

PACER's virtual Benefit is November 14

PACER's Annual Benefit is always an amazing event. This year, it has been rescheduled for November 14. "This year's PACER Benefit will be a virtual one," said PACER's Executive Director, Paula Goldberg. "It's going to be an exciting evening! We are working to ensure that it will be extra special. You can participate from the comfort of your own home, and wear whatever you like, whether it's jeans or evening attire. We are excited that the amazing Chris Moore, the Oscar-winning movie producer, will emcee the event.

"So many people were thrilled when I told them that we would have a virtual Benefit, and most importantly of all, that we are featuring the legendary Smokey Robinson," Paula said. "Everyone is so excited to hear him! This is a wonderful opportunity for people not only from Minnesota but from all over the country to be able to be part of PACER's Benefit."

Along with the performance by Smokey Robinson, the Benefit will feature PACER's legendary Live Auction, emceed by WCCO-TV's Frank Vascellaro, and Silent Auction. "It won't be a long event," Paula said, "but it will be an unforgettable one!"

Tickets can be purchased at PACER.org/benefit or by calling (952) 838-9000.



Smokey Robinson brings Motown to PACER

Smokey Robinson has been called "the reigning genius of Top 40" and "America's greatest living songwriter." Smokey was a founder of Motown and is best known for his 37 chart-topping hits, including "Tears of a Clown," "You've Really Got a Hold on Me," and "I Second That Emotion," all performed in his amazing high tenor voice. He has received numerous awards, including the Grammy Living Legend Award, NARAS Lifetime Achievement Award, Kennedy Center Honors, and the National Medal of Arts Award from the President of the United States. He has also been inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

Bidding on PACER's Silent Auction begins on October 30. Get started bidding at PACER.org/! Go to page 3 for info about a few of the fabulous prizes available.

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The amazing prizes available at PACER's live auction

Available exclusively for ticket holders on November 14!

Experience Chef Thomas Keller and The French Laundry in Minneapolis

A once-in-a-lifetime culinary experience. You and your three guests will be talking about this evening for years! Spoon and Stable Chef Gavin Kaysen will host The French Laundry Chef Thomas Keller at their Synergy Series dinner (date to be determined). The French Laundry, which opened in 1994 in Napa Valley, California, is one of the world's top restaurants and has earned 3 Michelin stars annually since 2007, in addition to many other International awards. Spoon and Stable, which opened in 2014 in Minneapolis, was recently awarded one of the world's top 50 Up and Coming Restaurants. You'll enjoy numerous courses with wine pairings, meet and take photos with Chef Keller and Chef Kaysen, and take home four signed cookbooks from Chef Keller.

Wine for the connoisseur

Stock your wine cellar with this magnificent collection of some of the world's finest wines! You'll take home bottles of 1996 and 1997 Grand Vin Pauillac, 1998 Carruades De Lafite, 1995 Chateau Margaux, 1995 Pessac Leognan, 1998 Pauillac, 2003 Saint Emilion, and 2001 Pauillac. This package also includes the rare and unforgettable 1996 Chateau Mouton Rothschild, valued at \$2,499.

ESPN's ESPY Awards and after party, July 2021

The ESPYs are the sports award event of the year recognizing individual and team achievements as well as honoring athletes for their contributions to society and humanitarian work. This wonderful prize commences the date before, when you and your guest tour backstage and meet the ESPY Award hosts. The day of the event, you will walk the red carpet, attend the show with VIP seating, and celebrate at the post-show party! Exact date to be determined.



Pedigreed yellow lab puppy and training package

Take home an eight week old purebred yellow lab puppy and make her a part of your family! Along with your new canine best friend, this package also includes training sessions with an expert dog trainer, a collar, leash, bowl, and puppy food.

Savor the exquisite limited-edition Opus One wine

Every true wine lover knows the story of Opus One, the ultra-premium wine by Baron Phillippe de Rothschild and Robert Mondavi. Together, these legendary winemakers created this polished blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec, and more; a wine that is French in style and Californian in execution. You will delight in owning 18 bottles of this great wine. Opus One is produced with uncompromising attention to detail, from the way the vineyard is planted and maintained to the quality of the cork that seals the bottle.

College football fan package

Experience two of the greatest college football games of the year with this exciting football package! You will receive two tickets to the 2022 Rose Bowl in Pasadena, CA, as well as two tickets to the Big 10 Football Championship Game, in December 2021, in Indianapolis, where you'll enjoy the game from the in the Big 10 Conference Commissioner's suite and will be seated with Commissioner Kevin Warren!

PACER's silent auction is full of exciting prizes

Whether you're shopping for yourself or planning a surprise for someone else, here's a taste of just a few of the fabulous finds PACER's silent auction has in store for you. *Experiences are subject to public health guidance due to the pandemic.*

Bidding opens on October 30! Visit PACER.org to put your credit card on file and get started bidding.

VIP Minnesota Vikings tickets. The winner and their guest will enjoy the game from their seats in the VIP Section, near the owner's suite and the 50-yard line. Food and beverage are included. Game date to be mutually determined.

A fantastic assortment of electronics. Enjoy an Activision game box with PS4 gaming system and games, Nintendo Switch, iPhone 11, air pods, and an Apple watch.

Behind the scenes tour of Instagram and Facebook. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for you and three guests to tour Instagram and Facebook headquarters in Silicon Valley, including a virtual reality experience. Must be 13 or older for virtual reality experience.

