PACER PARTNERS

Connecting families, friends, donors, and staff of PACER

PACER is fortunate to have three wonderful volunteers who make a difference in the lives of children with disabilities and students who are bullied. Don Davidson, Jim Oricchio, and Hal Lieberman have an important story to share.

Though Don, Jim, and Hal support PACER for different reasons, their goal is the same. These amazing friends of PACER are all wonderful people.

Don Davidson

Don Davidson and his wife Joanne came to PACER more than 30 years ago when their daughter Stacy, who has Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), was struggling in school. The Davidsons contacted PACER and a parent advocate helped them create a plan to keep Stacy in the classroom. Davidson said PACER made a significant impact in Stacy’s life and inspired him to help the organization. “PACER does so much for so many,” said Don. “People who have experienced PACER are so thankful and pleased.”

Don has served on PACER’s Advisory Board for several years and has co-chaired the Corporate Sponsor Committee for more than 20 years.

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Minnetonka, Minn., he has been an active corporate sponsor for two decades, and has donated for the Benefit raffle. He also spreads the word about PACER to his customers and competitors.

Even when the economy took a downward turn, the Corporate Sponsor Committee was able to maintain — even exceed — its financial goals. “It’s such a great committee to be on,” said Don. “We have large goals and we always meet them.”

**Jim Oricchio**

Jim Oricchio first heard about PACER Center in 1996, when he was invited to attend the Annual Benefit featuring Ray Charles. Jim and his wife Donna had a wonderful time and the following year he donated to the Benefit silent auction. Soon after, Paula Goldberg, PACER’s executive director and cofounder, asked Jim to be on the Corporate Sponsor Committee. He was happy to accept. “It’s a very well-run organization,” said Jim, who is president of Coordinated Business Systems in Burnsville, Minn. “I felt that I needed to help because PACER is helping so many families.”

Jim has been on the committee ever since, and in 2004 he became co-chair alongside Don Davidson. Over the years, they have inspired countless other people and businesses to be involved. Jim has also donated radio advertising to promote PACER’s Annual Benefit.

When his grandson was diagnosed with autism in early 2000, Jim’s connection to PACER became much more personal. With PACER’s help, his grandson has made significant strides. “It’s an honor and a privilege to be a part of PACER,” said Jim. “I know that I’m helping families just like mine.”

**Hal Lieberman**

Hal Lieberman has seen firsthand the positive impact that PACER has. His cousin Sam, who has cerebral palsy, received assistance from PACER in the 1970s, and is a successful individual and disability advocate who was recently elected to the Nevada System of Higher Education Board of Regents. Sam’s parents David and Sara Lieberman have also been heavily involved in PACER since it was founded. When selecting a nonprofit to support, Hal chose the organization that helped Sam. “My cousin is an inspirational person in my life,” said Hal. “The way Sam lives his life and his belief in PACER made it an easy choice for me.”

Hal is a long-time member of PACER’s Corporate Sponsor Committee and has been a co-chair for three years. As president of Lieberman Companies in Bloomington, Minn., he contributes to PACER as a corporate sponsor and encourages his employees and business partners to support the organization. Additionally, Hal and his wife Rebecca attend many PACER events, including the Annual Benefit. Hal attributes his deep commitment to philanthropy to his parents Steve and Shelia Lieberman, who taught him at a young age the importance of giving back. “We really enjoy being involved with PACER,” said Hal. “We’ve made great connections on a personal and professional level.”

Hal attributes the committee’s continued success to the passion and enthusiasm of its members. “We are all very committed to PACER,” said Hal. “The more you believe in the causes you are representing, the easier it is to ask people to give.”

Corporate and individual sponsorships of PACER’s Benefit start at $2,000. Sponsors receive tickets to the event as well as an ad in the Benefit playbill. Funds raised support a variety of PACER programs including PACER’s parent training programs, National Bullying Prevention Center, Simon Technology Center, Housing Project, and Count Me In® and Bullying Prevention Puppet programs. For more information on sponsorship opportunities email jackie.saffert@pacer.org or call (952) 838-9000.
Though it was more than 30 years ago, Connie Kunin still remembers the day she came to PACER Center for the first time. Her son Alex had been diagnosed with autism a few years before, and Connie and her husband Dan were struggling to find information and resources to help him. PACER’s programs and support network opened up a new world for Connie, Dan, and their three children, who often felt isolated. “In those days, autism wasn’t talked about, and we didn’t realize that other people were having the same experiences,” Connie said. “It was very fulfilling to hear stories from others and to know that we weren’t alone.”

