

# PACESETTER

Explore the latest highlights and happenings from PACER Center

## 2025 PACER *Gala*

Presented by  
*Steven C. Simon & Family*

**Saturday, May 10**  
**JW Marriott, Mall of America**

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PACER Center improves educational opportunities and enhances the quality of life for children and young adults with disabilities and their families.

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## Connect with an advocate

Are you a Minnesota parent seeking support for your child with a disability? PACER parent advocates are available to help. [Contact us today!](#)

## Share your story

Has your child or family benefited from PACER's services? Consider sharing your story with us today at [communications@pacer.org](mailto:communications@pacer.org).

## Follow PACER on social media!

For up-to-date information on all things PACER, find us online [@PACERCenter](#).



Dear Friends,

PACER has been a steady resource for families of children with disabilities for over 45 years. We aim to continually focus our efforts to improve our services and help children and young adults with disabilities reach their education, employment, and independent living goals. There have been recent challenges and exciting changes at PACER that I'd like to share with you.

There has been a lot of news about government policies and budgets for special education at both the federal and state levels. I know that the changes being discussed cause confusion and anxiety for families, especially when the landscape is likely to continue to shift in the coming months. I want to assure you that PACER is keeping a close eye on federal and state proposals impacting students with disabilities and advocating against changes that we believe are not in the best interest of the families we serve. Regardless of what changes occur, PACER will continue to help families navigate through them.

I am happy to announce that we have launched PACER AT Work, a program to help employers explore assistive technology (AT) solutions for workers with disabilities. AT can help employees expand their abilities and improve their performance. This service will train managers and HR professionals about technology options and enable them to refer employees to PACER for one-on-one consultations. This initiative will give us a new and sustainable source of revenue that will fund both PACER AT Work and other PACER programs.

We are also excited about a new mural at our office to represent how PACER "lights the path" for families as they navigate the forest of disability systems. It recognizes donors to Friends of PACER, the nonprofit that owns and operates our building. It has been a beautiful addition and a wonderful tribute to generous donors. Be sure to see it the next time you visit and let us know if you'd like to see "your name in lights!"

Finally, I cannot wait for the PACER community to enjoy the updated format of our annual gala (previously benefit). It will be a heartwarming, mission-focused event in a more intimate setting to inspire and cultivate meaningful engagement with our donors. *Read more about the event on page 4.*

I am filled with gratitude for all who support PACER's mission and am excited for what the future holds.

Sincerely,



Tonia Teasley  
Executive Director



## Apply for PACER's EX.I.T.E. Camp

*The 2025 summer program will inspire curiosity and exploration of technology, engineering, and more.*

Each summer, PACER's EX.I.T.E. Camp provides a fun, inclusive, and engaging environment for middle school girls and gender-expansive youth with disabilities to explore their interests in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) concepts. Program Coordinator Christine Retzlaff has prepared for a week of engaging projects this August. "I'm looking forward to seeing the campers build relationships and explore all of our activities," she said.

3M, Best Buy, Xcel Energy, MnDOT, Wold Architects and Engineers, Medtronic, the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Zoo, and lawyer and former camper Ann Motl are among this year's featured presenters. Campers can look forward to projects like building bridges, creating code, learning about foodborne diseases, and more throughout the week. "We try to secure a variety of activities that introduce campers to different STEM fields and pique their individual interests," Christine said.

The camp provides a wide variety of challenges throughout the week to help participants expand their interests and try new things. Last year, campers were surprised by activities that didn't jump out to them right away but ended up keeping them engaged throughout the day. "It reinforced how important showcasing different subjects can be," Christine said. EX.I.T.E. Camp helps expose participants to unique subjects and fosters an environment for trying new projects. Activities can guide campers



**Christine (R) with mom Anne Retzlaff**

to a new hobby, or even a future career path. "You never know what you are going to find a passion for unless you try it," she added.

