At first glance, it might seem that PACER Center and IBM have little in common. PACER is a 29-year-old Minnesota-based nonprofit that works with families of children with disabilities; IBM is a huge multinational corporation that has a 100-year history of creating innovative technology solutions.

Yet for all their differences, they have a strong connection and a partnership that shoots for the stars—thanks to the tireless efforts of two IBM employees, Heidi Kraemer, manager for IBM Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs, and Kristi Wieser, client director.

“About five years ago, a client asked me if IBM had ever worked with PACER,” Heidi recalls. “We hadn’t, so I set up a meeting with Paula Goldberg [executive director] and Mary Schrock [development director]. It was like the stars aligned,” she says. “Everything that was important to IBM was important to PACER. The adrenaline was pumping in the room.”

“For example, IBM’s focus is on the innovative use of technology, whether that’s in the nonprofit world, early childhood, involving girls in science and technology, or other areas. Every time I talked about a program IBM had, PACER could point to a similar effort—and they needed a partner.”

The first collaboration was IBM’s donation of 16 computers and other equipment to PACER’s Simon Technology Center. That generous contribution has allowed PACER to conduct many individual and group trainings for parents and children with disabilities, educators, professionals, and others.
It was a great beginning—but the stars were still moving toward perfect alignment. About a year later, another IBM employee whose son is deaf was scheduled to speak at a PACER workshop. When he became ill at the last minute, he asked Kristi to pinch hit. She did, “and I fell in love with PACER,” she says. “They have a great staff and a lot of rigor around programs. Grants were coming in and comments from parents were very positive. It was a good group to get involved with—so I hitched my wagon to that star.

“There was an interest on both sides to have a local executive on PACER’s advisory board to find ways for us to partner,” she adds. “Heidi orchestrated my coming onto the board in 2004.”

Since then, the partnership has grown beyond what anyone envisioned at that initial, adrenaline-filled meeting. Both women name EX.I.T.E. Camp (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) as a highlight.

Now in its sixth year, this IBM-PACER partnership inspires middle-school girls with disabilities to learn about technology, explore career opportunities, and have fun doing it. IBM volunteers generously donate their talents to the effort.

Project KITE (Kids Included through Technology are Enriched) is another favorite for Heidi. Started in 1994, PACER’s early childhood program trains teams of educators and parents to promote inclusion of young children through technology. The program got a boost in 2005 when IBM donated 18 Young Explorer computers to classrooms of KITE-trained teachers. A year later, they donated six more computers to KITE for parents and professionals to use during the training. The collaboration continues today as a complement to IBM’s KidSmart Early Learning program.

The stars continued to align as PACER and IBM turned their attention across the globe. When Paula traveled to India three years ago, she saw many people with disabilities whose lives could be improved through technology. Kristi had traveled there as well and saw the same need.

From that need, a seed was planted—and IBM and PACER again joined forces. “At IBM, we have access to technology, skills, people, and volunteers,” Kristi says. “PACER had interest in building a center in India like its Simon Technology Center. So we began reaching out to other companies and organizations.” The result is a state-of-the-art assistive technology center in Bangalore, India, that is expected to open later this year.

Just as the professional connections between PACER and IBM have expanded and deepened over the years, so have the personal connections.

“When I started with PACER, I didn't have any personal experience with disability,” Heidi says. “When my son was in kindergarten, however, his teacher suspected he had ADHD. I knew that I needed to call PACER to help me help my son. I wouldn't be where I am if PACER hadn’t set out the beacon for me to follow.”

Kristi, too, has found PACER to be helpful for her family. Although her son doesn't have a disability, “he was bullied a few years ago, right when PACER's bullying Web site for elementary-age children was launched. I called PACER and tapped into its bullying information and staff. It was terrific,” she says.

Looking back on the past few years, both women are amazed at all this partnership has accomplished. “It started with a roomful of hardware, and look where it's gone,” Kristi says. “What's next?”

No one knows for sure, but both are optimistic that something great is in the offing. “Because IBM and PACER have this rich partnership, we will find the right project,” Heidi says. “It will keep growing. PACER dreams big; IBM dreams big, too.”

“PACER is an outstanding nonprofit organization,” Kristi says. “They are very focused on their mission, and they're masters at leveraging resources to meet their goals. The bottom line is that they're improving the lives of children with disabilities and making a huge impact. PACER is one of a kind.

