



The President at the ADA ceremony.

ADA marks 20 years

The 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), one of the country's landmark civil rights measures, was celebrated July 26 during a ceremony at the White House.

PACER's Executive Director Paula Goldberg attended the event along with other advocates, lawmakers, federal officials, consumers and families. Goldberg, who co-founded PACER in 1977 to provide resources to families of children with disabilities, also attended the signing of the ADA at the White House 20 years ago.

"The ADA expands opportunities for Americans with disabilities, but there is still more to do," Goldberg said.

During the ceremony, President
(Continued on page 5)

Join the movement! October is National Bullying Prevention Month

October is National Bullying Prevention Month, a project of PACER Center. It's a time when communities, organizations and individuals nationwide can raise awareness of bullying prevention by using resources at PACER.org/bullying.

"To make a significant impact on bullying prevention, we need organizations across the country to take action and become leaders of this cause," said Julie Hertzog, director of PACER's National Center for Bullying Prevention. "There are 160,000 children staying home from school each day for fear of bullying, but working together, we can make a difference."

Nonprofits, schools, and community groups can show their support and share their efforts to prevent bullying by becoming a Partner or Champion of this cause. Organizations and a link to their website will be listed on PACER's site, along with a list of any activities or events they are planning in connection with the month. To become a Partner or Champion, sign up at PACER.org/bullying.

Everyone can find a way to join the cause at PACER.org/bullying. Students, educators and families can use the free, creative resources at the site to address bullying and help create a culture that no longer accepts bullying.

Teens can sign an online petition, tell their story at bullying411@PACER.org, start a bullying prevention committee at their school, join the TeensAgainstBullying Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube sites, and more. Teens can find videos, blogs, and a toolkit of things they can do to address bully-



Jonna Herbstritt, 13, organized an event at her school. Displayed in the school window are paper figures signed by students pledging, "The end of bullying begins with me."

(Continued on page 5)

Fun Times seeks teens for fall events

When teenagers and young adults with and without disabilities gather for one PACER Center program, they know they are in for “Fun Times.”

“This is the best thing in my life,” said Jennifer Bocklund, who has autism spectrum disorder. “I get to hang out with people, and it doesn’t matter if you have disabilities or not.”

Fun Times is a PACER program designed to help high school teenagers and young adults with and without disabilities connect with one another outside of school. Social events, such as movies, sporting events, or pizza parties are scheduled every other month during the school year in the Twin Cities area, says Susan Shimota, Fun Times coordinator.

As Fun Times gears up for the 2010-11 school year, students are encouraged to sign up, says Shimota. They can visit PACER.org/funtimes to

view a video that describes the program and complete an online application to participate or volunteer. College-aged students and adults can volunteer as chaperones. Information on disability awareness is provided.

Fun Times was launched seven years ago, the brainchild of Win Bennett, brother of Mara, who has Williams Syndrome. Win had noticed that when he and Mara were young children, both were included in birthday parties and other events. As they grew older, however, their social calendars changed. Win continued to receive invitations, but Mara did not.

“It occurred to me that if Mara, who is very outgoing, was sitting home on weekend nights, what about teenagers with disabilities who are not as social?” said Win in 2003.

He decided to do something about it.



Fun Times participants having fun at the Mall of America.

With the help of his family, a group of close high school friends, and PACER, Fun Times was born. Win, Mara, and the original Fun Times group are now adults. Fun Times, however, still attracts teens and young adults, and comments such as “I’m so glad I came!... I am so excited!” keep on coming. Ben Bennett, Win’s brother, is the coordinator of Fun Times this year.

For information, contact PACER Center at 952-838-9000.

Order PACER holiday cards; deadline is Sept. 30

Delight your friends, family and others with PACER’s amazing holiday cards, customized with your own special greeting.

When you send PACER’s holiday cards, you warm hearts twice—once when the recipients open them, and again as your purchase supports PACER programs for children with disabilities. You also make a statement to the world that you care about your community.

Measuring 4 ¾” x 6 ¼”, these full-color cards are printed on glossy card stock and come with white envelopes.

PACER cards are created during the annual Creative Kids Contest, a time when children with disabilities express their artistic side. It is sponsored by artist Tony Whelihan. Each year, a child’s artwork is chosen to be



featured on the cards. This year’s winner is Spencer Sieber, 10.

Ordering is Quick and Easy

Whether you order online, by phone, or by email, simply provide us with:

- the number of cards you want (100 minimum)
- your customized greeting
- your company name or logo
- the date your cards are needed (after Oct. 26)

Order now!

- Online: PACER.org/help/creativecustom2010.asp
- Phone: Kelly Lorenz, 952-838-9000
- Email: kelly.lorenz@PACER.org

Please Note: Orders must be received by **Sept. 30, 2010**. Payment is due at the time of your order.

PACER's gone digital!

Social media is taking the world by storm, and PACER Center is on board! PACER's Facebook page, Twitter page, and YouTube channel let you and PACER stay connected, anytime, anywhere. So, friend us, follow us, and watch us today with just the click of a button at PACER.org.



Families, professionals invited to technology open house on Oct. 2

Sample assistive technology (AT) and learn how it can make a difference for children with disabilities at the annual Simon Technology Open House on Saturday, Oct. 2, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at PACER Center.



This popular event for children, parents and professionals will offer demonstrations of AT, educational software and resources, as well as fun and interactive activities for all ages.

Children are welcome and encouraged to attend.

For more information, call 952-838-9000.