It wasn’t long before Connie decided to become involved with PACER on a deeper level. She served on the Advisory Board and co-chaired the Capital Campaign Committee for several years. She has also taken on numerous volunteer commitments. “Connie has been so generous with her time and talents,” said Paula Goldberg, PACER’s executive director. “She is fantastic, and we are so fortunate to have her loyalty and support.”

Connie believes strongly in PACER’s mission and wants to ensure that its programs will be available for children and families in the future. Her latest contribution — a gift to PACER’s $10 million endowment campaign — will keep Connie’s giving spirit and PACER’s mission alive. “An endowment is a necessity for the organization to continue and evolve,” Connie explains. “If people believe in this organization, then the way to ensure it continues is to support the endowment.”

Connie’s daughter Alicia Kunin-Batson, who is a pediatric neuropsychologist, has become a passionate PACER volunteer as well. For eight years, she served on PACER’s Board of Directors, including roles as vice president and president. Alicia attends PACER’s Annual Benefit each year with her husband Hayes Batson, who has served on PACER’s Corporate Sponsor Committee.

Alicia says that following in her mother’s footsteps has been a rewarding experience and she hopes her children will do the same. “It’s really nice to have a family commitment to PACER,” said Alicia. “We’re all here for the same reason — because we care about helping children with disabilities in our community.”

To learn more about PACER’s Endowment Campaign and how you can donate, please call Executive Director Paula Goldberg at (952) 838-9000.
Don’t Miss an Evening with Crosby, Stills & Nash Live!

More than four decades since Crosby, Stills & Nash first harmonized in Southern California, its members continue a creative partnership that is one of the most influential and enduring in music. David Crosby, Stephen Stills, and Graham Nash have each been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. See them live at PACER’s 33rd Annual Benefit at the Minneapolis Convention Center on Saturday, May 2, 2015, presented by Whitebox Mutual Funds.

Tickets to the Benefit include the performance, as well as silent and live auctions. This year, the Silent Auction will offer some brand-new surprises among the hundreds of items, beginning at 6 p.m. at the convention center. Here are a few of the special opportunities you may bid on:

- **For the ultimate Vikings Fan** — Two season tickets to the Minnesota Vikings 2015 season
- **Sports cars for young drivers** — Realistic battery-operated Mercedes Benz and Ferrari ride-on cars for children
- **CSI Minneapolis** — Take a tour of a real police department crime lab, or experience the hands-on field work of a Minneapolis Police Department Forensic Scientist.
- **Lake Minnetonka Dining Experience** — Enjoy a relaxing evening and dinner for 8 to 10 people at a beautiful home on Lake Minnetonka. Your guests will enjoy appetizers and a cocktail cruise on the lake, followed by dinner prepared by renowned chef Stewart Woodman, culinary director of Crave Restaurants.

**Live Auction Items**

Following the Silent Auction, the Live Auction takes place in the auditorium where WCCO-TV news anchor Frank Vascellaro will serve as auctioneer. The auction will offer a few rare, priceless items and opportunities including:

**VIP tickets to see “The Ellen DeGeneres Show” live and tour Warner Brothers Studio**

Picture yourself and three friends in the live audience for the Emmy Award winning “Ellen DeGeneres Show.” You’ll be guaranteed VIP seating during Ellen’s spectacular “12 Days of Giveaways,” when every guest receives fabulous gifts which were valued last year at $3,000 per person. You’ll also enjoy an exclusive Warner Brothers Studio tour and four tickets to a hit show, such as “Mike and Molly” or “2 Broke Girls,” plus round-trip airfare and beautiful hotel accommodations in Los Angeles.
Your chance to own several cases of exclusive Opus One wine

This is your opportunity to relish the exquisite taste of Opus One, a true ultra-premium wine from the California winery created by Baron Phillipe de Rothschild and Robert Mondavi. Delight in owning several cases of the best. French in style but California in execution, Opus One is produced with uncompromised attention to detail, from the manner in which the vineyard is planted and maintained to the quality of the cork that seals the bottle.