EX.I.T.E. Camp will be held in person at PACER's office in Bloomington, Minn. from August 4 to 8. The 2025 camp schedule is available online at [pacer.org/exite](https://pacer.org/exite). Contact Christine Retzlaff at (952) 838-1407 or [christine.retzlaff@pacer.org](mailto:christine.retzlaff@pacer.org) for questions and more information.

**Registration is now open! Submit your camper application before May 31, 2025. ■**

2025 PACER

# Gala

Presented by  
Steven C. Simon & Family

Saturday, May 10

JW Marriott,  
Mall of America

**Join PACER for an evening of inspiration and generosity.**

For more than 40 years, PACER's Benefit has been a celebration of support for families of children with disabilities. Reimagined as the PACER Gala, the event will invite guests to come together to learn how their contributions truly make a difference. It will feature a three-course catered dinner, an uplifting program led by emcee Miss Shannan Paul and auctioneer Frank Vascellaro, and a performance from Bluewater Kings Band. They have guaranteed us that they will fill the dance floor! "This year the gala is going to be more mission focused. The band will be really fun, and we're excited about our new format and space," said PACER Development Manager Debbie Andrews.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to test their luck with raffles, a wine pull, and mystery jewelry bags. The four featured raffle prizes include a Delta

Airlines voucher, MacBook Air, Lululemon gift card and bag, and Apple AirPods Max. Each raffle ticket is \$50 and can be purchased at the event. PACER's iconic silent and live auctions will return as well, with exciting items like luxury vacations, theater and event tickets, gift cards, and more. *Read more about the auction and preview items on page 5.*

The unforgettable evening will certainly be an extraordinary experience — but more importantly, it will create tangible change for the thousands of families of children with disabilities who benefit from PACER's resources and services. "The goal of this gala is to bring our guests joy. From a wonderful evening of dinner, dancing, and fun with friends and family to most importantly, the joy that comes from supporting families of children with disabilities," said PACER's Executive Director Tonia Teasley. The essential funds raised will ensure that PACER's programs can continue for many years to come at no cost to families. ■



Bluewater Kings Band

**There's still time to secure  
your ticket!**

*Sales close on May 5.*

Learn more and purchase your  
ticket at [pacer.org/gala](https://pacer.org/gala).



# Explore the live and silent auctions

Browse the full collection at [pacer.org/gala](https://pacer.org/gala).

**Check out what PACER's auctions have in store for you! The silent auction will be available online before the event, with bidding beginning on May 2.**

## **Luxury getaway in Manzanilla, Mexico - *Live auction***

Experience the ultimate ocean-front vacation at Palacio de Cristal in Manzanilla, Mexico. This luxury property boasts three bedrooms in the main house with two more in each adjacent private villa. The accommodation is complete with a pool, swim-up bar, workout room, and beach access. The chef will cook you three delicious meals a day, with an additional charge for food and beverage costs. Your trip will also include an on-site house manager and staff who will make your stay one to remember! *Pictured above.*

## **Old Rip Van Winkle Handmade Bourbon**

Sip on a glass of this rare bourbon and enjoy its big, bold, and aged taste with caramel-nut-fudge aromas. Bottled close to barrel proof with just a splash of Kentucky limestone well-water, this whiskey is as smooth as any you will find. This 750 ml bottle is aged 10 years and is 107 proof.

## **Wine tasting dinner with PACER's Executive Director, Tonia Teasley**

Indulge in an unforgettable evening of fine dining at the home of Tonia Teasley and her husband, Paul Stutler. This exquisite four-course dinner will be expertly crafted by Tonia with each course thoughtfully curated and paired with wines to enhance the flavors of your meal. Whether you're celebrating a special occasion or simply gathering with friends and family, you'll enjoy an evening of elegance, delicious cuisine, and perfectly matched wines. Available for a group of eight.

## **Four course dinner at the St. James Hotel**

Delight in an exclusive four-course tasting menu meal at the historic St. James Hotel in Red Wing, Minnesota. Scarlet Kitchen & Bar Executive Chef Cory Dufour will introduce you to each course and beverage pairing, and the night will conclude with a delicious desert medley from Pastry Chef Amy Zerwas. Available for a group of eight.