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PACER website: PACER.org
ALLIANCE National PTAC site:
ParentCenterNetwork.org/national
FAPE site: fape.org
C3 site: c3online.org
BULLYING: PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org
PACERTeensAgainstBullying.org
MN SEAC site: mnseacinfo.org

(Alternate format is available upon request.)

Mann Symposium educates about children's mental health and learning disabilities

A total of 1,100 parents and teachers attended the inspirational and informative Fifth Annual National Ted and Dr. Roberta Mann Foundation Symposium about Children and Young Adults with Mental Health and Learning Disabilities on Aug. 17.

Dr. Roberta Mann Benson funds this free event, which this year was co-sponsored by PACER and Dairy Queen. Through the symposium, Dr. Mann hopes to educate more people about these issues and reduce the stigma of mental health and learning disabilities, ultimately providing more support for children and their families.

The demand for attending the symposium has been great: Attendance has grown from 300 attendees to this year's total of 1,100.

"I'm totally overwhelmed by the



Dr. Roberta Mann Benson

response from this symposium," Dr. Mann says.

"Roberta is wonderful" says Paula Goldberg, PACER executive director. "Because of her support, this event has helped so many people learn more about mental health and learning disabilities."

The end of bullying begins with you!

By Julie Holmquist

Disney actress and singer Demi Lovato uses her national platform to promote PACER's bullying prevention movement and its teen site (PACERTeensAgainstBullying.org), and students across the country are joining her in spreading the message.

See what a few of those students are doing to spread the word and change lives. Learn how you can make a difference at PACER.org/bullying.

Start an Event at School

When 13-year-old Jonna Herbstritt of Chaska, Minn. heard PACER's slogan, "The End of Bullying Begins With Me," she took it to heart and organized a Bullying Prevention Awareness Week at her school.

During the week, teachers and students talked through various bullying scenarios, students announced bullying facts over the school's public address system and signed a bullying prevention petition during lunch time, and 230 signatures were displayed at the main entrance of the school.

A mother entering the school noticed those signatures one day just as Jonna was leaving the building. "Finally someone is taking this seriously," she told Jonna. "She looked like she was going to cry," Jonna says. "She said her son was bullied." Knowing the event made a difference to this mother – and other students – left Jonna feeling "just great."

"In middle school, it's very dramatic and cliquy, but we need to treat everyone with respect," she says.

Gather a Group

Last year, 15 seventh graders at Watertown-Mayer Middle School in Min-

Demi speaks out

Demi Lovato knows what it's like to be bullied. That's why she joined PACER's bullying prevention movement and lets other tweens and teens know that they can join the movement, too.

"Together, we can stop this," she says.

Whether she is tweeting about TeensAgainstBullying.org, talking about bullying on national television shows, or sharing her story in a *Seventeen Magazine* article,



Demi takes the time to speak out on this issue. Learn more about Demi's story and find out how you can speak out at PACER/bullying.org.



Peer advocates from Watertown-Mayer Middle School.

nesota addressed the issue of bullying head on. A "peer advocate" group, which included students in special education, collaborated to speak out about bullying, raise awareness of the issue, and make a difference in their school.

Julie Hertzog, director of PACER's National Center for Bullying Prevention, gave the students tips about what they could do if they saw a student in a bullying situation. They learned that

bystanders can step in and prevent bullying.

"This experience has opened my eyes and changed the way I think about people," says one of the students involved.

These peer advocates are featured in a video called "The End of Bullying Begins with Me." Watch it at PACER.org/bullying.

New National Parent Center Network website provides portal to resources for parents, others

A new website, ParentCenterNetwork.org, allows parents and professionals to easily link to a national network of Parent Centers and a wide range of resources. Parent Centers provide training, information and assistance to families of children with all disabilities ages birth to 26 years and the professionals who work with them.

Launched at the Office of Special Education Programs' (OSEP) Leadership Mega Conference in Washington, D.C. in August, the website is a convenient way for anyone to connect with:

- The ALLIANCE National Parent Technical Assistance Center, a project of PACER
- The six Regional Parent Technical Assistance Centers
- Each of the 106 Parent Centers in the U.S. and its territories

From this new portal, parents and professionals can link directly to the websites of these partners and use an interactive map to find the local Parent Center in their state or community. The website features links to research-based information, announcements about upcoming events, and other resources for Parent Centers, families and professionals.

The portal also includes an innovative Parent Center Network search function. Users can type in topical queries such as “alternative dispute resolution” or “individualized education programs” and instantly search the websites of all 106 Parent Centers and the National and Regional Parent Technical Assistance Centers across the country to find related content. Consolidating separate websites



Larry Wexler, Director of Research to Practice at OSEP.

into one Parent Center Network presence was the vision of Larry Wexler, Director of Research to Practice at OSEP. The new portal, www.parentcenternetwork.org, is a collaborative effort of the National and six Regional Parent Technical Assistance Centers.

October is National Bullying Prevention Month

(Continued from page 1)

ing at PACERTeensAgainstBullying.org, a relevant, edgy website created for them.

Elementary school students can take the “Kids Against Bullying” pledge and learn how to respond to bullying at PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org. The site features animated characters, Webisodes, games, and more.

Educators and parents can find free, creative classroom

activities and resources for K-12 students at PACER.org/bullying.

PACER’s National Center for Bullying Prevention unites, engages, and educates communities nationwide to prevent bullying through creative, relevant, and interactive resources. Learn more at PACER.org/bullying or call 952-838-9000; 888-248-0822 (national toll free).

