Join PACER Center for an unforgettable evening with the legendary Jay Leno, one of the country’s most beloved comedians. “Jay will have the audience laughing nonstop,” said Paula Goldberg, PACER’s Executive Director. “We are thrilled that everyone will have the opportunity to experience his magic.”

The Emmy Award-winning late night TV show host and amazing stand-up comedian will entertain the crowd at PACER’s 35th Annual Benefit, presented by Starkey Hearing Technologies, on Saturday, May 13, at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

Leno, the former host of “The Tonight Show” and current star of CNBC’s “Jay Leno’s Garage,” was named “America’s Favorite TV Personality” by the Harris Poll. He has performed hundreds of live shows and is passionate about performing in front of live audiences. Leno has been touted as one of the nicest people in show business and the hardest working.

Proceeds from the Annual Benefit support PACER’s programs for children with disabilities and their families and PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center. Tickets start at $75 and include the celebrated silent and live auctions.

**PACER’s unforgettable Live Auction**

The excitement will be palpable as the Live Auction takes place on stage in the auditorium, led by auctioneers Frank Vascellaro and Amelia Santaniello.

PACER Benefit continued on page 2
The auction will offer several rare, priceless items and experiences, including:

**A private tour of Jay Leno’s personal automobile and motorcycle collection**

Comedian Jay Leno, this year's headline entertainer, is one of the most famous car buffs in the world, with an extensive collection of more than 200 vehicles. The winning bidder and three friends will enjoy an exclusive private tour of Leno's expansive garage complex in Burbank, Calif., which includes everything from 1870s steam vehicles to a jet-powered motorcycle. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that no automobile or motorcycle enthusiast will want to miss!

**VIP Tickets to see “The Ellen DeGeneres Show” during “12 Days of Giveaways”**

Picture yourself and three friends in the live audience for the Emmy Award-winning “Ellen DeGeneres Show.” Guests will be guaranteed VIP seating during Ellen’s spectacular “12 Days of Giveaways,” which takes place during the holiday season. Every audience member receives fabulous gifts that have been valued at more than $3,000 each. Package includes hotel for two nights. Four airline tickets are also included, courtesy of Travel One.

**One-of-a-kind culinary experience with Andrew Zimmern**

Enjoy a spectacular culinary experience with acclaimed multiple James Beard Award-winning American chef, food writer, and television personality Andrew Zimmern, creator and host of the award-winning Travel Channel series, “Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern.” Andrew will prepare a spectacular whole lamb, pig, or goat roast dinner for 20 at his new kitchen studio in Minneapolis. This package also includes autographed books for all the guests, beverages, sides, service for the meal, and some special surprises, as you enjoy your evening of food and fun with the one and only Andrew Zimmern.

**Porsche driving experience**

The winner and a guest will travel to the brand new Porsche Experience Center in Los Angeles, where they will hone their driving skills via one-on-one instruction, tailored to the winner’s requirements, on a unique Porsche test track built to demonstrate the power, responsiveness, and safety at the core of Porsche engineering. The unforgettable experience includes a chance to drive two different Porsches on an all-new track. Package also includes a two-night hotel stay.

**Luxury 10-day trip for two to South Africa and a safari in Zimbabwe**

The winning bidder and a guest will spend three nights relaxing in the sophisticated charm of Cape Cadogan Boutique Hotel in Cape Town, South Africa. From there, another three nights will be spent at the five-star Victoria Falls Hotel in Zimbabwe, just a 10-minute walk to Victoria Falls, one of the seven natural wonders of the world! The trip will wrap up with three nights at Somalisa Acacia at Hwange National Park, and a safari drive with a certified ranger at Zimbabwe's largest reserve, which provides sanctuary for all of the country's endangered species. Allowance of $2,000 for airfare included. Prize is courtesy of Pique Travel.

**Limited edition Opus One wine**

A wine connoisseur’s delight! This exclusive package features the ultra-premium Opus One wine from the California winery created by Baron Phillipe de Rothschild and Robert Mondavi. Opus One is French in style, but Californian in execution. It is a polished and age-worthy wine that includes a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec, and more. Opus One is produced with uncompromising attention to detail — from the way the vineyard is planted and maintained to the quality of the cork that seals the bottle.
From special experiences to wonderful jewelry and more… PACER’s Silent Auction has amazing prizes for you to win! These are just a few of the extra special opportunities available at the silent auction:

**Drive a Tesla for a week**
With instant torque, incredible power, and zero emissions, a Tesla is a car without compromise. You’ll enjoy the unforgettable Tesla experience when you’re behind the wheel of the Model S 85, the fastest four-door production car ever. The S 85 seats up to four and offers front and rear cargo space. You’ll cherish your memory of driving the Tesla; the hardest part will be giving the car back.

