RSAs Present at Pac Rim!

RSAs from all over the Pacific Basin attended the Pacific Rim Conference on Disabilities in Honolulu this past March. From Yap, Francesca Tinmad and Berna Mamreng attended. Berna had already been in Honolulu for several weeks accompanying two families whose children were receiving surgery for cleft lip and/or palate at Tripler Army Medical Center. Aimina Talley came from Kosrae. Manner Namelo and Anden Nifini came from Chuuk. No one represented Pohnpei this year. Romeo Harris and Romen Laibwij represented Ebeye and Majuro in the Marshall Islands. Merenaite Siaosi represented American Samoa as an RSA, the first time an American Samoan RSA has participated in Pac Rim.

The RSAs attended many educational offerings at the conference, and also presented about the RSA program in a breakout session. They talked about the RSA program on their island, how many children are being served, and how the RSA program is supported by special education. Kathy and Deborah showed a Powerpoint presentation that included pictures of RSAs in their home states providing services to children, and talked about the mentorship program.

RSA Mentorship Trip to Yap

Kathy Ratliffe, PhD, PT and Irene Stetkevich, MS, CCC-SLP

Irene Stetkevich, MS, CCC-SLP and I traveled to Yap in May, 2002 as part of the RSA mentorship project. We were hosted by Yapese RSAs, Francesca Tinmad, Berna Mamreng, Paul Tapang, and Henry Yangirelitig who helped us to see children and families on Yap proper, and deliver a two-day workshop on Communication Strategies for Children with Special Health Care Needs to the CRTs, RSAs, RSPs, and Head Start teachers. Over 30 people participated in the workshop. We saw a total of twenty-four children with varied communication needs- from cleft lip and palate to deaf and hard-of-hearing in homes and schools. Paul and Henry were able to take the ship in from the outer islands to be with us for the second half of the week, and headed back out again shortly after we left. They then came back to Yap for the summer.

We were able to do some recreation while in Yap; the RSAs took us out on a boat to view the mangrove forests of Yap and we had a delicious picnic of local foods on a nearby island. We also had a party for Josepha, a teenager from Ramung who hopes to attend the vocational program at the high school in the fall. We all did the Macarena which was sung in Yapese. Maria Waathan, Special Education Coordinator, taught us how to do the moves.
**Televideo Dates**

Dates have been set for the monthly televideo seminars for RSAs in FSM from March, 2002 through September, 2002. The dates have been booked through Peacesat in Honolulu. They are:

**Honolulu**

The seminar will be held at Wist Hall on the University of Hawaii campus in Manoa.

- Monday, March 18, 1:00 – 4:00 PM
- Monday, April 15, 1:00 – 4:00 PM
- Tuesday, May 28, 1:00 – 4:00 PM
- Monday, July 1, 1:00 to 4:00 PM
- Monday, July 29, 1:30 to 4:30 PM
- Thursday, August 15, 1:30 to 4:30 PM
- Monday, September 16, 1:30 to 4:30 PM

**Majuro**

- Tuesday, March 19, 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM
- Tuesday, April 16, 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM
- Wednesday, May 29, 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM
- Tuesday, July 2, 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM
- Tuesday, July 30, 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM
- Friday, August 16, 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM
- Tuesday, September 17, 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM

**Kosrae/Pohnpei**

- Tuesday, March 19, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM
- Tuesday, April 16, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM
- Wednesday, May 29, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM
- Tuesday, July 2, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM
- Tuesday, July 30, 10:30 AM – 1:30 PM
- Friday, August 16, 10:30 AM – 1:30 PM

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Televideo Dates, Continued
Kosrae/Pohnpei, cont.
Tuesday, September 17, 10:30 AM – 1:30 PM
Chuuk/Yap:
The seminar will be held in:
Chuuk: Chuuk State School System Office (Karatin 330-2202)
Yap: Yap SEED multimedia lab.
Tuesday, March 19, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Tuesday, April 16, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Wednesday, May 29, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Tuesday, July 2, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Tuesday, July 30, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Friday, August 16, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Tuesday, September 17, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Success Story- Taylor
Florina Esiel, RSA and Maxcipa Harris, RSA
Taylor is a five-year old boy living on Pohnpei. He participated in the RSA training program in 2000. The RSAs continue to follow Taylor by providing consultation to his teachers, but Taylor has outgrown his need for home-based services. He is now in Head Start! Taylor is now sitting without any support. His head has stopped growing. He is talking fluently. Good for you Taylor!

New RSA Program Gets Started in Saipan
Katherine Ratcliffe, PhD, PT
Twenty-three students began their related services training in Saipan this April. The RSA training program in Saipan has been renamed RST (related services technician) training program in order to comply with administrative rules in the physical therapy practice act (governing what physical therapists can do and who they can supervise under what conditions). The RST students are all teacher aides from most of the elementary and high schools in Saipan. Two students are from Tinian and two are from Rota, the two outer islands of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, while the majority of students are from the island of Saipan.
The training began with a one week intensive period of instruction in April during spring break where all of the students gathered on Saipan. Then they dispersed to their respective schools, and instruction continued via televideo with Kathy in Hawaii connecting to all three islands in CNMI. The semester ended with another week-long visit by Kathy in May with Rota and Tinian folks participating by televideo. The summer intensive program will begin in June.

Mercy, an RST student in Saipan, tries to get F.C. to reach for the mobile that Mercy made for her toy assignment in the RST program.
Cleft Lip and Palate: What is the RSA to do?

Irene Stetkevich, MS, CCC-SLP

Cleft lip and palate are relatively common conditions that RSAs see on all of the islands.

A cleft lip is an opening in the upper lip where the two sides do not fuse during weeks 6-7 of a baby’s gestation (growth in the uterus). A cleft palate is an opening in the roof of the mouth caused by poor fusion during weeks 8-13 of a baby’s gestation. A baby can have a cleft on one or both sides of the lips or mouth. These problems can be caused by genetic factors, and/or by exposure to environmental factors such as certain drugs during pregnancy. Most children have both a cleft lip and palate at the same time, but some have either one or the other. The lip is usually repaired surgically after the baby reaches 10 pounds (between 6 weeks and 4 months of age), and the palate is usually repaired when the child is between one and two years of age - before the child learns to speak. Problems that a baby may have include feeding problems (poor weight gain, poor suction, long feedings, poor coordination of suck and swallow, food coming out nose, choking, or gagging), poor alignment of the teeth, ear infections, speech impairments, and voice disorders such as hypernasality (sounds like child talks through nose). Children may also have a poor self-concept (feel bad about him or herself), anxiety, depression, or problems adjusting socially because of the differences in how they look. The RSA should keep in mind:

1. Use a soft nipple with a wide base and possibly an enlarged hole so the baby doesn’t need to suck so hard.
2. Make sure the milk doesn’t flow too fast causing the baby to choke. Monitor swallowing to prevent choking.
3. Feed the baby in an upright position - gravity can help the baby swallow and prevent milk in the nose or ears.
4. Place the nipple to the side away from the cleft to help the baby get some suction.
5. Monitor for ear infections and hearing loss - test for hearing often. Talk to the baby a lot to promote speech.
6. Try using thickened liquids if the baby chokes (mix in baby cereal, cooked taro, or rice water).
7. After surgery, use a cup or syringe rather than a nipple and spoon to protect the healing wound.
8. Treat the baby as you would any other child including talking and playing with baby, setting limits, and loving baby to promote skills such as crawling, walking, talking, self-feeding, and social skills.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED