



Legendary **STEVE MARTIN** headlines PACER's Benefit, Saturday, November 13

Steve Martin, the award-winning comedian, actor, musician, writer and producer, will be the star of the show at PACER's Annual Benefit. Steve co-created and currently stars in Hulu's smash hit comedy series, *Only Murders in the Building*. He has a long and storied career which began as a writer for the *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* and then as a frequent host of *Saturday Night Live*, where he created the famous "Wild and Crazy Guys" routine. Among his many movies are *The Jerk*; *Parenthood*; *Little Shop of Horrors*; *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles*; and the *Father of the Bride* films. He has written Broadway plays and recorded award-winning Banjo albums as well as the hit novelty song, *King Tut*.

"Steve Martin is a true show business legend as well as a top star in entertainment today," said Paula Goldberg, PACER's Executive Director. "I don't want to spoil the surprise of his format, so let's just say that it will be a night to remember, and we are thrilled that our audience will have the chance to experience Steve's magic. Everyone we've spoken to about Steve Martin says that same thing: 'I can't wait.'"

Steve has earned five Grammy Awards, a Primetime Emmy Award, and an Honorary Academy Award. He is also the recipient of a Kennedy Center Award, the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, and the American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award.

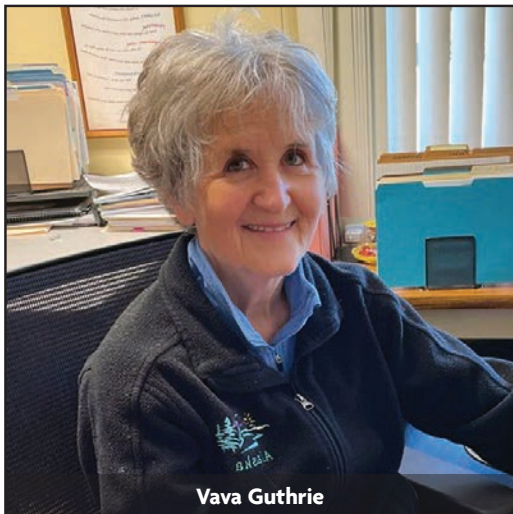
For safety reasons, the benefit will be held virtually, as it was last year. ■



PACER's BENEFIT • SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13

Tickets on sale **NOW** at PACER.org!

See page 9 for information about PACER's Silent Auction



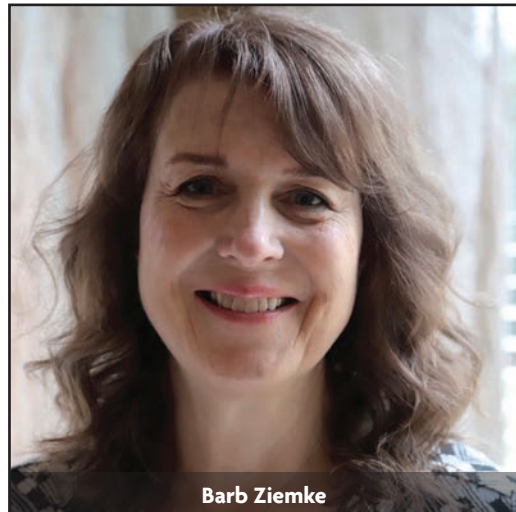
Vava Guthrie



Virginia Richardson



Renelle Nelson



Barb Ziemke

In the more than 40 years since PACER Center was founded, there have been many changes and much growth. One thing that hasn't changed is the role of PACER's dedicated staff of parent advocates. "Parents helping parents" is at the core of what they do – all of PACER's parent advocates are parents or family members of children with disabilities. "PACER hopes that every child with a disability or special needs has a parent who can be an effective advocate for them," said Virginia Richardson, PACER's manager of parent training. "PACER's advocates are here to help."

What does an advocate do?

Parents who contact PACER for help don't always know what to ask, said Vava Guthrie, PACER's director of parent programs. "Advocates listen and acknowledge what the parent is saying. The parent might know something is wrong, but they don't always know exactly what. They may say 'I don't want my child in special ed anymore!' I might respond with, 'It sounds like you are not happy with the services your child is receiving.' We then discuss what the child needs and make a plan to ensure that happens."

Barb Ziemke, co-director of PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment, said: "Part of an advocate's job is to be a detective – we collect information to determine what the problem is, and then help the parent take steps to solve it."

Vava Guthrie added, "Advocates talk with parents, research information and laws, prepare parents for meetings with schools, attend meetings with parents and school staff, prepare for and conduct workshops, create fact sheets and materials, and more."

Families' needs come first

Virginia Richardson said, "We don't have a magic number of calls an advocate takes in a day. We take the time that is needed to help."

During the pandemic, Vava Guthrie is the initial contact for parents who call or email PACER. She listens to voice mail messages and reads emails from parents. If the parent isn't already working with an advocate, Vava assigns them to one. "We are all generalists. Every advocate can handle any call. But advocates do have areas of special expertise, and it's often based on their experience in areas like mental health, dyslexia, deaf or hard of hearing, etc."

Working from home during the pandemic provides advocates with flexibility that benefits parents. "Advocates are not coming into the office at 8:00 and leaving at 5," Vava Guthrie said. "Working from home, they can talk to a parent who isn't available during the workday."

Although PACER receives nearly 40,000 parent calls each year, parents hear back from an advocate within two days,

or sooner if the situation is a crisis, said Renelle Nelson, PACER's Children's Mental Health and Emotional-Behavioral Disorder Project Coordinator. "All of the calls we receive are important, but certain calls need an immediate response, such as if there is a mental health crisis or the parent is concerned about a child or family member's safety."

Another situation that merits a priority response is if a parent has an imminent meeting with their child's school. "A parent may have just learned about PACER, and they have a meeting with the school in two days," Vava Guthrie said.

Hope is a reality

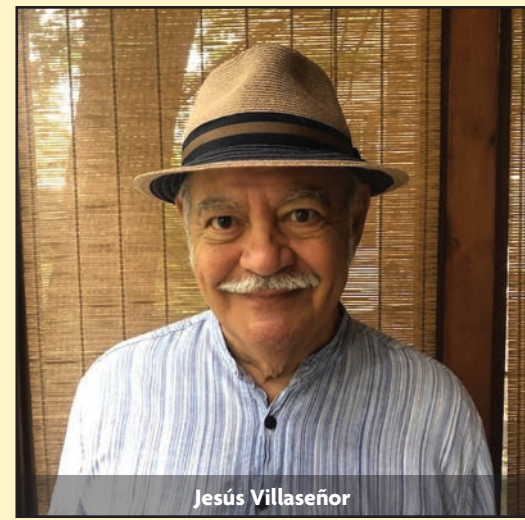
When Virginia Richardson said, "We see hope in every child," she added, "It is not a hollow hope – we have seen hope make a difference. Schools and doctors deal in what they see as realities, but we know that all families and children are unique. When my daughter Debbie was a child, I was told that she would never read. Debbie takes the newspaper and reads it cover to cover every day."

Part of the hope PACER offers, said Barb Ziemke, is helping parents build on their child's strengths. "We help identify possibilities and potential; we don't only focus on deficits that are part of a child's disability. We help parents understand their rights and options. We are here to support parents so that they know that they are not alone. I have had parents say, 'Now I can breathe easy! I can sleep at night; this has been keeping me awake.'"

Virginia Richardson said, "A mother told me, 'I have never received a note from the school saying my son had a good day. I wish that I'd get a note like that just once.' PACER is here to help that parent work with her son's school to receive that note."

"You're
not alone"

PACER's multicultural advocates



Jesús Villaseñor

PACER's staff of multicultural advocates include Jesús Villaseñor, who serves Latino families; Dao Xiong, who serves Hmong families; and Hassan Samantar, who serves Somali and other East African families. Virginia Richardson and Bonnie Jean Smith serve all families. Families who work with Jesús, Dao, or Hassan usually contact them directly via the advocate's cell phone. Families may have heard about the advocate from a community member or sometimes the school.

Parents from other cultures are often not comfortable discussing these issues over the phone, said senior multicultural parent advocate Jesús Villaseñor. "In regular, non-pandemic times, we would immediately make an appointment for a home visit. It is more challenging now."

During a home visit, the advocate listens to the parent's story and gathers any papers or reports from the school. "We give the support the family needs," Jesús said. "That is how trust is born." One of the most important things he says to a parent is, "I just want you to know you're not alone."

Due to cultural and language barriers, "Sometimes parents don't know what to ask us. Typically, there are no special education or inclusion opportunities in their home countries. They often feel overwhelmed and don't know what to do when they discover that their child has a disability."

"Sometimes if the child has an 'invisible disability' such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), or a learning disability or autism that is not severe, they may be in elementary school before they are diagnosed. Their child's disability may be a problem in a life that is already full of problems. My heart goes out to them."

The multicultural advocates accompany families to school meetings. "Many times, we end up solving the problem for them. The barriers are too high for them to advocate for themselves," Jesús said. "Other times, the parents will be sitting at the table, seeing us speak for them as they asked us to -- and suddenly they are empowered, and they find their voice. They learn what their child needs and how to ask for it." ■

PACER advocates are here for you!

Staff are working remotely due to COVID, so please leave a voicemail message at (952) 838-9000 or email PACER@PACER.org. Our front office staff will forward your inquiry to the appropriate PACER advocate who will respond.

We are here to help!

October is National Bullying Prevention Month!

Celebrate Unity Day on October 20

October marks the 15th annual celebration of National Bullying Prevention Month, started by PACER in 2006. On Unity Day, October 20, PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center invites you to wear and share **ORANGE** to come together in one giant message uniting our nation—and even the world—in kindness, acceptance, and inclusion. Wearing orange visibly shows that we believe no child should ever experience bullying.

One of the best ways to show your orange spirit is by wearing PACER's **Unity Day t-shirt**. These PACER designed shirts are available for just \$12 plus shipping at PACER.org/bullying. Order yours today!

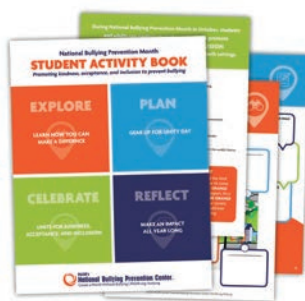


NEW! National Bullying Prevention Month Student Activity Kit

PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center has developed an engaging four-week activity kit that helps students explore how to prevent bullying, plan how they will wear and share orange, celebrate Unity Day, and reflect on how to continue creating a kinder, more inclusive, more accepting world. This kit can be used in classrooms or other youth settings throughout the month of October and features theme weeks, classroom projects, and student engagement. View it at PACER.org/bullying.



Overview guide



Activity kit



Poster set

PACER.org/bullying is your headquarters for everything you need to know to celebrate National Bullying Prevention Month. You can download a guide to Unity Day, register your school or organization as a Champion Against Bullying, order bookmarks and Unity Day posters, and much more.



