



## Dedication and dreams...

Photos of adorable children set in Plexiglas rectangles. Glass etched with inspiring words. A metal ribbon to bind them. These are the tangible materials of PACER's Donor Wall, dedicated on Nov. 19, 2002. What the Donor Wall represents, however, is the love for and support of the community for children with disabilities.

Seventy-five people took time out of their busy lives to gather for a brief program that unveiled the Donor Wall, thanked all the donors to PACER's Capital Campaign, and dedicated the Mara Bennett Conference Room. Mara is the daughter of Muffy and Frank Bennett, co-chairs of the Capital Campaign. Mara, who has Williams Syndrome and received services from PACER, is the reason her parents took a leadership role in the campaign.

*cont. on page 8*



Mara Bennett receives a plaque in honor of the new Mara Bennett Conference Room at PACER Center.



Frank and Muffy Bennett, Capital Campaign Steering Committee Co-chairs; Jerry and Sarah Caruso, Capital Campaign Steering Committee Members; Jeff Betchwars, PACER Board President; John Guthmann, PACER Board Vice President.

## Persistence and courage pay off

Ten-year-old Darnell has a big bright smile that flashes when he sees his mom. He and his mother have a special bond, so it's not surprising to learn that Delores uses all means available to help Darnell, who has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). He had been placed in a classroom for children with emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD). Darnell wasn't academically challenged in these classes, and his boredom and inattentiveness was interpreted as a behavior problem.

Delores knew that her son would perform better in general education classes. He didn't show behavior problems at home or in Sunday school. With PACER's help, Darnell moved to a regular education classroom with support services. His regular education teachers reported to Delores that Darnell was doing well in class—he was behaving just like the other students.

"I always tell my son, 'You just keep your head up and have courage. We have come a long way'," she said. "Bonnie Jean at PACER really educated me. She and her supervisor Virginia Richardson are super. They know Darnell so well."

*letter cont. on page 2*



*"If you can imagine it,  
you can create it.  
If you can dream it,  
you can become it."*

*William Arthur Ward*



Dear Paula Goldberg,  
Executive Director,

I would like to take time out to acknowledge Bonnie Jean Smith from PACER Center for doing an extremely great job. She has been with me and my son Darnell from the very beginning, since January 2000.

She attended IEP meetings and conciliation conferences. She has always been very supportive, patient, and knowledgeable of Darnell's educational goals.

I'm very pleased to say that my child, Darnell, went from Setting III EBD (Emotional Behavioral Disorders) to

Setting II general education with support services, due to Bonnie's good workmanship.

Bonnie Jean Smith will always have a special place in my family's heart and mine!

Sincerely yours,  
Delores Manning



*"Team PACER" runner Cynthia Armacost is still smiling after finishing her TC 10 Mile.*

## "Team PACER" becomes annual PACER event

It started last year when marathon runners Tom Nelson and Andy Lilienthal, Friends of PACER Advisory Board members, decided to run for PACER at the Twin Cities Marathon. Nelson and Lilienthal were joined by another PACER supporter and runner, Eleanor Fraser-Taylor, to help them raise money for PACER.

Wooters. Lilienthal was unable to run this year due to a running injury.

The Friends of PACER Advisory Board was developed four years ago by co-founders Martha Dayton and Tom Nelson. The goal has been to raise money and volunteer time for PACER programs, and members accomplish this in many creative ways. Some of the projects have included: PACER garage sales; the PACER Bear Bank, a project that gave special talking bears to over 300 families served by PACER; and the PACER Pumpkin Patch Party.

For more information on joining Team PACER for the 2003 run, call Amy Wooters at (952) 838-9000.

**A**fter the 2002 Twin Cities TC 10 Mile race, Team PACER runners were sweaty, tired, and sore—but in high spirits. The runners had raised more than \$5,000 for PACER Center programs.

This year the Board expanded their marathon fundraising project to include the TC 10 Mile race and more runners for Team PACER. Runners included Cynthia Armacost, Eleanor Fraser-Taylor, Kathy Graves, Andrea Hendel, Tom Nelson, and Amy

# PACER and Paddington pair up for family fun and community involvement

Lively entertainment, conversations with Santa Claus, and a leisurely stroll through Marshall Field's popular annual animated holiday display inspired eager children and their parents from the Twin Cities to kick off the 2002 holiday season while benefiting PACER.

