



HAWAII &
PACIFIC DEAF-
BLIND PROJECT



NEWSLETTER

SUMMER: REFLECTIONS DURING A TIME OF CHANGE

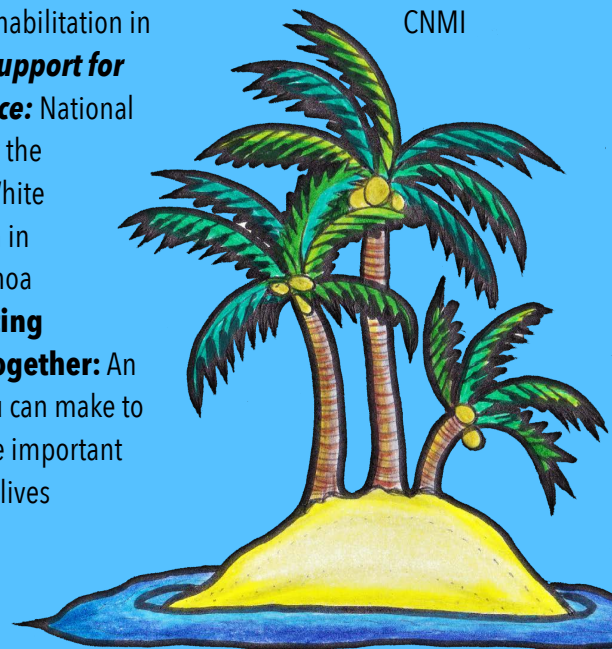
by Mellanie Lee

It is now Summer and we hope each of you and your families are safe and healthy during these uncertain times that seem to be changing moment by moment. Everyone of us is challenged by the new "now" that brings us together in ways we have not been before. We hope you're taking whatever steps you can to keep yourself and your loved ones healthy.

Every day, within our homes and communities, we are trying hard to adjust to this new reality of self-isolation in this time of COVID19. The good news is that we know we are truly better together and nowhere is this more evident than in the Pacific, in how we care for one another and live for the moment.

In this issue of our newsletter, we wanted to reflect on the last few months and share with you some of the activities that have brought us joy, helped us grow, and that have also connected us *for shared support and celebration*. We hope to shed some positivity, curiosity and *inspiration* as you navigate through the articles in this newsletter:

- **Building New Partnerships for Improved Support:** A fabulous week of learning and sharing with Connections Beyond Sight and Sound, Maryland Deaf-Blind Project journeyed to Honolulu and spent a week providing training for us on Cortical Vision Impairment (CVI).
- **Gathering with Peers to Support Children & Families:** Six of our Pacific Liaisons came to share experiences and join in the special CVI training. It was just the elixir needed to help all of us learn more to further our skills in assessing and planning for our children and their families.
- **Sharing Joy through Entertainment, Information, & Connection:** Community gathering at the movie premiere of *Feeling Through Experience* shown in Oahu
- **Expanding Perspectives of Success:** Our Liaisons reviews of Haben Girma's autobiography, [The DeafBlind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law](#)
- **Learning Together & Supporting Each Other:** The First International Disability Inclusion Symposium in Tokyo, Japan
- **Enhancing Services for Future Success:** Our partner Leah Neumann Deaf-Blind Specialist from Helen Keller National Center meets with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in CNMI
- **Increasing Support for Independence:** National Federation for the Blind's Free White Cane Program in American Samoa
- **Making Lasting Memories Together:** An art project you can make to remember the important people in our lives





THE FEELING THROUGH EXPERIENCE IN HAWAII

The **Feeling Through Experience** in Hawai'i was a 90 minute, 3-part event designed to entertain, inform and connect. The central focus of the experience was the short film, **Feeling Through**, the first film ever starring a deaf-blind actor in a lead role. The film is the story of the unlikely connection between a teen and a deaf-blind man, and underscores the human capacity to transcend differences. The heartwarming film was followed by a documentary about the making of the film and a discussion with writer/director Doug Roland.

Since an integral part of The **Feeling Through Experience** is bringing the deaf-blind community and other communities together, Doug was joined by two members of Hawai'i's deaf-blind community - Lance Kamaka, a long time local musician, and Kon Davis, Comprehensive Service Center for People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blind's (CSC) Outreach Specialist.

