Perk Brews Up Support for PACER

Up at 5:30 a.m. each day, Richard W. Perkins has read six newspapers and arrived at the office by the time most people are just rubbing sleep from their eyes. It seems only fitting that this high-energy man known as Perk has his office right next door to a Starbucks.

“I work a lot of hours, seven days a week,” admits the president of Perkins Capital Management, a family-owned investment advising firm in Wayzata. “I’m working harder than I ever have—and I’m having more fun than ever.”

Sporting a colorful tie featuring playful, crayon-style drawings of children, he even looks like he’s having fun.

Ask Perk how he became involved on PACER’s Advisory Board, and he’ll tell you he doesn’t remember. It’s not surprising that this decade-old detail might elude him. Recently voted “the hardest working board member” by The Business Journal, he has more pressing matters on his mind. In addition to running his company and supporting PACER, he serves on six for-profit boards and 12 subcommittees; spends as much time with family as possible; meets with corporate and world leaders; and travels to five auctions a year, where he seeks out new additions to his extensive collection of duck decoys.

As disparate and consuming as these activities and interests may appear, they integrate seamlessly. In fact, they illustrate a theme of Perk’s life—connection. It is that common thread that has led to a fascinating life and created a great advocate for PACER Center.

A visit to Perk’s Wayzata office demonstrates the point. The well-appointed conference room sports a few of his many duck decoys. Art prints of waterfowl adorn the walls. The credenza is lined with an impressive series of framed photos of Perk with President George H.W. Bush, Colin Powell, and other political figures.

On the adjacent wall is a bookcase topped with another picture of Perk with comedian Bill Cosby, taken at PACER’s 1997 Benefit. “That was a memorable moment,” he says. “I treasure that photo.”

As he is being interviewed for this article, his daughter and grandson pop in for moment. Soon after, a colleague stops by for a brief consultation on a client portfolio. As the interview concludes, he makes a quick call to check on the status of a trade. It all flows together smoothly—work, family, hobbies, interests, commitments.

For PACER, that connectedness has led to almost 10 years of remarkable support. “I know a lot of people,” Perk says in understated fashion, explaining how he has been able to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for PACER. He has even managed to arrange some extraordinary donations for PACER’s Annual Benefit—including a private jet to fly a live auction winner to the Super Bowl.

Each year, he raises the bar. “Last year, we set an ambitious goal, and nobody thought we’d make it,” he says. He and PACER’s corporate sponsor committee exceeded it.

As in any venture, an occasional disappointment crops up. “I tried last year to have a certain company be a major donor. That didn’t happen,” he says. Undaunted, Perk hasn’t given up. “I’d still like to do that,” he says with a twinkle of determination.

What else is in his plans? “Every year, I want to raise more money for PACER. And there’s always the question of how to find a Benefit entertainer to top the previous year,” he says.

“PACER is a great organization to work with and help fund,” Perk adds. His involvement stems not from any personal experience with disability, but from a belief in PACER’s mission and quality. “It’s a wonderful cause,” he says. “It’s impressive that 93 percent of what’s raised goes into programs. If you could be at PACER on any given day and see the youngsters, you might understand. You see who benefits. When you can see that, it makes the difference.”
Write in PACER on Your United Way Pledge

The United Way allows employees to support PACER Center through their workplace campaigns. 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. If your pledge card does not have a defined area to nominate PACER Center as the beneficiary organization, you may still write in PACER as your choice recipient.

PACER is not a United Way agency organization and therefore does not receive support from their general funds. Your specified support, however, helps PACER continue to respond to the 36,000 requests for assistance received each year.

“Identifying PACER as your choice organization provides important funds to PACER while still contributing to your overall workplace campaign,” says Mary Schrock, PACER’s Director of Development. “Your donation helps PACER open doors for children with all disabilities.”

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

☑ Other PACER Center

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

Upcoming Events

PACER continues to offer exciting events and new opportunities for you and your family to become involved. Mark your calendar now for these upcoming festivities:

Ongoing:
Visit Panera Bread® and contribute through Operation Dough-Nation® coin boxes located at each register.

Fall 2005:
Volunteer for PACER’s Annual Phonathon and hear inspiring stories of how PACER has helped families.

October 16, 2005:
PACER Family Field Day, a fun-filled day of games and play! Registration available online at www.pacer.org.

February 4, 2006:
HOT Party, Cool Cause is annually attended by 700 young parents, professionals, and entrepreneurs. Save the date!