PACER would also like to thank the Benefit Committee co-chairs (Jessica Broyles, Mary Holmes, Nancy Kaysen, Noelle Sheehan, Colleen McGough Wood); the Corporate Sponsor Committee co-chairs (Don Davidson, Hal Lieberman, Jim Oricchio); and the Silent Auction Committee co-chairs (Lee Hoffman, Marilyn Lipschultz, Don McNeil, Jennifer Rowland, Raleigh Segal, Rishia Zimmern). Thank you to all of the Benefit committee members, generous sponsors, dedicated volunteers, and loyal attendees who are all Champions for Children with Disabilities.

Buy a Raffle Ticket to Win a 7-Night Luxury Rainforest & Reef Package for Two in Belize!

With the highest concentration of Maya ruins in Central America, the second-longest barrier reef in the world, and a lush jungle environment for caving, kayaking, and ziplining, Belize is the one of the best kept secrets in travel.

Luxurious package includes flight for two from the Twin Cities to Belize, 4 nights in a stunning villa with private plunge pool at Ka'ana, travel in Belize, and 3 nights in a luxury casita at Victoria House, which is located on one of Belize's many islands.

To learn more about Belize and the amazing amenities offered at Ka'ana Boutique Hotel and Victoria House, go to PACER.org/benefit and watch the video!

For your chance to win, purchase a $100 raffle ticket at PACER's Annual Benefit featuring Crosby, Stills & Nash on May 2, 2015, at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Suggested retail value of the trip: $9,500. Need not be present to win.
Nothing Runs Like a Deere for this Energetic Child

Three-year-old Leah has a radiant smile, sparkly eyes, and an energetic personality to match. Now, thanks to PACER’s Simon Technology Center (STC), she also has mobility. “She wants to be able to do the same things the other kids do,” said Leah’s mom Jennifer. “She doesn’t want to be left out of anything.”

Leah has Spina Bifida and cannot use her legs. Although she is incredibly determined, it has been difficult for Leah to keep up with her friends, especially outdoors. Jennifer and her husband Ty had been searching for a solution when they discovered the Go Baby Go program at the University of Delaware. That led them to PACER. With volunteer help from electrical engineer Marty Stone, STC Director Bridget Gilormini was able to modify a John Deere children’s riding tractor to operate with hand controls.

“An inability to interact with your peers because you lack mobility affects socialization and play, which is so important for growth and development,” said Gilormini. Leah has used an adapted wheelchair since she was 9 months old, and the family had tried a number of mobility devices, but none were practical outside. The family chose a tractor for several reasons: It is durable, can easily be driven in their yard, and is big enough so that Leah will not outgrow it quickly. There was another reason, too: “Leah thought it would be cool to have a tractor just like Daddy’s!” Jennifer said.

No one could forget the October day when Leah picked up the tractor at PACER. “It’s my tractor!” she shrieked, before motoring down the hallway to show off her new wheels.

“It was an incredible moment for us as parents to see the joy on her face,” Ty said. “When we got home Leah just took off across the yard. We bought her a matching trailer, and for Halloween she dressed up as a farmer. The other kids were scrambling to keep up.”

Ty is now a member of PACER’s Board of Directors, and the family is committed to helping PACER support other families. “We could not have done this without PACER,” said Jennifer.

For Gilormini, it was gratifying to see the impact of the project and how it changed a child’s life. “It’s not about the tractor. It’s about that smile, and the fact that Leah can now do things she couldn’t do before,” she said.

For Ty and Jennifer, the project has provided their daughter the opportunity to excel. “We just want for her what any other parent wants for their child,” Jennifer said. “Why should that be any different just because she has a disability?”

For more information on the Go Baby Go program and assistive technology, email bridget.gilormini@pacer.org or call (952) 838-9000.
Community involvement has always been important to Seamus Hyland, so he did not hesitate to volunteer his time and talents upon arriving in Minneapolis to serve as President of the Great Plains Region for Verizon Wireless. Hyland is a member of PACER Center’s Board of Directors, and has helped forge a corporate partnership between PACER and Verizon that is helping to keep children safe.