“I feel very fortunate to be part of this partnership,” she adds. “The drive, the diligence, the passion—we can accomplish more together than we could have done alone.” The stars would seem to agree.
Bequests Keep PACER’s Future Strong

Helen and Derm Rowland have been PACER supporters for well over 20 years. In fact, Derm was PACER’s landlord when the office was on Chicago Avenue. It was that experience and relationship with PACER’s staff that inspired Derm to make PACER a beneficiary in their will.

“I have always been impressed by the leadership of PACER and its wonderful staff,” Derm says. “I have seen the work they do with families on a day-to-day basis over the last 20 years. It is unbelievable how many children and families they help. I truly love this organization.”

Planned gifts, such as bequests or trusts, will help ensure that PACER’s services will be available to families in Minnesota far into the future. For more information on naming PACER Center in your will, call Mary Schrock, development director, at 952-838-9000.

“PACER is a humble group of people who run a service, not a business, for our community,” Derm says. “I feel very fortunate to be involved with PACER. I wish I had more time to help. Putting PACER in my will is one way that I can give my support. I hope others will be inspired to do the same.”

PACER’s Cars with Heart Donation Program Helps Kids—and You

When you donate your used car, truck, or boat to PACER’s Cars with Heart program, everyone wins. Your donation raises money that supports PACER programs and services for children with disabilities—and you gain a tax deduction.

“Many people are tired of spending too much on repairs, unhappy with the trade-in value offered, or simply want an opportunity to help,” said Paula Goldberg, PACER executive director. “By donating a vehicle to PACER, you are making a tremendous difference in the lives of children with disabilities.”

Easy as 1, 2, 3...

1. Gather your keys, vehicle title, and lien release (if applicable).
2. Call PACER (952-838-9000) to arrange a delivery or pick up time. We’ll give you a receipt at the time of exchange.
3. After the vehicle has been sold, you’ll receive a written acknowledgement of the final value of the donation. The letter will serve as your receipt for tax purposes.
More than 3,000 people are expected at PACER’s 26th Annual Benefit, and every one of them will be treated to great music as well as amazing auction items that range from gift certificates to deluxe vacations. Here’s what’s in store.

The Benefit kicks off at 6 p.m. with PACER’s much-anticipated Silent Auction. It offers many fantastic finds, including culinary experiences, sports memorabilia, elegant parties in private homes, salon indulgences, artwork, and fine jewelry. It also includes other distinctive items, such as exquisite diamond and emerald earrings, a VIP Vikings/Packers ticket package that includes lower-level seats and a pregame warm-up pass, and a Disney family vacation in Orlando with accommodations for 10 people.

The Live Auction begins at 8 p.m. and includes extraordinary items such as a two-year lease on a Mercedes donated by Sears Imported Autos, an Executive Resorts vacation to Los Cabos, and a custom-made, completely accessible child’s playhouse. A detailed listing of Live and Silent Auction Items will be mailed to all ticket buyers.

The gala continues with a rockin’ concert featuring none other than Earth, Wind & Fire. Winner of eight Grammy Awards, four American Music Awards, and a well-earned place in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, the energetic group is sure to wow PACER’s Benefit audience with its enduring and popular hits. Inspired by soul, funk, pop, and a mix of styles, the group is well-known for its long list of bestsellers, including “Shining Star,” “That’s the Way of the World,” “After the Love Has Gone,” “September,” “Serpentine Fire,” and “Let’s Groove.”

Tickets range from $55 to $550. Patron level ticket-buyers will be given preferred seating and will be invited to a champagne and dessert Patron Party following the performance. There will also be a Preconcert Gourmet Dinner held at 5 p.m. in the Seasons Rotunda at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Seating for the dinner is limited and tickets are sold separately for $95 each.

Thank You!

PACER thanks the Benefit Committee Co-chairs Patrice Alkire, Jessica Broyles, Colleen McGough Wood, and Danna Mirviss along with the Corporate Sponsor Committee Co-chairs Don Davidson and Jim Oricchio. PACER appreciates the wonderful Benefit committee members, generous sponsors, dedicated volunteers, and loyal attendees who are all Champions for Children with Disabilities.
26th Annual Benefit Committee Members

The 10 co-chairs lead a committee of 73 dedicated volunteers.


(Left) 2008 Silent Auction Committee Co-chairs: Lisa Miller, Michele Heimes, Nancy Keyes, and Cindy Farmer.