St. James Hotel



PACER parent advocates (not all pictured)

# How an advocate can help

**PACER Center is the place where Minnesota families of children and young adults with disabilities can gain information, training, and support.**

At some point, you may have thought about reaching out to a PACER advocate. PACER advocates are fellow parents who are available to share their own knowledge and personal experiences so that parents can know they're not alone and feel confident in their own walk of life with a child with a disability. "We are working to help parents understand how to navigate a process," Parent Training and Advocacy Manager Rose Quintero said. These processes include special education, health services, mental health services, disability services, and more.

PACER's parent advocates help families understand what their rights and responsibilities are within the complex systems that serve children and young adults with disabilities. "We also help them identify where they are in a process. They may have already started taking steps and don't know where to go from there," Rose said.

Advocates help parents identify what their next steps might be and provide them with resources and information to help them make that decision. Advocates cannot make decisions for parents or provide legal advice, but they can explain their options and give them relevant information.

As a parent training and information center, PACER's purpose is to educate parents. The more parents practice advocating for their child, the better they get at it. Over time, that can make a real difference. For example, instead of attending every IEP team meeting, PACER advocates help parents build their own skillsets so they can be more effective advocates for their child at that meeting. "It's better for the parent to acquire knowledge themselves so they can use it consistently," Rose said. "I often tell parents that it's our knowledge that has the power, and our goal is to give that knowledge to the parent," she added.

***"We also help them identify where they are in a process. They may have already started taking steps and don't know where to go from there."***

**- Rose Quintero**

## When should parents contact a PACER advocate?

“It’s never too early to call if you have a doubt or concern,” Rose said. Contacting PACER early in the special education process helps parents gain a proactive understanding of the system before problems get too big or there’s a breakdown of trust or communication with the school.

## What should parents do before they meet with a PACER advocate?

“It’s helpful for parents to think about what their main concern or question is first,” Rose said. She added that it’s also helpful to gather copies of paperwork, such as their child’s current IEP or recent special education evaluation. This information will help advocates better understand parents’ questions and allow them to provide individualized assistance.

## What should parents do after they meet with an advocate?

“Parents can always ask their advocate to send them an email with a summary of the conversation and next steps,” Rose said. Parents should review any resources or guides their advocate sent them as well. If more information is needed by the advocate, they may have to collect those documents to prepare them to take the next steps. After meeting with an advocate, parents can make a decision on what they want to do and follow through with it. Rose emphasized that parents can always return to PACER for more information. “I tell parents to call me back, that we can always go through this again,” she said.

## PACER is here to help

Navigating special education and other complex systems can be overwhelming. “Sometimes you need to take it step by step,” Rose said. Working with a PACER advocate can be an ongoing relationship for parents to build their advocacy skills and knowledge over time. “There’s nothing wrong with taking one step and then coming back to the advocate to look at step number two,” she said.

Learn more from PACER’s resource: [How an advocate can help](#)

## How to get in touch with an advocate

PACER has parent advocates available to help with questions about navigating the special education process, transition beyond high school, special health care needs, and more. To get in touch with an advocate, parents and caregivers can [fill out a contact form](#) available online. ■



Rose Quintero



## Questions about surrogate parents?

If the parents of a child with a disability are unknown, unavailable, or not legally authorized to make educational decisions for the child, the school district must appoint a surrogate parent to advocate on the child’s behalf in the special education process. PACER provides individual assistance and online resources to parents and professionals seeking information on this topic and to surrogate parents already serving in this role. Read more about surrogate parents on [PACER’s website](#) or [connect with an advocate](#).