“My goal has always been to be involved with causes that I have a personal attachment to, but also to pick the best organizations from a corporate point of view,” said Hyland, whose wife Anna has been a member of PACER’s Advisory Board since 2011. “Every single person I have met at PACER has impressed me so much with their commitment to children and families.”

Verizon helped forge a partnership between PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center and the Minnesota Vikings for “Viktor’s Quest to S.T.O.P Bullying,” a bullying prevention program for Minneapolis-St. Paul elementary schools. Verizon is participating as part of the company’s commitment to building healthy relationships. Through its HopeLine® from Verizon (verizonwireless.com/hopeline) device recycling program, the company funds awareness and prevention efforts nationwide.

“The HopeLine® program is about building healthy relationships,” said Karen Smith of Verizon. “We think bullying prevention is a great place to start so that kids understand what that means from a young age.”

During the assemblies, the Vikings’ mascot Viktor and a trained presenter deliver a dynamic bullying prevention program that equips students to identify bullying situations and empowers them to respond appropriately.

In addition, PACER and Verizon do training workshops for parents, educators, and community members. The workshops help adults learn about bullying and how to respond when their children report a bullying situation. Participants also receive mobile and Internet safety tips to help reduce cyber-bullying.

Bullying prevention has always been an important issue for the Hylands. As parents of four boys — two on the Autism spectrum — they understand the impact bullying can have on children and their families. “We were always concerned about bullying as our boys were growing up,” he said. “That’s why it is particularly important for me personally to be involved with PACER but also to have Verizon as a company support what PACER is doing.”

Hyland said Verizon looks for marketing partners who are willing to be involved in the community with the company. “The Vikings are unbelievably good at that,” Hyland said. “They were developing a bullying prevention program and were looking for ways to make it more meaningful. Having PACER involved provides a tremendous amount of knowledge and credibility.”

PACER has numerous corporate partnerships that provide the funding to help raise awareness, deliver programming, and provide assistance to children and families. “PACER does an excellent job,” Hyland said, “of going above and beyond to ensure that everybody wins.”
PACER Center Highlights: 2013-2014

PACER Center, with over 35 years of implementing programs and services to assist and support parents of children with disabilities, continues to expand its services and surpass its goals. In 2013-2014, PACER conducted more than 30 projects to improve outcomes for the nation’s 7 million children with disabilities and 13 million students who are bullied.

PACER's projects provide important services for children and young adults with disabilities and their families and the professionals who work with them in Minnesota, nationally, and globally. New programs are developed each year to meet the changing needs of families. PACER is committed to helping all parents become more involved with their children's schools, enriching the professionals who work with families, and creating better outcomes for all children.

Each year, PACER Center staff provide individual assistance, information, and referrals to parents, professionals, and others through phone calls, emails, letters, and in person. PACER makes every effort to respond to each of these requests quickly. Of these requests, 57% were from parents and 29% were from professionals.

44,119
Requests for individual assistance, information, and support were responded to by PACER staff.

88% of parents reported that their child has received more appropriate services because they put to use the information they received from PACER’s Federal Parent Training project.

100% of parents reported that individual assistance received through PACER’s Alternative Dispute Resolution project increased their knowledge of their rights and responsibilities and their understanding of educational planning.

98% of families reported that information from PACER’s Health Information Center was useful in helping them find needed community services.
Individuals attended PACER’s workshops, presentations, and other events. PACER staff members from all projects conducted 753 workshops, trainings, in-services, presentations, meetings, and other events. PACER Center offers free workshops throughout Minnesota to parents of children with disabilities and the professionals working with families.

Visits were made to PACER’s innovative websites. PACER.org and other PACER websites are updated on a regular basis. In 2013-2014, new mobile-friendly sites were launched for bullying prevention for kids and teens. PACER continues to leverage technology to disseminate information, with the addition of monitored blogs, polls, audio files, interactive files, and videos.

Individuals receive PACER’s print and electronic newsletters. In addition to PACER’s primary newsletter, the Pacesetter, specialized newsletters and e-newsletters are disseminated with information on early childhood, bullying prevention, assistive technology, and other topics.

