PACER’s L.A. Gala: A night to remember

PACER’s first ever Los Angeles Gala, honoring Minnie Driver and the cast of her ABC hit series *Speechless*, was glamorous and memorable. Most importantly, the star-studded event attracted a crowd of 250 guests and raised needed funds to support the L.A. office of PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center.

“The event co-chairs, Jimmy Pitaro and Chris Moore, did a fantastic job,” said Julie Hertzog, Director of PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center. Pitaro, who is ESPN President and Co-Chair, Disney Media Networks, and Moore, a movie producer of *Good Will Hunting* and *Manchester By the Sea*, are longtime members of PACER’s National Business Advisory Board.

PACER Center Executive Director Paula Goldberg talked about what the event’s success will mean to children in Los Angeles. “Judy French, the sole staff person in L.A., reached almost 10,000 students and others in the past year,” Paula said. “With more funding for staff, PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center will be able to reach more students.”

Chris Moore emceed the evening’s program, which included a live auction. “Chris was a wonderful emcee,” Julie said. “His genuine warmth, wit, and wisdom helped him connect with everyone in the room.”

Minnie’s sincere and heartfelt thanks and recognition of the work of PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center was one of the evening’s highlights. The teen members of PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center Advisory Board addressed the crowd. Member Maddie Moore's few words spoke volumes when she said, “We may be small people, but our hearts are really big.”

Paula said, “We are so grateful to all who came and contributed, and to the members of the committee. Jimmy Pitaro and Chris Moore, the co-chairs, were fabulous!”
EX.I.T.E. Camp: STEM* fun for girls with disabilities

*Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

Coding Lego robots and watching them bowl was just one of the exciting new activities at PACER’s 16th Annual EX.I.T.E. (Exploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) Camp, held for five days every summer at PACER Center. A group of 32 middle school girls with disabilities gathered in August for the experiences of a lifetime. Daily interactive and fun learning included everything from creating and launching rockets; making a prosthetic hand from Play Doh, plastic straws and string then using it to pick up ping pong balls; making ice cream with liquid nitrogen; and learning product transportation methods.

“Camp is all about showing the magic behind STEM so girls can see just how much fun it can be,” said EX.I.T.E. Camp coordinator Tina Hanson.

PACER partners and volunteers, including Accenture, IBM, 3M, Medtronic, and C.H. Robinson, brought their expertise to bear as they worked with the girls. Highlights of the camp included special guests from the Bakken Museum, Como Zoo, Eagan’s Green Girls robotics team, Growing Green Hearts, and KARE-11 meteorologist Belinda Jensen.

The camp is transformational for the girls, who become more confident in their ability to have a potential STEM career. An additional bonus of camp is the life-changing social aspect which further connects the campers through STEM.

For many girls, this is the first time they have really connected with peers. One mother wrote, “Thank you for everything you and your team have done this week for these campers! My daughter has talked about each day with genuine excitement of what she has experienced and learned. I can tell she also has made some connections socially and has experienced an environment where she was accepted and not shunned. It means a lot.”

Help PACER by taking fun surveys

Helping PACER is now as easy as taking simple online surveys. PACER supporters can sign up on SurveyMonkey Contribute to receive short surveys from SurveyMonkey customers who are seeking opinions on a variety of topics.

For every survey completed, SurveyMonkey makes a donation to PACER, and participants have the opportunity to win $100 in an instant win game. Participants’ identities and information remain confidential.

Sign up at contribute.surveymonkey.com/charity/PACER
Chris Moore, producer of hit movies including *Good Will Hunting* and *Manchester By the Sea*, has served on PACER’s National Business Advisory Board since it was founded. “It seems like I’ve been involved with PACER forever,” he said. Chris owes his relationship with PACER to the late David Goldberg, who was the CEO of Survey Monkey and son of Paula Goldberg, PACER’s Executive Director and co-founder.

Though friendship led Chris to PACER, it’s his admiration of PACER’s mission that keeps him involved. “PACER does cool things,” he said. “I really like the work PACER does for families of kids with disabilities, and bullying prevention for all kids. PACER's driven by the needs people have. What happens in Minnesota is representative of what’s happening in the rest of the world.”

Chris has introduced PACER to many new supporters, and he’s had an impact on how PACER communicates through his insistence that the organization produce its own videos. Chris spent a day at PACER’s office, teaching the staff video skills. “The economics of making short videos are pretty manageable,” he said. “You don’t have to allocate thousands of dollars, and the technology is such that people in the office can make short videos.”