LASIK for both eyes. LASIK laser vision correction for both eyes with Dr. Thomas Samuelson. Includes pre-operative care and one year of post-operative and follow-up exams.

Wine basket. Red, white, or rosé? Sweet or dry? You'll have plenty to choose from in this basket, which includes a variety of fine wines. Don't miss the chance to try some exciting wines!

Four nights in Big Sky, Montana. Enjoy four nights in a two bed/two bath condo located in Meadow Village on Big Sky Golf Course. Nearby activities include skiing, hiking for all abilities, fly fishing, river rafting, golf, horseback riding, and zip lining. Dates to be mutually determined. Expires November 2021.

Top-of-the-line Toro snowblower. The lucky winner will be the envy of their neighborhood this winter! The Easy Toro Power Clear 721E Snow Thrower has an easy electric start, powerful 212cc 4-cycle OHV engine and self-propel Power Propel® system.

Winners can pick up their items at PACER or pay to have them shipped (PACER cannot ship alcohol). Pick up will be contact free, and reservations are required.

Wine and dine with these local notables

Timing is subject to public health guidance due to the pandemic.

Rudy Boschwitz served Minnesota in the U.S. Senate for 12 years. Many Minnesotans remember former Senator Boschwitz as the founder of Plywood Minnesota and as the proprietor of the famous flavored milk booth at the Minnesota State Fair. Enjoy getting to know this fascinating statesman over lunch!

Frank Vascellaro is an award-winning journalist with two regional Emmy Awards under his belt, a longtime friend of PACER, and a Twin Cities TV legend who has co-anchored the WCCO-TV evening news with wife Amelia Santaniello since 2006! Don't miss the opportunity to bid on lunch with Frank.

Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon knows the state capitol inside out from his years as a Minnesota state representative and his current position as Minnesota's chief election official. The lucky winner will receive his "insider's tour" of the capitol and lunch with Secretary Simon.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey will be your companion for lunch in Minneapolis! Prior to his election as mayor, Jacob Frey was a member of the Minneapolis city council and an employment and civil rights attorney. Fun fact: he is a former professional runner who competed in the 2007 Pan American Games.



Frank Vascellaro

‘Virginia was a major part of PACER from the very beginning’

In the mid-1970s, Virginia Richardson chaired a committee on special education for the Minneapolis Public Schools. At the time, she didn’t drive, but a committee member named Paula Goldberg, the co-executive director of a new organization called PACER Center, offered to pick her up and drop her off. Neither Paula nor Virginia dreamed at the time that they were beginning a relationship that would span more than 40 years and the building of one of the country’s most important organizations for families of children with disabilities.

Virginia joins PACER

When Paula and Virginia met, PACER Center was in its infancy, with just a handful of part time staff, funded by a small grant from the State of Minnesota.

Virginia recalled, “Paula persuaded me to take the training to learn how to do workshops for parents.” After she completed the training, Virginia traveled throughout Minnesota, teaching parents about special education law. After several workshops, Virginia was asked to join PACER’s Board of Directors. In her second term, she became President.

“I presided over two Board meetings, and then Paula and Marge Goldberg [PACER co-founder, no relation to Paula] asked me to take the job of advocate,” Virginia said. “I was the eighth employee. They saw something in me that I didn’t see in myself. I think a lot of people set out to become leaders. I wasn’t one of those.”

While Virginia didn’t think of herself as a leader, Paula saw her as one from the beginning. “I have always had tremendous respect for Virginia,” Paula said. “She is so bright, honest, and cares about people.”

As PACER grew, so did Virginia’s role. Today, she is the manager of PACER’s Parent Training and Information Center. “Virginia developed standards for our advocates,” Paula said. “She plays an important role in training new advocates. She teaches them so much and does an outstanding job.”

Shared values

“PACER has always valued diversity, even when no one else talked about it,” Virginia said. Part of valuing diversity, she said, was ensuring parents of color had a seat at the



Virginia Richardson

table when policies were made. “Every year, when PACER led the national alliance of 100 parent centers, I went to Washington, D.C., for meetings,” Virginia said. “Paula felt it was important that I be there. My life was greatly enriched by that.”

Over the years, Virginia has served on a number of Boards. “PACER’s Board is one of the most effective that I’ve encountered. The Board is presented with issues that need decisions, and people express their opinions but there are no factions. That’s unusual. Paula and the Board have integrity. The Board makes good decisions because they all have input and good information.

“One thing about PACER is that most of us are parents of children with disabilities and our work is not just a job, it’s a commitment. We understand and believe parents when they tell us something. Understanding how parents feel helps us connect with them.

“The message of my journey is that other people see things in you that you don’t see in yourself. I don’t think I ever consciously thought of leading. I just wanted to do the best I could at whatever job I was doing.”

Learn more about Virginia on the following page.

PACER helps surrogate parents advocate for children with disabilities

Every child who needs special education services has the legal right to have their parent advocate for them. This parental involvement in decision-making about special education programs is so important that it's part of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). But not all children with disabilities have a parent who is able to serve as their educational advocate. "That's where a surrogate parent comes in," said Rachel Pearson, who coordinates PACER's Surrogate Parent Project.

A surrogate parent is a foster parent or a community volunteer appointed by the school district. In Minnesota, a surrogate parent is appointed to represent a child if the parent is unknown or unavailable; the child is a ward of the state; or the parent requests a surrogate in writing.

