

125TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE FIJI SCHOOL OF MEDICINE (FSMed)

BY ALUMNI OF FSMed IN AMERICAN SAMOA

American Samoa celebrated the 125th Anniversary of the Fiji School of Medicine (FSMed) on the 24th and 25th of September, 2010. The celebration commenced with a walkathon on Friday afternoon at 3:00pm. The walk started from the Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) Hospital to Utulei beach which is a distance of 1.5 miles. This walkathon was also part of our fundraising activity. There were

about 200 people in the march, including FSMed alumni, families, hospital workers and friends. Everyone wore their special celebration tee-shirts. Some of the tee-shirts were donated by FSMed, some were printed locally by the organizing committee, and some were sponsored by the Anti-Smoking program.



Photo 1- FSMed alumni, hospital workers, family members & friends ready for the walk

The celebration dinner was held on the 25th September, at Moana-o-Sina Resort commencing at 5:00 pm and ending at 10:00 pm. The dinner was well attended with over 80 guests and we were able to accommodate extra guests who turned up on the evening. A live band played with very good music throughout the night event. We sang Fijian songs and danced the Fiji "Tuiboto". Our special guests included Rev. Tini Sipili, who led with prayer service, the Lt. Governor of American Samoa, Faoa Aitofele Sunia, representing the Governor

who was away overseas, Dr. Apenisa Ratu, FSMed. representative from Fiji, members of the Legislation, Hon. Pulele'i'ite Li'amatua (Jr)Tufele, representing the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Senator Fuata T. I'atala, an FSMed. alumni and representing the President of the Senate, Vice-Chairman of the LBJ Hospital Board, Tufele Li'amatua, who is also the Secretary of Samoan Affairs, Head of local government, and the retired FSMed. alumni. The rest of the guests were FSM alumni and families.

The “sua” presentation is the highest honor presented to a guest in the Samoan culture. Three “sua” were presented to, Rev. Sipili, Lt Governor Faoa, and to Dr. Apenisa Ratu. A big “ie toga” or the fine mat, called the “tofa” plus an “envelope” containing money, were also presented to the three special guests. All the retired alumni were presented with a plaque of “Service Appreciation” sponsored by the American Samoa Medical & Dental Association (ASMDA). Other honored guests were presented with a gift of FSMed. t-shirt and an “envelope” which contained money. The wife of the hospital board vice chairman, Mrs. Tofiga Tufele and Dr. Ratu performed the cutting of the FSM 125 years Anniversary Cake.

The celebration activities were rounded up in a “to’ana’i” (feast) on Sunday afternoon attended by the alumni members. This was a

farewell feast for Dr. Ratu who left for Fiji the following day, and also a time for all to cool down from the festivity of the previous night.

Everyone who had attended the celebration activities commented on the success of the event and there were positive feedback from the alumni members. The organizing committee set two goals in the beginning which became the theme of the celebration, “Advocate for FSMed” and “Promote FSMed”. To raise funds the business communities were approached, and a walkathon, was the major fund raising activities of the organizing committee. The dinner was a success and everyone who attended had enough to eat and drink. The dinner tables were professional laid out and was graced with labeled 125 anniversary souvenir champagne bottles and champagne glasses. Guests were greeted and garlanded with a “salusalu” of fresh island flowers upon arrival.



Photo 2 – Organising Committee with souvenir champagne bottles and champagne glasses

Dr. Apenisa Ratu spoke on the history, achievements and the strategic development of FSMed. over dinner. We felt very honoured by speeches of our special guests. The Lt. Governor Faoa commented that the Government of American Samoa may have overlooked this important occasion and

should have been responsible for organizing this celebration for the alumni. He suggested the need to resume sending students back to Fiji for medical training. American Samoa LBJ Tropical Medical Center sent the last medical student to FSMed in 1997. The Vice Chairman of the LBJ Hospital Board said the

history of American Samoa is not complete without mention of Fiji School of Medicine. Dr. Saleapaga DSM (Fiji), MD (USA), a former Director of Health, and former Chief Medical Officer for LBJ Tropical Medical Center, commented that it is more cost effective for American Samoa to train doctors in Fiji School of Medicine with postgraduate training in Fiji, New Zealand or Australia, then to depend on USA to provide doctors.

These comments from our special guests and top leadership in government were the measure of success in advocating for and promoting FSMed. The kind words expressed of recognition of the long term service of

FSMed. to American Samoa and the Pacific was appreciated. This will be followed by a Resolution from the “Fono”, the Legislative Assembly, commending the service of FSMed to American Samoa and the Pacific for 125 years. This resolution was proposed by Senator Dr. Fuata I’atala MBBS(PNG), Dip. Peds.(Fiji).

We feel we achieved what we set out to achieve in the beginning, Advocating and Promoting FSMed. and returning to FSMed due recognition for its services to American Samoa; this was the “Cake”. All the other preparations for the celebration went smoothly according to plans was the “icing”



Photo 3 - A fundraising FSMed Alumni Walk-A-Thon held in aid of 125th celebrations held in American

“CONGRATULATIONS TO FSMed. - HAPPY 125th ANNIVERSARY”