

Best Buy Contributions to PACER Have National Impact

Best Buy Corporation is helping children with disabilities nationwide as a result of a partnership with PACER Center in Minnesota. Best Buy's commitment to children with disabilities began with PACER Center, but soon children with learning, emotional, mental and physical disabilities from coast to coast will benefit from this corporation's generosity.

Marc D. Gordon, Executive Vice President and CIO of Best Buy, is a member of the PACER Board of Directors. From that vantage point, he provides advice, guidance, and resources for technology projects and is the key link in creating this partnership between PACER and Best Buy. Through his work with others in his industry, he and Best Buy enabled PACER to form additional partnerships.

PACER Center is the national office for the Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers (the Alliance). Through the Alliance, PACER brings training, resources, materials, and technical assistance to the nation's other 107 parent centers. Best Buy is a pivotal partner in a specific Alliance project at PACER: the Technology Project. The Project provides resources that expand technology capabilities for all the parent centers.

Best Buy's involvement with PACER brought another important resource: Best Buy employees as volunteers. From helping assemble computers for the PACER Training Room to providing technical consultation for the national Technology Project, Best Buy's staff has been critical in helping PACER expand the benefits of technology to all parent centers across the nation. This is a highly synergistic relationship: PACER has access to expertise and resources,



IBM selected PACER as its partner for its first EXite Camp for girls with disabilities. The girls learned about computers first hand during "PC Tear-Down" Day, the most popular activity of the camp. Please turn to page 7 for more details about EXite Camp.

and Best Buy employees have a way to make a difference outside of the workplace. Through participation at PACER, employees can live out what has been a

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IBM/PACER Partnership Reaches for the Stars

Sometimes wishes actually *do* come true! Thanks to the IBM Corporation, a PACER dream is becoming reality.

When PACER's new building was designed in 1999, a training room was wired for 16 computers. It sat empty for several years due to a lack of funds. Recently, through a relationship with Best Buy, IBM Corporation heard about PACER's needs and stepped in to help.

IBM donated all the equipment for the training room: 16 computers and monitors, a training computer, and a printer. The equipment allows PACER to conduct trainings for parents and children with disabilities, for teachers and other professionals, and for several children at one time. IBM's contribution of equipment enables PACER to reach more children with disabilities with the benefits of technology.

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Parent Finds Valuable Support from PACER

Tina McRae had a feeling that something was not quite right when her daughters, Felecia and Jacqualine, were born. Now, six years later she knows that her instincts were correct.

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After talking to many professionals, Tina found out that Jacqualine has mental health issues including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, general

anxiety, and other health disorders. Felecia has anxiety and depression.

She says that she knows now that “if something doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t.” But she has also learned that she is not alone—there is a parent somewhere who has experienced a child’s behavior similar to one of Tina’s children. When you find that person, she said, you ask a ton of questions.

Tina struggles with her daughters’ behaviors because she can’t always

understand them and can’t always find easy solutions.

“It is kind of like walking on eggshells sometimes because the triggers for them are non-specific,” she said. “There are so many sensory issues that affect Jacqualine and Felecia—sights, sounds, temperatures—and I can’t regulate all of that. I can only control certain things.”

When she found PACER and other parents to talk to, PACER workshops to attend, and school staff who were understanding, she felt like a huge weight had been lifted off her shoulders.

“The hardest thing for me is to keep my daughters going when there is no one to keep me going,” she said. “But when I found PACER and other resources, I felt so much more in control and hopeful.”

Tina knows that her daughters will probably need to work harder than some of their peers, but she has confidence that they will grow up with the skills they need. “I want them to be successful,” Tina said.

You can help PACER continue to deliver services to families of all children with disabilities, like Felecia and Jacqualine, by contributing to PACER using the envelope provided.



Tina McRae with her daughters Felecia and Jacqualine.

“But when I found PACER and other resources, I felt so much more in control and hopeful.”

Panera Bread Rises to New Heights

Operation Dough-Nation® is a partnership between Panera and PACER that began last September and will continue through 2004. The partnership provides Panera and its customers an opportunity to support PACER. Customers can make contributions in the collection boxes at the registers of all Twin Cities Panera locations and they will be matched by Panera Bread.

