

**CHILDREN’S RIGHTS EXHIBIT VISITS GUAM
BY HELENE ANDERSON
GUAM CORRESPONDENT**

The SGI-USA exhibit “Treasuring the Future: Children’s Rights and Realities” made its way to the island of Guam May 12, when a grand opening and ribbon-cutting took place at the Micronesia Mall.

The ceremony opened with deaf and hard-of-hearing students from Tamuning Elementary School performing the song “I Hear Your Hand” in sign language. There was also a moving song by Ronnie and Tabitha Espina, 6 and 8 years old, titled “Touch the Hands of Tomorrow.” This song was originally written for teachers, and it describes how the children’s voices are reaching out to their teachers to be understood. It reminds teachers of their responsibility to help, nurture, protect and reach their students.

Everyone then had a chance to explore the exhibit. Dream Flower Trees were displayed, where hundreds of students from throughout the island’s schools had written their dreams for the future on flowers. Also, Pepsi Bottling Co. donated bottle caps for a Treasure Chest, where children could write their names and wishes on the caps. The chest symbolized how children are our treasures, and how we should cherish them.

Gene Polk, a teacher in the deaf and hard-of-hearing program, said: “The kids deserve one day [of honor]. This is also a chance for them to learn new things. Even if they have disabilities, they’re just children — they’re the same as anyone else.” Tara Acquiningoc, 9, said through her sign-language translator that the exhibit inspired her toward her dream of becoming a teacher someday.

Marie Nelson, a University of Guam Board of Regents member, said: “There needs to be more education and awareness to protect children’s rights. This exhibit is a start for us to take action in our community.” The event was honored with a proclamation presented by Acting Governor of Guam Madeline Z. Bordallo designating May 12–19, the week of the exhibit, as “Kids Have Rights Too Week.”