A surrogate parent has the same rights and responsibilities as parents and guardians in the special education decision making process. In order to be effective, a surrogate parent should be committed to learning about special education and the child's educational needs and be able to communicate well with the school. PACER's Surrogate Parent Project helps surrogate parents understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities, and provides them with information and resources through workshops, publications, videos, and an online training guide. This is all available at PACER.org/surrogate.

For more information, visit PACER's surrogate webpage, email Rachel at Rachel.Pearson@PACER.org, or call (952) 838-9000.

"PACER is here to help surrogate parents succeed in their important role as the advocate for a child with a disability. We have heard from surrogate parents that PACER's resources have been instrumental in helping them successfully advocate for their surrogate children." — Rachel Pearson

A personal passion

Like many parents who work for PACER, Virginia's passion for the educational rights of children with disabilities was driven by her own experience. When their oldest child, Debbie, started kindergarten, Virginia and her husband realized that she was different than the other children in the classroom.

"We had Debbie evaluated by a psychologist who said she would never learn to read or write and that we should put her in a facility for children who were called 'mentally retarded' at that time.

"My husband and I had no background in early childhood education, but we didn't believe that Debbie would never learn to read or write."

The Richardsons had high expectations for Debbie. They persuaded the school's principal, a family friend, to allow her to go into the first grade. They were right about Debbie: She could learn, just not at the fast pace of a regular classroom. At the same time, they felt it was important for Debbie to be in some regular education classes. "I'm from the South," Virginia said. "I knew that when you were sent out of the room, it was because people thought they were better than you. It was important that Debbie be in some regular classes."

Today, Debbie is a high school graduate who is good at math and lives in her own apartment. She subscribes to the StarTribune newspaper and reads it every day. "She delights in voting," Virginia said. Debbie sings in her church's choir and walks two to three miles most days.

"My son is a graduate of Georgetown Law School. I think Debbie has accomplished just as much."



Debbie Richardson

Partnering for Izera's success

Last year Izera Rogers made the school honor roll three times. She is on track to graduate from high school this spring and is thinking about college. "It's just so wonderful! I'm in tears here," said her proud mother, Migdalia Rogers. "I want to thank PACER and Deanne Curran, our advocate. I can't imagine where we would be without their support."

PACER's help with Izera's IEP (Individualized Education Program) and conciliation hearing when the IEP wasn't working, turned things around for the 17-year-old girl. It was a long road, but thanks to Migdalia's persistence, Izera's hard work, and PACER's knowledge and support, things are going even better than Migdalia had hoped.

Izera, who was diagnosed with ADHD and dyslexia, once was so upset about school that she had panic attacks. Migdalia knew for years that her daughter needed help with academics, but the school didn't see it the same way she did. "In elementary school, she struggled with reading and comprehension," Migdalia said. "Izera tried to tell them she really was trying, but the teacher wouldn't believe her. They moved her into the hallway."

Izera came home crying that day, and it wasn't the only time that happened. Migdalia struggled to get the school to understand that Izera needed help. Migdalia felt that because she was a person of color with a disability – she is Deaf – the school discounted her observations. "I knew my daughter needed services," she said. Though the school agreed to a 504 Plan, it wasn't enough, Migdalia said. She thought Izera needed an IEP.

A 504 Plan is easier to qualify for than an IEP. A 504 Plan provides some accommodations and supports for a child to learn alongside typical peers in a regular classroom. An IEP is very detailed. It provides a blueprint for special



Izera and Migdalia Rogers

education and services that are individualized to the student's needs, and includes the child's current academic level, annual goals, services, participation in general education classes, and more.

Izera was in middle school when Migdalia called PACER for help. PACER suggested an evaluation, and the results proved Migdalia's instincts were correct: Izera qualified for additional help. As a result, an IEP was developed and Izera was able to access special education classes and services.

Although the IEP was helpful, Izera continued to struggle over the next year. Migdalia contacted PACER again. Over the next few years, as Izera moved from middle school to high school and then to a different school district when the family moved, PACER was there for help. Once there was an IEP that was working, Migdalia wanted to make sure Izera would have the same IEP in the new school district. PACER suggested Migdalia contact the new district's special

'Izera's success' continued on next page

"My daughter really needed help. She was anxious and crying all the time. It was tough for me to watch. PACER helped me say what I wanted to say, correctly, and the school listened."

– Migdalia Rogers

'Carmen's Corner' nurtures social-emotional learning

Children learn more than academics at school: They also learn how to work, play, compromise, and share with others, skills that are crucial for their social-emotional development. Social distancing and virtual learning have created new barriers to these opportunities for children to learn in social settings.

To help counteract this isolation, PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center created Carmen's Corner, an innovative and educational video series for children in K-3rd grade. Starring in the videos are beloved characters from PACER's Kids Against Bullying puppet show, who highlight key concepts of bullying prevention and promote social-emotional learning in an engaging and accessible format. Visit Carmen's Corner at PACER.org/CarmensCorner.

"We realized that communities, perhaps now more than ever, need the Kids Against Bullying messages of kindness, acceptance, and inclusion," said Tara Ricasa, of the Los Angeles PACER Puppet Program. "Kids still need to learn and grow, and teachers need to be supported, too. This web series is a way to bring Carmen and her puppet friends into students' homes and virtual classrooms."

