



Fai'a'oga's in AmSam

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Memories that last a lifetime

By Quinn Bolander, Leone High School

With one month to go, the World-Teachers of American Samoa can look back on our year and remember all of the moments, memories, and challenges that crossed our paths. We have had countless ups and downs, but either way, we are still going strong and finishing our year without taking any moment for granted.

This newsletter focuses on those moments, memories, and challenges that really stood out to us: the ones that changed or impacted our time as a volunteer teacher. No matter what, we will leave this island with a new outlook on life. Some may be ready to go, others might want to stay, and then there are the few that actually

are staying because they just haven't had enough.

Life in American Samoa is different than what we may be used too, but none of us can leave without saying, "This was one of the most interesting years of my life."

Enjoy and soak up our memories!

I was once a teacher myself...

By Drew Ross, WT Field Director



Looking back on my year as a volunteer, I fondly remember many school events that I had never been a part of when I was student in school. The one event that was especially exciting to watch as a teacher was the first Pep Rally of the year. My students were so pumped about it and spent many hours rehearsing for the big event. All of their hardwork paid off as they won the whole shebang. It was a great afternoon!

A night to remember

By Heidi Trapp, Vo-Tech High School

Amanda, Melinda and I went to our school's Senior Ball last week. We got there in time for the "Senior Walk", when all the seniors walked out with their dates, showing off their snazzy sparkly outfits. After about half an hour of this, the last remaining students lingered outside the door, dateless. One of Melinda's students (a really nice, smart, and polite kid) caught her attention and asked her if she would PLEASE walk with him. And she did. But then a group of "cheeky" Senior boys, who probably lost their dates when they showed up cocky and drunk, started to beg Amanda and I to walk with THEM. I said no, but Amanda gave in and walked with one of them. After seeing those two survive and make it through in one piece, and with one student (a notoriously cheeky boy) still beg-



Melinda and Heidi with some of their students at the Vo-Tech High School Senior Ball.

ging for me to walk with him so he'd have someone to walk with, I caved and said, "O.K. But don't you DARE try anything kaukai-kiki! The principal is watching and I will get in SO much trouble if you don't behave."

We walk out, arm in arm, and get to the spot right in front of where the principal is sitting, and where the photographer is waiting to take our "Senior Walk" picture. And what does he do? He grabs me, spins me around, and puts his arms around my waist from behind. The kids either laughed, or gasped. The principal was NOT amused.

Needless to say, I think the kid was reprimanded. And I'm still waiting to hear back about my contract... :P

Another Senior Ball moment

By Amanda Mills, Vo-Tech High School

The Wildcat's Senior Ball was held at CC on Thursday, April 12. (Don't worry, no alcohol was being served!) Even though I don't teach many seniors, I still wanted to go and check it out. Drew had said it was worth going to since I'd "never see so much satin again in my life". So I got dressed up and hopped into a cab with Heidi and Melinda.

Sure enough, it was worth it. The kids looked great, and I wish I had taken more pictures of their outfits. The three of us were also asked to escort students who didn't have partners. It was a great night, full of food and dancing!



A surprising Cultural Trade Fair

By Melinda Ramirez, Vo-Tech High School

At the end of this month, our school is celebrating its 27th year of existence by putting on a "Cultural Trade Fair." All the trades will have booths displaying their 'resources', and for the past two months, all the grades have been practicing traditional Samoan, Filipino, Hawaiian, and Tongan dances for that day. Last week we had our first official "Showcase" of the dances, and it was supposed to be like the final run-through, the last dress rehearsal.

The freshman class performed, then

the Sophomores, and then the Junior class. The rowdiest group of boys in school had been assigned to do a traditional Filipino "coconut dance". Shirtless, with coconuts strapped all over their bodies, they proceeded with some sort of hybrid Filipino/pelvic gyration dance that was CLEARLY not what our strict Filipino vice principal had intended. As the boys all "slapped" each other's coconuts while swaying their butts and thrusting their hips, coconut shells shattered and flew across the courtyard, rolling in front of

the furious administration.

After ten minutes of the "Filipino coconut dance", and 16 broken coconut shells later, the dance ended with one final "CHEEEEEHOO" and them chucking any remaining coconuts in the air.

