



# Employment Brief

## Disability Mentoring Day in Hawai'i—2004 Mentor Profile: On the Job with Scott Robbs

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 both as a means for individuals with disabilities to explore various career options, and for employers to learn about disability culture, clarify misconceptions about hiring workers with disabilities, and contribute to their communities by becoming mentors. The following is the portrait of one mentor who participated in Disability Mentoring Day Hawai'i in October, 2004.*

### Introduction

Sports fans in Hawai'i may already know Scott Robbs by name—or perhaps, by sound—as the Voice of both Warrior (Men's) Volleyball & Wahine (Women's) Volleyball for the University of Hawai'i at Manoa (UHM). As a broadcaster for KKEA 1420-AM Sports Radio, Robbs' voice can be heard



Photo by David Baker. Used with permission.

*Dee Dee Freitas shadowed Scott Robbs broadcasting at a University of Hawai'i volleyball game.*

throughout Hawai'i (and thanks to the Internet, across the country), covering UHM volleyball matches, as well as hosting The Sports Bar, a daily talk show covering various sports topics. When NTAC-AAPI began to recruit mentors for Disability Mentoring Day Hawai'i 2004, Robbs was one of the first to respond. He served as a mentor for an aspiring broadcaster, and allowed her to shadow him during an exciting Wahine volleyball

game, as well as discussing the ins and outs of the job with her. I had the opportunity to talk with Scott about his experiences as a mentor, several weeks later, at the KKEA offices in downtown Honolulu.

---

## Who is Scott Robbs?

To sit down to chat with Scott Robbs, even when meeting him for the first time, is like reuniting with a childhood friend. Though we had communicated only by phone and e-mail his enthusiastic, yet laid-back manner, immediately put me at ease. Over a plate lunch I learned his openness, both about his earlier life experiences and about sharing his present with others, is just one of the qualities that makes him a model mentor.

“I like to work with people,” said Scott, “and I like to help people, if I can.” Thus when the call from NTAC-AAPI came, he was more than willing to help out. Scott is often on the road (following the volleyball teams), and when he is in town, he is constantly on the move. He still made time to become a mentor to an individual with a disability for Disability Mentoring Day.

“I think it’s part of our responsibility to give back to the community,” he said. Having lived both in Hawai‘i and on the U.S. mainland, and having undertaken a number of different types of jobs himself before breaking into his current profession, Scott has a lot of experience to share with others.

Raised in Hawai‘i, Scott spent much of his childhood accompanying his father, Don Robbs, also a broadcaster, to various sports events. While in his youth, Scott did not know what type of career he would eventually pursue. In retrospect, he knows watching his father work, and as such, being informally mentored, positively influenced him. After graduating from Kaiser High School, Scott joined the Army, and served for four years. This time, he recalled, started a period in his life in which he began to open himself to new things, and learn the advantages of being flexible and adaptable. “I spent two years in Germany and two years in Texas,” he said, a far cry from island life. “I had never even seen snow until Basic Training.” A few years later, after a short return to Hawai‘i, Scott moved to Las Vegas, where he lived for ten years.

In Las Vegas, while exploring career options, Scott worked various jobs, including bagging groceries for minimum wage. It was not glamorous, he said, but “my father had always instilled in me a good work ethic, to do whatever you need to do to get the job done.” In addition to a good work ethic, Scott’s father also taught him the value of giving back to the community where one lives. Don Robbs, who has been active with Easter Seals and community organizations for more than thirty years, “definitely had a big influence,” said Scott. “I respect him a lot.” Thus it is not surprising that in another of his early jobs, Scott found himself mentoring teenagers with developmental disabilities and behavioral difficulties. When I asked him how he got involved, he said, “You know, I kind of just fell into it.” He helped the teenagers find employment, aiding them in filling out applications, supervising them on the job, and so forth. They usually worked as busboys and dishwashers, and Scott worked alongside them, explaining work procedures and providing support. “A good mentor has to be a good listener, [someone who is] understanding,” said Scott.

Meanwhile, Scott continued to pursue a career in broadcasting. He began as a public announcer for University of Las Vegas (UNLV) baseball games. This led to a stint presenting the radio play-by-play for high school football games. These were not his dream jobs, he said, but they did give him a chance to refine his skills. In fact, he put together the first radio package for UNLV baseball, becoming the “Voice of UNLV baseball.” He was also able to work as a road broadcaster for various UH sports games on the mainland: “It was easier for me to fly or drive to different games on the mainland than for someone to have to fly back and forth from Hawaii,” he said. While he enjoyed his work, he missed home. In 2002, Scott and his wife and daughter returned to Oahu, and it was not long before the “Voice of UNLV base-

---

---

ball” became the voice of Warrior and Wahine volleyball.

Scott did not return to Hawaii with a job in hand. So when a position at KKEA opened to cover volleyball soon after his return, Scott was both excited and a little apprehensive. While he had covered volleyball games during his work at away games on the mainland, he said, “unlike baseball, volleyball is such a fast-paced game! It’s tough to keep up with every move.” Despite his slight uneasiness about volleyball, he accepted the job, and his love of sports in general and his strong work ethic helped him to keep at it. Now, Scott has a career he loves—“I get to talk about sports all day,” he says, “which I love. But it’s never boring—actually, it’s a little nerve-racking, because I expose my personality to thousands of people every day.” Yet if Scott is anxious, he certainly conceals it well: every day, listeners tune in—and call in—to hear about the latest game and other goings-on in the world of sports, and to chat with Scott. Many feel as if they know him. “Sometimes people come up to me when I’m at the volleyball games,” he said, “and say, ‘Hey, Scott!’, and I’ve never met them before, but because of my show, they know me.”

Indeed, it is his self-described what-you-see-is-what-you-get attitude that establishes Scott as a great mentor before he even meets his protégé. “I am the same way on the air as I am in real life,” he said. “You can talk to me [by phone] at the studio and I’ll answer you the same way I would in person.” There is no pretense, which is essential to developing the sense of trust and honest communication necessary in a mentor-mentee relationship. His flexibility and adaptability also render mentoring more natural, as the mentor must be an active listener who can adjust planned activities and/or instructions to fit changing situations. When first asked to become a mentor, Scott did not know what type of disability the individual he would mentor might have, or what accommodations the mentee might need—he just knew that NTAC-AAPI and its consumers sought his help, and he agreed. “I had a great time,” said Scott. “I got to show Dee Dee what I do during the games, and talked to her about the [KKEA] studio and sports broadcasting in general. If you ever need me to do anything like this again, just let me know.” For Scott, Disability Mentoring Day-Hawai‘i 2004 was a success. And because of people like Scott, DMD-Hawai‘i 2004 was a success for us.

## **Get Involved**

Often, when asked to participate in Disability Mentoring Day, the first question potential mentors ask is, “What do I need to do?” While there are guidelines for how shadowing or other activities might operate, the initial answer to this question is: be willing to be involved. Once involved, dedicate yourself to being present, to listen, to being patient. Be willing to share your knowledge, yet also willing to learn from your mentee. Moreover, be flexible. By extending yourself through mentoring, you can help to break down employers’ fears about hiring people with disabilities, and increase a mentee’s confidence in securing gainful employment.

To become a mentor, contact the NTAC-AAPI office at (808) 956-2890, or email [christine.su@cds.hawaii.edu](mailto:christine.su@cds.hawaii.edu).

---

