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## **American Samoa Department of Education's Close Up Summit: Nurturing Future Leaders through Civic Engagement and Democratic Education**



The American Samoa Department of Education is hosting a week-long Close Up Summit event dedicated to empowering the youth through discussions on democratic principles and governmental functions. The summit, scheduled from November 6 to November 9, 2023, is being held at the Governor H. Rex Lee Auditorium and has gathered a selected group of students from each high school in American Samoa. This event represents the Department of Education's commitment to equipping young individuals with the essential tools and knowledge required for active participation in the future governance of American Samoa.

The Close Up Summit is facilitated by a team including Mia Charity, President of the Close Up Foundation, Anna Bauder, and Danny Hastings. These Close Up staff members have traveled to American Samoa to lead engaging workshops and discussions, examining public policy issues

influencing the island. Together, the students will work together to develop recommendations to resolve those issues.

The official opening of the summit commenced with special remarks from the Acting Governor, Talauega E.V. Ale, who emphasized the critical importance of the youth in shaping the future of American Samoa. Governor Ale's speech highlighted the current challenges facing democracy and the urgent need for the younger generation to understand and uphold the principles of a free and just government.

"Democracy is under attack," stated Acting Governor Ale. "There has never been a more crucial time for our youth to immerse themselves in learning the fundamental principles of a free government. Your presence here is not just significant, but critical. You are the future of American Samoa. The responsibility to safeguard our democratic values will soon be in your hands, and it is imperative that you stand firm in upholding the law and the principles of the Government of American Samoa."

The Close Up Summit offers multiple interactive workshops, discussions, and simulations designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of democratic processes and governance. Students participants will have the unique opportunity to engage with seasoned professionals and educators, fostering a deeper understanding of the roles and responsibilities within a democratic society.

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