“Speak up, reach out, be a friend!” – Carmen

L.A. office pilots exciting virtual classroom project

“Carmen’s Classroom Conversations”

The Los Angeles office of PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center is piloting virtual classroom visits for children in grades K-3. The combination puppet show and discussion features Carmen, the lead character in PACER's Kids Against Bullying puppet show. The puppet Carmen and Judy French, PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center L.A. coordinator, appear via Zoom or another online platform for a 15-20 minute interactive presentation.

Prior to the presentation, students watch an episode of “Carmen’s Corner,” a series of videos featuring characters from PACER's Kids Against Bullying puppet program. PACER's staff engage the children in a game, discuss the topic featured in the Carmen’s Corner episode, and answer their questions.

“The majority of the students at the schools we are piloting to are Spanish-speaking,” said Judy French. “Our L.A. puppet coordinator, Tara Ricasa, presents Carmen. She is bilingual and the students’ eyes light up when she speaks to them in Spanish.”

The visit encourages students to talk about topics such as kindness, healthy relationships, and how to treat people with respect. To learn more about the Carmen's Corner video series, visit PACER.org/bullying.



Don McNeil and family (L to R): Back row: Don, Ethan, Evan. Front row: Julie, Megan.

Don McNeil: My people are at PACER

Don McNeil remembers his first contact with PACER. “The state was trying to levy a surcharge on services to parents of children with disabilities,” he recalled. That was in 2003. Don wanted to do something about it, so he picked up the phone and called PACER Center. “I asked Paula [Goldberg, PACER’s Executive Director] what to do. Paula invited me into the office to share my thoughts.”

Like many people who meet Paula, Don became involved with PACER. “I ended up on a PACER committee, and then in 2008 I joined PACER’s Board of Directors,” Don said. He is Vice President of the Board of Directors’ Executive Committee.

Don and his wife, Julie, are the parents of three young adult children, two of whom have disabilities. Their oldest child, Megan, has Williams syndrome, a genetic disorder characterized by mild to moderate intellectual disability, and their youngest, Ethan, has “severe, classic nonverbal autism.” Their middle child, Evan, is typical and is a medical student.

“PACER helps us improve their lives. Julie and I have attended many of PACER’s free workshops and worked with PACER parent advocates. We learned about insurance options and supportive social services. I’ve been through 30 IEP [Individualized Education Program] meetings,” Don said. “I may be a lawyer, but Virginia Richardson, Jody Manning, Sharman Barrett, and others at PACER taught me how to advocate in order to succeed in those IEP meetings and conciliation conferences.”

Don has contributed to PACER in a number of ways. When PACER Board member John Guthmann became a judge and could no longer be involved with public policy, Don stepped up, serving on a statewide task force that reviewed state rules and regulations governing special education. He pays close attention to how the legislature deals with issues that

affect families of children with disabilities, has served on a number of other committees and task forces, and regularly testifies on PACER’s behalf at the Minnesota State Capitol.

“Don is a leader and an important part of PACER,” Paula Goldberg said. “He has done so much for PACER! He works hard as a member of our Board of Directors, is involved in public policy work, and he’s done so much legal work, pro bono. I know that if I have a legal question – or need any help at all – I can just pick up the phone and call Don. He’s also a fantastic father and a good, kind person.”

Don values his colleagues on the Board of Directors, and feels a deep sense of belonging. “Some lawyers go to country clubs with their friends. My people are at PACER,” he said. “The staff is talented and dedicated. The Board is a very collegial group, very committed to PACER. We understand each other because the vast majority of us are parents of children with disabilities. Our backgrounds vary, but we share that experience. There is great talent and everyone brings their own networks and abilities.”

Don’s experiences have made him passionate about inclusion. His daughter Megan has worked part-time in his law office, and Don believes that PACER is one of the reasons Megan has typical friends. “PACER’s Count Me In puppet show makes a big difference in helping kids understand inclusion, and why it’s important. I’ve seen how kids start to treat those with disabilities as peers to be included. Megan was welcomed to sit with kids at lunch, invited to weddings, participated in Girl Scouts. She’ll be a bridesmaid soon for the second time. PACER helps change the culture, how people think about disabilities.

“There is no other organization like PACER! The staff and programs are just invaluable. No one else does what PACER does.” ■

“There is no other organization like PACER! The staff and programs are just invaluable. No one else does what PACER does.”

– Don McNeil



Julie Hertzog and family (L to R):
Laura, Julie, Jim, David (with Scooby-Doo), and Grace

Julie Hertzog:

*Putting my values
to work every day*

Julie Hertzog wasn't really looking for a new job, but the newspaper ad for a position at PACER Center caught her attention. "It said, 'Parents of children with disabilities are encouraged to apply,'" she recalled.

At the time, Julie and her husband Jim were the parents of a typical preschool daughter, Laura, and a toddler, David, who was born with Down syndrome and serious medical issues (daughter Grace was born later). When David was born, "His odds of survival were not good. We didn't focus on David's disability; our priority was his health. He underwent a number of heart surgeries as an infant, and there were many health scares. For three years, David fought to live and as a family we were close by his side every step of the way."

Julie had "a nice job" at the time, but she knew she had to apply for the PACER job. "I was so excited that PACER not only valued the voices of parents of children with disabilities but also sought out their involvement. I realized that I wanted a job where not only my talents and skills were important, but where I could work for my values every day: that I could bring my life experiences to the table, that they mattered and were important."

Julie started her new job as PACER's publications coordinator in January of 2000. "PACER has hundreds of publications and does all writing and design in house," she said. Julie found time, though, to take on other responsibilities; she became the hiring coordinator, and discovered a talent for research and developing curricula.