ADA marks 20 years

(Continued from page 1)

Barack Obama also acknowledged that there is more work to do to ensure equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in employment, access to public facilities, transportation and telecommunications. After his remarks, Obama signed an executive

order that will establish the federal government as a model employer of individuals with disabilities.

The order directs several federal agencies to design model recruitment and hiring strategies for agencies seeking to increase their employment of people

with disabilities, as well as mandatory training programs for both human resources personnel and hiring managers on the employment of individuals with disabilities.

Learn more about the ADA at www.ada.gov.

Students create videos on transition issues

It was lights! camera! action! when 17 teens wielded video cameras to make six short films that addressed transition issues for youth with disabilities.

The 2009-2010 project, “Innovative Partnerships for Advancing Youth Employment,” was the concept of PACER. All of the teens involved in the project have disabilities. They learned job skills while creating videos to teach others how to navigate their own transition process.

Representing high schools in St. Peter and Bemidji, the students worked as paid interns and were joined by interns from nearby colleges who were majoring in mass communications and had an interest in disabilities. The college interns helped the young filmmakers learn about video production as the teens created videos about self-advocacy, postsecondary accommodations, healthy hobbies, workforce center services, vocational rehabilitation services and independent living.

Art imitated life as the student-driven project unfolded. The teens learned about all those transition topics as they researched, scripted, storyboarded, filmed, and edited their work. In addition to those technical skills, they learned employment skills such

as teamwork, problem solving, project management, and communication.

Funded by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the project was a creative collaboration with postsecondary institutions, workforce development, and the two high schools.

Students discovered skills and direction:

- “I learned that I can be a leader.”
- “I plan on going to college in mass communications and getting a job in this field!”
- “I learned that you shouldn’t be scared that you have a disability.”

Administrators and teachers gained insights into students’ capabilities:

- “Students have a clear idea of how to meet the postsecondary options in school. They are more capable than they thought they were and they rose to the occasion – creatively, productively.”
- “As a result of the project, these students have more confidence, self-esteem, and started to realize their



Teens from Bemidji, Minn. took part in the video project.

potential.”

- “It gave them a better understanding of what it was like to be successful in college. They learned new strengths and more self-confidence. ...Students learned how to advocate for themselves, how to budget their money, and how to be successful in this world!”

PACER’s Andrea Moore was the project lead. “Not only did the project partners work together to demonstrate what is available in the community for these students, but the students themselves grew immensely in the areas of self-knowledge, interpersonal skills, work skills, work ethic and professionalism.” The videos will be posted later this fall at youtube.com/user/pacercenter.

Archived PACER webinars provide on-demand workshops

In 2008, PACER began archiving its popular webinars (web-based seminars that are transmitted over the Web). PACER’s archived webinars cover a wide range of topics and provide workshop information that can be accessed anywhere and at any time through PACER’s website.

Twenty-six webinars are available, with new webinars added throughout

the year. Topics include “Planning for Educational Inclusion,” “The House of IDEA,” “Charter Schools and Special Education,” “Six Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy” and more.

Are you planning to attend a live webinar but are unfamiliar with how it works? PACER’s archived webinar titled: “Webinar 101: How to Attend and Navigate a Webinar” can help.

To access the archived webinars, visit PACER.org/PACERwebinars, click on a topic, and enter your contact information. Don’t forget to fill out the evaluation form after viewing the webinar.

For more information, call 952-838-9000 and ask for the Simon Technology Center.

Symposium on inclusive recreation set for Nov. 10

Are you interested in finding ways to include children with disabilities in recreation programs and helping them be more physically active?

Program directors, people who work with families of children with disabilities, and anyone passionate about this topic are invited to join PACER and Opening Doors Project Adventure at a symposium on Nov. 10 at PACER Center in Minneapolis.

For the past four years, through a federal National Institute on Disability Rehabilitation and Research grant, an interdisciplinary team at Children's Hospital Boston and the Institute for Community Inclusion in Boston has been working to create and evaluate Project Adventure, a program designed to increase access to recreation for children with special health care needs and disabilities.

At the symposium, information will be presented about the project and how the goals of recreation and inclusion can be applied in different settings.

The symposium is free, but enrollment is limited to 45 participants. Those interested in attending should call PACER at 952-838-9000. For more information about Open Doors, visit: openingdoorsforyouth.org.

Visit PACER's newly updated Health Information Center website

Parents of children with disabilities can find current resources for navigating the health care system on PACER's newly updated Family-to-Family Health Information Center website, PACER.org/health.

The website provides information and links concerning public and private insurance options, as well as the medical home philosophy and family-centered care, dental and medical provider lists, and prescription assistance. Families can also find webpages that explain new Minnesota legislation on personal care assistance eligibility,

recent federal health care reforms, and billing for health-related services included in a child's Individualized Education Program. PACER extends a special thanks to Kaitlin Roh, an intern from Macalester College, for her work on updating the website.

For more information on navigating health care systems or for individual assistance with questions or concerns relating to health care, call PACER Center at 952-838-9000 and ask for the Family-to-Family Health Information Center.

United Way and CFC can support PACER

PACER Center is eligible for donations made through United Way campaigns and Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), the workplace charity campaign for federal civilian, military, and postal employees. PACER is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

United Way

The United Way accommodates employees wanting to support PACER. United Way pledge cards have a Donor Choice location in which to write PACER's name and

address (PACER Center, Inc., 8161 Normandale Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55437).