The partnership has also launched new opportunities for PACER. This past July, PACER was the beneficiary for Panera’s grand opening event at the Yorktown Mall in Edina. PACER supporters helped kick-off the event while enjoying Panera’s bakery items, sandwiches and musical entertainment by a local high school band from Richfield called *Dead Fish in a Can*. All proceeds went directly to PACER programs.



PACER plans to help open the new Panera location in Shakopee this fall.

Visit www.pacer.org to find a Panera location near you.

Special Thanks to Metris Companies

PACER extends special thanks to Metris Companies, the Presenting Sponsor of PACER Center's 21st Annual Benefit.

Metris contributed financially to PACER's 2003 Benefit and was also involved in other ways. The Benefit Raffle Committee sold raffle tickets in the lobby of the headquarters building during a busy workday lunch hour. Approximately 20 Metris employees volunteered in the Silent Auction during the Benefit. In addition, Metris donated several items to the successful Silent Auction.

Metris Companies, headquartered in Minnetonka, is a national provider of financial services and products. Metris supports a wide variety of programs benefiting children, families, and communities in seven cities where Metris employees live and work. PACER again thanks Metris for their demonstrated commitment to the community through the presenting sponsorship for PACER's Benefit.

"We thank Metris Companies for investing in PACER's programs by contributing at this level. Because of



(Above) Jon Mendel, Metris Executive Vice President Human Resources, holds a plaque of appreciation presented by PACER Executive Director, Paula Goldberg (seated right) and Development Director, Mary Schrock (seated left). Standing are: Metris Vice President Corporate Communications, Mike Smith and Metris Director of Community Relations, Anne Morrow.

this commitment, PACER Center will be able to continue serving children with disabilities and their families at no charge throughout Minnesota," stated Mary Schrock, PACER development director.



Metris employees attended the pre-Benefit dinner. Seated front to back: Jenny Lamb, Sue Lamb, Angela Henchen, Todd Henchen, and Jean Vernor. Standing from left to right: Breck Ogren, Jennifer Ogren, Anne Morrow, Ivan Ross, and Jim Vernor.

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more information at
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Heidi Kraemer, IBM Minnesota Community Relations Manager, has provided vision and leadership in the expanding partnership with PACER.

The donation of equipment was the beginning of a PACER-IBM partnership. Under the leadership of Heidi Kraemer, IBM manager of community relations, more synergy was developed between the two organizations. "Teaming for Technology," a national IBM strategic initiative, helps nonprofit organizations become more efficient and effective through the use of technology. As part of this initiative, IBM is providing assistance for the Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers and its Technology Project, enhancing the technology capacity for the 107 parent centers across the nation. Staff members of IBM and Best Buy, meet frequently with PACER's technical staff in designing detailed plans for the complex project.

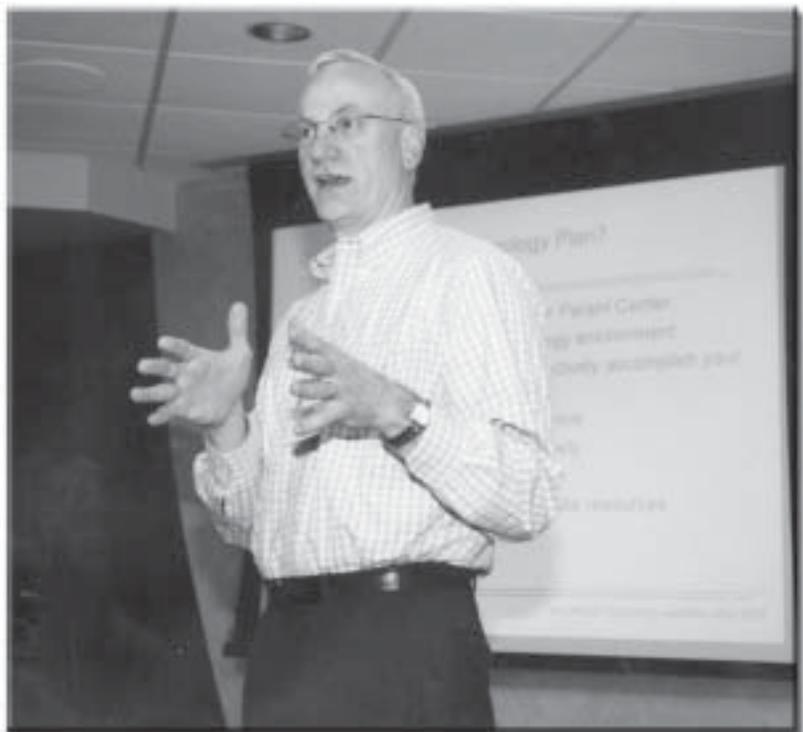
PACER and the Alliance will also be participating as a pilot site in IBM's Web Adaptation Technology project. Through this project, Web sites are

made accessible to children with disabilities through a variety of adaptations, such as large print and voice reading.