# Help looks different for *everyone*

Raising a child with a disability can affect all areas of life, and PACER is here to support families every step of the way. PACER has three main areas of focus and offers services that empower families as they navigate special education and other systems, access assistive technology solutions, and discover social inclusion resources. Shari used PACER advocates and information to help her daughter get the extra support she needs in school, Minna found innovative equipment to help her communicate at the Simon Technology Center, and Shawnda brought greater kindness and inclusion to her community through bullying prevention resources. Read their stories to learn more about the diverse ways PACER can benefit families of children with disabilities and help them thrive.

## Advocating for Sophia's classroom change

Shari Klein has always known her daughter Sophia needed extra support. She is a single parent of two daughters and has appreciated the information and confidence that PACER has provided her over the years. "I couldn't have done it without the support of PACER," she said.



Sophia (L) with sister Julia and mom Shari Klein

Sophia was first referred to special education services before she started kindergarten and began working with a paraprofessional in a general education classroom. However, it became too overwhelming for her to be in a large class and Shari realized that a modified special education setting would be a better fit.

"I knew she wasn't in the right place, but I was also scared to make that change," Shari said. "That's when it was so amazing to have PACER by my side."

Sophia has autism, developmental and cognitive delays, OCD, anxiety, and health concerns. She is now 20 years old and started transition school last year. At first, Shari was hesitant about her starting a new program. "She has separation anxiety and there were times when she couldn't lose sight of me and didn't want to be at school," she said.

Sophia began attending transition school for an hour and a half each day and quickly started asking to stay longer. "She loved it so much and I will always have PACER to thank for that," Shari said.

The advice and insight Shari received from PACER staff, workshops, and resources helped her to become a better advocate for Sophia. "Never did a question go unanswered. Whenever things got difficult for Sophia, they were always made better because of PACER," she said.

[Connect with a PACER advocate](#)





Amanda Teachout-Emerson with her daughter Minna

## Finding Minna's voice

PACER's Simon Technology Center has become a critical resource for Amanda Teachout-Emerson's family and is a key part of the care team she's built for her daughter Minna.

Minna is three years old and has cerebral palsy. She has begun to take steps with equipment but cannot sit, walk, or stand on her own, and is nonverbal. When Minna's family visited the STC's Lending Library, they were excited to try switch-adapted toys that made play more accessible for her.

Assistive technology consultations with PACER staff helped Amanda find devices that would be a good fit for Minna. "They listened to what Minna's needs were and what we wanted her to accomplish," Amanda said.

Practicing with switches taught Minna skills that enabled her to explore communication devices. "When we first started, we knew nothing," Amanda said. Minna quickly mastered basic devices and now uses the iTalk4. "It opened a lot of doors for Minna. I would not have known about it if we didn't visit the STC," Amanda said.

The iTalk4 is a portable device with buttons that can be programmed to say a word or phrase. The family changed the words seasonally so that Minna could trick or treat, tell Santa what she wanted for Christmas, and play the Star in her church's Christmas program.

Assistive technology consultations helped Minna learn, develop, and gain independence. "We've received so much support from PACER. Our family will continue to use their services for many years to come," Amanda said.

[Schedule a consultation](#) or email [stc@pacer.org](mailto:stc@pacer.org) for assistance.

## Uniting Shawnda's community with kindness

Shawnda Steer is a community advocate for bullying prevention. Resources from PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center helped her spread kindness, acceptance, and inclusion across her township and to multiple communities in the Chicago area.

When her daughter Brielle was in fourth grade, she told Shawnda her friends were being mean. For the first time, Shawnda googled the word "bullying," and found her way to PACER. Shawnda pitched a bullying prevention and kindness campaign with NBPC resources to her PTO president. "A lot of parents had the same issue," she said.

Her efforts encouraged schools and communities to wear orange and resulted in a proclamation from the mayor declaring October as National Bullying Prevention Month. "I have a background in marketing, and I love the creative ways we've been able to teach kids how to be more active against bullying," she said.

When Shawnda's family moved to a new community, her children noticed more bullying in their schools. "My daughter was scared to go to school," she said.