Marshall Field's selected PACER as a partner for a Nov. 8 preview of its animated holiday display with a *Paddington Bear* theme. This is the fourth year that the preview event has benefited PACER. Proceeds from the event go to several PACER programs, including the Simon Technology Center and the COUNT ME IN puppet program.

"We thank Marshall Field's for their continued support of children with disabilities and commitment to the community," said Paula Goldberg, PACER's executive director. "The event is an example of how a caring corporation can make life better for children and their families."

Event co-chairs were Cynthia Holtz, Kate Helms, and Kelly Nitschke. Committee members were Cynthia Armacost, Sima Griffith, Kelly Jasper, Sheila Jones, Amy Lucas, and Kelly Perry.



Committee co-chairs for the 2002 event were (left to right): Kelly Nitschke, Cynthia Holtz, and Kate Helms.



Face painting was a big hit at this year's event. Children were also entertained by the PACER COUNT ME IN puppets who performed several shows.



PACER Advisory Board member Tom Plumb attended the 2002 event with his family.



Val and Ed Spencer enjoyed the animated holiday festivities with two of their children and a family friend.

## PACER's 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Benefit

Presented by Metris

### Featuring Bonnie Raitt

Saturday, May 3, 2003

Minneapolis Convention Center

#### Ticket Prices

\$50, \$75, \$135\*, \$185\*, \$260\*, \$525\*

Call PACER at (952) 838-9000 for reservations.

Benefit events include a pre-concert gourmet dinner (tickets sold separately), silent and live auctions, performance, raffle, and a patron party\*.

# Inspirational teen makes a difference

By Beth Casper

When Jessica Billings was crowned Miss Minnesota Junior Teen 2002 in June, she knew that she could use the title to draw attention to important issues.



Jessica with her brother Jamey and their mother, Michelle Billings. Jessica uses her position as Ms. Minnesota Junior Teen to raise awareness for the disability community.

Jessica had no hesitation in deciding which issues were the most significant to her—raising awareness and promoting equality for people with disabilities was top on her list.

Jessica credits her brother with

teaching her the importance of accepting differences and speaking up for others.

“When I look back through photo albums when we were very little, I realized that I didn’t know Jamey had a disability,” Jessica said. “He was just Jamey. People would ask him things and I simply would say, ‘Jamey doesn’t talk.’”

Jamey, 17, was diagnosed with autism when he was just 2 years old. As Jessica grew up, Jamey’s differences grew more apparent. Jessica, who is two years younger than Jamey, spent much time explaining Jamey’s disability to classmates, teachers, and friends.

Her 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher suggested she read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and write an essay for the League of Minnesota Human Rights Commission’s essay contest. Jessica took second place in an essay that eloquently made a case for the rights of people with disabilities to be free from discrimination and free from degrading treatment.

“One definition of prejudice is ‘an adverse opinion or learning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge’,” Jessica wrote in her essay. “In other words, prejudice is ignorance. There is an old saying that people are scared of what they don’t know. So we need to teach people about disabilities and differences.”

After reading the essay on cable television, Jessica was approached by a Human Rights Commissioner who uses a guide dog. He thanked her for giving a voice to those who don’t have one. He told her that by sharing her experiences she was raising awareness of disabilities.

Staying true to her words, Jessica is traveling the state teaching people about disabilities. This energetic 15-year-old also serves on the Bloomington Human Rights Commission, started a program called “Dare to be Different” to educate children about diversity, and volunteers many hours at PACER Center.

She knows that her work is making a difference.

Children are inspired by her—they show up early at PACER’s Creation Station craft room to work with Jessica, and they gather close to have their photo taken with her. Their beaming smiles say everything about what it is like to meet Jessica.

When Jessica volunteers with the COUNT ME IN puppet program, working as a puppeteer for Gina, a puppet who is blind, or Mitch, a puppet with mental retardation, she can tell that children are interested.