As David approached school age, Julie thought about what his future might look like. She wanted him to be socially connected to his typical peers. "I believed there would be less chance of David being bullied if his classmates knew him," she reasoned. Julie asked Paula Goldberg if she could write a curriculum for parents about what to do if their child with disabilities was being bullied. "I was so grateful when Paula agreed," Julie said. The result was a national curriculum outlining parent and student (self) advocacy, along with an overview of laws and rights.

As Julie worked on the curriculum, she discovered that there were very few bullying prevention resources available online. Combined with calls PACER was receiving about the issue, the curriculum planted a seed that grew into PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center, which provides resources to students, parents, educators, and community members. At first, Julie coordinated the program along with her other work.

"I was surprised, but also excited and ready when Paula said, 'We are going to create a national program.' Paula thinks big and dreams big, and she found funding for our first website, Kids Against Bullying, which we created with the help and input of a group of elementary school students."

*"I was so excited that
PACER not only valued the
voices of parents of children
with disabilities but also
sought out their involvement."*

— Julie Hertzog

Nancy and Kevin Rhein: Supporting PACER in many ways



Nancy and Kevin Rhein

Many donors and volunteers come to PACER because they have a family member with a disability, but that wasn't the case for Nancy and Kevin Rhein. "We were relocated [to the Twin Cities] by Norwest Bank in 1994," said Nancy. She was looking for meaningful volunteer work, and through local friends, Nancy started to volunteer with PACER's puppet program. It was a great fit for someone with a background as a social worker in the mental health field. Nancy has volunteered with PACER for more than 20 years.

Nancy and Kevin also support PACER financially. Kevin said that their annual gifts will continue after they're gone through the Charitable Remainder Unitrust (CRUT) that is part of their estate plan. A CRUT offers the donor certain tax and income benefits during their lifetime, and after the donor's death, benefits the charity or charities of their choice. Kevin explained, "We want to continue our annual support of PACER after we're both gone. By naming the organization as a beneficiary of our CRUT, we will continue supporting PACER's mission into perpetuity."

In addition to Nancy's work with the puppet program, she has also been part of the Benefit committee. Although PACER's puppet shows are, due to the pandemic, being virtually performed by staff, Nancy is still involved. "[PACER staff] Lynn and Katie created excellent Zoom puppet shows, and they used puppeteers as test audience members, giving feedback as though we were school children," she said. "It was a fun way to stay involved and feel connected."

The Rheins are also enthusiastic about other PACER programs. Nancy mentioned the importance of PACER's Simon Technology Center's adaptive tools, and the robotic technology that allows children to access their school classrooms when they are hospitalized or when health concerns keep them at home. "I am also excited about the work of the National Bullying Prevention Center, which serves and benefits all children," Nancy said.

The Puppet Program, though, holds a special place in Nancy's heart. "Everyone knows someone or has a family member with physical, intellectual and/or mental health challenges. I have met so many wonderful people through puppeteering.

"Being a PACER puppeteer has been a highlight of my volunteer life." ■

Continued from page 6

Today, Julie is the director of PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center (NBPC), which hosts three cutting edge, interactive websites: PACER.org/bullying, for parents and professionals; PACERteensagainstabullying.org; and PACERkidsagainstabullying.org. Julie and her staff can point to amazing achievements, including the nationwide observance of National Bullying Prevention Month, founded by PACER; trips to the White House; high-profile corporate and media partnerships; an award from the Director of the FBI; stories in national media; and the support of celebrities including Ellen DeGeneres.

Most importantly, though, NBPC's work has led to a seismic shift in attitudes about bullying and the harm it causes. "People are much less likely to view bullying as a 'childhood rite of passage' and more likely to address bullying behavior head on," Julie said.

The NBPC itself has impacted how society views the issue of bullying. "We have led with certain values that are still important in our work today. We don't use 'anti-bullying': – instead, we say 'bullying prevention' because we want to prevent bullying before it starts by encouraging kindness, acceptance, and inclusion," Julie said. "We avoid labeling. Kids who bully are first and foremost kids, we focus on behavior, using terms such as 'students who exhibit bullying behavior,' because behavior can be changed. And kids who are bullied aren't victims, they're targets – which means they can help change what is happening, and they can self-advocate." ■

PACER helped Naomi achieve her dream

"I've always had to push harder to succeed at what people without disabilities don't have to struggle with,"

said Naomi Larkin. Naomi's K-12 education was full of struggles: she has sensory issues, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and mental health needs. Even when things were the hardest for her, Naomi said, "I knew that I wanted to go to college, be successful, and have a career."

Peggy Larkin, Naomi's mom, wanted all of that for her daughter, too. At the same time, she said, "We wondered, could Naomi make it to college if she couldn't get through the day at a level four [the most restrictive environment provided by a public school district] setting?" PACER's help made all the difference.

Peggy called PACER for the first time when Naomi was in kindergarten. The school did not understand that Naomi's severe sensory issues were triggered by everyday experiences such as putting on winter clothing or hearing a fire alarm, but the PACER parent advocate understood and stepped in to help. She taught Peggy about Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and accommodations. In addition to the help from PACER advocates, Peggy also attended "every workshop PACER offered" as well as PACER's parent leadership training. As Naomi got older, Peggy used the skills she learned from PACER to help Naomi learn to advocate for herself. Naomi attended IEP meetings and became skilled at advocating for herself.

While Naomi struggled with behavioral and mental health issues, there was one area where she consistently did well: athletics. Naomi played basketball from the time she was five. "Playing sports kind of let me escape from the reality of stressful things and just focus on accomplishing my goal," Naomi said.

In 3rd grade, Naomi was placed in a level four setting for an initial 60-day placement and remained in that setting through 6th grade. Although there were some helpful, more individualized accommodations available there, overall, the setting made things worse, Peggy said. "Naomi started to take on the behaviors of the children around her and her behaviors escalated in a way they never had before: throwing chairs, kicking teachers. The school recommended a day treatment program, but none would take her."



