

https://www.guampdn.com/opinion/letter-5-cent-coca-colas-and-careers/article_92f2b9d6-f729-11ef-9231-0bf37f001b59.html

LETTER: 5-cent Coca-Colas and careers

By Sam Mabini Young, PhD
Mar 3, 2025



Experts representing various industries, including advertising, government, economics, engineering, the Guam Legislature, the hospitality industry, a local church, a private equipment company and law firms take turns answering questions and offering insights on the local workforce at the 2025 Career and Technical Education Summit held at the University of Guam Lecture Hall on Feb. 28, 2025. At far right is moderator and current ACTE president Charlie Hermosa.

Jojo Santo Tomas/Pacific Daily News



Coca-Cola was 5 cents the same time when a large group of dedicated educators rallied to support students' preparation for the world of work.

In 1926, the Association for Career and Technical Education emerged as the leader and champion for workforce education and development.

Almost 100 years later, Guam ACTE celebrates their 10th year anniversary, serving the educators of Guam and island nations of the western Pacific.

As the founding president of GuACTE, I've been asked to retell my tale of how this all came about. It all began about 50 years ago for me.

I was 9 years old, with glasses, hair in long braids and embarrassing buck teeth. It was 1975. I didn't understand much about the Vietnam War, but I did notice new classmates who spoke no English. My Tamuning Elementary School teachers recruited me and other students to volunteer for an after-school program. With supportive parents, I began peer-tutoring my new classmates.

Eleven years later, at the University of San Francisco, Hien, a.k.a. John, introduced me to his friends as the one who taught him English. His memory surprised me, sharing:

"I could not enunciate 'S' or 'Sh' sounds, until you told me to say, 'the sunshine on Asan seashore.' I stayed at the Asan refugee camp months earlier. So, it clicked right away!"

Today, John is a doctor and a deputy mayor in California. Two siblings are also in the field of medical science. They are a product of Operation New Life.

Around 2005, I defended a bill at the Guam Legislature that would fund vocational education counselors. The senators eventually funded four new high school career counselors. In 2008, I received my Ph.D. in Work and Human Resource Education from the University of Minnesota.

In 2010, I decided to run for senator to write legislation for the integration of academic and CTE in public schools. I joined the 31st Guam Legislature and had unanimous support for the College and Career Readiness Act, which Gov. Eddie Calvo signed into law on Jan. 4, 2012.

In 2015, with the help of other passionate CTE educators, we started the Guam Association for Career and Technical Education. It is the western-Pacific chapter of the national ACTE, with the mission to provide educational leadership in developing a competitive workforce.

It's now 2025, and at the recent annual CTE Summit hosted by GuACTE, there were over 140 teachers and business leaders. We had the first ever Mixer social held at the CarsPlus showroom on Thursday, followed by a dynamic panel discussion at the University of Guam on Friday, and a morning packed with workshop sessions at JFK High School.

The journey continues to build the necessary network and practical partnerships to move CTE forward in the 21st Century – one that works for Guam and the region. I witness the passion, enthusiasm and commitment from many teachers, and it brings me much hope.

The CTE torch continues to shine brightly in Guam and the Pacific, especially with the business stakeholders providing the fuel of critical insights and foresight.

The work of CTE champions continues, and I give a toast to them...with my

can of Coke Zero.

Former Sen. Sam Mabini Young is the founding president of the Guam Association for Career and Technical Education and a former Guam Department of Labor director.