

# PACER PARTNERS

Connecting families, friends, donors, and PACER staff



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## Friends of PACER's 2<sup>nd</sup> annual virtual *Run Walk Roll* this April

In 2021, Friends of PACER's annual Run Walk Roll went virtual for the first time, with a goal of circling the earth (24,901 miles). The event was an amazing success, with a total of 87,412 miles logged by participants – more than three and a half times the goal!

“This year we are offering a month-long free event with the goal of collectively circling the earth as many times as possible. The distance around the earth symbolizes ‘moving toward a world without bullying,’” said Julie Hertzog, Director of PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center. “Everyone can participate from anywhere, at any time, and know that they are making a difference.”

Last year, 203 teams of schools, neighborhood groups, colleagues, families, and others participated in the Run Walk Roll. There were more than 1,500 total participants, including those from French Guiana, Mexico, and Thailand. “Many schools added activities around kindness, acceptance, and inclusion,” Julie said. “This year we have included new ideas to engage participants to make this even more meaningful.”

Though the event is free, those who donate are supporting the important work of PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center and helping to provide free resources to students, families, and educators. It all helps make a difference for youth. ■



2021 virtual Run Walk Roll participant and t-shirt

### EVENT DETAILS

**WHEN:** April 1 – 30, 2022

**WHERE:** Any community across the nation!

**HOW:** Set a goal of miles to move by running, walking, rolling, strolling, biking, hiking, or wheeling

**GOAL:** Collectively circle the world (24,901 miles) as many times as possible

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Donations and fundraising are encouraged; participants are eligible for prizes and incentives

**T-SHIRTS AVAILABLE!** T-shirts are just \$18 each, including shipping; bulk discounts available for orders of 10+ (Email [bailey.huston@PACER.org](mailto:bailey.huston@PACER.org) for information)

**REGISTRATION AND INFO:** [PACER.org/RWR](https://PACER.org/RWR)



*“Our motivation is the kids and families. These kids are great kids!”*

- Jim Oricchio

L to R: Hal Lieberman, Don Davidson, and Jim Oricchio

## PACER's Corporate Sponsor Co-chairs: *Leading from the Heart*

Don Davidson, Jim Oricchio, and Hal Lieberman, the three co-chairs of PACER's Corporate Sponsor Committee, are business leaders who are committed to PACER's success. Together, they lead a group of dedicated volunteers who reach out to businesses and individuals, seeking their financial support for PACER's Benefit. Over the years, the committee has raised millions of dollars to support PACER's work on behalf of children and families.

“Don, Jim, and Hal are amazing people who give so much of themselves to PACER,” said Executive Director Paula Goldberg. “They make an incredible difference in the lives of children with disabilities and children who are bullied. They inspire other business leaders to give to PACER, and we are so grateful for their hard work and commitment.”

### Don Davidson:

*“We didn't need a hard sell”*

Don Davidson has been a co-chair of the committee for more than 25 years. Don, who is the owner and CEO of Sears Imported Autos, Inc., first came to PACER as a parent seeking help for his daughter Stacy, who has ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and was having problems in school. “A PACER advocate came to the IEP meeting,” Don recalled.

“The whole tone of the meeting changed because PACER was there. After that, everything went better.”

It wasn't long before a customer of Don's, who was involved with PACER, approached him for a donation. “We agreed to be corporate sponsors,” he said. “We didn't need a hard sell!”

Don soon joined the Corporate Sponsor Committee and before long, was the co-chair. “The more I got involved, the more I liked it,” He said. “PACER has done so much for so many for so long.

“I talk to a lot of people because I believe you should give back. It's an important part of being a community member. I tell about PACER's value to children and families. There are so many stories that can be told about how PACER helps. I use my own family, my daughter as an example.”

Don is proud of the breadth of PACER programs. “PACER keeps reinventing itself,” he said. As an example, he cited PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center. “PACER's work on bullying is so significant.”

Speaking of the committee's work, Don said, “With adding new people, that's how we've grown. New people, new contacts, new donors.”

**Jim Oricchio:***"Helping families just like mine"*

Jim Oricchio first heard about PACER when he was invited to attend PACER's annual Benefit featuring Ray Charles. That was in 1996, the same year Jim and his wife Donna founded their company, Coordinated Business Systems. Jim joined the committee the next year; six years later, he was named co-chair. That was 18 years ago. "Once you get involved with Paula [Goldberg], you can't say no to her," Jim said with a laugh. It's clear he has no desire to say no to PACER. "I thought we weren't raising enough money," he said. "I'm a salesman at heart, and Paula put me in charge of the goal. Our motivation is the kids and families. These kids are great kids! When I talk to people, I tell them the economics. PACER doesn't waste money.

"We've reached our goal every year but one," Jim said. He said that recent fundraising has been a bit more challenging, given the effect of the pandemic on many businesses. "Some companies are hurting," he said. However, he is determined to raise the needed funds. "It's all for the kids," he said.

When Jim's grandson, Sam Kripotos, was diagnosed with Autism, Jim's daughter Kristie Kripotos called PACER. With PACER's help, Sam has made great progress. Today, he is a college student who plans to be an entrepreneur.

"It's an honor and a privilege to be a part of PACER," Jim said. "I know that I'm helping families just like mine."

**Hal Lieberman:***"Giving is more than just writing a check"*

Hal Lieberman, CEO of Lieberman Companies, is a long-time committee member and for the past 10 years, co-chair. In the 1970s, his aunt and uncle, David and Sara Lieberman, sought PACER's help to ensure their son Sam, who had cerebral palsy, received the accommodations he needed to be a successful student. David and Sara were strong supporters of PACER.

Hal learned about philanthropy at an early age from his parents, Steve and Sheila Lieberman. Hal and his wife Rebecca wanted to model to their children that "giving is more than just writing a check. I wanted to combine personal ties with having an impact," Hal said. He had a connection of his own: Hal went to school with Paula Goldberg's sons, David and Robert.

Most importantly, Hal thought of his cousin Sam when he decided to become deeply involved with PACER. "Sam was a very inspirational person who lived an independent life," Hal says with pride. Sam Lieberman was a University of Nevada graduate, former chair of the Nevada Democratic Party and, at the time of his death two years ago, a member of the University of Nevada Board of Regents. The two cousins were very close.

Hal says that the committee's success in raising money is due to their commitment to PACER's work. "Big companies and people of means get asked a lot," Hal said. "For our committee, the ask is easy when you believe in the cause and are passionate about it. That comes across to people." ■

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For up-to-date information on PACER workshops, events, stories, publications, videos, and more, go to:



- [Facebook.com/PACERCenter](https://www.facebook.com/PACERCenter)
- [Facebook.com/PACERsNationalBullyingPreventionCenter](https://www.facebook.com/PACERsNationalBullyingPreventionCenter)
- [Facebook.com/NPCTE](https://www.facebook.com/NPCTE) (PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment)



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# Mai Mishan: Raising her voice for bullying prevention

**M**ai Mishan was just 11 years old when she began volunteering with PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center. Her involvement dates to the opening of the Los Angeles office in 2015. "I was going into sixth grade, and my mom and I went to the opening event," Mai recalled.

Her mom, Michal, had never heard of PACER before her friend Jodie Resnick invited the Mishans to the event. Mai and Michal quickly became involved. "We didn't choose PACER – we felt like PACER chose us," Michal said.

Mai was deeply touched by what she heard. "I heard the speeches about being bullied, and I wanted to do something so that wouldn't happen to anyone else," she said.

Mai, who attends a small private school in the Los Angeles area, brought her concerns to the school. "Bullying hadn't been much of a topic of conversation," she said, "It was pushed under the rug. I talked to the middle school dean, and I said, 'We need to do something to make this stop.'"