Tara and Judy French, the coordinator of PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center's Los Angeles office, produced the pilot episode of Carmen's Corner on the topic of kindness, and began researching and compiling the show's supplemental learning materials. PACER staff in Minnesota worked with the team virtually to assist with the curriculum and worksheets, puppeteering, script writing, and video production.



Bailey Huston, Coordinator of PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center, talks to Carmen about kindness on the first episode of "Carmen's Corner"

Season one of Carmen's Corner focuses on the topics of kindness, emotions, acceptance, inclusion, advocacy, and unity. These concepts can help young children develop healthy relationships and social behaviors, which in turn helps prevent bullying and keep them safe. To help parents and educators reinforce the ideas in the videos, each episode has a corresponding educator guide, worksheets, and fun activities that can be downloaded for free and completed at home or in the classroom.

Carmen's Corner is just one of dozens of activities and resources that PACER's NBPC has created to help support students' social-emotional learning and promote bullying prevention during this difficult time. Visit PACER.org/Bullying for booklets, infographics, digital worksheets and activities, creative projects, and more!

'Izera's success' continued from previous page

education director to ensure they had the information from the previous IEP.

Today, Izera is a successful and confident student who enjoys writing and forensics. Migdalia can't say enough about PACER's support. "PACER really stood up for us," Migdalia said. "I've learned so much about what PACER does, how much PACER offers. They take the time to listen to you and understand, and then they help make sure your child gets what they need."

Deanne said that Migdalia is a great role model for Izera. "She is very proactive and has great perseverance," Deanne said. "Sometimes a parent will stop at a certain point, when if they had kept going another step, their child would get additional needed services. Migdalia keeps going, and she partners with Izera."

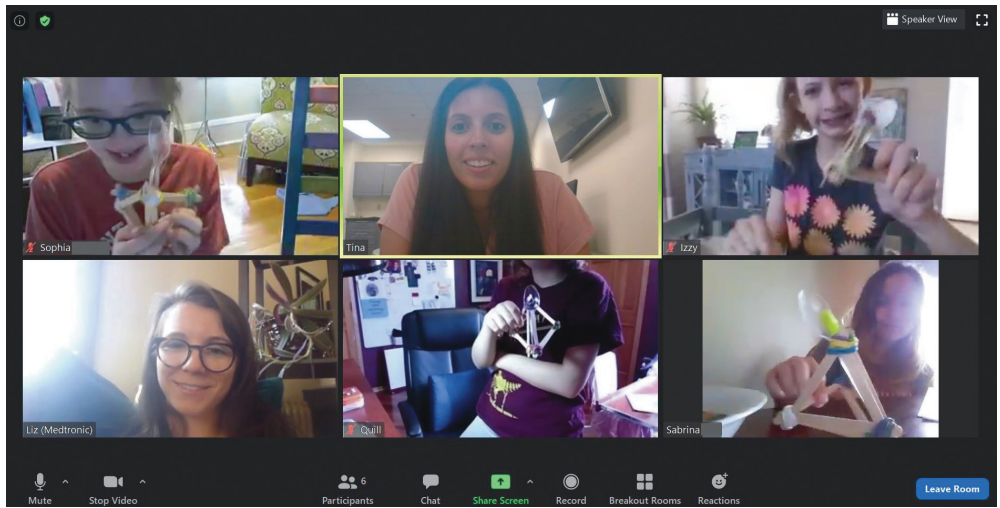
"She is passing on the self-advocacy skills that will help Izera not just with her education but with succeeding in life."

PACER's annual EX.I.T.E. Camp

When the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the ability to hold in-person events, PACER's Simon Technology Center (STC) didn't want to disappoint the students who were looking forward to EX.I.T.E. Camp, a free, five-day summer camp that encourages middle school girls with disabilities to have fun, meet new friends, and gain confidence in their ability to learn about Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).

"It seems fitting for a STEM camp that we used technology to allow the girls to participate," said STC Director Terri Rosen of the decision to hold this year's camp over the virtual platform Zoom. The 20 girls were mailed kits with materials that allowed them to participate in each of the activities. In addition, said Tina Hanson, who coordinates EX.I.T.E. Camp, "We wanted to replicate the supportive camp environment, so we included movement break ideas and other strategies. We encouraged the girls to take breaks as needed since we know it's a lot to ask of them to sit in front of a computer for a few hours at a time. We also shortened the camp day from seven hours to three to four hours.

"Overall, the girls adapted really well to the virtual format. It helped that they had been participating in distance learning for school, so many of them knew how to use Zoom. They were able to navigate the chat, virtually raise their hands, and use their microphones and cameras to participate," Tina said.



While the campers couldn't meet in-person this year, they were able to connect virtually

Four major companies partnered to help make this virtual camp a reality: Medtronic, C.H. Robinson, Best Buy, and Accenture. Employees from Medtronic led the girls in designing their own boats. The team from C.H. Robinson ran a coding activity using Scratch software. Best Buy's interactive presentation had participants write a story and then code it to life with characters and dialogue. Representatives from Accenture guided the girls through activities that highlighted project management and logistics.

Presenter Belinda Jensen, KARE-11 TV's chief meteorologist, talked about her road to meteorology. The Works Museum provided an exciting presentation about circuits and led the girls in creating their own fan out of a motor, battery, and popsicle sticks.