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!
952.838.9000 | www.PACER.org

2008 Corporate Sponsor Committee

Back Row (left to right): Don McNeil, Hal Lieberman, Co-chair Jim Oricchio, Janet Becker, Mary Schrock, and Paula Goldberg.

Front Row (left to right): Jenna Moeger, Ken Rosenblum, Jeanne Crain, and Therese Pautz.

Brianna, Trisha, and Jenny are three young women who have faced hard issues early in life. Yet for each, PACER’s Project C3 (Connecting Youth to Communities and Careers) has made an important difference in their lives—and through the project, they have made a difference in the lives of others.

For Brianna, a young woman with mental health issues, difficulties began early. Raised by a single mother with chemical dependency problems and a history of incarceration, Brianna was in and out of foster care several times. Struggling throughout high school, she, too, had a brush with the law and subsequently entered a low-security juvenile shelter where she lived and went to school. Through a collaboration between the correctional facility and Project C3, she became an intern for the project. Her job was to help Project C3 populate its online resource map, a statewide database of organizations that provide services to youth, including those with disabilities. The map allows anyone to search for resources in employment, transportation, housing, education, health, and recreation assistance. As she researched information, conducted phone interviews, managed software, and validated data, Brianna learned valuable work skills. As her skills increased, so did her self-confidence. Brianna began to show leadership potential and good teamwork skills. With support from the Project C3 staff and her teacher, Brianna began to explore options, including a military career, that might make her future successful. Just recently, the Project C3 staff received an update from her—complete with a picture of her wearing fatigues at her U.S. Army boot camp. She had followed her dreams and is on the road to success.

Trisha, another young woman whose single mother was dealing with chemical dependency issues, had poor school attendance and was verbally abrasive, even to the principal. One of Trisha’s teachers saw potential in her, however. Project C3 did, too. By collaborating with the school and other agencies, Project C3 created an internship for her that would provide work experience as well as school credits toward graduation. While she interned for Project C3, her school attendance improved, she earned top marks, and she even built a solid and respectful relationship with her principal. Initially very anxious about public speaking, Trisha gained enough self-confidence to talk to both youth and professionals about the project. She brings her best attitude to work and school. She is dependable, and she has enrolled in a postsecondary enrollment option (PSEO) course to help her earn credit toward a nursing degree after high school.

The Project C3 Web site assists youth find resources and organizations to help them with their specific needs. Through a series of questions, they are able to pinpoint resources close to their homes and schools. www.c3online.org
Jenny, a young woman with learning disabilities, became an intern for PACER's Project C3 through the WorkForce Center of Albert Lea. A high school dropout and a teenage single mother whose daughter has special needs, Jenny had trouble finding a job that would provide the income and insurance she needed to take care of her child. While helping C3 populate its resource map, Jenny learned about the resources that her community had to offer her. Along the way, she discovered that she was skilled in clerical and data management; before long, she was in charge of the mapping project. Jenny went on to complete the certified nursing assistant program at the WorkForce Center and was hired full time at a local retirement center. Jenny is working toward her high-school equivalency diploma, continues to research her career options, and plans to attend college.

Like Brianna, Trisha, and Jenny, countless more youth and families can enhance their lives through Project C3, whether by accessing resources on Project C3’s Web site or benefiting from its strategic partnerships.

“When youth make the transition from school to community, they often can benefit from additional supports found in the community,” says Sean Roy, project director for Transition and Workforce Partnerships at PACER. “Project C3 is a unique and valuable resource that can provide that support.”

A joint venture between PACER Center, Pathways to Employment, the Minnesota Department of Education, and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Project C3 improves the employment and postsecondary outcomes of youth moving from school to their communities. It achieves this goal through professional collaborations, resource mapping, advocacy and training for youth and parents, and strategies that create system change for at-risk youth.

For more information on how to contribute to the project, please call Mary Schrock, development director, at 952-838-9000 or e-mail her at mschrock@PACER.org.

And the Winner Is...???

The excitement is building as dozens of young artists wait to find out whose entry in the third annual Creative Kids contest will be selected to appear on PACER’s 2008 greeting cards. They’ll have to wait until PACER’s 26th Annual Benefit on April 26, when the winner and top 10 entries will be announced and the art offered for sale at PACER’s Silent Auction.