May 6, 2006:
PACER’s 24th Annual Benefit. Planning has already begun! We welcome your participation, ideas, and energy.

To be involved, please call the Development Department at (952) 838-9000, or visit www.pacer.org and click on “How You Can Help.”

Spice up your winter with a night you won’t forget!

HOT Party 2006

PACER’s 3rd Annual HOT Party, Cool Cause is Saturday, Feb. 4, 2006, at The Loft at BarFly in downtown Minneapolis. Early registration is available online at www.pacer.org.

Sold-out crowds at previous parties helped raise important funds for PACER and increase awareness of PACER programs among young families and professionals.

“What better way to enjoy a winter evening? At HOT, we can just dance and have a good time with friends while still benefiting families. We look forward to it every year!” says event co-chair Evie Simon.

Please save the date for this year’s boogie bash.
When you’re 6 years old, the world is full of exciting new things to learn. When you’re 6 and have Down syndrome, learning those things can present a challenge. Of course, when you’re 6, have Down syndrome, and you’re Bret Salter, you’re feeling pretty cool and confident about it all—and with good reason.

Bret recently participated in PACER’s Project KITE (Kids Included through Technology are Enriched). Designed to promote inclusion for children with disabilities, KITE helps teachers and families learn how technology can open the door to success at home and school. For Bret, KITE has been the ticket to learning critical skills and being able to prove how much he knows. Technology allows him to bypass his limitations and show off his capabilities.

“KITE is fantastic,” says Kate Bretscher, Bret’s mom and an enthusiastic proponent of the course. “It still astounds me. It is such an optimistic program.”

When she and Bret went through the program this spring, Kate wasn’t sure what to expect. “I was naive as to what I was walking into,” she admits. What she knew was that her son needed help to reach his potential.

“Bret is bubbly and bright,” Kate says, noting that he could read when he was 2. “One of his biggest challenges is fine motor skills. He’s 6, but his hands are like those of a 3-year-old.” That delay has held him back from being able to show what he knows. “He also is very verbal,” Kate continues. “He makes his needs and feelings known—but he still has some articulation and expressive language issues, such as speaking in paragraphs,” she says.

Enter Project KITE. To address Bret’s fine-motor issues, “the first thing they did was convert him to using a touch-screen computer instead of a keyboard,” Kate says. “Then they found him the right kind of trackball,” a type of mouse that’s easy for people with limited motor skills to manipulate. “Suddenly, he had access to a computer,” she says.

Next, the KITE staff let Kate and Bret try out a variety of software. “Bret is a highly visual, concrete learner,” Kate says, so they looked for programs that would help make abstract concepts like numbers and rhyming more tangible. “All of a sudden, counting started to click for Bret,” Kate says. Through highly visual games, auditory rhyming skills also began to fall into place.

In addition to the high-tech tools, KITE staff also recommended low-tech adaptations. A pencil grasp, for example, made writing tools more manageable. They also identified toys that could help develop motor skills. “Assistive technology lets us look at Bret’s learning skills apart from his fine motor skills,” Kate says. “We can keep the academic piece moving while we bring his motor skills up.”

The results are astounding. “It’s really energizing,” Kate says happily. “Bret can work on skills in an environment where he feels good. His self-esteem is soaring. His attention span has increased, too,” she adds.

The benefits will continue when he enters kindergarten this fall. Thanks to guidance from KITE staff, Bret’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) team now includes an assistive technology (AT) specialist and goals include using AT in the classroom. One of his first projects will be A Book About Me—a digitally created story about all his favorite things. He’ll use it to introduce himself to classmates during show-and-tell this fall.

Kate couldn’t be more pleased. “Including AT in your thinking is pretty magical,” she says. “This progress may seem like a baby step to some people,” she adds, “but for our family, it’s huge.”

Find out more information about Project KITE online at www.pacer.org/kite.
Most Minnesotans know PACER’s Annual Benefit as a major Twin Cities fundraiser. It is often called “the hottest ticket in town.” For participating families of children with disabilities, however, the event may be much more.

Sheryl Hanuman is an example. Upon meeting PACER Executive Director Paula Goldberg at the Benefit, Sheryl told her the event provided her with a “highlight of my life.”

“I fully expected her to say that she was a Lionel Richie fan and couldn’t wait to hear him perform,” recalled Paula. “Instead, Sheryl told me that the highlight of her life was finally meeting Pat Anderson [a PACER advocate] in person, after years of help over the phone! She told me the story.”