Both the participants and their families were delighted by the success of the new virtual format for EX.I.T.E. Camp. As one parent said, "[My daughter] increased her creativity and her desire to learn STEM subjects. She has asked me about becoming an astronaut now. You all did a great job. Thank you again, PACER Center and staff."

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PACER Center enhances the quality of life and expands opportunities for children, youth, and young adults with all disabilities and their families so each person can reach his or her highest potential. PACER operates on the principles of parents helping parents, supporting families, promoting a safe environment for all children, and working in collaboration with others. PACER is also the National Bullying Prevention Center, offering innovative resources for students, parents, educators, and others.

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Bringing weather to EX.I.T.E. Camp: Meteorologist Belinda Jensen

KARE-11's chief meteorologist, Belinda Jensen, is dedicated to EX.I.T.E. Camp. "The simple truth is, I went the first time and I was hooked," Belinda said. "I get as much out of it as the girls." That was 16 years ago, and other than during a brief break, she's been a popular contributor every year since. To the girls' delight, she always gives EX.I.T.E. Camp a shout out on KARE-11 News.

Belinda said she "keeps it loose" when presenting at EX.I.T.E. Camp. Though she comes prepared with topics, "If the girls want to talk about hurricanes for 20 minutes, we can do that," she said. "If we're talking about something and I see their attention waning, I switch gears. With weather science, there's a plethora of topics."

Belinda likes to start with the basics. "I demystify weather by focusing on the nuts and bolts," she explained. One thing she's noticed is that some of the girls view storms with fear. "There is some anxiety, and I ask them, 'Why are you afraid of thunderstorms?' It's a great way to talk about what makes a thunderstorm. And then we can talk about hurricanes and tornadoes, too. Weather isn't as scary when you understand it."

Belinda is dedicated to introducing girls to science and said she's "humbled and honored to be part of EX.I.T.E. Camp. I love the history and that someone realized that science is so important for every single person, including girls with disabilities."

She's also impressed with the caliber of corporations that volunteer their time and talents. "All of these companies that volunteer and create projects are wonderful," Belinda



Meteorologist Belinda Jensen presents to campers at this year's virtual EX.I.T.E. Camp

said. "The volunteers hang out with the girls and have a really great time."

Belinda has been with KARE-11 for 27 years and has been chief meteorologist since 2005. She co-hosts "KARE 11 Saturday," and "Grow with KARE." She is also the author of six books about weather for young children.

"Every time, I am blown away by the questions the girls ask and their intelligence," Belinda said. "I believe that they soak in the information in different ways. Even if they can't express it, I see it in their eyes."
— Belinda Jensen

And the survey says... Support PACER with SurveyMonkey

Helping PACER is now as easy as taking simple online surveys. PACER supporters can sign up on SurveyMonkey Contribute to receive short surveys from SurveyMonkey customers who need opinions on a variety of topics. For every survey completed, SurveyMonkey makes a donation to PACER, and participants have the opportunity to win \$100 in an instant win game. Participants' identities and information remain confidential. Sign up at contribute.surveymonkey.com/charity/PACER.

Distance learning: Parents speak out

PACER has received an unprecedented number of phone calls from parents who have serious concerns about the problems distance learning presents for families of children with disabilities. In their own words, parents share their experiences with distance learning.

CHELSEY WINTER: “Carter cries every day.”

Chelsey’s oldest child, Carter, has severe dyslexia and moderate dysgraphia. “Carter is very overwhelmed by distance learning,” said Chelsey. “He is trying so hard, but this year in his new middle school, the teacher uses a mastery program for different subjects that is not specifically for kids with dyslexia.”

Carter was two weeks into the school year before he was assigned a paraprofessional to help him. “She tried to message him on Teams [Microsoft Teams is a virtual communication platform],” Chelsey said. “He can only read small words. He said, ‘I can’t read that!’” Chelsey also said that the lack of structure, including no due dates for assignments, is difficult for Carter.

The technology is also a challenge for the Winter family. “We have two computers for three kids. The school gave us an iPad for Carter, but it doesn’t work with the program used for Carter’s classes.

“I am so overwhelmed.”



Carter Winter

JUDY CAVAZOS-BEAL: “I don’t feel like we’ve gotten to the point of accessing education.”

“In a few words, distance learning is challenging, difficult, and frustrating,” Judy said. She has two boys. AJ, who is nine, has CHARGE syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that affects his senses. He is Deaf, blind, and has issues with balance and other senses. “I feel like the teachers are trying their hardest, but we need more support. AJ is just learning how to use the equipment. I am helping him, but I don’t have the proper training.”

With the help of a PACER advocate, Judy has just completed a conciliation conference with the school. “We’re hoping that AJ will be able to have a paraprofessional to help him. Just a few hours of week would make a big difference.

“I don’t want to drop my expectations for AJ. We just need more help.”

ZENAIB MOHAMMED: “Ismael’s IEP doesn’t work with distance learning. He is not getting any of the supports he needs.”

Zenaib is working full time from home while she also helps her three children, ages 7 to 11, with their distance learning. “Working at home and juggling my children’s education is extremely difficult,” Zenaib said. Her middle child, Ismael Hurreh, is on the autism spectrum and, when he was in school, had an aide to help him. Although Ismael’s special education teacher is very supportive, “The school has not offered other services or supports to supplement for the aide he used to have. I wish the school would supplement what kids are missing from their IEPs.

