

## **FSM Information Services**

### **Press Release**

#### **International Day of Persons with Disabilities Commemorated**

PALIKIR, Pohnpei—The United Nations’ International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) was commemorated on Monday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, with a community event in Madolenihmw, Pohnpei. Included among the approximately five hundred attendees were Honorable Reed B. Oliver, Lieutenant Governor for Pohnpei State, Monique Panaligan, Keynote Speaker and representative of the non-government organization (NGO) Pohnpei Women with Disabilities, youths, persons with disabilities, community and church leaders, Pohnpei State senators, and representatives from the FSM National and Pohnpei State Government.

The organizing committee chose Madolenihmw as a key location for this outreach program because, according to the 2010 FSM Census, Madolenihmw has the highest percentage of people with disabilities in Pohnpei State.

The theme for the 2018 International Day of Persons with Disabilities was “Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.” Keynote Speaker Monique Panaligan delivered a powerful speech from her own experiences as a person with multiple disabilities, and as an advocate for women with disabilities through the NGO Pohnpei Women with Disabilities. “We are not people to be pitied or sad for,” she said, “But we ask that you take the time to learn about what disabilities are, educate yourself on different types of disabilities, understand them—and treat us like any other person.”

The event, hosted by person with disabilities, supported this theme with activities incorporated into the program focusing on education and awareness of what disabilities are, the importance of inclusiveness, and how such inclusiveness can be obtained through a community environment. One such activity was a student essay competition. The winners of the competition were: Carla Mae Henry, Martin Rodriguez Jr., and Nidisha George.

An informative day with strong and powerful messages, citizens were enlightened and heart-warmed to see so many people attend and support with disabilities in Pohnpei State. More projects and programs focusing on the rights of people with disabilities will be rolled out as organizers implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in Pohnpei and the other FSM States.

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