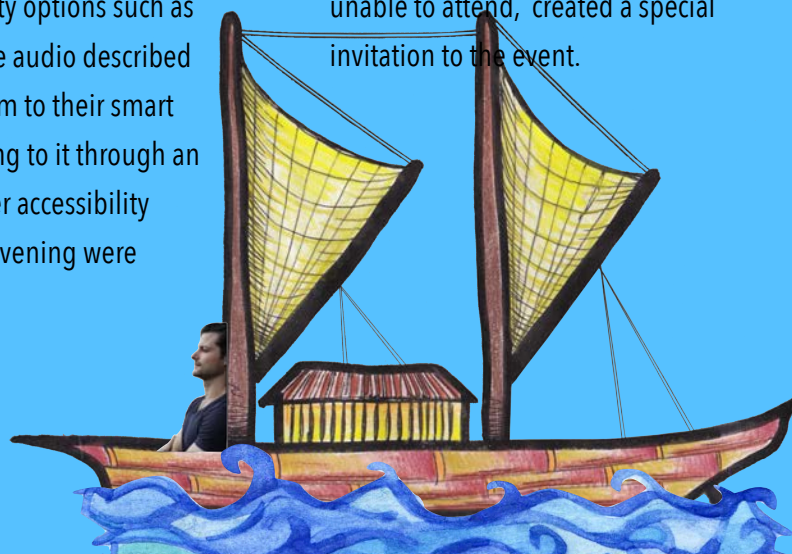
The **Feeling Through Experience**, like many before it, played to a packed cafeteria at the Hawai'i School for the Deaf and the Blind. For some, this evening was a glimpse into the world of accessibility and accommodations. It began with Teresita Hostallero and Brenda Camacho, members of CSC's Deaf Kupuna (senior citizen) group serving as greeters to welcome arrivals. Brenda, a trained SSP, expertly guided deaf-blind guests to the cafeteria.

As they entered, these guests were given accessibility options such as downloading the audio described version of the film to their smart device or listening to it through an FM system. Other accessibility provisions that evening were

captions on the film and American Sign Language interpreters.

The **Feeling Through Experience** was followed by rousing applause as audience members cheered. Lance later shared that Feeling Through is his "new favorite movie of all time" and added "I FINALLY got to "see" someone like me in a movie!"

The Hawai'i **Feeling Through Experience** was presented by a collaboration between the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC), Comprehensive Service Center for People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blind (CSC), and the Hawai'i and Pacific Deaf-Blind Project (HPDBP). Thank you to Leah Neumann (HKNC) who served as emcee, Cathy Kirscher (HKNC) who led the panel discussion, Roz Kia (CSC) who coordinated accessibility, and Jennifer Tarnay (HPDBP) who organized SSP services. A special mahalo to Robert Tarango, the film's deaf-blind actor, who although unable to attend, created a special invitation to the event.





A SIMPLE ART PROJECT TO REMEMBER OUR CONNECTIONS

In these challenging times, we found this simple and meaningful art project that inspired us. You may want to make as a keepsake for your family and loved ones. Hand in hand we are getting through this together.

Materials Needed: scissors, markers, pens or crayons, glue, different colors of paper



Directions: Each person takes a piece of paper and traces around one hand. Cut out the hand. Write your name on the thumb. Glue the hands (from biggest to smallest) on the paper. Write the words: *When the world stayed apart this was my favorite place to be! Lockdown 2020...* or use words of your choice.

Guzman, T., 2020. *How To Make A Family Handprint Keepsake.* [online] Kids Activities

A frame of hands cut out in different colors and layered with the smallest on top, and family member names written on the thumbs.

Photo Description: I Love You handshapes from left to right with family member names written on the thumbs.



A group photo in front of the Hope Dialysis Center sign.

National Federation for the Blind's Free White Cane Program is now available in American Samoa! HKNC and Hope Dialysis Center in American Samoa connected with NFB to inform them that American Samoa was not listed as a shipping option. After a few months the territory was added to the website. I would like to announce that American Samoa's first ever application has been submitted! For more information on the program visit: <https://www.nfb.org/programs-services/free-white-cane-program>.

For any resources for the Deaf-Blind please feel free to contact me.

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A WEEK OF CORTICAL VISION IMPAIRMENT (CVI) BLESSED WITH SOME OF THE BEST!!!

In October we were blessed to have experts from our sister project *Connections Beyond Sight and Sound*, (Maryland and DC Deaf-blind Project) spend a week with us. Donna Riccobono, Jennifer Willis, Rebecca Hommer, Sandy Newcomb graciously shared their knowledge and expertise with service providers, families and children. It was awesome!!!