“It is exhausting even for my children in mainstream classes to be on the computer for so long. The teachers have been flexible about letting Ismael take time off from schoolwork when he is having an especially hard time, which has helped a bit, but at the same time I am worried about what he is missing out on,” Zenaib said.

SARAH SHULMAN: “Most days, Sam is not done with his schoolwork until 8:00 p.m., and he always has to use the weekends to catch up.”

Sarah’s son Sam, who is 11, has dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD, anxiety, and depression. Sam is in his first year of junior

‘Distance learning’ continued on next page

The gift that keeps on giving: Why PACER's endowment is important

"When I think about the kind of legacy I want to leave, I think of PACER," a donor said to Paula Goldberg, PACER's Executive Director. "Is giving to PACER's endowment the best way for me to do this?"

Understanding how endowments work can help answer that question. An endowment is composed of donor gifts: cash, stocks, or other assets. Some people compare endowments to a savings account. An endowment is a legally restricted fund in which the interest or investment earnings can be spent on programs or operations, but the principal is kept intact. Giving to an endowment can also benefit the donor's tax situation.

An endowment benefits PACER Center because it helps PACER plan for the future. It helps ensure that PACER's programs will always be there to meet the emerging needs of families with disabilities and children who are bullied. "In these uncertain times, PACER's endowment is more important than ever," said Paula Goldberg, PACER's Executive Director.

There are many ways to give to PACER's endowment. A donor may give today, plan regular gifts, or make PACER part of their estate plan. A donor may begin an endowment in honor or memory of a loved one, or choose to contribute to one of PACER's named endowment funds.

To discuss your role in PACER's endowment, call Paula Goldberg at (952) 838-9000. Consult your tax professional or financial advisor to learn how a gift to PACER's endowment may enhance your tax situation.

'Distance learning' continued from previous page

high. "That would be a big transition in itself," Sarah said. "Distance learning has been very difficult for Sam. The first two weeks of the school year were chaotic, and there was very little educational content." She doesn't blame the teachers for this; she questions why they were given just a week to implement the new learning platform.

Sarah works in health care; her schedule is one week on and the next week off. During the weeks Sarah is working, Sam goes to her work's emergency employee childcare center; when Sarah is at home, she helps Sam with distance learning.

Though Sam has now qualified for an IEP, and the school has been moving the process along well, Sarah wonders how, with distance learning, Sam will receive the services

and supports he is entitled to. "I believe we will have to pay out of pocket for a home tutor to help Sam with distance learning. I don't think the IEP will cover this, but even if it does, I don't think the district has the resources to cover it."

In spite of the difficulties, Sarah is optimistic because the teachers have been so responsive to feedback. "I am also very grateful to have PACER's support. Working full time as an essential health care employee and trying to parent and teach Sam at the same time has made me feel unable to keep up with the many details involved in special education. My advocate, Susan Einspar, has been able to take that part off my plate and explain special education logistics, terms, and rules to me in more straightforward terms, so I am able to prioritize being Sam's mom."

PACER's advocates are here to help with your concerns about your child's education! Call (952) 838-9000 or email PACER@PACER.org.

Voting with a disability

It is not always easy for people with disabilities to vote, but there is information and accommodations in place that help make voting less of a challenge. Accessibility in voting is a priority for Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon, the state's top election official.

"There are 3,000 polling places in Minnesota," Secretary Simon said. "Volunteers from the Minnesota Disability Law Center audit the locations to make sure they are physically accessible, and they also check to see that assistive voting technology is easily available. Since the enactment of the Help America Vote Act in 2002, every polling location has been required to have a ballot device that makes it possible for voters with a range of disabilities, including sight, hearing, and reading, to vote independently. Head election judges are trained in how to make this available for voters to use."

A voter with a disability has the right to have another person read their ballot to them, mark their ballot for them, and even sign their ballot; however, no one can tell them how to vote.

In addition to voting inside a location, voters have the option to vote curbside without leaving their vehicles. Polling locations have curbside voting areas marked. Upon request, two election judges, one from each major party, will bring the ballot to the voter, who can vote privately from their vehicle. To ensure integrity of the ballot, both judges put it through the voting machine.

Secretary Simon said that his office is working on implementing a system to provide those with print,



Secretary of State Steve Simon

visual, and other disabilities a way to vote privately and independently at home, using a software tool that is already used under certain circumstances by military and expatriate voters, who have ballots emailed to them. The tool is authorized under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and he noted that they are working with the National Federation of the Blind and the Minnesota Disability Law Center on this solution.

Secretary Simon noted that his office has voting information in 12 languages, including American Sign Language (ASL).

A tale of two voters: Brett Nelson and Abie Curran

Brett Nelson has been voting for many years

"Everyone should vote," said Brett Nelson. "It can be confusing, but it's important to protect our rights."

Brett is an adult with developmental delays who has been voting since "right before I graduated from high school, when I turned 18." He said that when he sees political commercials, "I sometimes don't know if they're telling the truth. I talk about it with my family, and then we decide.

"I have a disability and I have a right to live and work in the community. I pay taxes to help support my rights, and my right to vote is important. The money I pay in taxes helps support my waiver and my support staff."

Brett remembers vividly his first time voting. "They knew it was my first time, and after I put the ballot in the machine, they clapped and cheered!"