Chris’ support and encouragement was the impetus behind the launch of the successful *PACERTalks About Bullying* series of short videos. Produced by PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center staff, the first season’s series of 33 videos is available at [PACER.org/bullying](http://PACER.org/bullying), and the second season is now underway.

“I think it’s working,” Chris said. “It’s such a nice way of doing it, bullying prevention videos.” He is modest about his own role in PACER’s foray into video, saying, “It’s not that I’m a visionary, it’s just so obvious that PACER should tell its stories through video. Someone just had to give you the confidence. The idea was like low hanging fruit.” He looks forward to more PACER videos. “In my professional job, I look for stories with emotion and authenticity; PACER is buried in them.”

Chris commented, “Emotional storytelling can change people. Not numbers, facts and figures, but telling stories. People watch them and are moved. I know it’s a little braggy, blowing your own horn; I have some problems doing that myself. But if you’re not going to do it, who will do it for you?”

He is eager to continue to spread the word about PACER. “I want to try to help people understand how wonderful what PACER does is,” Chris said. “Paula and PACER staff are very Midwestern, so humble about what PACER does. I don't know if you all get a chance to enjoy all that you're accomplishing. I try to continue to point out how cool what you do is, and how it could be expanded throughout the world. At National Business Advisory Board meetings, we talk about what we could do to help people in other places. We’re proud of PACER's accomplishments. The number of children who need help isn't going down,” he said about the need for PACER's services.

Regarding his role, Chris commented, “It’s fun to be helpful, and it’s moving to watch the things PACER does. It’s interesting to learn about and see it happening. It’s nice to be able to apply some of what I’ve learned in storytelling to help PACER.”

His enthusiasm for PACER is obvious as Chris talks. When asked about his future with PACER, Chris says he can’t imagine not staying involved. “Among those of us who get involved, the enthusiasm for your work is contagious. I try to be a big cheerleader: PACER, be proud of what you’ve accomplished!”
### Transition: Creating a bridge into adulthood

Preparing for adulthood is a time of many transitions for teens and their families. For students with disabilities, their Individualized Education Program (IEP) helps create a path to achieve their goals for life after high school in the areas of postsecondary education and training, employment, and, when appropriate, independent living. PACER’s National Parent Center on Transition and Employment provides education and support for parents and students.

“Transition means that for teens and their parents, the focus shifts from setting annual goals to long-range goals that help students to reach their dreams after high school,” said Rachel Pearson, a PACER Center parent advocate.

Parents appreciate PACER’s assistance in navigating the transition process. Jennifer Leitzke is the mother of transition-age student Marissa, who has Usher’s Syndrome, is deaf, and has progressive vision loss. With assistance from PACER, Marissa stayed on track in high school and now attends the University of Minnesota Duluth. “Marissa was feeling pretty low when we came to PACER,” said Jennifer. “They taught her how to be a strong advocate for herself, which completely changed her life.”

Jesse Ofstie, who has Rubinstein-Taybi syndrome and is nonverbal, also transitioned successfully with help from PACER. He was the first student with cognitive disabilities to participate in the typical classroom at his high school and walk in the graduation ceremony. Today, he attends a transition program where he continues practicing job and life skills.

“PACER has been there for us for 15 years,” said his mother, Beverly. “They’ve given me the information and support I needed.”

PACER has many resources for parents at any point along their child’s transition journey, including transition-related workshops throughout the year and experienced parent advocates who provide parents with the information and resources they need to support their students. Parents can also tap into the wealth of resources created by PACER’s National Parent Center on Transition and Employment.

Learn more about transition at PACER.org/transition/learning-center/planning.

### All Hands In!

**Get the Vitals™ App for FREE**

PACER is pleased to partner with Vitals Aware Services to spread the word about a life-saving technology service available to Minnesotans at no charge. The Vitals™ app provides first responders and police with real-time information about vulnerable children, teens and adults living with emotional, intellectual and developmental disabilities. Vitals™ has officially launched in Minnesota and is FREE for individuals and caregivers. Please help PACER spread the word and help make this valuable service available to all.

It takes less than a minute to sign up for The Vitals™ app at https://info.thevalsapp.com/vitalsmn.

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- Rachael Pearson, PACER Center parent advocate
9th Annual Friends of PACER Run, Walk, Roll

The trees at Mount Normandale Lake Park weren’t quite at peak color quite yet, but orange was all around on Saturday, Oct. 6, as hundreds gathered for the Friends of PACER-sponsored Run, Walk, Roll Against Bullying. Orange t-shirts proclaiming, “Together, We Can Create a World Without Bullying” provided a bold show of support for PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center.