The first day, *Laying the Foundation for Assessment and Intervention- Introduction to Phase I*, the presenters focused on a basic understanding of CVI, sharing activities and resources. They described the unique characteristics of CVI, introduced interventions for Phases I & II, and showed us how we might implement the Routine Planning Form (CVI schedule). Participants left with some concrete strategies they were eager to try.

Day two, *Moving Beyond the Basics to Progress Through the Phases CVI Phases II & III*, was an advanced training geared towards our teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) and our Pacific Liaisons. Dr. Sandy Newcomb enlightened all of us with her depth of experience, humor, and brilliance. She shared examples and stories as well as opened up discussion for teachers to share and exchange ideas. Everyone was appreciative of the interventions she brought forth.

On the third day the team modeled for us their teachings of the last two days

in doing CVI assessments with Hawai'i children. When complete, they sat with the our trainees and the student's parents and reviewed what their assessment revealed along with recommendations for next steps. This was particularly exciting because everyone was able to see and be a part of the assessment. Donna and Sandra saw two children in Oahu while Jennifer and Rebecca flew to the Big Island (Hawai'i) to assess and additional two children. The day was long but very worthwhile. It was so valuable for everyone to see how the assessments were done. Each team learned new things including: that you should assess with the child in different positions not necessarily with the child in midline and sitting in a wheelchair; the critical importance of waiting for a child to respond; and to pay very close attention to the child to stop/break when the child looks away, closes eyes or disengages, showing you "I have had enough". Our very busy Maryland & DC friends worked hard with the four children! The final gift was the report and recommendations they made for the Teams. WoW!!!

Our last day together, Donna, Jennifer, Rebecca and Sandy spent time listening to our Pacific Liaisons share about their lives, their islands, and their cultures including challenges that impact services and the lives of the children and families they are working with. These challenges included: lack of resources, access to materials, equipment (e.g. wheelchairs and money to make adaptive seating) transportation, trained personnel, and a lack of local



role models. Besides learning about life on these islands there was a brainstorming exchange of information and strategies that everyone learned from. Perhaps the greatest outcome of the week was the relationships forged and connections made, built upon mutual respect and trust, that will undoubtedly lead to building and supporting new bridges across the Pacific Islands.



Mahalo nui loa to our Maryland and DC friends, now part of our extended 'ohana. Your shared wisdom and passion impacted us all and will long be remembered. Sending our Aloha until we meet again to Donna, Jennifer, Rebecca and Sandy, we hope you will return sooner than later, as you are always, always welcome!!!

If you would like to learn more about Cortical Vision Impairment please check out:
Cortical Visual Impairment and the Evaluation of Functional Vision, presented by Dr. Christine Roman at <https://www.perkinselearning.org/videos/webcast/cortical-visual-impairment-and-evaluation-functional-vision>