Another "first" for both organizations is EXite Camp, EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering. This IBM project is a science, math, and technology camp for middle school girls, designed to stimulate and maintain interest in coursework and careers in the sciences and technology. IBM has 30 national and international sites for EXite Camp, but IBM selected PACER to pioneer the first camp for girls with disabilities. You may read more about this exciting program on pages 7 and 14 in *PACER Partners*.

"PACER thanks IBM for the contribution of technology and technical consultation and for the wonderful opportunity to be a partner with a corporation that has a strategic vision to help the nonprofit world utilize the benefits of technology," stated Paula Goldberg, PACER executive director.

"Teaming for Technology," a national IBM strategic initiative, helps nonprofit organizations become more efficient and effective through the use of technology.



John Tanner, a volunteer from IBM Global Services, made the opening presentation at the Technology Institute on the need for parent centers to have a technology plan. John has been instrumental in designing the overall Technology Project.

core value at Best Buy from its inception, *giving back to the community*.

Best Buy has given employees, staff, and managers time to volunteer for planning meetings and to participate as trainers and speakers in a technology institute presented by PACER to parent center leaders from across the country. Best Buy invited institute attendees to its world headquarters, located within a mile of PACER, for a session demonstrating the most recent advances in technology. Two more institutes will be held this fall. Best Buy executive John Valente, Vice President of IS Operations and Engineering, has been instrumental in coordinating the technical resources for both the institutes and the technology project. His enthusiasm for the project and experience in directing teams has kept the collaborative effort on track and on schedule.

The economic reality is that technology is expensive for nonprofit parent centers whose mission is helping children with disabilities. But, another reality is that technology brings increased productivity to parent centers in delivering services. All parent centers need access to the Internet, e-mail, databases, and Web sites to help children, but they cannot afford to purchase that technology. Best Buy is helping bridge the gap by donating help and technical expertise.



Staff from Best Buy, IBM, and PACER teamed up to unpack the computers donated by IBM. (L to R) Doug Kampe, IBM; Brian Pietraszewski, Best Buy; Janet Peters, Simon Technology Center Coordinator, PACER; Darren Hibbard, Best Buy; Monique Ouellette, IBM; Mary Schrock, PACER; and Randy Odom, IBM.

Best Buy's major contribution began in Minnesota, but the effectiveness of the partnership ripples across the United States. In the future when a parent center staff member in California

In the future
when a parent center staff
member in California or
New York helps a family
with a child with ADHD
or helps solve a school problem
for a child with a learning
disability, they can use
resources through the technical
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Best Buy's participation.

or New York helps a family with a child with ADHD or helps solve a school problem for a child with a learning disability, they can use resources through the technical advances enabled by Best Buy's participation. What began with board member Marc Gordon understanding a need, now helps children with disabilities from New

and demonstrates Best Buy's commitment to helping thousands of families of children with disabilities through its resources.

This story demonstrates the power of combining for-profit businesses, like Best Buy, with nonprofit organizations like PACER. You may be asking yourself, "How could *my* business make an impact and help children with disabilities?" The leadership teams at both PACER and Best Buy welcome an opportunity to talk about the possibilities for *your* company to make a positive difference. Please call Mary Schrock at (952) 838-9000.

York to Los Angeles. Best Buy's assistance to one parent center, PACER, is multiplied many times over through these national projects,

Innovative Vision Inspires Friends

Tom Nelson and Martha Dayton, a young Twin Cities couple with a family, wanted to make a difference in the lives of children with disabilities. Four years ago, their vision led them to create the Friends of PACER Advisory Board. They chaired the committee and recruited friends and colleagues from the community to join and

establish the 20-person board. The role of the Friends of PACER Advisory Board has been to recruit volunteers, organize projects and events to raise awareness for PACER, and to raise money for PACER programs. It has accomplished all the goals.

A primary fundraising project developed and maintained by the board for more than three years is the PACER Bear Project.