CFC (federal, military, and postal employees)

Look for PACER in your local campaign booklet under the Children's Charities of America (CCA) heading or alphabetically. You also can see a video about a PACER program by visiting cfcvideospeakersbureau.org and entering PACER as the keyword.

To designate your gift to PACER, use code 12272. This code is unique to PACER and should be used under any heading where you see PACER's name listed.

For information on how to support PACER through the United Way, CFC, or other workplace charity campaigns, call PACER's development office at 952-838-9000 or visit PACER.org and click on Get Involved, Make a Donation.

Siblings of children with disabilities experience

By Julie Holmquist

The dynamics of any sibling relationship are complex, but the mix of siblings with and without disabilities in a family can create a unique set of challenges for parents and siblings alike.

Research has documented several concerns voiced by siblings of children with disabilities, including loss of parental attention, the need for information about the disability, increased caregiving demands, and concern about the future. Yet research has also shown that these siblings have a unique opportunity to develop insight into the human condition, maturity from coping with their special-needs sibling, appreciation for good health, and other positive characteristics.

The type and severity of the disability, the number of siblings, how far apart they are in age, and how a family deals with disability are among the many factors that can shape the experience of siblings.

According to a 2006 National Adult Sibling study conducted by the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center's National Sibling Research Consortium, siblings of adults with disabilities are doing very well overall. In that study, siblings reported that as a group, they spend a fair amount of time with, feel very affectionate and close to, and have benefited greatly from their brother or sister with a disability.

Jodee Kozlak, executive vice president of human resources at Target Corporation, and her youngest sister, Amy Stapleton, would agree with that positive viewpoint. They share their perspectives on the impact a child with a disability can have on siblings.



John Zahariades (center) in an early family photo with his sisters, (L to R) Teresa, Jodee, Suzy and Amy.

Prepare for the best

Jodee was 10 years old when her brother John, at 15 months old, had a brain injury. He now functions at a preschool level. “My parents were told that they couldn’t predict anything about John’s future and to prepare for the worst,” Jodee says. “They said if you can’t predict anything, then we’ll prepare for the best!”

Her parents’ philosophy set the tone for this big Greek family. “My three sisters and I responded to John as a hero. I believe I was deeply influenced by my family and their viewpoint of looking at the situation as a positive one. You never give up, and our parents didn’t give up on our brother. They believed in human capability and undying love, and being proud of John, not being embarrassed but celebrating his life.”

That philosophy meant including John as much as possible in family life. “It was very important to us as a group to include John,” Jodee says. “I remember taking him to the grocery store and the looks we got from people because

of his unpredictable behavior. As a family, our response was to say, ‘tough!’ We deliberately included him.”

As the oldest of five children, Jodee had a different experience than her sister Amy, who at age 38 is only one year older than John. He was “more of a play-mate” for her, Amy says, but she also remembers the public reactions to her brother’s behaviors.

“I remember our parents taking us out to the movie theatre,” Amy says. “John was hyperactive and would make noises and clap his hands. I remember getting so upset about the way people looked at us and wishing he had a physical disability so they would know.”

John’s disability did not stop Amy from inviting her friends to her home, however. “My best friends all just loved John. Even to this day they ask about him.”

Restrictions, responsibilities

While both sisters remember their childhood years with John in a positive light, there were also certain restrictions and extra responsibilities that came with being John’s sister.

“For me it meant very much taking on additional responsibilities so my parents had time with John,” Jodee says. “We arranged things so we all had time with him and our mom would have a break.” She remembers having to quit her first job so she could be home to care for her sisters and start dinner.

“I’m sure there were times when I thought, ‘bummer,’ but we all did our part,” Jodee says. “As a family we came together and believed in the power of hope, love, and attention.”

Experience unique challenges, opportunities

She also remembers her sisters feeling disappointed when they couldn't do something because of John but said they never dwelled on it.

"Because there were four of us older sisters, there were two others who helped immensely," added Amy. "Even though it was difficult at times, we all just naturally pitched in and shared in helping care for John."

During John's middle school years, his bus trip home from school took one hour. "I remember being at home after school waiting for his bus," Amy says. "I couldn't be in after-school activities for that time period. That stands out. I had to be home to help get John off of the bus."

There were other inconveniences, Jodee recalls. "Sure, there were places you didn't go or vacations you didn't take, and we really had to respect his routines. But our home was the hang out place for our friends – that wasn't an issue. His disability was never something behind the scenes."

Positive influences

Despite these limitations and responsibilities, both Jodee and Amy attribute many positive character traits to growing up with John. "It causes you to be really resilient and less judgmental and gives you a wider scope of experience," Jodee says. "I'm just not fazed by things. I have a huge tolerance and a righteousness that everyone belongs."

The time spent babysitting her siblings during her childhood, she notes, probably would have been her fate even if John had not been her brother.

"We are a big Greek family, so we had grandmothers, cousins, aunts, and uncles around and in and out of the house all the time. As the oldest of five and often the one taking care of other

cousins, I think I would have ended up in charge anyway."

Being John's sister helped Amy be more accepting and to appreciate others who were unique or who were cognitively challenged. "It definitely helped me to become a more patient person and also competitive in a sense," she says.

Both sisters remember how hard John worked, and how much he had to focus to accomplish something. "Here was a person with a disability, and there was nothing stopping him," Amy says. "Watching him encouraged me to try harder and not give up."

Amy believes that her parents were good at not letting John's disability become an obstacle for their other children. She recalls the once-a-year vacations to places such as Disneyland that would have been impossible

without respite care for John. "I did not feel like I had less attention," Amy says of her childhood. "I almost felt that John being a special needs child pulled the family together."

