



UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

Unibetsedåt Guahan

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences

I Pinangon Campus Suicide Prevention Program

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**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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in partnership with:

 Philip's Foundation, Inc



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**National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month
Opens Community Forum**

Hagåtña, Guam; September 21, 2012 – Suicide is the 5th leading cause of death on Guam; an average of one person dies every two weeks. On Tuesday, September 25, 2012, from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at the UOG Lecture Hall, I'Pinangon Campus Suicide Prevention Program, in partnership with the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention and Training Branch and the Philip's Foundation, Inc., will be hosting the **2012 Suicide Prevention Month Forum**. This forum is open to the community-at-large and aims to bring together key stakeholders – to include suicide prevention experts and community members – to discuss how Guam's people can build a suicide-safer island. Building upon the island's rich, resilient culture, the message shared in recognition of National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month is that ***there is hope*** and ***suicide can be prevented***.

The panel will be led by keynote presenter Dr. Judy Won Pat, Speaker of the 31st Guam Legislature. Other invited speakers are Juanita Blaz of Island Girl Power, Dr. Nelson Franco of UOG School of Nursing, Michelle Sasamoto of DMHSA Prevention and Training branch, Dr. Gerhard Schwab of UOG Social Work Program, Chuck White of Philip's Foundation, Inc., CW2 Pedro Larribas of the Guam National Guard, and Clyde Donato, a survivor and suicide prevention advocate. These speakers represent diverse professional and personal **experiences and possess** a deep understanding of the effects of suicide to an individual and to the community. As suicide caregivers and survivors, the members of our panel are fueled by their **compassion and** commitment to keeping our island safe from suicide.

"It is our hope to reach as many members of our community as possible at the open forum. It is heartbreaking to hear our brothers and sisters dying from a cause that is 100% preventable," shares I'Pinangon Director Dr. Iain Twaddle. "This year, our goal is to have everyone walk out of the forum with an enlightened perspective on suicide prevention; that they – professional, government employee, volunteer, student, military member, anyone and everyone – have a role in saving lives. We can and should take part in learning how to keep ourselves and the people around us safe from suicide."

DMHSA Prevention and Training branch supervisor Bobbie S.N. Benavente also adds: "One of the goals for the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act grant awarded by SAMHSA to DMHSA is to create a



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holistic approach in suicide prevention and early intervention. This partnership between a government agency, a university-driven organization and a community-based group strengthens a mobilized multi-sector island community to make a change; to stop suicide on Guam. We are thankful for the initiative that Dr. Twaddle's team is taking to bring together heartfelt speakers for this forum. We are looking forward to a meaningful discussion around prevention that touches the hearts and guts of all in attendance."

The **2012 Suicide Prevention Month Forum** is open and free-of-charge to all interested individuals who would like to take an active role in preventing suicide on our island. Refreshments and promotional items will be distributed to the first 100 audience members.

For more information, contact Jayde Macalinao or Jean Bello at the I'Pinangon office at 735-2888 or through i_pinangon@uguam.uog.edu.

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