Board members raised



The MN Twins Games occupied Board members during this fun summer season. Friends of PACER Advisory Board members worked at the concession stands during Twins Games to raise money for PACER programs. This new activity was another fun success for PACER. Go Twins!

money to purchase more than 300 special talking bears that promote self-esteem and comfort children who have physical, emotional, and learning disabilities. Other projects include:

Team PACER

Runners collect pledges for PACER by running in the Twin Cities Marathon or the TC 10 Mile Run. The team was developed for runners to train together and promote awareness for PACER.

PACER Fall Festival for families

A fundraiser and social service project providing an inclusive social activity for families served by PACER (see photo at right).



The garage sale committee takes a break from the "Mother of All Sales" event. Front row (L to R) Sara Richter and Jackie Olson. Back row (L to R) Cynthia Armacost, Sarah Johnson, Becky Walser, and Courtney Kiernat.

PACER Garage Sales for children and expectant parents

A fundraising and community outreach project that raises money for PACER programs and provides expectant parents and families with high quality and affordable clothing and toys for children.

Current co-chairs of the board are: Sarah Johnson, Courtney Kiernat, and Andy Lilienthal. Members are: Cynthia Armacost, Tara Cain, Rebekah Crosby, Martha Dayton, Sheila Jones, Jessica Kaplan, Peter Kaplan, Laura Keller, Kathy Longo, Amy Lucas, Aimee Mairs, Peter Martin, Mark Mortenson, Tom Nelson, Kelly Perry, Melissa Sigel, Evie Simon, Ryan Simon, and Amy Walsh.

The Board also supports these PACER programs:

Simon Technology Center—provides software, adaptive devices and training to help children and young adults with disabilities learn to communicate through technology.

COUNT ME IN puppets—provides puppet shows for preschool and elementary-aged children to foster positive attitudes and acceptance of children with disabilities in their schools and communities.



Courtney Kiernat (right), Friends of PACER Advisory Board co-chair and committee member Melissa Sigel help host the PACER Fall Festival for families at Deer Lake Orchard last fall.

American Indian Project—provides individual assistance and information for American Indian parents of children who have or are at risk for developing emotional or behavioral disorders.

The Health Information and Advocacy Center—provides a single source of information, resources and support for families whose children have disabilities and complex health care needs.

IBM Launches EXite Camp at PACER

The Simon Technology Center and IBM Corporation were partners in an EXite (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) Summer Camp for 24 middle-school girls with disabilities that began July 10, 2003, for five sessions. Although IBM offers EXite Camps worldwide, the Simon Technology Center camp was specifically for girls with disabilities and was being piloted for the first time.

The goal of EXite Camp is to give girls the opportunity to explore technology and engineering through engaging activities and to spark interest in these fields. Camp activities are technical hands-on experiences designed to be fun, challenging, and educational. Activities include creating a Web site, tearing down a personal computer, designing and building a strobe circuit, and taking a field trip to IBM's Rochester plant. EXite Camp also featured inspirational speakers and mentor relationships with IBM staff who have disabilities to demonstrate what people with disabilities can achieve in these fields. Each young woman who participated in EXite was matched with an IBM employee with a disability as a mentor for the EXite camp and the 2003-04 school year.



The girls created polymers during one lab session. Campers held up their finished product, "slime," and caught the attention of a volunteer IBM employee's seeing eye dog.

"PACER is excited to be selected by IBM as the partner for this pilot camp," said Mary Schrock, PACER Director of Development. This opportunity has opened the girls' eyes to new possibilities and new doors to the future.

Why focus the camp on girls with disabilities? Studies have indicated that girls in general begin to lose interest in math, science, and technology around the fifth grade and are often discouraged from pursuing technical careers. (*Tech-Savvy: Educating Girls in the New Computer Age*, 2000) There is an even more significant drop for girls with disabilities in these areas, as students who need accommodations or adapted curricula often encounter difficulties having their needs met at the junior high and high school levels. (*Parent Brief on Universal Design for Learning and Transition*, 2003)



An EXite participant engaged in the tear-down activity that provided insight into how computers work.

(Left) An EXite camper explores one of the latest assistive technology gadgets. IBM staff demonstrated the most recent technology advances for the girls and parents during the opening session of EXite camp.