Sheryl’s son had difficulty at school from the beginning. Now going into eighth grade, he had encountered the first challenge in kindergarten. He was failing because he did not know his alphabet. In an attempt to assess the situation, Sheryl quit her job to volunteer in the classroom. With her help and support, school went more smoothly for her son—for awhile.

In the second grade, however, reading challenges became a crisis for her son. The teacher said he was lazy, lacked motivation and responsibility, and would never be able to read.

Her son was miserable in school. Eventually, a psychiatrist diagnosed attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The boy began medication but continued to fail at school.

It was frustrating, said Sheryl. She knew that her son could achieve academically; using private tutors during summers proved it. At one point, her son’s reading level increased one-and-half years in three months. Another summer brought similar improvement. In addition, it was discovered that he was gifted in math. Sheryl’s son could learn in a one-on-one setting, but things would quickly fall apart in the classroom.

When he was in fifth grade, a frightening event brought positive change to his life. A switch in medication resulted in his admission to Children’s Hospital—and Sheryl’s introduction to PACER Center. In the discharge meeting, a social worker told Sheryl to call PACER for help with school issues.

Since then, Pat has helped guide the boy’s education journey. Pat told Sheryl about her son’s educational rights, what she could expect from the school, and how to ask for it.

“The meetings with the school were challenging, but once I mentioned that PACER was advising me, the process became easier. It can be very intimidating for parents to be by themselves in a meeting with a roomful of school personnel,” Sheryl said.

Her son first received a 504 Plan, a program of instructional services for children with special needs who are in a regular education setting. The approach, however, did not work for him. Several months ago, with PACER’s involvement, the school finally assessed Sheryl’s son and offered the needed special education services after seven years of asking for help in different school districts.

Her son’s long journey is not over, Sheryl said, but there is progress and hope. She believes that things will improve in high school.

With Pat’s help, Sheryl maintained courage and purpose amidst strong challenges.

“Without Pat’s advice, emotional support, and encouragement, I couldn’t do it. I don’t know where I’d be,” said Sheryl. “Pat would say to me, ‘Just do it!’ She helped me learn the language to use, the questions to ask, and to not give up.”

Sheryl says she feels fortunate because she had the resources to seek a psychiatrist, could hire private tutors, and had the freedom to quit her job to help her son. PACER services, however, are free to Minnesota families of children with all disabilities, she points out.

“If I can help even one other parent, sharing my story will be worth it. My message is this: ‘Don’t give up!’ If you quit too soon, your child’s education and future will suffer. My son and I are still in the middle of this expedition, but I see progress because of my own efforts and PACER’s help. Don’t be afraid to ask for help. PACER advocates can guide you on your journey, too.”

To speak to a PACER advocate, please call (952) 838-9000.
The companies listed below have generously made in-kind donations of time and services to many of PACER’s recent events, including PACER’s 23rd Annual Benefit. Their support results in greater funds and contributions directed to PACER’s programs for children and young adults with all disabilities.

If you use the services of one of these local providers, please thank them for helping PACER. By mentioning the organization, you magnify our thanks to the community that supports PACER’s work and the families it serves.

Partners of PACER is a directory produced by PACER Center. It features only major in-kind donors who have contributed to PACER between Feb. 1 and June 31, 2005. Please look in your next PACER Partners for the companies who will have supported our upcoming open houses and special events.

### AUTO DEALERS

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<th>Company</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sears Imported Autos</td>
<td>13500 Wayzata Blvd</td>
<td>952.546.5301</td>
<td><a href="http://www.searsimports.com">www.searsimports.com</a></td>
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### FINE ART

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<tr>
<td>Erin Taylor Editions</td>
<td>5222 W 78th St</td>
<td>952.844.9999</td>
<td><a href="http://www.billmack.com">www.billmack.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whelihan Fine Art</td>
<td>12420 53 Ave N</td>
<td>763.551.1475</td>
<td><a href="http://www.whelihan.com">www.whelihan.com</a></td>
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### FINE JEWELERY

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<td>J.B. Hudson Jewelers</td>
<td>770 Nicollet Mall</td>
<td>612.338.5950</td>
<td><a href="http://www.jbudson.com">www.jbudson.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeffrey Jewelry Co</td>
<td>12 S 6th St Ste 259</td>
<td>612.337.5700</td>
<td><a href="http://www.jeffreyjewelry.com">www.jeffreyjewelry.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas Joseph and Sons</td>
<td>12 6th St S</td>
<td>612.339.4111</td>
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### FLORAL, GIFTS & EVENTS