Today, their 37-year-old brother lives in a group home with three other men near their parent's house and works five days a week. Every Sunday he visits his parents, and his siblings call or visit on a regular basis.

Because John has a normal life expectancy and their parents are growing older, Jodee and her sisters are beginning to think about John's future care. "Just recently we've agreed that we need to get my parents out of the winter for a few weeks. They have been reluctant to travel because of John, but we are committing to taking care of John when they are on vacation."

Tips for parents

- Be open and honest.
- Limit caregiving responsibilities of siblings.
- Use respite care and supportive services.
- Accept the disability.
- Schedule special time with your child who does not have a disability.
- Let siblings settle their own differences.
- Welcome other children into the home.
- Involve all siblings in family events and decisions.
- Require the child with the disability

to do as much for himself or herself as possible.

- Recognize each child's unique qualities and family contribution.
- Recognize special stress times for siblings and plan to minimize negative effects.
- Teach siblings to interact.
- Provide opportunities for normal family activities.
- Join sibling-related organizations.

From the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, News Digest, Number 11, www.nichcy.org.

Share your story!

PACER is gathering stories from siblings of all ages for a publication. If you are a sibling of a child with a disability and would be willing to share your story, email Julie Holmquist at julie.holmquist@PACER.org or call 952-838-9000.

Blog about Target Field, Twins baseball gains attention

There were plenty of excited people attending opening day of the new Target Field last April in Minneapolis, but perhaps not many as thrilled as Sam Graves, 17, and Michael Sack, 20, two friends who use wheelchairs and have cerebral palsy.

The authors of a blog called “Two Men On” were finally able to easily access their seats at a Twins baseball game and enjoy an unobstructed view.

Accessibility at Target Field – and baseball – are the subjects of their blog, which drew the attention of Twins president Dave St. Peter. When St. Peter invited Sam and Michael to tour the new stadium prior to its opening, they came with an accessibility checklist and reported the results on their blog.

The old Metrodome stadium “was a nightmare for fans in wheelchairs,” says Michael. “What bothered me most at the dome was that fans in wheelchairs could bring one companion. At Target Field, they can have five or six companions.”

“The new field allows me to get



Michael Sack and Sam Graves at Target Field.

around much more easily,” Sam says. “I can see a lot better. In the Metrodome, people would walk in front of wheelchairs. There were railings in front of the seats that blocked the view, and there was only one elevator.”

During their tour of the new field, Sam and Michael pointed out issues with signage for elevators and restrooms, which were later corrected.

The diehard Twins fans started the blog in January of 2010 to inform people about the stadium’s accessibility. The number of people view-

ing their blog has grown, especially after they were interviewed by Minnesota Public Radio during their tour of the new stadium.

Sam and Michael have both benefited from PACER services over the years. Laurie Sack, Michael’s mother, says the PACER Simon Technology Center library, an assistive technology evaluation, and other classes were helpful when her son was younger.

Sam says he always loved visiting PACER’s Simon Technology Center because of “all the computers and the games.” That love of computers and his interest in writing has led him to join his high school newspaper staff and sign up for a journalism class.

Sam is considering a career in sports reporting, and Michael plans to become a journalist. The friends say they will continue blogging, and of course, enjoying a great view at the new stadium. Read their blog at www.gravessack.wordpress.com.

Discover options at PACER’s Housing Resource Fair

Parents: don’t miss this chance to learn more about future housing options for your child.

PACER’s seventh annual Housing Resource and Information Fair is Saturday, Oct. 9, 9 a.m. to noon, at PACER Center. It’s an opportunity for families of children and young adults and service providers to meet and discuss housing options, services, supports, and related issues for children and young adults with disabilities.

“Parents should start thinking about possible housing options when their child is 12, so they can be prepared for their child’s future,” says Susan Shimota, PACER’s housing program coordinator.

State and county representatives will be available to answer questions. For more information or to register, call 952-838-9000 or visit PACER.org/housing.



PACER's grandparent meetings start Sept. 21

In 2007, Pam Telleen learned that her oldest son and his wife were expecting a child with Down syndrome. Not long after, Pam and her husband Bill joined PACER's Grandparent to Grandparent Project and Pam became co-chair.

People with grandchildren of any age and any disability are welcome to attend the grandparent meetings and share concerns, joys, and interests; discover resources; and learn how they can provide support to their children and grandchildren.

"The most important part of having the grandparent group is that we have found a community and people who are feeling the same way," Pam says. "It's a comforting experience to talk with someone who's going through the same thing." Through sharing concerns and experiences,



Bill and Pam Telleen with their granddaughter.

grandparents gather ideas from one another that can be helpful, she says.

In the past, the group has listened to speakers on such topics as dealing with grief, using humor, finding books that show children with disabilities, assistive technology, financial considerations for grandparents, and ideas for

nutritional snacks, which can be a challenge with children who have special health needs or allergies.

Newcomers are welcome to the group. "New people come every time, and we'd love to them come," Pam says. A group scrapbook allows grandparents to share photos and information about their grandchildren.

Beginning Sept. 21, PACER's Grandparent to Grandparent Program will meet at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month (except December) at PACER. Topics for the future include learning about the special education process in school.

For more information, call 952-838-9000 and ask for the Grandparent project.

Parents: Responding to school survey offers valuable data

By answering a school district survey, parents of children with disabilities can provide the state of Minnesota and the federal government with important information that could improve services for children with disabilities.