Simon Technology Center Volunteers Help Families Bridge the Digital Divide

Alex is a talented 10-year-old who has muscular dystrophy. He worked with Tom Nelson, a PACER volunteer and Friends of PACER Advisory Board founder and member. Although Alex is a wonderful artist, he has difficulty writing

benefits of having his new computer at home. Alex's mom, Veronica, also learned to use a computer during the training sessions, which she said was "a totally new experience" for her. Because Veronica is learning English as a second language, the computer will be an invaluable resource for her also.

Technology transforms lives in countless ways. For people with disabilities, technology has an even greater impact on daily living, creating many new opportunities for communication, employment, education, independent living, and leisure. Computer technology, in particular, can play a vital role in breaking down barriers that so often limit the potential of persons with disabilities.

Research has shown that computer technology significantly enhances communication, learning, and socialization of all children, especially

those with disabilities. Even though the benefits of computer technology are well established, many families who have children with disabilities have limited access to computers and inadequate computer skills. For these families, community support and access to technology can make a critical difference.

To address the needs of such Minnesota families, PACER's Simon Technology Center collaborated with the Friends of PACER Advisory Board to provide new computer systems to



Tom Nelson, a PACER volunteer and Friends of PACER Advisory Board member, works with Alex in the Simon Technology Center on an art program called Buildability. This exciting program allows Alex to express his creative side through the use of technology. The program will help Alex this coming up school year.

Community support and access to technology can make a critical difference.

and communicating verbally. Knowing art was a great motivator for Alex, Tom taught Alex to use a multimedia program called *Buildability*. Alex was able to express himself creatively and wrote a story illustrated with graphics. He will share the story with his 4th grade class when school starts this fall.

The computer and software provided to Alex are the same that he will be using in school. This coordination will enable him to keep up with schoolwork and maximize the

two families of children with disabilities, who otherwise would not have access to them. The Board financed the program and two members of the Board, Nelson and Amy Lucas, volunteered a significant amount of time to help the children and families learn about the assistive technology, educational software, and the training needed to use the computer successfully at home.

Gabby, a 5-year-old with spina bifida, was thrilled to receive a new computer. She lives with her grandparents on their farm in Princeton. If you ask Gabby what she wants to be when she grows up, she'll happily tell you that she wants to be a dancer, teacher, doctor, and fireman.

Amy Lucas was the Friends of PACER Advisory Board member who volunteered with Gabby and her family. By the end of the training, Gabby was proficient at using a number of programs that will help her learn to read and write, and have fun. Gabby's grandmother, Muriel, also took part in the training. She learned quickly and was well on her way to being a bona fide computer user by the end of the sessions.

The PACER Simon Technology Center staff coordinated the program,



Amy Lucas, a PACER volunteer and Friends of PACER Advisory Board member, takes a break with Gabby. They have been working on a variety of programs to help Gabby with reading, writing, and just having fun.

"The experience of learning how to use a computer and assistive technology was especially powerful for the children and gave them a new confidence using technology."

including identifying the families, determining the computer system and software requirements, securing computer equipment, coordinating session schedules, and providing a meeting place for families and volunteers. Simon Technology Center staff, Nelson, and Lucas, worked closely together throughout the program to ensure that the mission and goals of the project were met, and to modify the program

when necessary to meet the needs of the families and volunteers.

"The computer grant program was a great success and the families were very appreciative to receive the technology and training," said Janet Peters, Simon Technology Center

coordinator. "The experience of learning how to use a computer and assistive technology was especially powerful for the children and gave them a new confidence using technology."

PACER's Computer Grant Program translates community giving into high-impact results for children with disabilities and their families. PACER is looking for businesses that would like to sponsor future sessions of this program to realize first hand the satisfaction and rewards of community involvement and volunteerism. Please call Mary Schrock, PACER development director, for more information at (952) 838-9000.

Don Davidson: Volunteer in Over-Drive

Stacy Davidson was only 6 years old when her school threatened to expel her because she was disruptive in class. Her parents were shocked—but took action. The Davidsons called PACER immediately and an advocate helped them work out a plan with the school so Stacy could remain in the classroom.

Don Davidson, Stacy's father, has trouble remembering everything about that time; after all, it was 18 years ago, and life isn't quite as chaotic now. Both Stacy and her brother Jeff were diagnosed with attention deficit disorders when they were young. Now, Stacy has finished her degree in computer graphics, and Jeff has followed in his father's footsteps—making his career in auto sales.

But Don's connection to PACER

didn't diminish as his children grew older. It only strengthened.