The artists are children with disabilities, ages 3 to 17, who joined artist Anthony R. Whelihan, and other local artists on Feb. 23 and March 1 for the contest. The artwork produced during the workshops or sent to PACER by mail was entered in the contest to become the 2008 PACER greeting card!
PACER PROGRAMS

EX.I.T.E. Camp Opens Doors, Careers for Girls with Disabilities

Applications Being Accepted for EX.I.T.E. 2008

Middle-school girls with disabilities are encouraged to apply for 2008 EX.I.T.E. Camp. The 2008 EX.I.T.E Camp will kick off with an opening ceremony on Aug. 7, and full-day camp runs on Aug. 11, 13, 15, and 19. On Aug. 21, camp will conclude with a tour of the IBM facility in Rochester, Minn, followed by closing ceremonies.

Learn more at www.PACER.org/stc/exite

The jubilation I felt upon being accepted to EX.I.T.E. Camp was replaced with dread as I entered the room and took my seat for the opening ceremony. I looked around at the other girls and felt butterflies in my stomach at the daunting prospect of knowing no one and trying to make friends at this week-long camp. However, my fears were unfounded and during the first 10 minutes of the first day of camp I met a friendly girl my age with whom I discussed what I was most excited about for the week. It was remarkable to befriend someone who also knew what it was like to be “different,” and many friends followed during the rest of the week.

What I will always remember and be grateful for about EX.I.T.E. Camp are the doors that were shown to me that I never knew existed. EX.I.T.E. Camp enables middle-school girls to learn about math, science, and technology in stimulating ways that would never be taught at school. The reason that this camp at PACER is so special is because it is for middle-school girls with disabilities. Before I attended the camp I knew that I wanted to do something with technology, but I had no idea what that career could be or how I would do it with my disability. During camp my eyes were opened to the world of engineering and the need for women and people with disabilities. After camp, I took my math and science classes more seriously and jumped at every opportunity I could to prepare myself for a career in engineering.

Throughout the year I attended workshops for summer campers and helped give Tech for Girls presentations. Along with leadership and interpersonal skills, I learned useful job and college skills at the workshops.

Overall, the EX.I.T.E experience has truly shaped the path of my future. This experience has shown me unknown doors and given me the keys to open them. I smile now when I think of the scared girl I was at my first day of EX.I.T.E. Camp and am proud of the mature woman I have become.

Editor’s Note: PACER’s EX.I.T.E. Camp (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) inspires middle-school girls with disabilities to explore careers in math and science. The following letter is from an EX.I.T.E. camper.
For the past four years, the Charlson Foundation has generously supported PACER’s EX.I.T.E. (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) Camp for middle-school girls with disabilities. To encourage other funders and individuals to become involved with this project, the foundation has issued a $15,000 challenge grant for the 2008 camp. **PACER must raise $15,000 by April 28 in order to receive the matching funds.**

When you contribute, you support brighter futures for girls with disabilities. Offered in collaboration with IBM, EX.I.T.E. Camp encourages girls to explore science and math, sparks interest in having a science career, and provides an opportunity to make friends. After last summer’s camp, for example, one girl was invited to a sleepover and was regularly calling the friends she had made at camp—both new experiences for her.

Help PACER meet the Charlson challenge! Become one of PACER’s Champions for Children with Disabilities and send in your contribution today in the enclosed envelope or call the Development Department at 952-838-9000. Thank you!

**Sponsors Make Family Fun Day a Resounding Success**

PACER’s third annual Family Fun Day brought nearly 300 children and adults together for games, fun, food, and laughs. The event was such a hit, one girl eagerly asked her mother when they could come back again.

Presented by SimonDelivers, Family Fun Day organized families into teams that rotated through a series of activity stations, including pumpkin bowling, Simon Says, and the ever-popular parachute toss. Captain PACER (Michael Keller, chief brand officer of International Dairy Queen), led the giggling groups through the series of wacky, inclusive games.

Happily munching on lunches donated by Panera Bread and wearing colorful team bandanas, children with and without disabilities played together in a comfortable environment.

Everybody was a winner! After marching through the gym to the stirring strains of “We are the Champions,” each child received a medal before the closing ceremony. Volunteers handed each child a goody bag and a Dilly Bar donated by Dairy Queen as they left the event.

Held in November at the Lindbergh Center in Minnetonka, Family Fun Day would not be possible without the support of the Friends of PACER Advisory Board, volunteers, the planning committee, and the sponsors. Committee co-chairs Michael Corrigan and Sarah Johnson along with Michael Keller and Jenny Garvin solicited sponsors and organized the event. Sponsorships made it possible to keep admission to $5 per person.