"If parents receive a survey from their school district about parent involvement, we encourage them to fill out the survey and mail it back, or do the survey online," says PACER Advocate Carolyn Anderson. "It's very helpful for encouraging school districts to involve parents in their child's education."

Each year, a random sample of school districts (one-fifth of the state's districts) sends a survey to a random sample of parents, seeking their views on how well their child's school

involves parents. These parents are asked to answer 23 questions, such as, "Does your school respect your cultural heritage?" and "Has school staff asked you how well special education is meeting your child's needs?"

The survey gathers data that is included in the state's Annual Performance Report (APR) on special education, which is sent to the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs.

In the most recent APR, 67.6 percent of parents of children receiving special education services agreed that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for their children. The target goal was 69 percent.

However, out of all parents randomly sampled to take this survey, only 36

percent of parents, for a total of 447, responded to the survey, says Nancy W. Larson, supervisor of data and reporting for special education policy at the Minnesota Department of Education. Larson noted that 41 percent of parents indicated that the school did not give them information about organizations that offer support for parents of students with disabilities.

Responding to the survey is important, Larson says, because specific kinds of policies, procedures and practices are determined on the basis of that information.

For more information, visit www.education.state.mn.us. Go to the special education page, then click on "state and local outcome data."

October events offer parents ideas, support

October is Minnesota Parent Involvement Month, a time to celebrate the powerful role families play in their children's education. The month features activities for parents and schools, a statewide Family Friendly School contest, and a conference for parents, all sponsored by the Minnesota Parent Center, Minnesota's PIRC, a project of PACER Center.

Research shows that children whose parents, family members, and community are engaged in supporting education achieve greater success in school. Studies also indicate that all parents can help their children be successful in school. There are several things any parent can do to help their children achieve that success.

At home parents can:

- Talk with their children and connect learning at school with experiences outside of school.
- Help with homework by creating a time and place for it.
- Make sure their child's homework is completed and turned in.

At school, parents can:

- Communicate to both school staff and their children about expectations, concerns or questions.
- Join a parent-teacher group or become a member of a school leadership council.
- Get to know their child's teacher. Take advantage of face-to-face opportunities by attending conferences. Meeting teachers early in the school year will make it easier to solve any educational issues that may arise as the year progresses.
- Support teachers by respecting their role and efforts.

Free activities

During Parent Involvement Month, parents and schools can also help children achieve success by using the free activities available at PACER.org/mpc. Parents can download a calendar for October that lists daily activities they can do with their child to encourage learning.

Family Friendly School contest

Parents and other family members may also nominate their children's school for a statewide Family Friendly

MINNESOTA PARENT CENTER

Minnesota PIRC
A project of PACER

School award. The contest honors schools making an extra effort to involve parents and families in school life.

Parents can share the great things Minnesota's schools are doing to involve parents by nominating a school before Oct. 31. To nominate a school, visit PACER.org/mpc and look for the parent involvement tab or call the Minnesota Parent Center at 952-838-9000.

Parent conference

Parent Involvement Month also features the fourth annual "Welcoming, Honoring and Connecting" dinner and conference, offering parents ideas and resources for supporting their children's education.

Following a celebration dinner on Wednesday, Oct. 27, the conference on Thursday, Oct. 28, will feature keynote speaker Tommy Watson, principal at Palmer Lake Elementary in Brooklyn Park, Minn. He will share his story of rising from poverty and a disadvantaged childhood through education.

The conference in Bloomington will also offer valuable workshops. Registration is required. Stipends are available for child care and travel, if requested. *Schools may use Title I funds to help parents attend this event.*

For more ideas and information about parent involvement in education, visit PACER.org/mpc or call the Minnesota Parent Center, 952-838-9000; toll free 800-537-2237.

Co-sponsors of Parent Involvement Month

Minnesota Parent Involvement Month is sponsored by the Minnesota Parent Center, Minnesota's Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC).

It is co-sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Association of School Administrators, Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association, Minnesota Association of Administrators of State and Federal Education Programs, Minnesota School Boards Association, and Minnesota PTA.

NEXT STEPS webinars win 2010 TATRA Award

The Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) in Virginia recently won a national award for an innovative webinar series created for youth with disabilities and their families.

The 15 webinars focus on how youth with disabilities can make a successful transition from high school to postsecondary training and careers. The Virginia parent center received

the TATRA Project 2010 Award for Excellence in Transition-focused Parent Training for its series of NEXT STEPS webinars, which were developed in collaboration with Virginia Commonwealth University. The TATRA Project (Technical Assistance on Transition and the Rehabilitation Act) is funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration and is a project of PACER.

“PEATC’s NEXT STEPS webinar series is an innovative way for families from Virginia and across the country to learn about a wide range of transition issues,” said TATRA project director Deborah Leuchovius. For more information on the award and a link to the winning webinar series, visit PACER.org/tatra.

Center for Early Literacy Learning offers language learning fun

It’s never too early to start teaching your child literacy skills—including things such as listening, speaking, enjoying books, and learning to use writing tools, such as crayons and markers. The Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) offers parents

and professionals free practice guides that show how to use everyday activities to encourage infants, toddlers, and preschoolers to listen, talk, and learn the building blocks for early literacy. To learn more about CELL

practice guides at earlyliteracylearning.org/pgparents.php.

CELL is a major initiative of the Center for Evidence-Based Practices at the Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute.

Students with print disabilities are eligible for accessible materials

Children who struggle to use traditional print curriculum at school may be eligible to receive Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) from their local school district or state.

