was very gracious in ensuring that we had enough gasoline to visit the outer islands and also to drive around Weno to visit children. We were impressed with the dedication of the RSAs and the homebound teachers in making sure that the children get the services they need in Chuuk, despite difficult circumstances.

Above: Kinson demonstrating his new crutches with his teacher Marshall, and his mother.
Below: Sienna sitting in her new wheelchair with her mother, Manner Namelo, RSA, and her teacher.
Veteran Site Visit to Kosrae and PBILC

Kathy Ratliffe traveled to Kosrae in June, 2007 for two purposes. The first was to support the veteran RSAs in Kosrae, and the second was to attend the Pacific Basin Interagency Leadership Conference.

Many of the RSAs were busy during the week she was there, but she was able to see everyone except for Arney, who was grieving the unexpected death of his 10-year old son. We all express our condolences to Arney and his family.

Florina Sigrah, RSA, accompanied Kathy to see seven children with a range of disabilities over the first few days of the week. Jim Skouge and Lillian Segal with friend Lei arrived in Kosrae to attend the PBILC and also to make a movie on nutrition and diabetes. They all worked together, also with RSAs Isabel Liviea and Tulpe Benjamin, to make a short video of Joylinda, a girl with cerebral palsy who will be a senior in high school next fall. Joylinda interviewed Kathy on camera, demonstrating her wonderful skills as an interviewer and her good command of oral English language.

Kathy was happy to see RSAs from Palau, Yap, and Pohnpei attending the PBILC. Esther Rengulbai (2005) and Roman Oseked (2005) came from Palau, Francesca Tinmad (2000) came from Yap, and Herry Weichep (2006) came from Pohnpei. With the six Kosraean RSAs, there was a strong showing!

Kathy and Jim gave a presentation on videos and other products that have been created by the RSA projects over the years that was well attended by RSAs and was received well.

Pacific Educational Conference

Many people from all over the Pacific and some from the US mainland converged on McKinley High School for the annual PEC conference. Kathy attended, and was happy to see many RSAs including Joe Reyes and Margaret Soalablai from Saipan; Esther Rengulbai, Angie Ngmaes, Gwen Rengii, and Roman Okesed from Palau, Marminer Pelep from Pohnpei, and Aitofii Lomu from American Samoa. Everyone gave wonderful presentations, and supported each other by attending as many presentations as possible. It was so nice to see old friends.

Data Needed from RSAs

A data form is included in this newsletter for all RSAs/RSTs to fill out and return to Kathy. She needs to report follow up data about participants in the RSA programs to the federal agency that funds the program. Please take a few minutes to fill it out and return it. Data will be compiled and reported in a future edition of this newsletter. All you need to do is fill out the information, fold it, put on a stamp, and mail it. Please do your part! Let’s see if we can get a Veteran Site Visit to Kosrae and PBILC

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Helping Children Breathe

Children with cerebral palsy and other neuromuscular disorders frequently have breathing problems because of weak muscles, reflux (stomach contents come back up), poor cough and airway clearance, scoliosis, frequent aspiration (liquid goes down wrong tube into lungs), poor nutrition, asthma, and other causes. We can help. Some things to do are:

1. Teach families to change the child’s position often, even when the child does not seem sick. This can help the thick stuff in the lungs loosen and get coughed up.
2. Thicken liquids that the child drinks to prevent aspiration (going down the wrong tube).
3. Help the child breathe deeply and cough by moving him/her around a lot, or gently pressing on the ribs while the child breathes out and releasing when the child breathes in.
4. If the child seems irritable a lot of the time, especially after eating, have the child sleep on a wedge with his/her head higher than the hips.
5. Make sure that medical conditions like asthma get treated with appropriate medicines.

Kathy teaching Charles how to help a child breathe more deeply in Chuuk
Above and to the right: Jason Teregeyo, RST student in Saipan who is blind, teaches his target student Evander to read second grade Braille, and also mobility skills on campus.

Above: Philippa, Deaf teacher, Charles Sinem, RSA, and Margo Wray, PT during the workshop in Chuuk

Left: Workshop participants in Chuuk displaying a poster they made for a child with a recent spinal cord injury in the hospital

Below: Margo works with a student in Chuuk

Introducing New RST/RSA Instructor: Margo Wray, PT

Margo Wray, PT, has joined the RSA/RST faculty, and will be taking primary responsibility for the 2007 RST cohort in CNMI. She has 30 years of experience in physical therapy, and is excited about working with the RSA/RST program. She is married and has two grown sons, and one grandson. She grew up in Hawai`i, and has traveled in Southeast Asia several times to provide physical therapy support to medical missions in Laos. She is new to the Pacific except for one trip to Yap in 1995 to support the first RSA program. So, really, she is returning to the RSA program! Welcome Margo.