Mai decided that Unity Day, the signature event of National Bullying Prevention Month, would be a great opportunity for her school to raise awareness of bullying prevention. Mai's original thought was that her grade level (sixth grade) would participate in Unity Day, but her idea mushroomed into a school-wide celebration.

Michal recalled the first Unity Day at Mai's school. "Every single one of the 1,200 students were wearing orange," she said. "It was such a touching, beautiful moment."

Mai worked each year with the school administration and students, and as a result, Unity Day is now on the school calendar and is celebrated each year. "It was a big accomplishment, and I'm proud of that," she said.

That first Unity Day was just the beginning of Mai's involvement with PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center. In 2016, she became the president of the National Bullying Prevention Center's L.A. Youth Advisory Board, a position she still holds, and she is the chief organizer of the office's community outreach projects.

"Mai is a natural leader," said Judy French, coordinator of the L.A. office. "When she takes on a project, you know it will be done and done well. She is an inspiration to other students and

adults, too! Mai is extremely committed to our mission of creating a world where every childhood can be free of bullying."

In addition to leading the Youth Board for more than six years, Mai also coordinated the 2017 Charity Ride fundraiser at the Calabasas, Calif., Soul Cycle; the proceeds, which benefitted PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center, far exceeded the goal. She chaired the 2019 "Picnic for Peace," a celebration of kindness and inclusion, free and open to the public.

Mai was also the youth speaker, before a crowd of 250 people, at the 2018 Los Angeles Gala, which honored Minnie Driver and the cast of the ABC series "Speechless" and raised funds for the L.A. office. "It was amazing to speak before a lot of people and know your voice is heard," she said. But her involvement in PACER goes even deeper – for five years, she and Michal came to Minnesota to volunteer at PACER's annual Benefit, until the pandemic forced the event to become a virtual one.

**Continued on bottom of next page**



*"I think the key is finding a cause that really speaks to you and to go at it! Seeing the difference I'm making, the tangible results, help keep me going."*

- Mai Mishan

# Donors speak out: *Why we give to PACER*

Many people donate to PACER because they have a friend or family member with a disability. That's the case with **Beth Simermeyer**, a mother of three who said, "The work PACER does is so important to families like mine. I give to PACER because I know my gift makes a difference."

**Don McNeil** said, "As the parent of two children with disabilities, I know firsthand how important PACER is. Families like mine count on PACER. I'm honored to do anything I can to make sure that families of children with disabilities, and those who are bullied, can count on PACER for help."

Not all donors have someone close with a disability. The late **Derm Rowland** believed so strongly in PACER that he was involved with the organization for 30 years. Derm introduced his son, **David**, and daughter-in-law, **Jennifer**, to PACER. David explained, "My dad's relationship with PACER started out as a business relationship; he was PACER's landlord at the office space on Chicago Avenue. Almost immediately the people, the principles, the mission sort of grabbed him." Derm supported PACER while he was alive, and he remembered PACER in his will. When the Rowlands planned Derm's funeral, David said, "It was only natural to request that memorials go to PACER, because it was so important in my father's life."

David kept that spirit of giving alive when he established an endowment fund in Derm's name at PACER. Many of Derm's friends made generous contributions, and David and Jennifer continue to contribute in Derm's name.

Like the Rowlands, **Al Apple** gives to PACER because he is impressed with PACER's work. The retired CPA said, "I've been with PACER from the beginning, and I know that PACER has community-wide and now national support. I love what PACER stands for, and what it's achieved."

Longtime friend of PACER **Muffy MacMillan** spoke from the heart when she said, "As the parent of a daughter with a disability, my family has been involved with PACER for a long time. Please join me in giving to PACER's endowment so PACER will always be around to help children and their families." ■

*"When you give to a charity, you want to be sure your gift is used wisely. I think PACER gives our community the 'bigger bang for the buck' than any other charity I know of."*

-Al Apple



Beth Simermeyer



Don McNeil



Jennifer and David Rowland

## Mai Mishan, continued from page 4

Although Mai has had many successes, she has faced some obstacles, too. "The administration at my school was quicker to 'get it,' she said. "Teaching my peers was more difficult, but it was possible and we achieved mutual understanding. I did find it a little challenging talking to parents; many see bullying as a 'rite of passage.' It was important to talk about how bullying and teasing are not the same thing."