AIM are specialized formats of printed textbooks and other core curriculum content that can be used by students with print disabilities.

Students with sensory, physical or learning disabilities may be considered to have a “print disability.” AIM may include formats such as Braille, audio, large print, or electronic text.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires that school districts and states provide accessible instructional materials to eligible

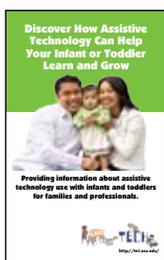
students with print disabilities in a timely manner, so students may study the material along with their peers.

For more information about the legal requirements and the wide range of alternative formats available, visit the website for the National Center on Accessible Instructional Materials at aim.cast.org.

Resources

These resources and many others may be ordered online at PACER.org/publications or by calling PACER at 952-838-9000.

New



Discover How Assistive Technology Can Help Your Infant or Toddler Learn and Grow

This book provides information on assistive technology (AT) use with infants and toddlers for families and professionals. It also includes tips on how to find more information about AT. Contact PACER regarding bulk orders. 2010.

\$1 10+ copies, \$.50 each STC-21

K is for Kindergarten

This booklet offers skill builders to help you prepare your child for kindergarten. In addition to fun activities, you’ll find specific information on state guidelines and tips for choosing a school. 2009. (One copy free for any Minnesota parent)



\$5 10+ copies, \$4 each MPC-21

Workshops

PACER Center workshops are free to Minnesota parents. For information and to register, call 952-838-9000 (metro area) or toll free at 800-537-2237 (Greater Minnesota) or visit PACER.org.

Creation Station

The Creation Station monthly events are for children of all abilities, ages 4 to 20.

Crafty Magic

Children will learn how to create their own amazing magic tricks out of seemingly ordinary craft materials. A guest magician offers tips - and tricks!

Sept. 18, 10 a.m. to noon (PACER)

Xtreme Paper Art

Go wild weaving, twisting and scrunching colorful, textured paper into a unique design, perfect for hanging on a wall.

Nov. 20, 10 a.m. to noon (PACER)

Embellishing Memories

Use decorative papers, beautiful embellishments and more to create a scrapbook to use as a keepsake. Bring up to five photos.

Dec. 11, 10 a.m. to noon (PACER)

Early Childhood

Families Are Important

An overview of families' rights, roles and responsibilities within the early intervention system is featured in this workshop. It also addresses services in natural environments and Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) child and family outcomes.

Oct. 19, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Anoka)

Early Childhood Parent Leadership Institute

This one-day training will help parents of young children enhance their leadership skills and learn how to effect systems change.

Interested parents need to apply. Contact Judy Swett (jswett@pacer.org)

Nov. 6, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (PACER)

IEPs, The Building Blocks of Early Childhood Special Education

This workshop will help parents understand the essential components of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) development, including the evaluation, team planning, writing goals and resolving differences.

Nov. 9, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Anoka)

Everything You Need to Learn Before Your Child Turns Three

This workshop will help families under-

stand the transition process from Part C Early Intervention services to Part B preschool services.

Nov. 15, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

Health Information, Advocacy and Early Childhood

Getting the Help You Need

This workshop for families will cover public programs such as medical assistance, TEFRA, home and community-based waivers, consumer-directed community supports, county services, and county grants.

Oct. 26, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Who Pays? Taking the Maze out of Funding

Come learn about sources of funding for families whose children have special health care needs and disabilities.

Nov. 4, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

How to Access Funding Resources for Your Child with Autism

Learn about resources to help fund PCA services, other county services such as waivers, consumer directed community supports, MA appeals and ABA (behavior) therapy.

Dec. 2, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

Housing

NEW! Housing 3-Part Workshop Series

Creating Your Independent Living Plan

What is your son or daughter's vision for independent living? Come hear about the person-centered planning process and begin to create your son or daughter's housing plan.

Jan. 11, 7 to 9 p.m., (PACER)

Housing Eligibility and Funding

Parents will learn the requirements for housing funding from the federal, state and local government. Information will be provided on individual and provider/developer requirements for various housing options.

Feb. 1, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Creative Housing and Services Options

Explore creative housing options and ser-

vices. This interactive workshop will provide an opportunity for parents, young adults and providers to share their journeys through the housing process.

Feb. 22, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Parent Training

New Two-part IDEA Series Kicks Off Fall Workshops

Session One

IDEA: Blueprint for Understanding the Special Education Process

The special education process is like building a house. This workshop will cover how to use the building blocks of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to develop appropriate services for your child. Anyone who has not previously participated in this session is encouraged to attend before participating in Session Two.

Sept. 13, 6:30 to 9:30 .m. (PACER)

Session Two

IDEA and the IEP

Hear an overview of the requirements of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and visit individual information stations to learn more about evaluation, progress reports, preparing for IEP meetings, and understanding accommodations and modifications.

Sept. 28, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Special Education: What Do I Need to Know

This workshop, presented in English and other languages, will help parents understand special education and learn how to communicate with school staff to encourage positive outcomes for children with disabilities.

Sept. 14, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Bloomington)

Spanish, Somali and English

Sept. 28, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (New Hope)

English and Spanish

Oct. 7, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Anoka)

Spanish, Somali, and Hmong

Oct. 26, 6:30 pm to 8:30 p.m.

(Brooklyn Center) to English and Spanish

Nov. 4, 7 to 9:00 p.m. (Northfield)

English

Nov. 11, 7 to 9 p.m. (Northfield) - Spanish

Transition: Pathway to the Future

This workshop will help parents of chil-

Workshops

dren with disabilities understand how to use the special education transition process to help plan for life after high school. Parents of students in the ninth grade and beyond are encouraged to attend.