“Every year, it’s exciting to see past attendees returning and new ones joining us at the Run, Walk, Roll,” said Julie Hertzog, Director of PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center. “Their support of this important day is a powerful demonstration of how much our community values keeping all children safe.”

The day dawned cloudy and cold, but weather never stops the PACER community. More than 250 participants and volunteers cheered each other on. After the runners, walkers, and rollers finished their laps, the community gathered in front of the bandshell. Emcee Miss Shannan Paul, a Twin Cities comedian and television and radio host, brought the sun out with her lively commentary and passion for PACER’s mission. Miss Shannan is a PACER board member and parent of a child with a disability. She has used her charisma and humor to help PACER for many years.

“I really appreciate all that we do to create a joyful environment to celebrate and champion people of all abilities and disabilities,” Miss Shannan said. “I’ve been involved with PACER for five years now, and I really love the work that we do!”

Michael Keller, CEO of Pearson Candy and longtime PACER partner, shared his personal experience being bullied as a student. PACER’s Faces of Change youth board joined him onstage to talk about the impact of bullying prevention in their lives and communities. Faces of Change member Dawn Jamison, who is also Miss Teen Richfield International, addressed the crowd on the board’s behalf.

This event is one of many ways that National Bullying Prevention Month was celebrated across the nation. Learn more about how you can help prevent bullying at PACER.org/bullying.

PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Month … and beyond

PACER’s 12th annual National Bullying Prevention Month drew in more people than ever as communities around the world united to say, “Together, We Can Create a World Without Bullying!” That was the powerful message on t-shirts, tote bags, and social media throughout October as schools, cities, and companies took action to raise awareness of bullying prevention through activities, events, and education.

On Unity Day, Oct. 24, millions of people across the world joined in by wearing and sharing orange to end bullying. The hosts of ABC-TV’s “The View” were all decked out in orange, part of a star-studded month of celebrity support. Others who participated included Carrie Underwood, Ryan Seacrest, Leighton Meister, and Kelly Ripa. In addition to wearing orange, they shared their stories about how bullying has affected their lives, and how to end bullying in all communities.

How can your community keep the momentum going after Unity Day? You can make a difference in many ways:

• Hold a community discussion about Unity and define what it means to your friends, family, and neighbors
• Plant a “seed” of unity in schools and communities with an interactive Unity Tree: PACER.org/bullying/classroom/schoolwide/unity-tree.asp
• Take a picture of yourself or your community wearing or displaying orange and share it on social media
PACER’s Los Angeles Gala
A night to remember

L-R: Minnie Driver, Paula Goldberg, Ella Goldberg

L-R: Scott Silveri and Julie Hertzog

L-R: Ilan Mishan, Mai Mishan, Michal Mishan

L-R: Kevin Campos, Sarahi Morales, Judy French, Allison Levine

L-R: Members of PACER’s NBPC Youth Advisory Board:
Mason Miller, Chloe Sooferan, Jack Boys,
Dylan Williams, Augie Issac, Ella Goldberg,
Maddie Moore, Mai Mishan
Supporting PACER’s Endowment is a Rowland Family Tradition

David and Jennifer Rowland have actively supported PACER for a number of years. David, who is Executive Vice President and Chief Investment Officer at The Travelers Companies Inc., serves on PACER’s investment committee, and Jennifer is a past co-chair of the Benefit Silent Auction Committee. In addition, they support PACER financially, including the endowment fund set up to honor David’s late father, Derm Rowland.

Before loyal PACER supporter Derm Rowland passed away in 2012, he and his wife Helen made certain that their spirit of giving to PACER would continue by making gifts to PACER in their wills. When the family planned Derm’s funeral, “It was only natural to request that memorials go to PACER, because it was so important in my father’s life. He wanted to ensure PACER would live on,” David said.

It was then that David established the endowment fund at PACER in his father’s name, and many of Derm’s friends honored his memory by making generous contributions.

“My wife and I continue to contribute to the endowment fund in my father’s name. It’s an enduring legacy that reflects his priorities and values,” David said. “That’s one of the most important thing an endowment does.”

About Derm Rowland

Derm Rowland’s relationship with PACER spanned more than 30 years. 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 just sort of grabbed him.”

Derm became a member of PACER’s advisory board, and he convinced PACER to reduce its overhead by buying the Chicago Avenue building. When PACER outgrew the building, he agreed to buy it back to help PACER fund the purchase of PACER’s current building.