Don has been a member of the Advisory Board for six years, and he has co-chaired the Benefit Corporate

Sponsor Committee the past three years. His free time is limited because he works long hours, six days a week at Sears Imported Autos, Inc., the business his father-in-law started. That makes his time at PACER more precious—but he says he wouldn't spend it anywhere else.

"PACER does so much for so many," he said. "They have a tremendous number of volunteers—I don't know of any other organization that comes close to PACER in terms of volunteer hours."

He continues to work hard finding silent auction items for the annual PACER Benefit and contacting other potential corporate sponsors. He says the "energy level at PACER is contagious"—and Don has proven it.

In addition to his work on the committees, he helps spread the word about PACER to other auto dealers in the area, employees in his building, and volunteers at other nonprofits. He's even bought his employees tickets to the annual PACER Benefit.

He says that he's never seen an organization with staff that have so much enthusiasm, but PACER Center staff know that it's volunteers like Don Davidson that generate the enthusiasm.



Don Davidson, PACER Advisory Board Member and Corporate Sponsor Committee Co-Chair.

"PACER has a tremendous number of volunteers—I don't know of any other organization that comes close to PACER in terms of volunteer hours."

Don Davidson



Bonnie Raitt greeted Don Davidson, along with his daughter Stacy and his wife Joanne, following the Benefit.

Oceanaire Hosts PACER Thyme Table

Anthony Whelihan, PACER's resident artist, reinvented PACER's Thyme Table with an aquatic theme when The Oceanaire Seafood Room donated a gourmet dinner for eight. Whelihan created the Thyme Table concept for PACER's 2001 Benefit Silent Auction when he designed custom PACER dinnerware and paired the china with gourmet dinners by top Twin Cities restaurants.

Mary and Jim Frey bid on the Oceanaire dinner during PACER's first on-line auction in 2002. They and their guests dined on delectable



(Above) Mary and Jim Frey had their friends wear 3-D glasses to view the artistic detail on PACER's dinnerware, designed by Anthony Whelihan, that incorporates unique 3-D imagery.



(Above) Mary Frey and Judy Jaffee share dessert and a laugh during the special Thyme Table dinner.

seafood prepared by Executive Chef Rick Kimmes.

Whelihan personally arranged the spectacular table-top decorations.

Oceanaire donated all the food and service for the multi-course dinner, so all the proceeds from the auction went

directly to programs for children with disabilities. This exceptional and entertaining evening was a win-win partnership for everyone!

A special thank you to artist Anthony Whelihan and to Oceanaire Manager Steve Uhl and Executive Chef Rick Kimmes for partnering with PACER on a "Culinary Creation for the Senses" to raise funds for children with disabilities.

Secondhand success story

In its third year, PACER's annual *Mother of All Sales* garage sale got people out of bed early and waiting in line for the door to open—yet another success for the Friends of PACER Advisory Board.

The sale features new and "gently-used" items for families with children ages birth to 12 years old and expectant parents. Items for sale have

included clothing for children and babies, toys, books, sports equipment, maternity clothes, and infant equipment.

The first sale was September 2001 at PACER Center, and the most recent sale was May 31, 2003. The three sales combined have raised more than \$18,000 for PACER programs.



Co-chairs of the event have been members of the Friends of PACER Advisory Board: Sarah Johnson, Courtney Kiernat, and Katie Mortenson.

2003 Benefit Committee

Ed Agranoff
Patrice Alkire
Kathy Amlaw
Melanie Barry
Carla Bender
Suzanne Bennett
Cynthia Birkeland
Susan Campbell
Dan DiMarco
Marcia Dolphin
Sabine Dudda
Judy Elias
Rosemary Fish
Doreen Frankel
Mary Frey
Sally Friedell
Carol Fuerstneau
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Susan Gray
Ava Hamilton
Kate Helms
Bonnie Dickel Hoffman
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Alexandra Jacobs
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Billie Lawton
Ruth Levine
Trish Lies
Nancy Lindahl
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Calla Sullivan
Jill Sweiven
Amy Walsh
Ann Wasserman
Everlyn Perry Wentzlaff
Tony Whelihan
Nancy Whitney
Marcia Wilkinson
Amy Zaroff
Sue Ziegler

* Corporate Sponsor Committee listed on the following page.