Sept. 21, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

IDEA: Blueprint for Understanding the Special Education Process

The special education process is like building a house. There is a logical order to both. This workshop will cover how to use the building blocks of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to develop appropriate services for your child.

Oct. 7, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Anoka)

IDEA: Understanding the IEP

This workshop explores Individualized Education Program (IEP) requirements and components of IEP development, including evaluation, resolving disagreements, and an expanded section on writing measurable goals.

Oct. 19, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Worthington)

Oct. 14, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Willmar)

IDEA: Understanding the Special Education Process

This workshop outlines the basic principles of special education. Topics include free appropriate public education, evaluation, resolving disagreements, and the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Oct. 4, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (St. Paul)

Oct. 18, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Austin)

Exploring the Invisible Disability of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

Presenters from the Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (MOFAS) offer parents management strategies for home and school for children with FASD. Parents will also benefit from meeting other families facing similar challenges.

Oct. 5, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Is Your Child a Target of Bullying?

This workshop offers intervention strategies for parents whose children with disabilities may be targets of bullying at school.

Oct. 12, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Six Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy

Learn six important skills you can use to become a more effective advocate for your child with a disability.

Oct. 14, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

Planning for Educational Inclusion

This workshop for parents of children with disabilities and professionals will increase participants' understanding of educational inclusion. Topics include least restrictive environment, access to the general curriculum, and participation in state and districtwide assessments.

Nov. 9, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

Strategies to Promote Graduation and School Achievement

This workshop will help parents of children with disabilities learn effective strategies to help their child stay in school and be successful.

Nov. 2, 6 to 8:30 p.m. (Burnsville)

English and Somali (each language presented separately)

Tips for Talking with School Staff

Parents will learn effective skills to communicate with school staff about their child. This workshop will provide parents of special education students practical tips to work in partnership with the school.

Nov. 1, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Feb. 24, 2011, 7 to 9 p.m. (Northfield)

English and Spanish (each language presented separately)

A Fitting IDEA

This interactive workshop is for parents of children with disabilities and mental health needs. Parents will learn practical tips on how to use the Individual Education Plan to help meet their child's needs at school.

Oct. 13, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)

Successful Transitions: Planning for Youth with Disabilities and Mental Health or Behavioral Needs

This workshop is for parents and youth with mental health or behavioral needs who are receiving special education. Transition-age students in ninth grade and above are invited to attend with their parents.

Nov. 18, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

The Power of a Personal Story

This interactive hands-on session will help parents of children with disabilities craft and practice presenting their personal story, which can help them be a more effective advocate.

Oct. 30, 9 a.m. to noon (PACER)

Getting and Keeping the First Job

This workshop is designed to help families understand the realities of employment for

youth. Topics include career planning, the role of families, and suggestions to increase the likelihood of being hired for a job.

Oct. 11, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Puppet Training

Kids Against Bullying Puppeteer Training

Volunteers will learn bullying prevention strategies and puppetry skills to present educational puppet shows to elementary-aged students. Volunteers must live in the Twin Cities metro area, have their own transportation and be available during the school day

Oct. 5, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (PACER)

Juvenile Justice

Juvenile Justice and Special Education: What Parents Need to Know

In this workshop, parents will learn why youth with disabilities may be at higher risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system, how to address their needs in their IEP, and how to prepare for court.

Oct. 6, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Special Education: Where Does Juvenile Justice Fit In?

Parents will learn about the special education process and how to integrate best practices for youth at risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Nov. 3, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Youth with Disabilities in the Juvenile Justice System

This session for professionals will offer strategies to help participants work more effectively across systems for youth with disabilities and their families.

Nov. 17, 1 to 3:30 p.m. (PACER)

Simon Technology Center

Assistive Technology Open House

Children and their parents can explore hands-on technology and create works of art in the Creation Station.

Oct. 2, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (PACER)

(Continued on page 16)

Inside

ADA marks 20 years	1
Bullying Prevention	1
Join Fun Times	2
New website	5
Transition videos	6
Health website updated	7
Siblings forever	8
Bloggers	10
Housing Fair	10
Grandparent group	11
Parent Involvement	12
Workshops	14

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Workshops

PACER Center workshops are free to Minnesota parents. For information and updates or to register, call 952-838-9000 (Twin Cities metro area) or toll free at 800-537-2237 (Greater Minnesota) or visit PACER.org/workshops.

Achieving Competence in Augmented Alternative Communication (AAC)

In this workshop, parents and professionals will learn how to support the communication needs of children who use AAC to communicate.

Nov. 11, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (PACER)

Tech for Girls: Dream It, Build It!

If you can dream it, you can build it! Middle school girls with disabilities will put their creative thinking skills to the test while designing bridges with toothpicks, pennies, aluminum foil and gumdrops.

Dec. 7, 6 to 8 p.m. (PACER)

strategies for youth as they enter and complete high school and move toward postsecondary education, work and adult services.

Sept. 27, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Albert Lea)

Social Security for Transition Age Youth

A Social Security representative will speak

about programs for transition-age youth. Topics include the difference between Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance, what the "Ticket" program involves and what "PASS" means for young adults.

Sept. 15, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Duluth)

Transition

Focus on Transition

Families of youth with disabilities (age 14 and over) will learn about opportunities and

SAVE THE DATE!

*PACER's 29th Annual Benefit
is May 7, 2011*