**Vacation in Rancho Mirage**
Enjoy a week of golf and California fun! You’ll love the spectacular west-facing mountain views from this condominium in Mission Hills East, a gated Rancho Mirage resort community with three 18-hole championship golf courses. This condo is just steps from the pool and the seventh green of the Pete Dye Championship Golf Course; you’ll enjoy the morning shade on the patio or watch the amazing sunsets behind the mountains at an evening BBQ. This two-bedroom, two-bath condo sleeps six.

**Dinner for four at the Brewer’s Table**
The Brewer’s Table at Surly Brewing offers a chef-driven experience that aims to build on the movement of bringing the pint to the plate by pairing exceptional food with exemplary beer. The winner and three guests will enjoy a four-course meal featuring an elevated and ambitious menu including locally sourced food.

**The Jon Bream concert experience**
What could be better than spending a warm summer night under the stars, listening to a top music act? Sharing the evening with legendary Star Tribune music critic Jon Bream! He will accompany you to a performance (part of the Music in the Zoo series) at the Minnesota Zoo’s Weesner Family Amphitheater, touted as the best outdoor music venue in the Twin Cities.
In a sense, three women are responsible for Dao Xiong joining PACER as a multicultural advocate 25 years ago: Dao's wife, Drew, who first met Paula Goldberg, PACER's Executive Director, at a community meeting for parents of children with disabilities; his second oldest daughter, Tsai, who has developmental delays and is the reason Drew was at the meeting; and, of course, Paula Goldberg. After Drew introduced them, Paula hired Dao to be an advocate, working with Hmong parents of children with disabilities. “Dao is a great advocate,” Paula says. “He is a leader in his community, very connected to it, and well respected.”

Dao says that one of the reasons he is successful in working with families is his experience with his own daughter. Cultural differences, he says, can make it hard for families to admit that their child has a disability and to seek help. “I will hear from someone in the community, ‘I told that family to call you,’ but the family doesn't call until I tell their friend, ‘Tell them I have a daughter with a disability.’ Then the family will call me.”

Dao and Drew have seven children. Tsai attends a day program for adults with developmental disabilities. The other six children are all college graduates. His oldest daughter holds a master’s degree and is a teacher in St. Paul. His second youngest daughter graduated from medical school at the University of Minnesota and is a doctor. His oldest son is an electrical engineer, his middle son is a Saint Paul police officer, and his youngest son is training to become a social worker. In May, his youngest daughter will graduate from pharmacy school. It is nothing less than what Dao expected of them, he said.

“It was my expectation that all of my children would be successful in their fields,” Dao said. “Only two of them graduated from college with honors; the other four graduated with high honors.”

An incredible journey

Dao was just 19 years old when he, Drew, and their baby daughter arrived in Peoria, Ill., by way of the Ban Vinai refugee camp in Thailand. His earliest memories are of the bombings he witnessed as a young child in Laos, where he was born in the midst of two wars: the Laotian civil war (often referred to as the “Secret War”) and the Vietnam War. “There were big guns, big explosions, bombings,” Dao recalls. “I was a young boy, it was something to watch.” He also recalls his father calling him to “Come home! Get inside the cave!” Historians have said that more bombs fell in Laos during this time than in all of Europe during World War II.

Dao's family members were refugees who often lived in caves. To survive, they were constantly on the move to stay
ahead of the fighting. They often fled on foot, carrying the few belongings they owned, moving from place to place. Dao, always intellectually curious, seldom had the opportunity for formal learning, but he managed the equivalent of “a couple of years” of schooling. When he was nearly 14, he had the chance to go to school in Vientiane, the capital city of Laos. His schooling was interrupted when his family was forced to flee Laos for Thailand.

“We were in a group of more than 4,000 people, all walking,” he recalls. As the group approached the bridge into Vientiane, they were forced to turn back after soldiers began to fire on them. After a month in a local village, Dao’s family was relocated to the Ban Vinai refugee camp in Thailand. It was there that Dao met Drew, his future wife, and Mike Carroll, an American who worked with refugees, teaching them English. Carroll arranged for his parents, Bill and Vivian Carroll, to sponsor Dao and Drew for citizenship. When the Xiongs arrived in Illinois in May of 1979, Dao had $5, a gift from an uncle, in his pocket. He stepped right into a job arranged for him by Bill Carroll: working in the housekeeping department of a hospital in Peoria, where the Carrolls lived. “I started working three days after we arrived,” Dao remembers.