Benefit Volunteers are PACER Center's Silver Lining

Bonnie Raitt's latest CD, *A Silver Lining*, expresses the same sentiments that PACER volunteers feel when their tasks seem overwhelming; the silver lining is knowing they have made a difference in the lives of thousands of children.

PACER Center's 21st Annual Benefit on Saturday, May 3, 2003 featured singer Bonnie Raitt at the Minneapolis Convention Center and was supported by almost 3,000 guests and more than 350 volunteers.

"We want to thank all the volunteers that participated on the Benefit committee this year—those who helped create the success of the live and silent auctions and corporate sponsorships, and those who helped with the logistics of the event," said Paula Goldberg, PACER executive director.



PACER volunteers of all ages joined with PACER staff to create a record-breaking auction this year! Front Row: Sabine Dudda with young volunteers. Back Row: (L to R) CeCelia Smith, Nancy Kleve, Danna Mirviss, Jan Flora, Trish Lies.



2003 PACER Benefit Co-chairs: Judy Jaffee, Kelly Perry, and Mary Frey led volunteers with their leadership, enthusiasm, and laughter to produce a very successful 2003 Benefit.

Special Thanks...

PACER thanks Dan Wixon and Hope Snyder of Wixon Jewelers for their unique contributions to PACER's Benefit raffle over the past three years. This year's raffle prizes were a woman's 18 kt gold diamond ring, a woman's LaScala wristwatch, and a man's Crystale 18 kt gold wristwatch.

An extra special thanks to all the individuals and corporations who have generously contributed goods and services to the Benefit this year!

Save the date for next year's Annual Benefit on Saturday, May 1, 2004, at the Minneapolis Convention Center.



The 2003 Benefit Corporate Sponsor Committee Co-chairs reached a new goal and surpassed even their own expectations by raising a record amount from corporate sponsorships. Seated (L to R) Co-chair John Lavander, Jeanne Crain. Standing (L to R) Richard Perkins and Co-chair Don Davidson. Not pictured: Frank Bennett, Uri Camarena, Jill Edelstein, Elliot Jaffee, Nancy Lehrman, Jim Oricchio, Tom Plumb, and Colleen McGough-Wood.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.

I ndeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead



2003 Benefit Silent Auction Co-Chairs Danna Mirviss, CeCelia Smith, and Trish Lies spear-headed the silent auction for PACER’s Benefit. This year the auction included over 800 items and raised a record amount to support PACER programs.

(Right)
The PACER Benefit dinner, co-chaired by Melanie Barry and Susan Gray, took place prior to the Benefit in the Seasons Rotunda at the Minneapolis Convention Center. This was the third year for the pre-event dinner. Benefit guests enjoyed the enchanting dinner music by local harpist, Laurie Leigh.



Home Depot is known for its huge buildings and broad inventories, but children with disabilities and their families found big hearts there as well. Home Depot managers donated merchandise to PACER’s Benefit and Silent Auction after CeCelia Smith, Silent Auction co-chair, and Mary Schrock, PACER development director, told them about PACER’s work. Home Depot staff members delivered the merchandise to PACER for the auction and volunteered at the Silent Auction on the night of the Benefit.



Young Women Thrilled with EXite-ing Opportunities

Bridget Thomson is a very bright, enthusiastic young woman with dyslexia. She said that she was thrilled about the opportunity to apply to the EXite camp, a summer program of the Simon Technology Center in collaboration with IBM.



Susan Thomson and her daughter Bridget using new programs in the Simon Technology Center at PACER. These programs will help Bridget with her science and history classes in school.

Included with Bridget's application for the camp was a letter from her mother, Susan. It read, "Enclosed is Bridget's application for the EXite camp. She is thrilled about the possibility of being selected for the program. She was surprised to

recognize that her disability of dyslexia enabled her to qualify for this great opportunity. This is the first time in her life when she observed that her disability opened an exciting opportunity for her. She loves science; she will tell you that quite cheerfully. She will also explain all the wonderful ways computers give her a boost with her school work... Thank you for offering the camp opportunity. This is the

first time in her life when her disability has invited her to a promising adventure."

In addition to activities related to the EXite camp, Bridget and her mother have come to the Simon Technology Center a number of times this spring. In May, Bridget underwent her first assistive technology assessment through her school. To prepare for the assessment, her mother participated in an Assistive Technology (AT) Manual Training at PACER. From the training, Susan Thomson learned about some tools that were available in the Software Lending Library for Bridget to try out before the assessment. Through the training she learned how the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team can help select the appropriate assistive technology for Bridget. Information from working with the Simon Technology Center staff on software programs to help Bridget with her schoolwork was very valuable.