“They ask Gina how she cuts her steak if she can’t see and other really good questions,” Jessica said. “When I am up there doing a puppet show, it’s not even like I am volunteering. I become the puppet character.”

*“Prejudice is ignorance. There is an old saying that people are scared of what they don’t know. So we need to teach people about disabilities and differences.”*

*Jessica Billings,  
Ms. Minnesota Junior Teen*

# Simon Delivers sponsors the PACER Pumpkin Patch Party



Imagine fields full of pumpkins, falling leaves, the smell of hot apple cider and the sounds of children laughing on a hay ride through the woods... all these elements were part of PACER's *Pumpkin Patch Party*.

Simon Delivers was the presenting sponsor of the party on Oct. 20, 2002, at Deer Lake Orchard in Buffalo to benefit PACER and children with disabilities. Edina Realty provided additional support.

More than 200 people attended this event, despite the cold Minnesota weather—and enjoyed a day of family fun. Event activities included a petting zoo, pumpkin decorating, hay rides, face painting, and live music from the *Splatter Sisters*.



Melissa Sigel (left) and Courtney Kiernat (right) Pumpkin Patch co-chair, took a break from committee duties.

Special thanks to the Pumpkin Patch Party co-chairs Courtney Kiernat and Laura Keller and to fellow committee members Sarah Johnson, Kathy Longo, Sara Richter, Melissa Sigel, and Evie Simon.



Suzy Downs-Laird, PACER Board member, braves the chilly fall weather with her family.

One of the many prized pumpkins from the day. Children were able to participate in hay rides, pumpkin decorating and puppet shows.



Hay rides were very popular, despite the cold weather. Everyone bundled up for the afternoon fun!

**Become a part of PACER's future...  
put PACER in your will.**

Planned gifts include wills, trusts, insurance, retirement plans and other giving vehicles.

You can choose who receives the money rather than having the government choose through taxes.

You may designate any amount for a planned gift.

Call Mary Schrock for more information at (952) 838-9000.

# Individual contributions grow into

**F**ive years ago, Nan Owen and John Lavander would never have imagined that their individual contribution could have helped dozens of children and parents served by PACER's Health Information and Advocacy Center.



John Lavander and Nan Owen are committed to the spirit of giving. John and Nan have passed on this spirit of community and giving to their sons.

For example, recently the center's coordinator Carolyn Allshouse helped a distraught parent of a child with epilepsy write an appeal to the insurance company. The company had denied payment for several expensive phone consultations between the mother and a physician about medication to treat the epilepsy. The mother needed to consult the doctor

regularly about the medication in order to prevent her daughter's severe seizures. The mother said that without Carolyn's assistance she wouldn't have known how to write an effective appeal and her daughter's health could have suffered.

Nan and John offered their first challenge grant in 1998 and others responded. The money grew into a fund of \$113,000 for the initial funding of the Health Information and Advocacy Center, which helps parents find the right health care providers, understand how to pay for health insurance, adapt to a child's special health care needs, and many other health-related issues.

With such an incredible start, Blue Cross/Blue Shield provided additional funding for the project for the next two years. Other grants and organizations contributed as well.

Since proving its effectiveness, it has now been funded by a four-year federal grant.

"Nan and John's donation had a mushroom effect," said Mary Schrock, director of development for PACER. "The project needed a track record, and Nan and John helped plant the seed and let the project take root. It started with a vision from the donors and an investment in that vision."

The need that John and Nan fulfilled is by no means the only one at PACER. Many projects have been identified that would benefit from a similar approach by donors. One of the aspects of giving that appeals to John and Nan is their ability to select the needs that most closely match their values—something John calls "social entrepreneurship."

"We look at our donations as investments," he said. "We appreciate accountability and outcomes. We believe PACER is an excellent steward of our money. The organization has had such success at leveraging our giving."

Executive Director Paula Goldberg said PACER is extremely fortunate that John and Nan chose to invest in PACER. "We are so grateful that Nan and John are friends of PACER," she said. "Their spirit is infectious, they hold themselves to very high standards, and they set an amazing example for other donors."