Wanting to be more a part of the community, Dao and Drew moved their growing family to the Twin Cities, which has the largest per capita population of Hmong people in the United States. Dao and Drew sponsored Dao’s parents for citizenship, and the elder Xiongs came to live with them and helped care for their seven children while Dao and Drew worked. “All of my children speak Hmong,” Dao says proudly. “It’s a great thing. My parents were their best teachers.”

Dao’s expectations for his 15 grandchildren are just as high as those he had for his children. This summer he plans to take several of them, who are in middle school, to visit Ivy League colleges.

“It’s never too early to start,” he says. “If they see these colleges, it will give them something to work toward.”

PACER was pleased to host the 12th annual Creative Kids Contest on February 25, welcoming 24 children with disabilities and their families. PACER’s creative kids used markers, paint, crayons, and pencils to create a wide variety of imaginative and vibrant pieces of art that express the contest’s themes of unity, friendship, inclusion, and kindness.

A painting by Carter Jorgensen, which features two friends standing beneath a colorful rainbow, was judged the top winner and will become the cover design of the PACER Greeting Card that is sold online and at PACER’s Annual Benefit on May 13. The original artwork of other top designs will be sold during the Benefit’s silent auction.

Carter Jorgensen is a wonderful, creative eight-year-old boy who has already decided he will be an artist at Pixar when he grows up. His parents, Lisa and Jim Jorgensen, also believe he could end up being a comedian, as every day his unique, witty sense of humor makes them laugh out loud. Carter, who is on the autism spectrum, is passionate about building with LEGO sets, drawing, and trying to copy his favorite Michael Jackson dance moves.
Dan and Dana Levinson are the parents of a delightful nine-year-old daughter named Mira. When she was a year old, Mira was diagnosed with Kabuki syndrome, a rare congenital disorder. By that time, Mira had already had “all kinds of medical problems,” Dan says. “She had problems with her heart, with feeding, and with dislocated hips. She had several surgeries before she was a year old. She stopped breathing when she was 10 days old.” It was, he says, “just the beginning.”

Mira was a baby when the Levinsons found PACER. “We attended several PACER workshops, and found them very valuable,” he says.

When Dan talks about the challenges he and his wife Dana have faced in light of their daughter Mira’s medical needs, he always circles back to how fortunate they are. “Dana and I, we’re a team; we have different roles, but we’re both at the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings.” After becoming involved with PACER, he says, he came to realize how important PACER advocates can be in supporting parents as they work with their child’s school.

By the time Mira was four years old, her needs were “less medically intensive,” he says. “We have a fabulous IEP; PACER helped us learn to advocate.

“We want Mira to achieve everything she can in her life. PACER helped us meet her where she is. We thought, ‘How can we help other parents?’”

He found the answer, again, at PACER. A longtime volunteer, he has been president of PACER’s board of directors, and currently chairs the marketing advisory committee. “I believe so strongly in what PACER does. I know how hard the first three or four years of Mira’s life were for us.

“I am so proud of PACER. I’m proud to share my involvement with others. More often times than not, when I mention PACER to people in the Twin Cities, they know about it. They’ll tell me about their positive experience, or say they attended an awesome benefit. It’s nice to be connected.”

Dan wants to make it clear that he is not the only Levinson who is involved in helping children with

“There is a true sense of pride and accomplishment I feel in helping PACER and parents of children with disabilities. It is great for me to be involved with people who share my passion. We walk the same street.

-Dan Levinson
As Mira grew older, Dan, who worked in marketing strategy for new product development at Best Buy for 12 years, decided that he wanted to bridge the divide between his nonprofit involvement and his professional life. “I wanted to do things that were more societally important. I wondered, ‘Should I work in a nonprofit full-time?’” He found a role that blended his passion for children with disabilities with his professional skills at Optum, a health services company that is part of UnitedHealth Group.

Looking back over his involvement with PACER, Dan reflected on how important it’s been to him to get to know PACER staff and volunteers. “Everyone believes in the cause,” he says. “You work in a world where people have neurotypical kids, and people don’t understand. In the world of PACER, people understand. “Our shared experiences bring us together.”