Naomi Larkin

Peggy used the advocacy skills she learned from PACER, and found a small charter school in Saint Paul, Cyber Village Academy, that was willing to take a chance on Naomi. The school created an individualized program for her, and Naomi earned A's and B's and a place on the honor roll.

When the school could not offer one thing Naomi craved - athletics - PACER advocates Renelle Nelson and Michael Carr knew how important playing sports was to Naomi's success; after her home district denied her the opportunity to play on a team, Michael found another charter school, Great River School, that offered co-op sports teams with another, larger charter school.

Naomi went from being the girl whose home district wouldn't let her play to the captain of her school's basketball team. She coached other students in archery and was on the varsity softball team, and was named her school's Athena Award winner. The prestigious award recognizes outstanding senior women athletes.

Today, Naomi is a freshman at St. Olaf College, where she won a scholarship, and she is also a Justice Page Scholar. Because of PACER, she is prepared to work with the college's disability services office to make sure she gets what she needs to be successful. "Being in charge makes me a little nervous, but empowered. There have been times when I felt like I would never accomplish anything because of my disability.

"Now, though, I know that I can get past the struggling and accomplish things on my own." ■

— Naomi Larkin

Online bidding for **PACER's Silent Auction** begins October 29!

Here's your chance to own wonderful prizes or experiences for yourself or give as a gift to a special someone. Best of all, you'll know that your dollars support PACER's services for children with disabilities and their families. Visit **PACER.org** for a wonderful array of items and experiences in every price range: put your credit card on file to get started with bidding! The following are just a few of the fabulous finds PACER's online silent auction has in store for you.

A WEEK AT A MARCO ISLAND VACATION HOME

Spend a week on this fabulous barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico south of the city of Naples, Florida. There's plenty of space for your friends and family in this 4-bedroom waterfront home, close to resorts, beaches, golfing, and the wonderful Tigertail Beach Park, offering a tidal lagoon for kayaking and paddleboarding!

FOUR NIGHTS IN BIG SKY

The winner of this prize and their (up to four) guests will enjoy four nights in a privately owned 2-bedroom, 2-bath condo located on Big Sky Golf Course in Big Sky, Montana's Meadow Village. Nearby skiing, hiking for all abilities, fly fishing, river rafting, golf, horseback riding, and zip lining will make memories to treasure.

FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM TOUR

The lucky winner and three guests will tour Facebook's Silicon Valley office, designed by renowned architect Frank Gehry, featuring a single, massive room covered by a 9-acre rooftop park. There's more: enjoy a virtual reality experience and have photos taken when you tour the Instagram headquarters. Must be 13 or older for the virtual reality experience.

FOUR-DAY JEEP ADVENTURE

You'll have four days of fun to discover why people fall in love with Jeeps! Whether you want to bounce up and down on dirt roads or cruise the lakes in style... explore the cities or take a trip up north, it's all up to you. The sky's the limit in a Jeep Wrangler from Park Chrysler Jeep in Burnsville.

DISTILLERY WHISKEY TASTING AND TOUR

The winner and nine guests will delight in a tour and whiskey tasting at award-winning Studio Distilling in Saint Paul. They produce a wide array of whiskey, including: Earl Grey Tea Whiskey, Hops & Elderflower Whiskey, and Rye Malt Whiskey, a double gold award winner at the prestigious San Francisco World Spirits Competition.

FRANCE 44 PERSONAL SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

The staff at France 44 will work with the winner, learning their tastes and preferences, to help you find your new favorites! An expert staff member will help you shop for wines, beer, spirits, cheese, and meat. \$200 gift certificate included.

For the sports lover...

MINNESOTA TWINS TICKETS

Enjoy the game in style! The lucky winner and their three guests will view the game from the Champions Club. This package includes food, beverages, and valet parking. Game date to be mutually determined.

MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES TICKETS

Four tickets to the Philadelphia 76ers verses the Minnesota Timberwolves at the Target Center on Friday, February 25, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. Seats are lower level section 104, row M, seats 20-24.

MINNESOTA Wild GAME IN THE ECOLAB SUITE

Bring all your friends! Up to 18 people will enjoy a Minnesota Wild game from the comfort of the Ecolab Suite. Includes 18 tickets. Game date to be mutually determined.

**This and much more! Take a peek at
all PACER's Silent Auction has to offer...
get started at PACER.org!**

**It's not too late to donate an item or
experience! Email Raleigh.Johnson@PACER.org
for more information.**

*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. Experiences are subject to public health guidance due to the pandemic.*

Virtual EX.I.T.E. Camp



Every summer, girls and non-binary middle schoolers with disabilities gather for PACER's EX.I.T.E. Camp. The STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) camp runs for five days over a two-week period. For the second consecutive year, the well-loved day camp was held remotely due to Covid.

"After a year and a half of virtual school, the campers were very familiar with Zoom," said Elizabeth Barry of PACER's Simon Technology Center, who helped coordinate EX.I.T.E. Camp. "They were very comfortable interacting."

Companies partnered with PACER to lead the campers in projects, activities, and experiments. A number of guest speakers also presented on a variety of topics.

Returning partners included:

- **Accenture**, who led the campers in two activities: block coding with Star Wars characters and creating a purse or bag from duct tape.
- **3M**, who helped the campers build race cars and tie-dye towels and masks.
- **Medtronic**, who taught the campers to build bridges with straws and tape and then had them test the bridges with marbles. The campers also built a robotic hand and did a project with packaging safety.
- **Best Buy**, who led the campers in coding activities on the Scratch platform. The theme was "something you are passionate about." One girl chose kindness and another focused on her emotional support chicken.