Mai's high school graduation is just months away, and with it, the end of her tenure on the L.A. Youth Board. She said that saying goodbye will be "bittersweet. I feel like it's been my baby for so long! But I can't wait to see what the new board does."

As she looks ahead to the future, Mai plans to major in political science in college. "I've seen what I can do with PACER," Mai said. "I want to see what I can bring to local government or international affairs. I think a fresh new voice is needed!"

She is ready to be that voice. ■

## Many ways to GIVE

There are many ways to give to PACER. Donors can choose to give an unrestricted gift (allowing PACER to use your gift where it is most needed), earmark your gift for a specific PACER program, or donate to PACER's endowment.

PACER's endowment is permanently invested, with only the interest available to be spent. Your contribution to the endowment earns income for PACER programs.



### Here are a few ways to give to PACER:

- **Tax-free IRA distribution**

If you are age 70-1/2 or older and have a traditional (non-Roth) IRA (Individual Retirement Account), you can give PACER up to \$100,000 per year to satisfy your annual minimum distribution requirement. If you donate directly from your IRA to PACER, your gift is not taxable to you or to PACER. It's important to consult your tax advisor before completing an IRA rollover (also called a qualified charitable distribution, or QCD).

- **Bunching**

With the increase in the standard deduction, a taxpayer who is close to reaching the standard deduction may realize significant tax savings by "bunching" their charitable donations. "Bunching" is making a larger charitable gift or gifts every other year. If your combined state and local tax, home mortgage interest, and charitable gift deductions are close to the standard deduction, you may want to consult with your tax advisor about the tax-saving strategy of making larger charitable gifts every other year.

- **Appreciated stocks and securities**

Making a gift of stock or securities is a great way to earn a tax deduction. PACER can provide you with an easy-to-complete form for this purpose.

- **Cash**

It's easy to donate to PACER online at [PACER.org/donate](https://www.pacer.org/donate), or mail a check to **PACER Center, 8161 Normandale Blvd., Bloomington, MN 55437**.

- **Workplace giving**

Workplace giving takes many forms. Payroll deduction is a common way to support a charity like PACER. The employee decides how much to have deducted from their paycheck. An employer may match employees' contributions, either through payroll deductions or a year-end gift, essentially doubling your donation. Some workplace giving is affiliated with an organization such as the United Way. Check with your human resources department to learn more.

- **Estate planning**

It can be deeply satisfying to make a bequest to PACER in your will, knowing that after you are gone, your gift will live on. Children with disabilities and those who experience bullying will benefit from your generosity. ■

*No matter the size of your gift, it is so valuable to PACER! Our generous donors help make possible PACER's work on behalf of children with all disabilities and their families, and all children who experience bullying.*

*You are truly a*  
**Champion for Children!**

— Paula Goldberg,  
PACER Center Executive Director

**For questions about making a donation to PACER, call Paula Goldberg, PACER's Executive Director, at 952-838-9000.**

## A conversation with Dr. Barry Garfinkel

Dr. Barry Garfinkel is a prominent child and adolescent psychiatrist and clinical pharmacologist, and a long-time friend of PACER. In the more than 45 years he has been practicing, Dr. Garfinkel has seen major changes in the mental health of children and youth. He used the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and autism in our community as examples. “When I first started, autism was extremely rare. One in 170 children were diagnosed with autism. Now it’s one in 48,” he said. “We don’t have the research to identify why it has increased threefold. Mental health needs of children are a tsunami. This is just one example of childhood mental health disorders that are overwhelming providers.”