FIRST INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY INCLUSION SYMPOSIUM IN TOKYO, JAPAN

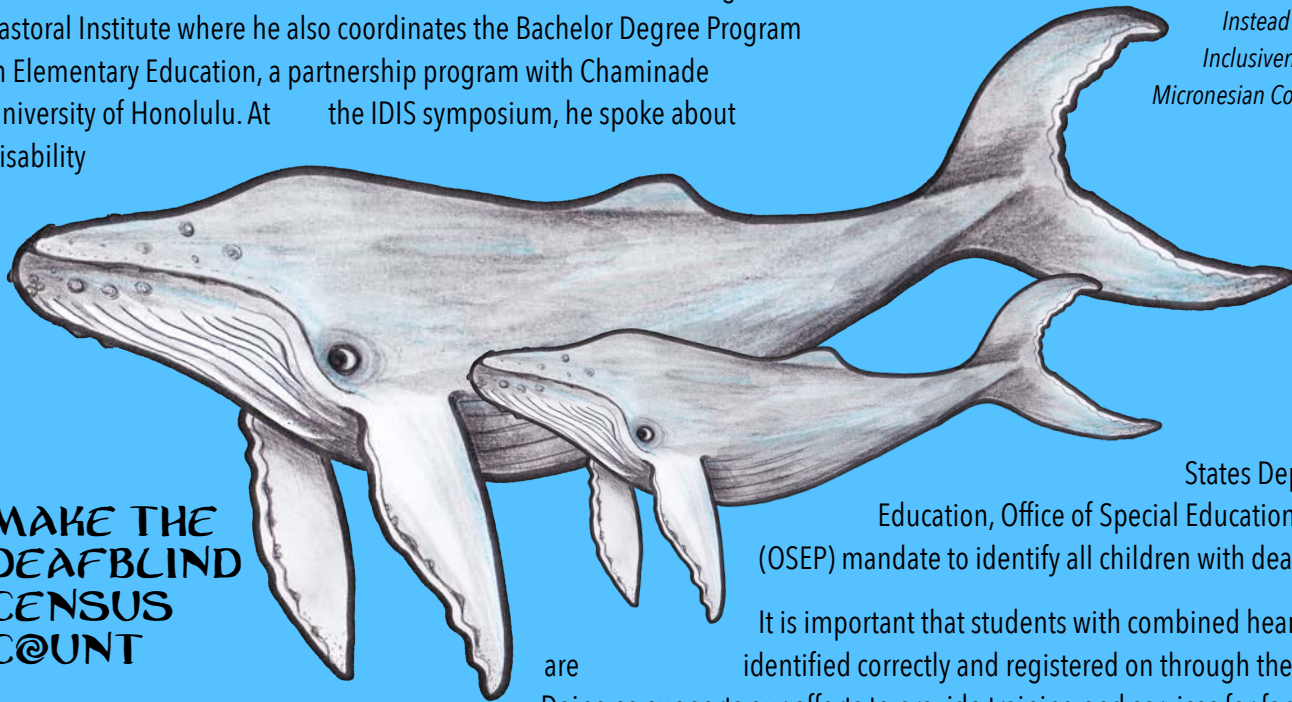
By Kiriko Takahashi

The First International Disability Inclusion Symposium on Higher Education and Career (IDIS) took place at the Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology, the University of Tokyo (U-Tokyo) on January 25-26, 2020 (<https://idis-symposium.org>). IDIS was co-sponsored by RCAST, PHED project at U-Tokyo, HEAP project at Kyoto University, and Pacific Basin University Center (PBUCE) at the Center on Disability Studies at University of Hawai'i Mānoa. Dr. Kiriko Takahashi of PBUCE has led the organization of IDIS and drew speakers and participants from eight ASEAN and Pacific countries, including our own Dr. LJ Rayphand and his wife, Ms. Novia Cholymay from Chuuk. Dr. LJ Rayphand was born and raised in Chuuk. He is the Dean of Outreach Education at the Caroline College and Pastoral Institute where he also coordinates the Bachelor Degree Program in Elementary Education, a partnership program with Chaminade University of Honolulu. At the IDIS symposium, he spoke about disability



Dr. LJ Rayphand holds a microphone and sits behind a table with 2 computers, behind him a big screen shares a slide

that reads: "Kichability Instead of Disability: Inclusiveness Matters for Micronesian College Students"



MAKE THE DEAFBLIND CENSUS COUNT

The annual deafblind census is a registration of children, birth through 21 years of age, who have a combination of vision loss and hearing loss.

The Hawai'i & Pacific Deaf-Blind Consortium (HPDBC) is required under federal regulation to identify students throughout Hawai'i and the Pacific Basin who have this combination of losses, also known as *deafblindness*. The Hawai'i and the Pacific census is part of the United

are

identified correctly and registered on through the DB census. Doing so supports our efforts to provide training and services for families, school districts, and agency personnel.

Registering a child does not require parental consent, nor does it violate FERPA, as outlined in Reg. 99.31(a). All Hawai'i and Pacific school districts should register children on the DB census – regardless of disability category (e.g., visual impairment, multiple disabilities, etc.) that have a combination of vision and hearing loss even if they are not identified as deafblind.

For instructions on how to register a child, go to the census form of the HPDBC website at <http://www.pdb.Hawai'i.edu/census-form/>

If you have questions about this information contact Jennifer Tarnay at jtarnay@Hawai'i.edu or Mellanie Lee at mellanie@Hawai'i.edu

States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) mandate to identify all children with deafblindness.

It is important that students with combined hearing-vision loss

PACIFIC LIAISON'S BOOK REVIEW @N...

The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law by Haben Girma

Lizelle Amirez (Common Wealth of Northern Mariana Islands) --- "I truly enjoyed reading this book! I have been a Special Educator for many years and I am still learning new things with every experience. One of the biggest take away I got from reading Haben's book was her Self-determination through trial and error. She knew what worked and what didn't for herself and pushed forward to make her environment work for her."