Schools and organizations around the country participated in PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Month in October. In October, PACER sponsored the eighth annual National Bullying Prevention Month. The event included exciting activities, information, and contests that engaged youth, educators, and parents in creating a safer world for children with and without disabilities.
PACER’s Young Professionals Advisory Board (YPAB) was formed almost 17 years ago by a group of young adults in the Twin Cities who wanted to make a difference in the lives of children, including those with disabilities. Over the years, YPAB has successfully raised thousands of dollars for PACER programs through events and activities, while introducing a new generation of young professionals to PACER’s mission.

Zach Robins joined the board as a co-chair in 2010 after hearing about PACER from a former Advisory Board member. He was amazed by the organization’s professionalism and wanted to help spread the word to other young adults. “It’s such an incredible organization,” said Zach, who is an attorney at Minneapolis law firm Winthrop & Weinstine. “I think it’s critical for PACER to share their exciting goals with the next generation of adults who may not be aware of the fantastic programs they provide.”

A Toast to PACER

This past November, the 12-member group led by Zach and fellow co-chairs Win Bennett, Ben Schleuss, and Ashley Speltz, organized PACER’s second Raise a Glass — A Toast to PACER. This tasting event was held at the Muse Event Center in downtown Minneapolis and featured music by The Cactus Blossoms. Guests sipped samples of locally made beer and wine, visited with others, and saw hands-on demonstrations of assistive technology from PACER’s Simon Technology Center (STC). Breweries such as Rush River, Tin Whiskers, Bad Weather, Flat Earth, Brau Brothers, and Chankaska Creek Ranch & Winery provided samples at the event.

The Friends of PACER event raised funds which will enable the Simon Technology Center to continue to provide resources and demonstrate state-of-the-art assistive technology that helps children with disabilities. “It was a fantastic evening,” said Paula Goldberg, PACER’s executive director. “We are very grateful to the Young Professionals Advisory Board for all of their hard work in making the event a success.”

For more information on the Young Professionals Advisory Board or to join, email jenna.hanson@pacer.org or call (952) 838-9000.
Rishia Zimmern first heard about PACER a few years ago, and she’s been an active volunteer ever since. When her 9-year-old son started having behavioral challenges, she spoke with PACER’s Executive Director Paula Goldberg, who recommended help for him. She also assured Rishia that the organization would support her family throughout all of their son’s developmental milestones. Rishia says she was overwhelmed with the support she received and the number of programs PACER offers. “PACER does amazing things,” she said. “They help so many families.”

In 2012, Paula asked Rishia to join the Annual Benefit Silent Auction Committee. She was eager to help the organization, plus it gave her an outlet to express her creativity. Through her volunteer experiences with PACER, Rishia has met several new friends who are able to empathize with her often challenging situation. “The other volunteers are so supportive and I feel like they really understand me and care about me,” Rishia said. “The silent auction committee is more than a committee — it’s like a family.”

Though Rishia’s husband Andrew Zimmern frequently travels for his “Bizarre Foods” show on Travel Channel, he is also a passionate PACER supporter, giving to both the Annual Benefit silent and live auctions. For the last three years, Andrew and Rishia have treated one lucky live auction bidder and five friends to an unforgettable tour of three of the Zimmerns’ favorite “food finds” in St. Paul, complete with autographed books and other surprises. For their donation to this year’s live auction, Andrew will prepare a pig roast which will be served at a special dinner for 10 lucky people. Through these amazing donations, the Zimmerns have helped raise tens of thousands of dollars for PACER. “Rishia and Andrew are Champions for Children with Disabilities in every way,” said Paula. “We are very lucky to have their incredible support.”

Rishia says the pleasure is all theirs. “PACER has done so much for us,” she said. “We want to give back in any way we can.”

To learn more about PACER’s Silent Auction Committee, call (952) 838-9000 or email pacer@pacer.org.
We are so excited about PACER’s Annual Benefit coming up on May 2 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. You won’t want to miss a wonderful evening with the iconic trio Crosby, Stills & Nash. We’d like to thank everyone who helps to make the Benefit a success — the volunteers, silent auction donors, and our many corporate sponsors — plus, a special thank you to our Presenting Sponsor Whitebox Mutual Funds. With your help, PACER is able to make a positive difference in the lives of children with disabilities and children who have been bullied.

Great seats are still available. You can order tickets online at PACER.org/benefit or call (952) 838-9000. Thanks again for being a Champion for Children. We look forward to seeing you there!