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<td>Linen Effects</td>
<td>6900 Oxford St</td>
<td>952.848.1055</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lineneffects.com">www.lineneffects.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Richfield Flowers and Events</td>
<td>6515 Nicollet Ave.</td>
<td>612.866.8416</td>
<td><a href="http://www.richfieldflowers.com">www.richfieldflowers.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Winsome Orchids</td>
<td>7978 County Rd 11</td>
<td>763.972.9708</td>
<td><a href="http://www.winsomeorchids.com">www.winsomeorchids.com</a></td>
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### HEALTH & WELLNESS

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<td>American Laser Center</td>
<td>7373 France Ave S, Ste 408</td>
<td>1.888.645.3312</td>
<td><a href="http://www.americana">www.americana</a> laser.com</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minnesota Eye Consultants</td>
<td>710 E. 24th St, Suite 106</td>
<td>612.813.3600</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mneye.com">www.mneye.com</a></td>
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### HOME & COMMERCIAL

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<td>Appliance Smart</td>
<td>7350 Excelsior Blvd</td>
<td>952.930.1740</td>
<td><a href="http://www.appliancesmart.com">www.appliancesmart.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambria</td>
<td>31496 Cambria Ave</td>
<td>1.866.CAMBRIA</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cambriausa.com">www.cambriausa.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ferguson Enterprises</td>
<td>2730 Ranchview La N</td>
<td>763.559.1200</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ferguson.com">www.ferguson.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGough Construction</td>
<td>2737 Fairview Ave</td>
<td>651.633.5050</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mcgough.com">www.mcgough.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>RSP Architects</td>
<td>120 1st Ave N</td>
<td>612.339.0313</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rsparch.com">www.rsparch.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sela Roofing &amp; Remodeling</td>
<td>4100 Excelsior Blvd</td>
<td>612.823.8046</td>
<td><a href="http://www.selaservices.com">www.selaservices.com</a></td>
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Twin City Tile & Marble
Stone fabricator & service
900 Montreal Circle
St Paul, MN 55102
651.602.5880

HOTELS & TRAVEL
Beverly Hilton Hotel
Luxury hotel
9336 Civic Center Dr
Beverly Hills, CA 90210
310.274.7777
www.hilton.com

Boulders Resort and Golden Door Spa
Luxury resort
34631 N Tom Darlington
Carefree, AZ 85377
480.488.9009
www.wyndham.com

Carey Limousine
Limosine services
302 Industrial Blvd NE
Minneapolis, MN 55413
612.627.5666

Elfin Cove Lodge
Alaskan luxury lodge
P.O. Box 17
Elfin Cove, AK 99825
1.800.382.3847
www.covelodge.com

Hotel Sofitel
French hotel & restaurants
5601 W 78 St
Bloomington, MN 55439
952.835.1900
www.sofitel.com

Travel One
Travel agency
8009 34th Ave S
Bloomington, MN 55425
952.854.5251
www.travelonline.com

PRINTING & DESIGN
Balger Concept to Print
Printer
3301 Como Ave SE
St Paul, MN 55414
651.645.6311
www.balgerinc.com

Centurion Printing
Publisher
718 Northland Circle N
Minneapolis, MN 55428
952.933.3852
www.centurionprinting.com

CityLites
Skyway advertising service
12 S 6th Street, Ste 936
Minneapolis, MN 55402
612.339.6875
www.citylitesusa.com

Cooperative Printing
Commercial printer
2009 E 24th St
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612.721.5731
www.cooperativeprinting.com

Coordinated Business Systems, Ltd
Digital document imaging
851 W 128th St
Burnsville, MN 55337
952.894.9460
www.coordinated.com

EckofX Studios
Motion graphics design
8700 Cottonwood Ln N
Maple Grove, MN 55369
763.425.1485
www.eckofx.com

Jigsaw Media
Multimedia archiver & design
2778 Dean Pky
Minneapolis, MN 55416
612.770.8155
www.jigsawmedia.com

Meyer Offset Printing
Professional printers
4838 Park Glen Rd
St Louis Park, MN 55416
612.822.4272
www.meyeroffset.com

Midwest Power Mall
Mail House
750 Washington Ave N
Minneapolis, MN 55401
612.288.9993