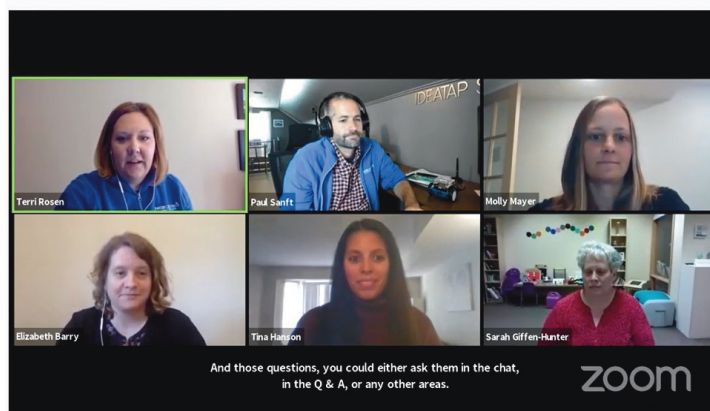
PACER's Tech Expo:

A new virtual success

Building on the success of EX.I.T.E. Camp, PACER held its annual Simon Technology Center Tech Expo virtually. The format differed but the goal remained the same: Help families and professionals learn about Simon Technology Center services, familiarize themselves with assistive technology, and have fun! The Tech Expo, held on September 19, usually is attended by families and professionals from the Twin Cities area, but this year's virtual event drew people from across the country and as far away as India to join in.

Virtual attendees met assistive technology specialists, learned about Simon Technology Center (STC) services and programs for different age groups, and watched assistive technology demonstrations that offered a preview of the range of supports available to individuals with disabilities of all ages.

A highlight for many participants was the virtual tour of the STC lending library, which houses a wide range of assistive and augmentative technologies that can be borrowed by families and teachers. Assistive technology can be a costly investment, so it was helpful for families to see all that PACER has available for them to consider and try before making an investment.



PACER's Simon Technology Center staff introduce themselves at the virtual Tech Expo

The in-person Tech Expo usually offers Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) and hands-on activities for children and youth. This year, staff led a session in which participants learned to make a Do-It-Yourself slant board at home. Participants also had the opportunity to view demonstrations of the technology used in the STC's free STEM workshops for teens with disabilities.

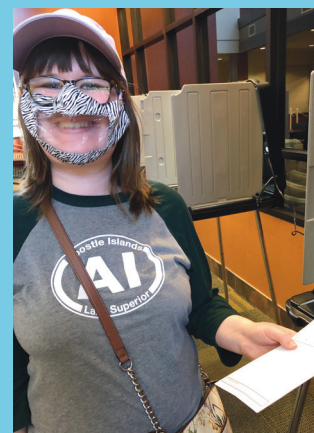
Many participants made the event a family affair. One parent said, "All family members watched. We had some great discussions! Because of my own disabilities, I would likely not have been able to attend an in-person expo, so this was perfect. It also allowed my five-year-old, who has significant support needs, to be exposed to content within his typical environment and routines."

Abie Curran is a new voter

Abie Curran, 18, voted for the first time this year, and like Brett Nelson, she is an enthusiastic voter. She said voting for President was "exciting!" Abie added, "It's important for me to choose who represents me." Abie is DeafBlind.

Abie believes everyone should vote. She found the voting process challenging, and thinks other people with disabilities might, too. "Many people have limited access and don't know how to get information," she said. "I needed a large print ballot, but I had a hard time finding out how to get one." Abie pointed out that on the ballot, the instruction to "Vote for one" was smaller than other ballot language.

Abie said that the COVID virus is her top issue. She hopes the next president will be able to "finish the COVID virus." She is concerned about the health of her grandparents, whom she misses and has not been able to see. Abie also mentioned the disappointment of missing out on her high school graduation ceremony and not being able to celebrate with friends and family.



Abie Curran votes for the first time

Workshops

PACER Center workshops are FREE to Minnesota parents. For information and to register, call (952) 838-9000 or toll free at (800) 537-2237, or visit [PACER.org/workshops](https://www.pacer.org/workshops).

PACER Center is using new, innovative techniques to best serve students, families, and professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, all PACER Center workshops are held virtually as a Livestream, webinar, or Zoom meeting. More information regarding the platform used for each workshop can be found at [PACER.org/workshops](https://www.pacer.org/workshops).

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Working Towards Positive Educational Outcomes: Mental Health and Special Education

This workshop will provide parents and others with information to help prepare for a positive Individualized Education Program (IEP) team approach to supporting a child's mental health needs in school and during distance learning.

- **Dec. 10, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**

EARLY CHILDHOOD

What Inclusion Means for My Child

Parents of children with disabilities ages 3 to 5 will receive an introduction to Least Restrictive Environment and the principles of inclusion. A panel of parents will also discuss their experiences with preschool inclusion.

- **Nov. 16, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

TECH FOR GIRLS CLUB

Have fun with science, technology, engineering, and math! Girls with disabilities, ages 11 to 18, of all skill levels are welcome.

Coding a Story

Middle school girls of all abilities will create their own story and use Scratch, an online coding program, to code scenes and animate characters.

- **Dec. 5, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

Mad Scientist: Chemistry Experiments

Girls will conduct experiments using common household items, learn about the scientific method, and make hypotheses about what happens when you mix certain items together. Girls will also make a rainbow using milk and create their own slime!