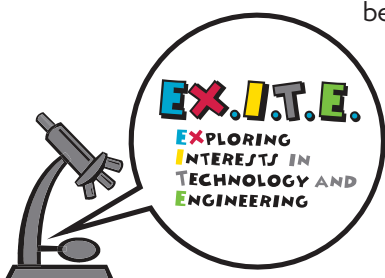
Speakers included the following:

- **Belinda Jensen**, KARE-11 chief meteorologist, who made a cloud and showed screenshots of EX.I.T.E. on the evening news.
- **Ann Motl** and other attorneys presented on inventors with disabilities and the importance of patents to protect inventions.
- **The Works Museum** led the campers in building small personal fans.
- **The Raptor Center** showed the campers hawks, owls, and their resident bald eagles.
- **Woodlake Nature Center** helped the campers interact virtually with snakes, frogs, and other amphibians.

New this year was **Wold Architects and Engineers**. "We were excited to participate and a little nervous about how we would be received," said Wold electrical engineer Sitha Chhum.

"The campers were great. They were very creative, and we hope they will be interested in architecture and engineering." The team from Wold taught the campers about the different people needed to create a building and all the planning a building entails. Campers used a shoe box to build their own room at school or home.

Sitha spoke for all of the presenters and the campers, as well, when he said, "It was a great experience, and we look forward to coming back next year – in person!" ■



"I wish the camp were 12 days long!"

– A camper

"She thoroughly enjoyed camp and loved how her learning needs were considered and respected. She was so excited because she often struggles to make friends, but within days, she was talking about the new friends she had met at camp. EX.I.T.E. introduced her to new things and increased her interest and confidence. It was exciting for me as a parent – we are so appreciative!"

– Mom of a camper

"I want to come back next year! I'm inviting my friends!"

– A camper

Ann Motl:

Full circle at EX.I.T.E. Camp

One of the speakers at this year's EX.I.T.E. Camp has a unique connection to PACER. Ann Motl, a young intellectual property attorney and trial lawyer, was a camper at PACER's very first EX.I.T.E. Camp in 1993.

Because her home in Staples, Minnesota, was such a long way from PACER's office – Staples is 140 miles northwest of Minneapolis – Ann stayed with family in the Twin Cities so she could attend EX.I.T.E. Camp.

Inspired by EX.I.T.E.

The experience made an indelible impression on her. "I feel like it made such a big difference in my life," Ann said. It wasn't only the experience of having fun with math and science: the presenters themselves, some of whom had disabilities, opened her eyes to a world of possibilities. "I had never seen professionals with disabilities," she recalled. "To see professionals with all kinds of disabilities, in the workplace, was huge for me. I grew up on a dairy farm, and I didn't see many people with disabilities, let alone those with professional jobs." Ann has a neuromuscular condition called Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease and uses a wheelchair and assistive technology such as Dragon NaturallySpeaking, a speech-to-text program for word processing and computer navigation. "The first place I used Dragon NaturallySpeaking was at PACER's Simon Technology Center," she said. "They taught me how to use it when I was in middle school."

Ann volunteered with EX.I.T.E. Camp when she was in high school. She went on to college, earning her degree in mechanical engineering at the University of St. Thomas. Ann remembers how challenging it was to be a college freshman with a disability. "I was so young and naïve. My family helped me get set up, and St. Thomas has a great disability services program, but it was challenging living on my own for the first time, hiring and training PCAs [Personal Care Attendants], and making sure I had accommodations for classes."

After earning her engineering degree, Ann went on to law school at the University of Minnesota. A career as a litigator (trial lawyer) focusing on technical issues was a great fit for her.

Ann said that when she first started practicing law, "Many of the people I worked with had never worked with someone who has a visible physical disability. I was asked, 'Can you write a report?'"

Being the inspiration

For EX.I.T.E. Camp this year, Ann pulled in several friends who practice intellectual property law to assist with small group work. "It was so fun, and surreal! I don't think I'm an expert on anything," Ann said modestly. The campers, who loved her presentation on inventors with disabilities, would disagree.

As part of her presentation, Ann asked the girls to think of inventions that would help them with their disability. "I am always surprised at how creative kids are! It was great to see them collaborate and feed off of each others' ideas. I think we lose some of that creativity when we get older."

Ann hopes that EX.I.T.E. Camp will inspire girls in their career choices. "I have a vested interest in having more people with disabilities choose careers in technology and law," she said. ■



Ann Motl

"To see professionals with all kinds of disabilities, [at EX.I.T.E. Camp], was huge for me. I grew up on a dairy farm, and I didn't see many people with disabilities, let alone those with professional jobs."

– Ann Motl

PACER's essential resources for surrogate parents

All children who receive or may need special education services have the right under law to have a parent advocate for their education. This fundamental right is part of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Most often, a child's parent acts as their educational advocate. However, in situations where a child's parent is unknown or unavailable, the child is a ward of the state, or an unaccompanied or homeless youth, a surrogate parent (often a community volunteer) is appointed by the court or school district to serve as the child's educational advocate.

Surrogate parents may also be appointed upon a parent's request. "Parents often don't know that they can request a surrogate parent," said Rachel Pearson, who coordinates PACER's Surrogate Parent Program. "If there's a situation where a parent isn't able to be their child's advocate, the school district should inform them of their right to request a surrogate, and let them know that a surrogate parent has the same rights and responsibilities as parents and guardians in the special education decision making process."