NRC Graphics LLC
Book & graphic designs
13033 Ridgedale Dr, #148
Minnetonka, MN 55305
952.512.1957
artcrawl.com/nancychakrin.html

Sexton Printing
Printing & digital imaging
250 Lothenbach Ave
W St Paul, MN 55118
651.457.9255
www.sextonprinting.com

Tandem Printing
Professional printers
7860 12th Ave S
Bloomington, MN 55425
952.854.0545
www.tandemprinting.com

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www.bestbuy.com

Marshall Field’s
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700 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 55402
612.375.2200
www.fields.com

MATTEO
Handcrafted home items
912 E 3rd St, Studio 105
Los Angeles, CA 90013
213.617.2813
www.matteohome.com

Target
Retailer
1000 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 55403
612.338.0085
www.target.com
SPORTS / ENTERTAINMENT

Minnesota Twins
MLB baseball team
34 Kirby Puckett Pl
Minneapolis, MN 55415
612.375.1366
www.mntwins.com

Peters Billiards
The Game Room Store
6150 Lyndale Ave South
Minneapolis, MN 55419
612.866.8433
www.petersbilliards.com

Polaris Industries
ATVs, snowmobiles, recreation
2100 Highway 55
Medina, MN 55340
763.417.8650
www.polarisindustries.com

WINE & CHEESE

Haskell’s
The Wine People
81 S 9th St
Minneapolis, MN 55402
612.342.2437
www.haskells.com

Kuether Distribution
Liquor wholesaler
6982 NE Hwy 65
Fridley, MN 55432
763.571.4115

South Lyndale Liquors
Wine & specialty beer
5300 Lyndale Av S
Minneapolis, MN 55419
612.827.5811
www.southlyndaleliquors.com

Wisconsin Cheese Group
Distributor & maker
1380 Corporate Center Dr
Eagan, MN 55121
651.994.1120
www.wisconsincheesegroup.com

The Stars Behind the Show

Benefit Co-Chairs (from L to R) were Colleen McGough Wood, Judy Jaffee, and Mary Frey.

A few of the Corporate Committee members were (back row) Don McNeil, Roger Scharton, Ken Rosenblum, and Sharon Tapper, and (front row) Co-Chairs Don Davidson and Jim Oricchio.

Some members of the Silent Auction Committee were (back row) Trish Lies, Jan Flora, Sabine Duda, Joan Valente; (middle row) Beth Jasco and Danna Mirviss; (front row) Marcia Wilkinson, Nancy Kleve, Patrice Alkire.

Some members of the Benefit Committee were (back row) Michele Heimes, Sande Rand, Mary Jean Sergeant, Nan Shimoda, Jill Sawrey, Jan McGough, Nancy Whitney; (front row) Ruth Kronick, Martha Koonheuck, Sylvia Kanevson

Silent Auction Co-Chairs (from L to R) were Trish Lies, Patrice Alkire, Danna Mirviss
Summer is often considered playtime. For PACER Center, that’s certainly true in 2005. PACER was chosen as one of six sites from across the nation for the Toy Industry Foundation’s “Early Childhood and Toy Expo.” It was at PACER Center on July 30.

Families of young children with disabilities were entertained with more than 60 new toys, treats, and activities. As they participated, they evaluated the toys and provided feedback for the Toy Industry Foundation’s publication Let’s Play: A Guide to Toys for Children with Special Needs.

Toy manufacturers use the guide for examining product safety, functionality, learning outcomes, and progress toward achieving “universal design,” a concept that encourages inclusion of children with disabilities with their same-age peers without disabilities. In their evaluations, PACER families indicated a desire for their children to use the same toys as their neighbor kids—toys that appealed to their child’s friends. Separate toys designed solely for children with disabilities are often more expensive and not as easily shared with peers.

Attending the Toy Expo gave PACER parents the opportunity to directly affect the toy industry in their design of accessible, useful and popular playthings for children of all abilities.

“We’re happy to be able to have an impact on the front-end of toy design and manufacturing so that children with all disabilities can play and learn,” said PACER Executive Director Paula Goldberg.

A few lucky parents and children won some of the toys showcased at the Expo. The remaining toys were given to PACER’s Simon Technology Center Toy Lending Library, which currently features both adaptive and universally designed toys. Parents can join and then borrow toys from the library to determine if a particular toy meets their child’s needs.