- **Jan. 30, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

Code a Ping Pong Game

In this virtual Tech for Girls workshop, participants will use the Scratch program to code their own ping pong game. Girls will learn how to code sounds, movement, and point scoring to their game. No coding experience required.

- **Feb. 20, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Off to College: What to Know Before You Go

This interactive webinar for families of youth who will attend two- or four-year postsecondary programs provides essential information about changing rights, roles, and responsibilities, along with practical tips for student success.

- **Nov. 10, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**

Tips for IEP Teams to Help Students and Families Prepare for Inclusive Postsecondary Education

Families of high school students and the professionals who work with them will learn strategies to guide in the selection of transition goals and activities to build the skills needed for college success.

- **Nov. 17, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**

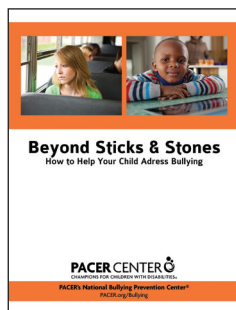
Resources

To see the full list of PACER publications and to order, go to **PACER.org/Publications**. You may also order by calling (952) 838-9000.

Beyond Sticks & Stones: How to Help Your Child Address Bullying

This book offers bullying prevention strategies for children at home, in school, and online. It is filled with information and practical tools that can help parents and others take action against bullying. A special section of the book provides specific tips for parents of children with disabilities.

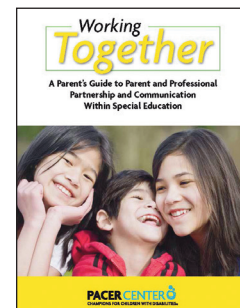
\$5 | BP-7



Working Together: A Parent's Guide to Parent and Professional Partnership and Communication Within Special Education

This book helps parents effectively communicate with special education professionals as they develop their child's educational program.

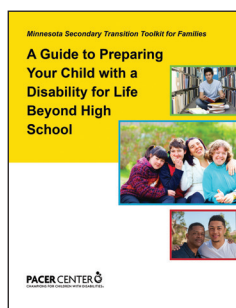
\$6 | 10+ copies, \$5 each | PHP-a19



Minnesota Secondary Transition Toolkit for Families: A Guide to Preparing Your Child with a Disability for Life Beyond High School

Helps make transition planning easier. Topics include health care, benefits planning, postsecondary education, housing, and more. Updated 2017.

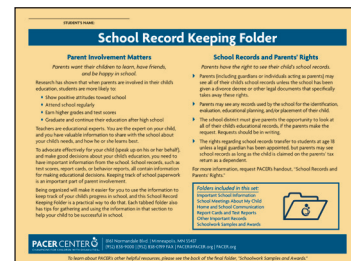
\$9 | ST-41



School Record Keeping Folders (General Education)

This School Record Keeping Folder is a practical way for all parents to stay organized to keep track of their student's progress in school. Each of the six tabbed folders have tips for gathering and using the information to help your child be successful in school. Also available in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali.

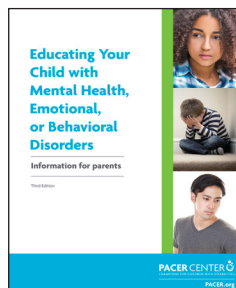
\$10 | 11+ copies, \$8 each | MPC-6



Educating Your Child with Mental Health, Emotional, or Behavioral Disorders: Information for Parents

This guide helps parents of children with mental health, emotional, or behavioral disorders participate effectively in special education planning, including school discipline policies, placement options, and behavioral and emotional support needs. Updated 2018.

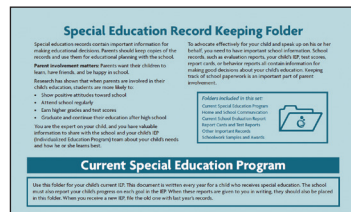
\$5 | 10+ copies, \$4 each | PHP-a21



Special Education Record Keeping Folders

Special education records contain important information for making educational decisions. This set of six folders helps parents organize school paperwork to help them make good decisions about their children's education. Also available in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali.

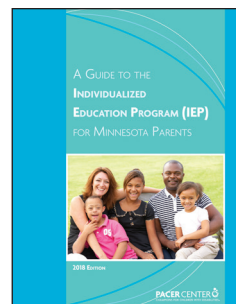
\$10 | 11+ copies, \$8 each | PHP-a5



A Guide to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) for Minnesota Parents

This booklet helps parents work with schools to address each child's special needs through understanding the required components of the IEP. Includes examples from an example IEP form. Updated 2018.

\$3 | 10+ copies, \$2 each | PHP-a12



PACER's complete list of publications can be found at PACER.org/Publications



**Details on PACER's Virtual
Benefit on page 1!**

Change Service Requested

PACER is here to help!



During these challenging times, PACER is committed to being a valuable resource for families of children with disabilities and students who are bullied, as well as the professionals who serve them.

PACER's parent advocates, assistive technology specialists, bullying prevention associates, and all staff are available to assist families and professionals. Call (952) 838-9000 or email PACER@PACER.org for assistance.

PACER Center has developed informational materials to help families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Topics include: Distance Learning and Students with Disabilities, Social and Emotional Learning and Supports, Health, At-Home Family Activities, and Student Privacy. Many are available in Hmong, Somali, and Spanish translations. Handouts are free to download and are available at PACER.org/special/covid-19.asp.