



# Employment Brief

## Disability Mentoring Day Hawai'i – 2004

Prepared by Christine Su, Ph.D.

### National Technical Assistance Center

www.ntac.hawaii.edu  
Tel: (808)956-3648  
Fax: (808)956-5713  
Tty: (808)956-2890

### Mission:

To increase employment opportunities for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders with disabilities nationwide.

### Based at:

University of Hawaii  
at Manoa, Center on  
Disability Studies

### In collaboration with:

Hawaii Centers for  
Independent Living  
  
Hawaii Vocational  
Rehabilitation and  
Services for the Blind  
Division

### Funded by:

U.S. Department of  
Education  
Rehabilitation Services  
Administration

*This brief is one of a series, from the National Technical Assistance Center for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders with Disabilities (NTAC-AAPI), designed to provide information on employment strategies for people with disabilities. These briefs discuss the value of mentoring as a means for individuals with disabilities to explore various career options. The previous issue discussed mentoring in general, as an avenue for employers to learn about disability culture, clarify misconceptions about hiring workers with disabilities, and to contribute to their communities by becoming mentors. The current issue discusses Disability Mentoring Day participation in Hawai'i in October, 2004.*

### Introduction

The National Technical Assistance Center for Asian American and Pacific Islanders with Disabilities (NTAC-AAPI), based at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa's Center on Disability Studies, was proud to commemorate "Disability Mentoring Day: Career Development for the 21st Century," on Wednesday, October 20, 2004.

Disability Mentoring Day (DMD), first administered by the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and the U.S. Department of Labor in 1999, is a broad-based effort promoting employment of persons with disabilities through personal mentoring. DMD began with just three dozen participants in the Washington, D.C. area, but as news of the program spread, it became both a national and international event. In Hawai'i, DMD is coordinated through NTAC-AAPI, with the support of local businesses and agencies.

Approximately 230,000 individuals with disabilities live in the state of Hawai'i, two-thirds of whom are not employed. NTAC-AAPI, therefore, gratefully acknowledges the enthusiastic participation of public and private employers in DMD Hawai'i-2004. Seventeen participants on O'ahu more than doubled the number of participants from the previous year.

During Disability Mentoring Day job-seekers and students (mentees) with disabilities are paired with representatives of locally-based businesses or agencies in career fields that match their interests. A primary goal of DMD is to provide people with disabilities insight and hands-on experience in various professions that appeal to them, rather

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than arbitrarily placing mentees in any job. AAPD materials assert it is important for people with disabilities to have the opportunity to explore:

*not just entry-level and dead-end jobs, but careers. Mentoring takes more than one day. But DMD can get the process started and draw national attention to the importance of encouraging young people with disabilities to develop the skills and obtain the experiences necessary to compete in today's economy. (<http://www.dmd-aapd.org/>)*

Despite passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) and subsequent policies, many individuals with disabilities of working age remain unemployed. Across the country, many employers are still uncomfortable hiring people with disabilities, largely because of misconceptions about the effects hiring people with disabilities will have on their companies. Some employers believe the type or nature of the work in their companies cannot be effectively performed by workers with disabilities. Others fear they might face litigation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for mistakes in compliance with ADA requirements. Many worry the cost of accommodating workers with disabilities would be too high. (Dixon, Kruse, and Van Horn, 2003). Thus Disability Mentoring Day can be a point of entry for employers to learn more about disabled individuals to dispel such fears. People with disabilities are an untapped source of possible interns and future employees.

### **DMD in Hawai'i**

This year's participation by both mentees and mentors in Hawai'i demonstrates how mentoring can indeed succeed. NTAC-AAPI mentees represented job-seekers of all working ages, both male and female, with a variety of career interests, ranging from sports broadcasting to acting to working in state government, among many others. Consequently, mentors represented a multitude of related professions, from acting coach to statesman to computer programmer. A sampling of matches appears in the table below.