Parents of middle school girls with disabilities are invited to apply for their daughters to attend PACER’s free EX.I.T.E. (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) day camp. The five-day camp, held in August, is free — parents need only to provide their daughters with daily transportation and a box lunch. Girls will do amazing experiments, make friends, and discover how science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) can be cool and exciting.

To apply or for more information, go to PACER.org/stc/exite/Camp.asp, call Tina Hanson at (952) 838-9000, or email STC@PACER.org. EX.I.T.E. Camp application deadline is June 19.
PACER supporters who love food had an incredible opportunity in October when renowned chef Gavin Kaysen, of Spoon and Stable in Minneapolis, opened his restaurant and his heart.

Kaysen chose PACER Center as one of four nonprofit recipients of his inaugural Synergy Series, which brought four Michelin star chefs from New York to Minneapolis. After the first date sold out in less than five minutes, Kaysen added a second date with each of the featured chefs.

“Synergy, to me, is a collaboration. It's when two forces basically collide,” Kaysen said in a video for the Synergy Series.

PACER's dinners took place on October 13 and 14, 2016, and featured Chef April Bloomfield, of the famous Spotted Pig, the Breslin, and John Dory Oyster Bar restaurants in New York City. The delectable multi-course dinners included beverage pairings.

“We are delighted that Gavin selected PACER as one of the beneficiaries of this innovative event,” said PACER's Executive Director Paula Goldberg. “We appreciate his culinary talents and his support of the work we do for families.”

**Shop Amazon.com to support PACER!**

Are you a regular Amazon.com shopper? Begin your shopping trip at smile.amazon.com and you will be supporting PACER Center with every purchase!

AmazonSmile is a wonderful charitable program that donates a portion of the cost of your purchase to PACER at no additional cost to you. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know — same products, same prices, same service — but with a generous twist. It's quick, it's easy, and it's a great way to support children and families.

When you visit smile.amazon.com for the first time, you will be asked to select a charity. Simply pick PACER Center and every time you log in, your eligible purchases will result in a donation!

Be sure to bookmark smile.amazon.com so you'll have it handy each time you shop.
Donating to PACER is a win-win situation when donors are able to combine their support for children with disabilities with their financial goals. How a donor chooses to give depends on a variety of factors, including their individual situations and how they wish to structure their will and estate plan.

Here are some ways to give to PACER:

- **Name PACER in your will.** This is one of the easiest ways to give to PACER. Your contribution will continue to help thousands of children and families.

- **Create a trust.** Donors who have a significant net worth often consider establishing a charitable remainder trust (CRT). Individuals are able to place assets or cash and claim an income-reducing deduction. There are two different kinds of charitable remainder trusts: the charitable remainder unitrust and the remainder annuity trust.

- **Your Individual Retirement Account.** Some donors may prefer to name PACER as the beneficiary of their Individual Retirement Account (IRA). Making PACER the beneficiary of the Required Minimum Distribution that you must make (beginning at age 70 1/2) can reduce your taxes. PACER receives the entire value of your contribution.

Donors should consult their tax advisor and lawyer to choose the best contribution method for them. “No matter how donors choose to give, they can be sure that PACER will use their gift wisely,” says Executive Director Paula Goldberg. “There’s something wonderful about knowing that your gift will live on, helping the families of children with disabilities and children who are bullied.”

To learn more about PACER’s charitable giving and how you can donate, please call Executive Director Paula Goldberg at (952) 838-9000 or email her at pgoldberg@PACER.org.

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**Happy Birthday, Mara!**

During the Annual Benefit committee meeting on Nov. 9, PACER had the pleasure of celebrating the birthday of committee member Mara MacMillan.

Mara’s mother, Muffy MacMillan, first contacted PACER when Mara, who has Williams syndrome, was a child. Muffy and her family have been involved ever since, both as supporters and dedicated volunteers.

Mara’s brother Win Bennett created PACER’s Fun Times, a volunteer social program for teens with and without disabilities. Mara’s other siblings, Frankie, Ben, and Noel, have also volunteered their time and talents as Fun Times leaders.

At the 2015 Annual Benefit, Mara was presented with the first PACER Ambassador Award in recognition of her efforts as a PACER volunteer. This year, both Mara and Muffy are serving as members of the Annual Benefit committee.