Diana Artero (Guam) --- : "The Deafblind Woman who Conquered Harvard Law is a definite must read. Girma sends out a strong message about the unlimited possibilities and extraordinary potentials of people living with disabilities. Through her memoir, I was captivated by her life journeys and how she overcame so many challenges with confidence, drive and heart! She demonstrates a zest for life and finds the joy and humor

needed to keep pushing forward despite the obstacles. This book serves as a great motivational and inspirational tool that will allow us to focus on the things our disability does NOT prevent us from doing and realize our full potential."

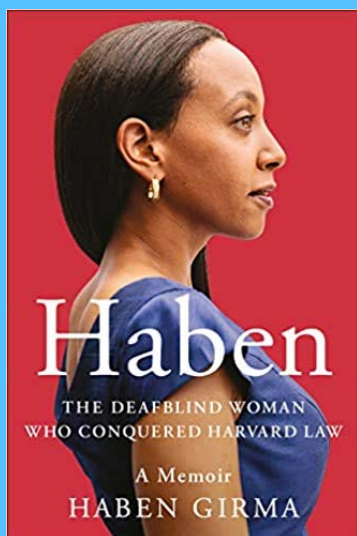
Miriam Joab (Marshall Islands) --- "I love this book, I've shared it with another teacher here who is deaf and she loves it too). Haben's book motivated me, a sighted person to push forward and not give up when challenges seem too hard to overcome. I learned from her example of her strong determination. She is so willing to learn and explore new things and when I picture her situation, I admire her even more."

Benedict Saipwerik (Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia) ---" I can see that this young lady has it all .. she has the strength, determination and dedication in pursuing her studies despite whatever challenges she faced in her everyday life..

I can say that Haben is very committed and

conscientious in her quest through her studies. As an islander and knowing how people react to or toward kids with disabilities, I come to conclude that this book is truly a way of encouraging them and telling them to change their views on disability. It is a way of opening the eye of their minds to know and understand that " disability is not a death





sentence”..
People with disabilities deserve to be treated like everybody else..Oh yes! It is the torch and the pillar for all service providers, stakeholders and the whole

community in dealing with people with disabilities..”

Roddy Robert (Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia) --- “It is very true that Haben means benevolent. She is a very humble person and I am amazed at the way she relayed the message of dealing with life the positive way even through difficult times. The other role that this book plays is being an inspiration for people with disabilities like me. It is not this common to witness a person with

disabilities graduate from any high school in the world let alone the idea of graduating from one of the best universities in the world. Helen Keller use to be my idol and Haben is now another idol.”

Olive Isaako (American Samoa) -----
“This book reminds me of times when I need to be heard. Life is a roller coaster ride, Girma’s book speaks loud for itself. I learned that writing a book is a very powerful too. A book tells a story and ignites new horizons learning from one’s real life experiences learning and the ability to advocate. I would use this book to promote awareness about Deaf-Blind, you have no limits despite having a disability. It is wonderful to share with professional colleagues!”

“I was captivated by her life journeys and how she overcame so many challenges with confidence, drive and heart!”





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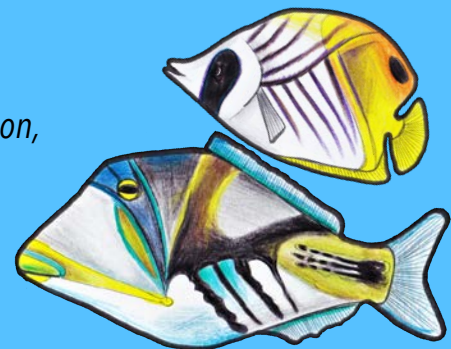
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As always, we want to hear from you, so please feel free to email us (mellanie@Hawaii'i.edu) or reach out on Facebook (Hawai'i & Pacific Deaf-Blind Project) and we will make sure to respond.

We are migrating to a new listserv host, if you have not been receiving emails from us or would like to be included on our listserv please let us know, write to: jtarnay@hawaii.edu and we will happily add you.

Be safe and well and remember, we are here to provide information, connections, and support. Much love and strength to you and your loved ones! While times are changing, we remain committed to supporting you however we are able.



Mellanie, Jennifer, Roz, Stella, & Shayleen



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