Learning about and understanding mental health has always been important to PACER. When the late philanthropist Dr. Roberta Mann-Benson approached Dr. Garfinkel years ago, wanting to fund research into mental health, he suggested that instead, they work together on education about mental health for parents and teachers. The two doctors worked with PACER Executive Director Paula Goldberg to create PACER’s Symposium About Children and Young Adults with Mental Health and Learning Disabilities, a yearly event. “In order to make advances in children’s mental health, we needed to educate parents, teachers, school nurses, school social workers, administrators,” on what problems reside in our schools. Dr. Garfinkel explained, “We invited experts in child and adolescent mental health from around the country.”

### Unmet mental health needs

Mental health needs are so great, he noted, that there is a shortage of professionals available to address them. Many, including Dr. Garfinkel, are so overwhelmed with requests that they can no longer accept new patients. “The mental health system is flooded with too many needs for mental health services, and too few providers,” he said.

Dr. Garfinkel worries that future mental health needs, often chronic, may go unmet because of their sheer numbers and the lack of capacity to address them in clinical and school settings. And, he says, “teachers are not adequately trained to identify or address chronic mental health needs. People go into teaching or medicine because of a passion, a love for young people. You have to really, really love what you are doing because the reimbursements (or, in the case of teaching, salaries) are not on par with peers in other careers or procedure-based specialties.”

Dr. Garfinkel is uneasy about the effect of the pandemic on parents, particularly those who have children with special needs or a disability. “Many parents feel they have failed during the time of home instruction,” he commented. “They never in a million years they would be elementary, middle, or high school teachers.

“Children with special needs were the least served by home instruction. It really fell short for children who need occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech language therapy. Parents are noticing that children who missed out on speech language therapy are not communicating as well as they did prior to COVID. For many, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) were not followed in a meaningful way.” This is just one issue Dr. Garfinkel shared.

He is enthusiastic about research on new types of psychotherapies and medications to treat mental health issues, including trauma. Dr. Garfinkel is a mentor to a number of medical students and pre-med students in the U.S. and some studying abroad. And he looks forward to the resumption of PACER’s Symposium when it is safe to do so. “We have educated more than 10,000 parents and educators,” he said, speaking of the training and expertise PACER offers Symposium attendees. “They have the opportunity to learn from national experts.” ■



*“PACER is on the cutting edge of education regarding the intersection of education and clinical mental health in children and youth.”*

**-Dr. Barry Garfinkel**

*Save the Date!*

**PACER's**  
**Annual Benefit**  
*Saturday,*  
*November 5, 2022*

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## PACER Partner: *Wheels for Wishes and Wellness*

The Car Donation Foundation's Wheels for Wishes and Wellness program has been a valued PACER donor for ten years. "Wheels for Wishes and Wellness generously supports PACER with monthly donations and corporate sponsorships of the annual Benefit and Run Walk Roll. They are a wonderful partner," said Debbie Andrews, PACER's Director of Events.

"We love PACER!" said Loren Dorshow, Executive Director of the Car Donation Foundation. "We get many requests, and we can't honor them all. There are thousands and thousands of great charities. We have to be judicious, we want to make sure our donation is impactful. If you dilute it too much, it doesn't help. PACER fits right into our Minnesota goal of supporting children's charities. PACER and Paula [Goldberg, PACER's Executive Director] are great!"

Loren explained how the Foundation works. "We operate in every state. We pick up donated vehicles and have them towed to auction houses. After expenses, all of the proceeds go to charities." In addition to cars, the Foundation accepts boats, recreational vehicles (RVs), campers, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and motorcycles.

Along with Wheels for Wishes and Wellness, which donates to children's charities, the Car Donation Foundation also operates Wheels for Wishes (benefiting Make-A-Wish recipients), Vehicles for Veterans (benefiting disabled veterans) and Animal Car Donation (benefiting animal rescue organizations). "We are one of the largest organizations of our kind in the country," Loren said. "I'm proud to say we have donated more than \$125 million to charity recipients.

"We really appreciate the opportunity to work with PACER. As long as people are donating cars, we'll continue to support PACER."



L to R: Renee Gallaher, Debbie Andrews, and Vava Guthrie