After her previous experience, Shawnda knew exactly where to start. Her advocacy continued, and she used NBPC pledges, activity kits, and posters to bring awareness to bullying prevention in her new home. She organized community events like chalk walks and peace gardens and enlisted the help of librarians to distribute free materials.

"PACER resources helped our children express themselves and cope. I hope to help spread the message of kindness, acceptance, and inclusion to other communities too," she said. ■

[Explore bullying prevention resources](#)



Shawnda Steer (center) with her children Brielle and Javis

# NEW PROGRAM REPLACES Personal Care Assistants and Consumer Support Grants

*Community First Services and Supports (CFSS) offers more flexibility to families.*

As of October 2024, Community First Services and Supports (CFSS) replaced Personal Care Assistants (PCA) and Consumer Support Grants (CSG) in Minnesota. This new program incorporates benefits from PCA and CSG in order to provide more funding flexibility for individuals with disabilities and their families.

The PCA program in Minnesota was available to people with disability waiver services and would enable them to receive care at home, such as help with meal preparation, bathing, cleaning, and other independent living tasks. The CSG program allowed funding to be used more broadly to support an individual’s needs at home, such as hiring an independent caregiver or purchasing adaptive equipment.

The new CFSS program will provide families with more flexibility for how the funding they receive is used. For example, parents can now serve as caregivers for their child, but instead of getting paid, they can use those funds for other purposes like installing a

wheelchair ramp in their home. “Families will have a lot of options for how the CFSS funds can be used. Parents who aren’t sure what this change means for them can contact PACER for more information,” said a PACER Advocate.

This change was prompted by legislative advocacy from families, individuals, and caregivers. After passing into law in 2023, it went into effect in October 2024. No changes in individual funding have been made outside of the typical reevaluation schedule.

Under CFSS, families can elect to use either a budget or agency model. These options allow them to choose between managing their budget independently or hiring an agency to manage it for them. To learn more, see an excerpt from PACER’s [new resource](#) below.

For individual assistance, [contact a PACER parent advocate](#). ■

**The table below highlights the differences between the old programs and the new one.**

	PCA/CSG	CFSS
<b>Eligibility</b>	Based on Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) — dressing, eating, toileting, bathing, mobility, hygiene, and transfers	Same criteria as PCA/CSG
<b>Eligible providers</b>	<b>Traditional PCA:</b> Hired by agency <b>PCA Choice:</b> Hired by parent or individual Parents and spouses can only be paid providers if on CSG.	All providers listed under PCA and individuals on CFSS who are capable of providing the services needed.

	PCA/CSG	CFSS
<b>Covered services</b>	<p><b>Straight MA:</b> PCA (traditional vs choice)</p> <p><b>Waiver services:</b> PCA (same as above)</p> <p><b>CSG:</b> Special therapies such as hippo, music and art therapy, special diet, and parent provider PCA. It also covers sensory equipment.</p> <p><b>CDCS:</b> Similar to CSG coverage for individuals on waivers. There is a larger amount of funding and a preapproved plan with four categories. It will continue unchanged, without impact by CFSS.</p>	<p>Provider changes described above. No coverage for special sensory equipment or therapies previously covered under CSG.</p> <p>Goods and services under CFSS must replace the need for human assistance.</p>

When a family transfers to CFSS, they will be required to choose a budget or agency model. In each model, the person directs their own care.

	Budget model	Agency model
<b>Who implements the plan?</b>	Implementation by a qualified adult, such as a parent, spouse, or individual	Implementation by the CFSS agency hired
<b>What is involved in implementing a CFSS plan?</b>	<p>The qualified adult (above) is the employer and is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting, hiring, training, supervising, and scheduling workers</li> <li>• Setting wages</li> <li>• Arranging backup</li> </ul>	<p>The agency is the employer, does everything listed under the budget plan, and chooses the Financial Management Service, if services are purchased.</p> <p>The individual being served has a say in hiring and scheduling.</p>
<b>How are resources used?</b>	<p>Funds can be spent on PCA services, now called CFSS workers, and other goods and services to assist the person with a disability.</p> <p>Goods purchased must be for the purpose of decreasing human services.</p>	<p>Allows funds to be converted to dollars to spend on goods needed to assist with a person's disability. The remaining funds are used for the CFSS worker.</p> <p>Goods purchased must be for the purpose of decreasing human services.</p>