Rachel added, "An effective surrogate parent is committed to learning about special education and the child's educational needs, and is able to communicate well with the school. PACER is here to help surrogate parents understand their duties and fulfill them, so they can do their best to advocate for the child's educational needs."

PACER Center's information and resources are useful for surrogate parents, individuals who are interested in becoming surrogate parents, and school district administrators. Publications, videos, workshops, and an online training guide are available at the surrogate parent section of PACER's website.

For more information, visit PACER.org/surrogate, email surrogate@PACER.org, or call (952) 838-9000.

New PACER video offers detail about surrogate parent role

PACER's comprehensive new video, **The Role of Surrogate Parents in Special Education: Surrogate Parent Laws & Guidelines**, covers a number of essential topics, including the school district's obligations, the role of the surrogate parent, criteria for appointment of a surrogate parents, the knowledge and skills needed to be a surrogate parent, and much more.

You can view this important video at PACER.org/surrogate.



Follow PACER Center on social media!

Follow us on social media for up-to-date information on PACER workshops, events, stories, publications, videos, and more! You can search for us by entering our username "PACER Center" or "@PACERCenter" in the platform search bar, or visit PACER.org and click on the corresponding icons located on the top of the homepage.



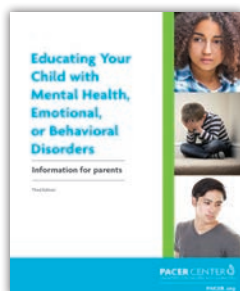
PACER Resources

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 or (800) 537-2237.

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.

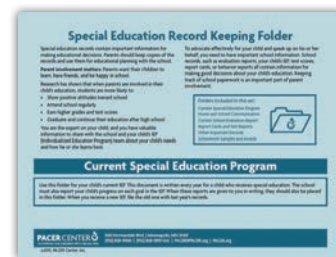
\$5 | 10+ copies, \$4 each | PHP-a21



Special Education School Record Keeping Folders

These folders are a practical way for parents of children in Special Education classes to stay organized to keep track of their student's progress in school. Each of the six folders have tips for gathering and using the information to help your child be successful in school. Available in English, 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 a sample IEP form.

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



General Education School Record Keeping Folders

These folders are a practical way for parents of typical children to stay organized to keep track of their student's progress in school. Each of the six folders have tips for gathering and using the information to help your child be successful in school. Available in English, Spanish, Hmong, and Somali.

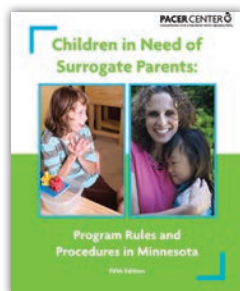
\$10 | 11+ copies, \$8 each | MPC-6



Children in Need of Surrogate Parents: Program Rules and Procedures in Minnesota

This 29-page manual is designed to assist school district administrators in implementing their surrogate parent programs, including the work of identifying students who need surrogate parents, and much more. Templates for many of the communication materials school districts may develop in support of this work are also included.

\$9 | 10+ copies, \$6 each | SP-3



Bullying Prevention: 5-Poster Classroom Series

Display these posters, featuring compelling bullying prevention messages, all year round in the classroom, hallway, lunchroom, community organization, or workplace. A full-size, printed set is 18"x24". Available in English and Spanish.

\$10 | Each additional set, \$5 | BP-38



PACESETTER

©2021, PACER Center, Inc.
Published three times yearly. Circulation: 135,106
(Alternate format is available upon request)

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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.

An Equal Opportunity Employer, PACER is funded by grants from the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, and other sources, and from foundations, corporations, and individuals. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Departments or other donors. Contributions to PACER are tax-deductible. For information, call PACER at (952) 838-9000.

PACER Workshops

FREE to Minnesota parents!

For information and to register, visit PACER.org/workshops or call (952) 838-9000.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Working Together: Supporting Your Child's Mental Health Needs at School

This training will discuss how mental health challenges can impact children and youth engagement at school, and strategies for working with schools when educational progress becomes a concern.

**This webinar is funded in part by a grant from Ramsey County Children's Mental Health Collaborative.*

• **October 14, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**

Back on Track for School Success: Mental Health and Education

Many children and youth experienced challenges managing their mental health and emotional wellness over the last school year. This webinar provides parents and others with information and strategies for school success when mental health impacts learning.

• **November 4, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**

Working Together: Supporting Your Child's Mental Health Needs at School

This training will discuss how mental health challenges can impact children and youth engagement at school, and strategies for working with schools when educational progress becomes a concern.

**This webinar is funded in part by a grant from Ramsey County Children's Mental Health Collaborative.*

• **November 16, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**

Working Towards Positive Educational Outcomes: Mental Health and Special Education

This workshop provides 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.

**This webinar is funded in part by the Minnesota Department of Education.*

• **December 7, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**

SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS

Rare Diseases, From Diagnosis to Care Plan

Erica Barnes of the UMN Medical School discusses MN CHLOE BARNES Rare Disease Advisory Council, dedicated to understanding the rare disease community's needs, increasing care access and coordination, and reducing diagnosis time.

• **October 5, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

PARENT TRAINING

Tips and Tools for Talking with School Staff

This workshop provides parents of special education students with practical tips and interactive problem-solving experiences to build the skills necessary to communicate effectively with school staff and resolve differences.

• **October 7, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.**

Hot Tips: Is Your IEP Individualized and Appropriate

Learn to use your child's special education evaluation report to determine how well the Individualized Education Program (IEP) addresses their needs. Have your child's most current school evaluation and IEP available.