PACER and the families who attended thank the following sponsors:

- **Presenting Sponsor:** SimonDelivers
- **Lunch Sponsor:** Panera Bread
- **Award Ceremony Sponsor:** All About Children Pediatrics
- **Bandana Sponsor:** U-Trau
- **Activity Sponsors:** Chipotle, Fresh Seasons Market, Mall of America, and TE Miller Development.
Frey Foundation Grant Challenges You to Support PACER’s Housing Project

For a second year, Mary and Jim Frey, directors of the Frey Foundation, have offered a $15,000 challenge grant for PACER’s Housing Project. To earn the money, PACER must raise $15,000 from other sources by Dec. 20, 2008.

The potential contribution of $30,000 will help PACER’s Housing Project assist more families of children and young adults with disabilities who need information on affordable, accessible housing for their youth with disabilities. Last year, PACER advocates answered more than 2,800 requests for information and assistance about housing for young adults with disabilities.

The Freys demonstrate their strong belief in giving back to the community through grants to many nonprofit organizations. They have created this initiative not only to help PACER but also to encourage others to give.

Toward this end, the Frey Foundation will match gifts designated to the Housing Project from:

- new donors
- previous donors who contribute 10 percent more than their largest previous contribution to PACER, and
- previous donors who have not contributed for two years or more.

Please rise to the challenge and help PACER bring vital information about housing options to young adults with disabilities and their families. PACER is thrilled to have this opportunity. Are you up for the challenge?

To donate to this important project and help PACER earn the full $30,000, visit www.PACER.org and click the “Get Involved” link, or send a check, payable to PACER, to:

PACER’s Housing Project
c/o Willa Hathaway
8161 Normandale Blvd.
Minneapolis, MN 55437

Thank you!
On a cold Minnesota night, PACER’s fifth annual HOT Party, COOL Cause heated up the dance floor at Solera in downtown Minneapolis. More than 450 young professionals braved the frigid weather on Feb. 9 to join PACER and friends for an evening of dancing, hors d’oeuvres, live music, and a few fun surprises.

Emcee Eric Perkins, of KARE 11’s Perk at Play, kicked off the evening and opened the stage for a sizzling performance by Christy Love, with former members of Boogie Wonderland. Weaving through the packed dance floor, guests also took advantage of the vintage photo booth and captured a night full of HOT memories. During a special presentation, Meghan McNeil, a young girl with Williams syndrome spoke about how she felt about PACER Center and the positive impact PACER has had on her life. Toward the close of the evening, board president Don McNeil, and Benefit co-chairs Colleen McGough Wood and Danna Mirviss announced the lucky HOT guest who won a fabulous door prize donated by the new Hilton Bloomington Hotel, which included an overnight stay in the Presidential Suite and a gift certificate to the Chop House restaurant. The Presenting Sponsor for the HOT Party was Target. “We greatly appreciate Target’s important support,” said Paula Goldberg, PACER executive director and founder.

As the evening grew late and chants for an encore slowly faded, the 2008 HOT committee declared yet another HOT success.
Thank You!

Thank you to the hundreds of people—volunteers, board and advisory board members, donors, corporate and foundation sponsors, and staff—who give of their time, energy, and resources. You are Champions for Children with Disabilities, and your role is vital! Without you PACER could not continue to help children with disabilities at no charge to families.

We welcome your ideas, energy, and participation. To be involved at PACER, call Mary Schrock, development director, (952) 838-9000.

PACER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

COUNT Me In® Program and Front Office

PACER's COUNT Me In® Puppet Program relies on volunteers to go into the schools as trained puppeteers. Become a volunteer and bring the important message of inclusion into early elementary classrooms! PACER's front office can always use volunteers to help with many tasks, particularly when preparing for events and conferences.

SPRING 2008

April 26
PACER's 26th Annual Benefit

Don't miss out on this premier event of the spring featuring Earth, Wind & Fire! Tickets are available now online at www.PACER.org or call (952) 838-9000. See page 4 for more Benefit details.

SUMMER 2008

Aug. 13
Third Annual Ted and Roberta Mann Foundation Symposium on Children's Mental Health and Learning Disabilities
Sheraton Bloomington Hotel

This symposium provides insights and strategies to teachers, parents, and administrators to help them work with children who have learning disabilities and mental health issues. Symposium information will be available May 1 at www.PACER.org.

PACER thanks the Ted and Roberta Mann Foundation for providing this important full-day conference.