Two programs that have potential for Bridget include "Dragon Naturally Speaking" and "Kurzweil." "Dragon" translates voice communication into typed words on the computer;

"Kurzweil" scans and reads aloud text from the computer screen.

Bridget had these comments about the two programs "I really like two computer programs. They are called "Dragon" and "Kurzweil". I went to a cool meeting [at PACER] where I got to use these programs. They are so amazing. I really

Information from working with the Simon Technology Center staff on software programs to help Bridget with her schoolwork was very valuable.

like "Dragon" because when I write my first draft of an essay, I have so much

information and so many ideas that I want to get down on paper. I can describe my ideas much better by talking than by writing because I have a really hard time spelling so many words that the actual spelling and typing slows down... and tires me out so much. I would be able to work so much faster if I could just talk out loud into a microphone, which could turn my voice into typed words on my computer screen. Then I could use my keyboard to revise my first draft. This is what "Dragon" does. I can hardly believe "Dragon" exists.

The other program would help me so much with my Science and History classes. I could scan the text books onto CDs that my computer could read onto my computer screen. Amazing. Then I could have the program read the textbook to me. I learn much better when I can see word and hear them at the same time. Then, one of the greatest things ever, I could highlight the important stuff in color. Color helps my memory so much! Then I could cut and paste the color-coded stuff onto a notebook page. Hit the print button one time. I would have my notes all ready for studying. "Kurzweil" would save me so much time. I can hardly wait to use it."

Bridget *did* participate in the EXite camp this summer.



For more information about assistive technology or the Software Lending Library, please contact the Simon Technology Center at PACER at (952) 838-9000.

Free Technology Consultations

Children and adults with disabilities have the opportunity to try a variety of software and assistive technology devices. PACER's staff assists parents, their children, and professionals attending the session to experiment with software and hardware. Together, they find ways the individual can benefit from technology.

The Software Lending Library

Preview more than 1,700 pieces of software and adaptive equipment. The Software Lending Library's service is available for parents of children and young adults with disabilities, consumers, and professionals in Minnesota. The Lending Library is available statewide through the mail service. **The Library is open on Tuesdays from noon to 8 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

United Way Donor Choice Program

The United Way accommodates employees who want to support PACER through their workplace campaigns—even though PACER is not a United Way agency.

PACER benefits from the donor choice programs of the Greater Twin Cities United Way, Tri-State United Way and others.

Please consider writing in "PACER Center" under "Other" when a United Way campaign pledge card is presented for your selections.

*Thank you for helping us serve families
of children with all disabilities.*



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PACER Executive Director:
Paula F. Goldberg

Director of Development
and Partners Editor:
Mary Schrock

Communications Coordinator:
Pat Bill

Contributing Writers:
Beth Casper,
Willa Hathaway and
Amy Wooters

PACER Center, Inc.

8161 Normandale Boulevard
Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044
(952) 838-9000 voice
(952) 838-0190 TTY
(952) 838-0199 fax
(800) 537-2237 toll-free
E-mail: pacer@pacer.org
www.pacer.org



Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights
8161 Normandale Boulevard
Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044

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PACER Development Corner

October Events

Running the Twin Cities Marathon or TC 10 Mile Run this October? Join "Team PACER" and raise money for PACER programs. Pledge information and forms are available for registered runners. Please call PACER's development office at (952) 838-9000 for information.



Do your holiday shopping early to benefit PACER!
The Wild Rumpus bookstore in Linden Hills is hosting a Disability Awareness Day for PACER on **Thursday, October 2, 2003, from 1-7 p.m.** Come find special books on disability related topics, visit with the PACER puppets, browse



through the extensive collection of children's books, and have fun! Twenty percent of all book sales during this time are given to PACER to support programs for children with disabilities.

The Wild Rumpus Bookstore, 2720 West 43rd Street, Minneapolis, MN 55410. Call (612) 920-5005 for directions.

Spring 2004

PACER's 22nd Annual Benefit will be held on Saturday, May 1, 2004, at the Minneapolis Convention Center. The Benefit committee will start planning the event this fall. Persons interested in volunteering for the Benefit, please call Jan Flora or Nancy Kleve at PACER at (952) 838-9000.