• **October 12, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.**

Planning For Educational Inclusion: A Viewing of "Including Samuel"

Join PACER for a screening of "Including Samuel," a documentary by filmmaker Dan Habib about educational inclusion. Q&A with a PACER advocate before and after the film.

• **October 26, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

Resolving Disagreements through the Special Education Process

A webinar with Q&A to help parents increase awareness of your dispute resolution options in the special education process.

**This webinar is funded in part by the Minnesota Department of Education.*

• **November 1, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.**

An Overview of Bullying Prevention

An overview of how bullying is defined, the roles involved, and tips to address bullying behavior. Includes a discussion of the laws and steps required in addressing bullying of or by students with disabilities.

• **November 11, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

ABCs of the IEP: Making the Individualized Education Program Work for Your Child

Parents learn to use the IEP to benefit their child, including how each required part of the IEP can be developed to meet their child's needs.

• **December 16, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

How Parents Can Effectively Communicate with the IEP Team

A webinar with Q&A to help parents build more effective communication skills for working with your child's IEP team.

**This webinar is funded in part by the Minnesota Department of Education.*

• **January 10, 12:00 to 1:30 p.m.**

Special Education: What Do I Need to Know?

Parents gain an understanding of special education, how to resolve disagreements, and discover the role they can play in the process.

• **January 11, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

SIMON TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Lunch & Learn: An Introduction to Assistive Technology and PACER Simon Technology Center Services

Assistive technology are items that can help support individuals with disabilities. This workshop provides a broad overview of assistive technology tools and helps parents consider how the Simon Technology Center can help.

• **October 14, 12:00 to 1:00 p.m.**

Reading Tools for the iPad

There are many tools available on an iPad that can assist with audio reading, visual customizations, and study supports. Learn about these options for use with different reading materials.

• **October 19, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.**

Tools for Students, Part 1: Prepare, Organize, and Research for School Projects

This workshop addresses tools for defining topics, breaking into steps, researching, and organizing using mind mapping, assignment calculators, task lists, and notetaking tools. Tools demonstrated will be appropriate for middle-school to college aged students.

• **October 20, 3:00 to 4:00 p.m.**

Reading Tools for Chrome

Learn about many tools on the Chrome web browser that can assist with reading such as audio options, visual customizations, and study supports, and the options for use with different reading materials.

• **November 9, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.**

Tools for Students, Part 2: Plan, Write, and Complete School Projects

This workshop will address tools for creating outlines, writing papers, designing projects, and revising, using visual organizing, dictation, spell-checking, and bibliography tools. Tools demonstrated will be appropriate for middle-school to college aged students.

• **November 17, 3:00 to 4:00 p.m.**

TECH FOR GIRLS CLUB

Tech for Girls: Engineering a Touch Screen Stylus

In this virtual workshop, learn how a stylus and touch screen work. Then, in a hands-on activity, build your very own stylus to use with your smartphone or tablet!

• **October 30, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

Tech for Girls: Into Space – Comets

We're heading to space! Join us to learn the role Comets play in the galaxy. We will then explore what makes a Comet by making our very own Comet on a Stick!

• **November 13, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

Tech for Girls: DNA – The Blueprint of Life

Do you know what role DNA plays in living organisms? This virtual workshop will explore the functions of DNA, and then we'll use candy to construct a DNA model.

• **December 11, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

Tech for Girls: Technology of the Future – Augmented Reality

Augmented Reality can create interactive experiences out of our everyday surroundings, like the mobile game Pokémon Go. Join us and learn about Augmented Reality and create your very own AR experience!

• **January 22, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

TECH FOR TEENS CLUB

Tech for Teens: Intro to Coding & Video Games

An introduction to the fundamentals of coding using Scratch online software. Teens will create interactive games and stories while developing basic programming skills. Only basic computer skills are necessary - coding experience not required. Students of all abilities are encouraged to attend.

• **October 16, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.**

Tech for Teens: Coding Websites

This workshop introduces teens with disabilities to the basics of coding for the internet with HTML and CSS. Students will create and publish their own website on the Internet using a free online tool, and experiment with code and see the results online in real-time.

• **December 18, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.**

Tech for Teens: Building Websites

This workshop will introduce teens with disabilities to a method of designing websites using Weebly.com, and they will learn to use template designs and insert small amounts of code to customize and publish their own websites online.

This is an extension of the Coding Websites workshop, but past attendance isn't required.

• **January 15, 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.**

TRANSITION

Inspiring Possibilities: Living, Learning, and Working After High School, Part One

Part one of the transition-to-adulthood mini-conference for Minnesota parents features community experts and PACER transition specialists. Parents can ask questions and connect (virtually) with other parents.

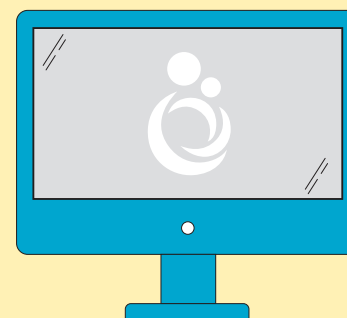
Topics include:

- What changes when youth with disabilities turn 18?
- Supported decision making and guardianship alternatives
- Minnesota student career counseling and vocation rehabilitation services
- Off to college: What you need to know before they go

• **October 8, 9:30 to 2:30 p.m.**

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**.

Call PACER with questions or to discuss virtual platforms at **(952) 838-9000, (800) 537-2237**, or email **PACERworkshops@PACER.org**.



For the most up-to-date listing of PACER workshops, visit: **PACER.org/Workshops**

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Silent Auction opens for bidding October 29! The auction closes at 9:00 p.m. CST on November 13.
For a taste of the prizes available, go to page 9. Visit PACER.org to start bidding!