Mentee career interest:	Paired with mentor in:
Public service/government	Office of State Representative
Human resources	Human Resources department at a large hotel resort
Special education	Therapeutic Recreation Unit of the Department of Health
Marketing/small business	Locally-owned and operated entrepreneurial company
Sports broadcasting	Broadcasting during game for University of Hawai'i Wahine (Women's) Volleyball

Most mentors welcomed their mentees on October 20th, the national mentoring day. Others mentored on October 21<sup>st</sup>, or other surrounding dates, if they were unable to participate on the 20<sup>th</sup> itself, yet did not want to miss the opportunity to be mentors. NTAC-AAPI would like to thank the following companies for their outreach to individuals with disabilities, and for their demonstration of leadership in the Hawai'i community:

- American Cancer Society-Windward Branch, the Look Good . . . Feel Better program
  - Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa
  - City and County of Honolulu
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- City and County of Honolulu Federal Credit Union
- Design Systems, Ltd.
- Hawai'i Film Studio
- Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) Department of Parks and Recreation, Therapeutic Recreation Unit, Developmental Disabilities Division
- Hilton Hawaiian Village
- KKEA 1420-AM radio
- Hawai'i State Representative Dennis Arakaki
- VSA Arts

Some employers planned for students/job seekers to come directly to their work site, with different activities scheduled throughout the day. Mentees were able to attend meetings and programs, while also having time dedicated to one-on-one shadowing and conversations between the mentor and mentee. Most



Photo by David Baker.

**Mentee Ivan Badget shares his DMD experiences at the closing dinner.**

employers gave mentees a tour of the work site, which often involved meeting different personnel and learning about the components of the organization. Each mentee had an opportunity to see what a day “on the job” is like.

As well as breaking down employer fears, mentoring increased mentees’ confidence in securing gainful employment. As a direct result of DMD Hawai’i – 2004, several mentees interviewed for a position or internship, and others were invited to return for additional mentoring experiences. At a celebratory dinner for the mentees on Friday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, the participants shared their experiences.

*“I had an awesome experience,” said Norman Ota, who shadowed someone in public service. “I was really surprised by the number of different things that the organization does. It was really interesting. I would definitely go back.”*

*“It was uplifting,” said Nancy Kinghorn, who had the opportunity to observe an employer’s programs for youth. “It changed the way I thought about the employer.”*

*“I would never have expected to have this type of opportunity,” said Mela Langilabang, a mentee who was able to observe the production of a television program in action. “It was so exciting. Thank you so much.”*



Photo by David Baker

**Mentees gathered at a closing dinner for Disability Mentoring Day Hawaii - 2004**

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## Get Involved

If you are a Hawai'i employer interested in participating as a mentor for Disability Mentoring Day 2005, or are willing to serve as a mentor at another time during the year, please contact Christine Su, (808) 956-2890, or at [christine.su@cds.hawaii.edu](mailto:christine.su@cds.hawaii.edu).

If you are a Hawai'i job-seeker interested in participating as a mentee for Disability Mentoring Day 2005, or as part of our year-round mentoring program, please contact Amy Nawatani, (808) 956-0947, or [amy.nawatani@cds.hawaii.edu](mailto:amy.nawatani@cds.hawaii.edu).

## References

- Dixon, K. A., Kruse, Doug, and Van Horn, C. E. (2003). *Restricted access: A survey of employers about people with disabilities and lowering barriers to work*. John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, New Brunswick, New Jersey. Retrieved November 10, 2004, from [www.heldrich.rutgers.edu](http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu)
- U.S. Census Bureau. *Profile of Selected Social Characteristics: 2000*. Census 2000 Summary File 3, Matrices P18, P19, P21, P22, P24, P36, P37, P39, P42, PCT8, PCT16, PCT17, and PCT 19. Retrieved November 10, 2004, from <http://factfinder.census.gov/>.

## Additional Information

For more information on Disability Mentoring Day, visit [www.dmd-aapd.org](http://www.dmd-aapd.org).