## Staff spotlight: **DOMINIC GOOD BUFFALO**

Dominic Good Buffalo

Last year, Dominic Good Buffalo joined PACER as a project coordinator and parent advocate to help increase family engagement in Minnesota school districts with American Indian families and students with disabilities.

He has been working with youth and families since 2003 and discovered his passion while volunteering with the Union Gospel Mission in St. Paul. “I found my niche, started having fun, and it all just came together. I just knew what I was going to do for the rest of my life,” he said. After college graduation, he continued his career in education and eventually joined St. Paul Public Schools’ family engagement and community partnerships department where he worked alongside their Indian education program. “I’ve been working with youth and families for more than 20 years in education, nonprofit, and government agencies,” he said.

### **Coming to PACER**

When a position opened up at PACER, he became interested in giving back in a different way. “What drew me to PACER was wanting to get even deeper into special education and advocating for parents in that area,” he said.

One of his main areas of focus at PACER is to help increase the graduation rates of American Indian students with disabilities in Minnesota through a partnership project with the Minnesota Department of Education. “It’s been an issue in Minnesota for a long time, not just with general education Native

students but especially Native students with disabilities,” he said. To help accomplish this goal, Dominic has partnered with school districts across the state to help improve their family engagement efforts with American Indian students and their families. He frequently travels around the state to further these efforts in person. “It takes honesty, openness, and willingness. Families are smart enough to know when you’re not authentic,” he said.

### **What is family engagement?**

“Family engagement is making parents and families feel that they have a seat at the table during the decision-making process,” Dominic said. He emphasized that the core of it is collaboration with the school. “It’s about having a dialogue between parents and schools. I want families to see that education can be beneficial,” he added.

To Dominic, the most rewarding part of his job so far has been visiting different communities and families. “Really getting to experience what they’re dealing with in their communities is one of the biggest things I enjoy,” he said. In the future, he hopes to continue his ongoing work and see tangible change over time. “Our ultimate goal is to increase graduation rates, I would love to see that number climb up,” he said.

There’s more work to be done, however, he is up for the challenge. “I want more families to know that services are available, that PACER is available,” he said. ■



# New campaign launching **SUMMER 2025**

PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center is launching a new campaign for students about advocating for themselves and others.



Students don't always know how to ask for help when experiencing or witnessing a bullying situation. Many think that involving an adult could make the situation worse. They also may not know who they'd reach out to, or how to conduct a productive conversation. In partnership with Infinite Campus Foundation, PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center's Speak Up about Speaking Up campaign seeks to educate students, teachers, counselors, and others about using effective and respectful self-advocacy to address bullying. The campaign will include free, downloadable resources including educator guides for elementary, middle, and high school students.

## Why is self-advocacy important?

Students who actively participate in providing input about their problems are better prepared to resolve them and understand when it's time to seek help from a trusted adult. When adults and students work together to solve problems, students feel safer because they know they have someone who will listen and help when they speak up.

Self-advocacy does not mean that a student must handle a problem on their own. They should learn to assert their right to safety when they feel they are being hurt and know that they have the right to tell an adult. Showing students by example how to speak up and find success when they do is important for cultivating their self-advocacy skills.

Explore the available resources and learn more at [pacer.org/bullying](https://pacer.org/bullying).

### SELF-ADVOCACY

*Communicating what you need.*

#### Be a self-advocate:

- Speak up for yourself effectively
- Know which situations need you to speak up to a trusted adult

### ADVOCACY

*Helping others get what they need.*

#### Be an advocate for others:

- Speak up for others effectively
- Know which situations need you to speak up to a trusted adult



## Save the date for Unity Day 2025!

Unity Day is on WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2025. It will be a day to come together to prevent bullying and wear orange to send a powerful and united message: We are committed to creating a kinder, more accepting, and inclusive world. Stay tuned for more details about how you can get involved!