Until this year, Nan and John chose to be anonymous donors. "It is more typical of Minnesotans to be anonymous," John said. "Minnesotans tend to be low profile."

To be effective advocates of giving, however, Nan and John also realized they needed to show people their dedication. "In order to be good role models, people need to know we are serious about our commitment," John said.

"John is an enormous giver," Nan

*"We feel we are gatekeepers—this is not ours to keep but to try to share with others.*

*Giving is such an important part of our lives.*

*We've really adopted the motto, 'Giving is living!'"*

*Nan Owen and John Lavander*

# much-needed PACER programs

said. "I came to realize that if the goal is to teach people to be better givers, then we better show how we give. We need to teach by example."

John and Nan have always donated to various organizations, but they started a concerted effort in 1997. John had founded Caliber Development Corporation, a commercial real estate development company, in 1986, and sold the buildings he had in his portfolio in 1997. Nan worked as a financial planner.

In 1997, Nan walked into PACER, asked to speak to Executive Director Paula Goldberg, and handed her a generous check. She explained that five years earlier, PACER had helped her family. Nan had called Parent Training Manager Virginia Richardson, who helped them with an issue with their son.

The first gift from Nan and John was used for general operating expenses. The following year they made the challenge grant to start the health project, and for the two years after that, Nan and John committed a major donation to the capital campaign for PACER's new building. Last year, another challenge donation helped the COUNT ME IN and LET'S PREVENT ABUSE puppet programs raise more than \$58,000. Nan and John are now deciding which PACER need is the most crucial for this year's contribution.

PACER was a clear choice for Nan and John as they searched for organizations that matched their interests and values. As parents of a 19-year-old son with autism, the couple has a firm understanding of the struggle parents face when raising a child with a disability.

"We are committed to the philosophy of PACER," the couple said. "We want to be able to save the mothers and fathers of today from the struggle we went through to get help for Bradley. We want to help parents of special needs children. We want to

make sure it's not as hard for them as it was for us."

John and Nan give much to organizations in terms of their time. Each volunteers frequently: John was a member of PACER's building committee during construction and currently co-chairs the Benefit Corporate Sponsor Committee, and Nan is a member of PACER's Advisory Board and organized a seminar to address women's financial responsibility. John also has numerous board appointments, including Hamline University, The Minneapolis Foundation, Groves Academy, and Opportunity Partners. They both volunteer at many organizations, including PACER, Opportunity Partners, and Habitat for Humanity.

The Lavender children are following in their footsteps. Bradley, Tommy,

and Davey have volunteered at many different types of organizations throughout their lives. Days off from school are considered perfect opportunities for the family to pick a volunteer site. But the children are also learning about accountability. Nan said she vividly remembers Tommy in the living room reading one organization's annual report and commenting on how it directed its money.

"We feel we are fortunate," John said. "We feel we are gatekeepers—this is not ours to keep but to try to share with others. Giving is such an important part of our lives. We've really adopted the motto, 'Giving is living!'"



## Welcome to PACER Center

This PACER Center building symbolizes our community's belief that the presence of children with disabilities and their families enriches and validates each of us.

Look around and see  
The PACER building built with community support,  
The PACER building built with hopes and dreams,  
The PACER building built with joyful themes.

Look around and see  
Not just bricks and mortar,  
But listening ears,  
supportive hands,  
Wisdom gained from life's lessons learned.

This PACER building stands—  
a symbol of hope,

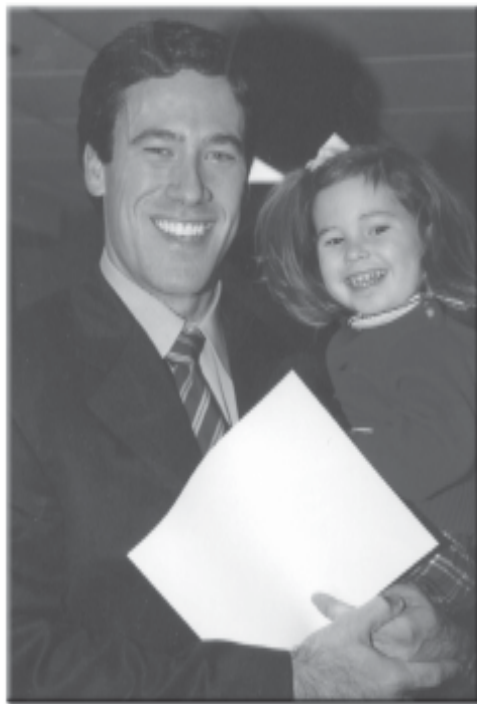
A tribute to children  
with disabilities  
and their families.