A recently developed link on PACER’s Web site (www.pacer.org/stc/crc_software.htm) makes it possible for Lending Library members to borrow toys and other assistive technology products. Up to three items can be mailed upon members’ requests with a one-month check-out period. Families who are interested in assistive technology products but live outside the Twin Cities have the chance to try out products free and conveniently.

“Our ultimate goal for the Toy Lending Library is to put together toy kits for specific disability categories. This would enable parents and educators to assess several toys at once and, through their feedback, improve recommendations and technical assistance given by the Simon Technology Center staff,” said Wendy Tuominen, coordinator of PACER’s Toy Expo and assistive technology specialist.

If you would like to contribute to the expansion of the Toy Lending Library or any other PACER project, please use the enclosed envelope or visit PACER’s Web site at www.pacer.org.
Motors with a Mission

PACER Center announces Leave a Car, Help a Child, a new program that allows families to donate their used cars in exchange for a tax deduction. Profits from the sale of the donated vehicle will support PACER Center and the children and families it serves.

PACER accepts cars, boats, trucks, fleet vehicles, motor homes, motorcycles, snowmobiles, personal watercrafts, and RVs. Cars should be 1990 or newer and running, though exceptions can be made depending on a vehicle’s condition.

Donors can drive their car to PACER Center or, if necessary, arrange for the vehicle to be picked up from their home. The donated car, truck, or boat will then be sold with proceeds benefiting the many programs of PACER Center. PACER will provide all donors with a letter of acknowledgement to certify the value of the donation following the sale.

“Many people may be tired of spending too much on repairs, unhappy with the trade-in value offered, or simply looking for an opportunity to help,” said Mary Schrock, PACER Director of Development. “By donating a vehicle to PACER, you are making a tremendous difference in the lives of children with disabilities.”

Donating your car is simple!

1. Just gather your keys, vehicle title, and lien release (if applicable).
2. Call PACER at (952) 838-9000 to arrange a time to deliver or pick-up your vehicle. A receipt will be provided at the time of exchange.
3. After the vehicle has been sold, PACER will provide you with a written acknowledgement of the final value of donation. Please keep the letter with your other tax records as all donations are tax deductible.

Thanks, PACER Center…

Throughout 2004 PACER received many thank you letters from parents and professionals. Examples follow:

Dear PACER,

“We were made to feel right at home. The staff person was very patient with my son Josh and very kind. It’s what a parent of a special needs person dreams of. To have their child treated as a valuable, respected individual who has just as many rights as anyone else. Thank you so much!”

Dear PACER,

“Thank you for all your help. It is very much appreciated. Your support is helping me to move on. The safety, health, and educational needs of my child were all met—thanks to you. The telephone conversations we’ve had were helpful and gave me direction.”

Dear PACER,

“We were made to feel right at home. The staff person was very patient with my son Josh and very kind. It’s what a parent of a special needs person dreams of. To have their child treated as a valuable, respected individual who has just as many rights as anyone else. Thank you so much!”

Dear PACER,

“Five years ago our son Christopher was graduating from high school and we needed an advocate intervention from PACER Center. You sent Virginia Richardson and ‘things’ worked out for Chris in the end. He went on to Texas A&M University Corpus Christi and majored in Political Science. He graduated last year with honors and moved to London for a master’s degree at the University of Westminster. Over 400 applications were received and 30 accepted! Chris is now finished with the course work and working on his thesis. He’ll be back in the States in September and will be applying for work in several government agencies…

We wanted to share this good news with your organization and once again thank you for your efforts and especially those of Virginia. As I told his high school special education teacher at the meeting just prior to Chris’s graduation which Virginia attended, not all persons with learning disabilities are destined for limited career opportunities. It should be the goal of special ed to help their students achieve their full potential—not just pass them through the system with the least amount of effort possible. Thanks to your organization for making schools do what they are supposed to do, and for the difference you make in the lives of the students you touch! Bless you all!”

~Parents served by PACER
IBM + PACER = High-tech Fun for Girls

PACER’s Simon Technology Center and IBM Corporation partnered to offer an EXITE (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) Summer Camp for the third consecutive year. This year, 30 middle-school girls with disabilities attended five sessions of the camp beginning July 21.

Although IBM offers EXITE Camps worldwide, the Simon Technology Center camp is the only one in the United States specifically for girls with disabilities. Last year, a camp was piloted in Japan, based on the Simon Technology Center’s successful camp model.