Mara MacMillan (right) celebrates her birthday at PACER with her mother, Muffy.
Child psychiatrist Arthur Kornhaber, an expert on grandparenting and the author of six books on the grandparent-grandchild relationship, has written that the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren are “magic... second in importance only to the bond between parent and child. Grandparents and grandchildren have this adoration and unconditional love and joy in each other’s existence.”

The members of PACER’s grandparents group are testaments to this. The group’s members share the joy of grandparenting their grandchildren with disabilities. Pat and Bill Telleen, whose granddaughter Sabrina has Down syndrome, were the group’s original leaders, and they are still involved today. The group is an important part of the lives of its members, both long time and new.

Janet and Mark Okey are among the group’s newer members. Their oldest grandchild, Isaac, 12, has a seizure disorder and developmental delays. “I’m pretty involved in Isaac’s life,” said Janet, who has a total of five grandchildren. “I took care of him when he was little. I still bake cookies for his bus drivers, and I like to know who his teachers are.”

Janet learned of the grandparent group from Isaac’s mother. She and Mark joined as a way to connect with other grandparents of children with disabilities. “There are a wide variety of disabilities, but we all understand and support each other,” she said. Janet says she has learned from the experts who address the group, mentioning in particular an advocate from Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare and a developmental pediatrician.

Though the Okeys are relatively new to the group, Jackie and Bill Gary, who have a 16-year-old grandson with a disability, have been part of it for more than five years. The Garys have found the group’s members to be friendly and supportive. “You know that someone else’s grandchild has a different disability, but they still understand what you’re going through and dealing with,” Jackie said. “The same thing is true of the speakers: even if they are talking about a disability that is different than your grandchild’s, you learn from them. There have been a lot of good speakers.”

Members of the group share the joys of grandparenting, and support each other through the challenges. “Some grandparents struggle with staying out of parenting,” Janet said. “Others will remind them, ‘Remember, you’re not the parent.’”

At the same time, she said, “Sometimes, through PACER, we learn about other resources to help Isaac’s parents. Supporting them is important, too.”

The grandparent group welcomes new members. Call PACER staff member Debbie Andrews at (952) 838-9000 or email debbie.andrews@PACER.org for more information.
There are endless options to explore in Napa Valley, one of the world’s premier wine regions. With its beautiful scenery, luxurious hotels, memorable winery tours, and gourmet meals, this will be a trip to remember for two lucky people!

**French Laundry Restaurant**

Called “the best restaurant in the world” by Anthony Bourdain, you’ll be treated to a 14-course tasting menu with wine pairings personalized by French Laundry’s sommeliers. This is the most in-demand restaurant in Napa Valley — it’s nearly impossible to get a reservation!

**Auberge du Soleil Restaurant**

At this Michelin Star restaurant that serves Mediterranean-inspired cuisine, enjoy a six-course tasting menu with wine pairings.

**Meritage Resort and Spa**

Relax and unwind with a two-night stay at the four-diamond Meritage Resort and Spa. With the world’s only spa in a wine cave, this resort is the perfect backdrop for your Napa Valley stay.

*Suggested retail value of the trip: $5,000. Some restrictions apply. Need not be present to win.*

For your chance to win, purchase a $100 raffle ticket at PACER’s Annual Benefit featuring Jay Leno on May 13. You may also pre-order online at PACER.org/Benefit or by calling (952) 838-9000.

Purchase one of the 200 Extravaganza jewelry bags, and you may be a big winner! Each bag contains a beautiful piece of jewelry, but 10 of the bags have something extra special. One of the Extravaganza bags will include this one-of-a-kind jewelry set: amethyst earrings and pendant set in silver with gold accents from the Italian Collection by Joryel Vera. *(Suggested retail value: $3,500)*

*This year’s Extravaganza is presented by Eagles Rock Jewels.*

Available at PACER’s Annual Benefit on Saturday, May 13.
Dear Friends of PACER,

I would like to take the opportunity to say thank you for all that you do for PACER. We are so appreciative of the parents, generous supporters, devoted volunteers, and loyal friends who make a difference for children and families all year long! Your dedication to PACER’s mission makes it possible for us to continue to provide assistance to families of children with all disabilities and those who experience bullying.

On behalf of PACER’s board and staff, I want you to know that you are appreciated for the work that you do, either by planning events, talking to friends about how important PACER is, or raising funds. We respect your role in what we do for tens of thousands of children each year.

Knowing that we can count on your continued support is something we value each and every day.

Thank you for being Champions of Children!

Paula Goldberg, PACER’s Executive Director