*Sue Pratt,  
parent*

*cont. from page 1... dedication*

PACER's Capital Campaign raised \$6 million to build a new home for PACER and to provide an operating reserve that funds maintenance of the building.

Sue Pratt, a parent, was inspired to write a poem when she visited the new building for the first time. The poem is now inscribed on a plaque in the lobby and expresses the feelings of many parents and others who work with children with disabilities (see left sidebar for poem).



*Ryan Simon, with daughter Mary Grey.*

Thank you to each and every donor who contributed to creating PACER's new home with such a warm, welcoming environment. As one parent said, "This is a place where I feel like a first-class citizen when I bring in my child. Rather than being shuffled to a dark, basement room, I am in warm, respectful surroundings. Thank you for making this a place where I feel comfortable and respected."

Thank you to the Capital Campaign Committee that provided the leadership for this project and to all the donors listed on the following pages who helped transform the vision into reality.

We invite you to visit our beautiful new building at the intersection of highways 100 and 494.

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**Muffy Bennett (Co-chair)**

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Brian and Shari Flanagan, and Tony Whelihan, PACER resident artist.

*"This is a place  
where I feel like  
a first-class citizen  
when I bring  
in my child."*



Frank and Muffy Bennett, Capital Campaign Steering Committee Co-chairs; Paula Goldberg, PACER Executive Director.

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## PACER Board of Directors 2002-03

**We thank PACER's Board of Directors for their hours of dedicated service in providing governance and oversight to all of PACER's activities.**

Front row, left to right: John Guthmann, Vice President; Eleanor Swanson, Treasurer; Lori Guzman; Jeff Betchwars, President. Back row, left to right: Hal Schippits; Gisela Cano; Susan Thoen; Lorrie Sonnek; Jim House; Kathy Graves; Jeanette Frederickson; Marc D. Gordon; Pam Telleen, Secretary; and Suzy Downs-Laird. Not pictured: Ron Lee; Beverly Lewis; Don Schwartz; and Carol Sime.



PACER Partners is published by the Development Office at PACER Center.

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# PACER Development Corner

**PACER’s 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Benefit , presented by Metris, features Bonnie Raitt.** The Benefit will be held this spring on **Saturday, May 3, 2003.** The Benefit Committee, co-chaired this year by sisters, Mary Frey and Judy Jaffee, along with Kelly Perry, is soliciting Silent Auction items and Corporate Sponsorships. If you are interested in working on the Benefit Committee, please contact Jan Flora at PACER, (952) 838-9000.

All proceeds from this gala evening go toward PACER’s programs, including the Simon Technology Center, COUNT ME IN, LET’S PREVENT ABUSE, American Indian Parent Network, and Creation Station.

**The Mother of All Sales**, a garage sale to benefit children with disabilities, is scheduled for **Saturday, May 31, 2003**, at Lake Harriet Methodist Church, 49<sup>th</sup> Street and Chown Avenue in Edina.

The sale, featuring many new and “gently-used” items, is for families with children ages birth to 12-years-old and expectant mothers. Items include clothing for children and babies, toys, books, sports equipment, maternity clothes, and infant equipment.

PACER has started collecting “gently-used” children’s items for the sale. For more information, call PACER at (952) 838-9000.

**Operation Dough•Nation<sup>®</sup>** is a partnership between Panera Bread and PACER. Contributions placed in collection boxes at the register will be matched by Panera. Visit [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org) to find the Panera location closest to you.

Help PACER raise some “dough” by contributing the next time you are in Panera!

*Save the Dates!*