The EXITE Camp offers girls an opportunity to explore technology and engineering through enjoyable activities that 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 circuit board, and creating a polymer. New this year were sessions on lift robotics, Lego™ robotics, and a visit with animals from the Minnesota Zoo.

EXITE Camp also featured a field trip to IBM’s Rochester plant and guest speakers such as Belinda Jensen of KARE 11 Television. Each girl is matched with an IBM employee with a disability as a mentor for the EXITE camp and the 2005-06 school year.

Why focus the camp on girls with disabilities? Studies have indicated 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).

“PACER is thrilled to continue this valuable partnership with IBM and its EXITE Camp,” said Paula Goldberg, PACER executive director. “It opens girls’ eyes to new possibilities at no charge to their families.”

If you would like to contribute to EXITE or other PACER programs, please use the enclosed envelope or visit PACER’s Web site at www.pacer.org.

PACER’s Bullying Prevention Web Site Needs Your Help!

There is still time to support PACER’s goal of raising $100,000 by Oct. 31, 2005, to support a matching grant of $100,000 from the Robins, Kaplan, Miller and Ciresi LLP Foundation for Education, Public Health and Social Justice, a supporting organization of the Minneapolis Foundation.

Make a pledge or contribute directly to BULLYING 411, PACER’s Bullying Prevention Project Web site. The site is designed for all children, and has a unique, special emphasis on children with disabilities.

Your support now will help us raise a total of $200,000 for this vital resource for children with disabilities. We NEED your HELP by Oct. 31 to accomplish this goal!

For more information call (952) 838-1316. To make a donation, use the enclosed envelope, or make a designated donation online at www.pacer.org.
PACER Family Field Day

You are invited to PACER’s first Family Field Day! Please join us for a fun-filled day of games and play on Sunday, Oct. 16, from noon to 3 p.m. at the Lindbergh Center in Minnetonka.

Children with and without disabilities and their parents will be assigned to teams consisting of about 20 people. Team “captains” will lead their mates through a series of creative activities. Teams win “zillions of points” as rewards for best time, most smiles, and greatest teamwork, and then points are tallied for a special awards ceremony at the end of the day.

Inclusive activities are designed by PACER staff and volunteers to engage people of all ages and abilities. Treats and refreshments will be provided throughout this family day of fun!

Ongoing Partners: Panera Benefits Families

For the past three years, PACER Center has been the designated nonprofit partner of Panera Bread’s® Operation Dough-Nation®, which provides both public and financial support to PACER and its programs. Early this summer, Panera announced its decision to continue the relationship into the future.

“It is important for us to be a part of the communities we serve; PACER helps us do that in so many ways,” said Jim Rand, Director of Operations for Panera Bread®. “We look forward to expanding our partnership.”

Just recently, more than 30 Panera Bread® managers and directors visited PACER Center to gain a greater awareness of the services PACER provides at no charge to families of children with disabilities. PACER’s Sean Roy and Sue Fager provided information about transition services and supportive employment. Stephanie Rosso presented technology that adapts Web sites and computer programs to the individual needs of persons with disabilities.

“Holding the meeting at PACER Center and having our managers get to know the organization and some of the staff really helped validate that what we are doing is good and right. By having the meeting at PACER, we were able to learn more about PACER and its programs. It raised our awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities, be they our staff, patrons, or their families,” reflected Rand.

Panera Bread® matches all coins donated to the collection boxes located at every register in metro bakery-cafés. “Panera is proud to be associated with PACER and their mission,” said Rand.

Panera Bread® managers gathered at PACER to learn about its programs and see how their contributions benefit children with disabilities.
Thank You!

Hundreds of people—volunteers, board and advisory board members, donors, corporate and foundation sponsors, and staff—contributed time, energy, and resources to PACER’s 23rd Annual Benefit to ensure that PACER is able to continue its vital role in helping children with disabilities at no charge to families. Thank you to everyone who made the 2005 Benefit the most successful ever!

We want to extend a special thank you to those who responded so generously to the Challenge Grant made by the Robins, Miller, Kaplan, and Ciresi LLP Foundation for Education, Public Health Policy, and Social Justice of the Minneapolis Foundation for a bullying prevention web site. You may still participate in the Challenge by using the envelope in this issue.

Many donors made contributions to PACER Center through the United Way by writing in PACER’s name. Thank you for thinking of PACER through your workplace contributions. We continue to be inspired by our volunteers and donors’ responses to the needs of children with disabilities. Thank you.