Needless to say, the administration was not as humored as we were, but it was by far the funniest school-condoned moment we've had this semester.

[And just in case you're curious, the dance WAS removed from the program.]

Up and over the mountain

By Amber DeBardelaben, Leone High School

When we were asked to share our favorite memory, my brain flood with all the amazing times I've had in American Samoa, especially teaching my little hooligans. But when it came down to it, there is one day in particular that really stands out as the best ever: the day of my field trip to the National Park of American Samoa in Vatia, waaay over the mountains and across the island. One day last November, after MUCH bureaucratic hoop-jumping to get the field trip approved, Abby, me, and 50 of my students left the school and headed across the island. We had to switch to two smaller buses in Tafuna, I guess so that we could make it up the mountain. Then we picked up the Park Rangers in Utulei, and headed over the mountain to Vatia. Going over that mountain was pretty intimidating, because the bus had to completely floor it to get up it, and I was pretty sure the engine was going to explode. And then coming down the other side, there are all these hairpin, switchback turns, and we were kind of flying around them at an alarming



Students exploring and enjoying the National Park!



speed. My kids, of course, thought it was great fun, and accompanied the turns with exaggerated leans and "WOOOO" noises, like they were on a roller-coaster. A roller coaster that clings to the side of a volcanic peak that shoots 3000 feet up from the ocean.

There's a point on the road called Afono Pass. It's at the top of the mountain, and from this point, you get a bird's eye view of pretty much the entire island. It's amazing. We stopped the bus at the pass, and the kids got out to take a look. Most of them had never been up there before.

Let me just say: every headache, every argument, every minute of stress was completely worth it at that moment. Because the look in their eyes as they took in the beauty of their island from 3000 feet up? I'd fight with every school administrator in American Samoa to see that look.



A Samoan Day Deal

By Abby Laman-Maharg,
Leone High School



Samoan Day at Leone was pretty fabulous. And I didn't expect anything less after hours and hours of practicing for a month. My sophomore biology student, Liva, was involved in one of the individual performances and, consequently, was always asking me if it was ok to miss my class to go practice. I always let him go but told him he would have to make up the work. A few days before Samoan Day he tried to make a deal with me that if he did really well during his performance that he should get an A in my class. Nice try. But he did perform very well and I was very impressed with all my students. It was a very special day that I'm so glad I got to experience!

Party!

By Lauren Seagraves,
Tafuna High School



Having a pizza party with the class that won the class competition. I loved seeing them so happy, celebrating their big win!

"May the odds be ever in your favor"

By Quinn Bolander, Leone High School

Midway through 3rd quarter, I decided to read "The Hunger Games" (by Suzanne Collins) with all of my classes. While I know that most of my students despise reading, I was convinced that this book was going to win them all over.

I did not want my students to have to read the HG on photocopies (and now, there's no way that could have happened – all the printers at school have either run out or are almost out or ink...), so I asked my friends, family, and blog readers to send copies of the books. I ended up with 21 copies, which was so helpful. Each student has a number and that book is their baby, their responsibility. The following moments really warmed my heart as we read the book in class:

"When you read it, I understand." This quote is coming from a boy who has skipped my class 42 times since the beginning of the year. He was the kind of student who never really cared. He did

his homework occasionally. Most of the time, he wouldn't pay attention. Since we started reading the HG, he has only missed 2 classes. 2! Now, he is one of the very few in his class to raise his hand to answer questions I ask. He pays attention when I read. He moves to other tables so people don't distract him while we read. I am so, so, so proud of him.



My 5th period class with their "Hunger Games" books.

My classroom is right next to the bathrooms. There is a heavy traffic load of students walking past my classroom at all times. They yell through my windows. They bang on my door. They walk into my room when the door is open. They blast their speakers. Sigh. My students always respond to the yelling by talking back. They will yell at people out the windows. They get up and leave my classroom to go talk to their friends. They unlock the door so their friends can come in. Sigh. Since starting the HG, no outside noise is allowed. When people walk by and make noise, almost everyone in all my classes is either "SHH"-ing, or "AUA LE PISA!"-ing (stop the noise). It's incredible and it makes me smile every single time.

Almost all of my students have never even read a book before, and now they can say they have!