**JENNIFER THALHUBER**

## *AbleNet is proud to support PACER*

Before they became an official sponsor of the 2025 PACER Gala, AbleNet and PACER had a long history of working together to positively impact people with disabilities and their families. AbleNet develops and provides assistive technology (AT) for individuals with disabilities, such as speech devices, activity supports, switches, and more. “In a lot of ways, our missions are very complementary to each other,” said Jennifer Thalhuber, AbleNet’s Chief Executive Officer.

In recent years, AbleNet has been more active in giving back to other organizations that align with their mission. Like PACER, AbleNet is committed to providing solutions for people with disabilities that help them flourish, including tools and technologies to

live more independently. “We’re lucky to be working with PACER in that capacity, it’s been wonderful to sponsor the gala,” she said.

Before becoming a gala corporate sponsor, AbleNet provided many of the assistive technology devices families can try at PACER’s Simon Technology Center (STC) Lending Library. Together, AbleNet and PACER have also exposed special education instructors, speech pathologists, and other professionals to the benefits of AT in the classroom and beyond. In 2024, PACER’s STC Lending Library provided 1,500 assistive technology loans and 93 consultations to individuals with disabilities and their families.

“Getting products into people’s hands so they can explore how they work was a huge, foundational step to our relationship with PACER. It’s evolved into collaborating more on a bigger scale and shining a spotlight on the other work that you guys are doing,” Jennifer said.

This mission-centered work is a cause close to Jennifer’s heart. Growing up, her parents were involved in social work and psychology, and she spent many summers working with young people who were struggling with their mental health. After she earned her engineering degree, she wanted to apply her



**AbleNet staff delivering assistive technology devices to PACER's Simon Technology Center**

**“Getting products into people’s hands so they can explore how they work was a huge, foundational step to our relationship with PACER. It’s evolved into collaborating more on a bigger scale and shining a spotlight on the other work that you guys are doing.”**

**- Jennifer Thalhuber**

skills to make a meaningful difference, which was when she found a position at AbleNet. 20 years later, she continues to help AbleNet reach its potential as an organization and impact the lives of people with disabilities each day.

### **Supporting PACER in a new way**

Jennifer is excited about extending the professional relationship between the two organizations further. “We want to broaden our impact to give PACER more opportunities to reach their goals,” she said. She added that sponsoring nonprofit galas like PACER’s creates a positive internal sentiment with employees and stakeholders. “They see that you are reaching beyond your own community to make an impact and that can create an organic energy that really helps with employee engagement,” she said.

She also challenges other organizations to do the same. “Think about nonprofits that align with your

mission and invite your employees to see the kinds of investments you’re making. They’ll feel a stronger connection to your organization as a result of that,” she said.

The 2025 PACER Gala will be an inspiring event for AbleNet employees this May. “These events are really exciting and reinforce the mission and vision of PACER Center. We’re excited to have members of our team join us, celebrate PACER, and learn what they stand for,” she said.

Purchase tickets for the 2025 PACER Gala at [pacer.org/gala](https://pacer.org/gala).

Support PACER today – any amount is appreciated! [pacer.org/donate](https://pacer.org/donate)

If you wish to share why you give to PACER, contact [development@pacer.org](mailto:development@pacer.org).



## **IEP team activities in the special education process**

Special education is a cyclical process that responds to a child’s needs, progress, and struggles. There are three main activities that the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team repeats. They include **evaluating educational needs; developing, reviewing, and revising the IEP; and measuring and reporting progress**. To learn more about each of these activities, watch [PACER’s video](#) or [read our resource](#) on the topic.

# Thank you

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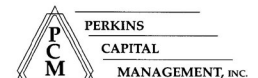


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