

PACESETTER

A news magazine of PACER Center, Inc. by and for parents of children and young adults with disabilities

The Otto Bremer Trust donates \$1 million to PACER Center

Gift establishes Otto Bremer Center on Innovation for Children and Families

To advance innovative ways to support families of children and young adults with disabilities and students who have been bullied, the Otto Bremer Trust announced a \$1 million donation to PACER Center on April 30, 2016. The donation will establish the Otto Bremer Center on Innovation for Children and Families at PACER.

“As a charitable trust, we support organizations whose work delivers measurable value in advancing individual and community potential,” said Brian Lipschultz, Co-CEO and Trustee, Otto Bremer Trust. “PACER is an important voice for families and children. They have a long history of providing services based on a model of education, advocacy and empowerment. We are thrilled that PACER is using these funds to provide services to underserved families and to expand their impact in Bremer communities. We hope other corporations, foundations and individuals will support this important and innovative program at PACER.”

Nationwide, one in five families has a child with a disability or special health care need. Additionally, one out of every four students is bullied each year. In 2015, PACER

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Idina Menzel lets it go for PACER

Broadway came to Minneapolis when charismatic Idina Menzel took the stage at the Minneapolis Convention Center on April 30. Menzel captivated the crowd at PACER's 34th Annual Benefit, presented by Starkey Hearing Technologies. From the moment she began to sing Prince's "Nothing Compares 2 U" until the closing notes of her Oscar-winning smash hit, "Let It Go," from The Disney Company's movie, *Frozen*, the audience was entranced. The Tony Award-winning star's delivery, amazing vocal range, and anecdotes kept the crowd entertained as she sang hit after hit and interacted with the audience. Most memorably, Menzel invited children and young adults to sing "Let It Go," and more than three dozen, many with disabilities, joined her at the front of the room.

“She was wonderful,” said PACER Executive Director Paula Goldberg. “Idina was amazing, and she really connected with the audience. People were raving about her performance, and a number of people commented on how she appreciated what PACER is about.”

Menzel spoke from the stage of her admiration for PACER's mission and programs. Writing about the performance for the *Star Tribune*, music critic Jon Bream noted, “Idina Menzel understands the PACER Center. Probably more so than any other entertainer who has performed at the



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Department of Education official visits PACER

TIKES (Technology Improves Kids' Educational Success) Program Officer Tracie Dickson of the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, visited the TIKES Project at PACER Center this spring. PACER staff and advisory board members welcomed her.

TIKES is in the fourth year of a five-year model demonstration project to encourage using AT with young children. It is one of three such projects across the nation funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

From left, back row: Tara Bruss, Kate Bartlein, PACER Center Executive Director Paula Goldberg, Ann Bettenburg, Sean O'Halloran, Jan Ormasa, and Eric Melbye. Front row: Elizabeth Barry, PACER's Simon Technology Director Bridget Gilormini, TIKES Program Officer Tracie Dickson, Paula Kirschenheiter, Barb Troolin, and Norena Hale.

Age is just a number: Peggy Widtfeldt going strong at PACER

Peggy Widtfeldt retired once, but it didn't take. Widtfeldt, who was a secretary at Plymouth Congregational Church for 30 years, was eight years into her retirement when she ran into her neighbor, PACER Executive Director Paula



Peggy Widtfeldt

Goldberg, at the dry cleaner. "Peggy had so many skills, I asked if she would she come help us out," Goldberg remembers.

Before long, Widtfeldt, then 73, was working in PACER's front office, answering phones and performing other administrative duties. That was 22 years ago, and Widtfeldt, 95, who works two days per week, plans to work as long as she is able. "I'm passionate about PACER," Widtfeldt says, "And I believe in making a difference in the lives of children."

Widtfeldt was widowed after 66 years of marriage. She has three children, four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. She volunteers at Plymouth Congregational Church and loves to cook, especially desserts.

Widtfeldt is among many employees who have been at PACER for a number of years. Along with Paula Goldberg, who co-founded PACER in 1978, Virginia Richardson has been at PACER for 36 years, Sue Folger for 31 years, and Sharman Davis Barrett for 28 years. "We are proud to have many staff members who have spent the majority of their careers with PACER," said Goldberg. "These employees bring incredible value and a rich history to our organization."

Run, Walk, Roll kicks off bullying prevention anniversary

PACER Center's Oct. 1 Run, Walk, Roll Against Bullying kicks off a 10-year anniversary celebration of PACER's National Bullying Prevention Month. The Run, Walk, Roll Against Bullying and other events throughout the month of October recognize efforts to prevent bullying behaviors.

The seventh annual Run, Walk, Roll Against Bullying, organized by the Friends of PACER, will be at Normandale Lake Park in Bloomington. It includes a four-mile run or a two-mile walk or roll, followed by family activities, music, snacks, and a ceremony. Persons can register online now. The family-friendly event has been part of PACER's bullying prevention activities throughout most of the decade. More than 100 cities and towns across the United States are estimated to now have similar related events. PACER provides a free download toolkit that outlines how to plan the activities.

Wear orange Oct. 19 on Unity Day

Unity Day, Oct. 19, is another focal point for the anniversary celebration. On that date, schools and communities across the globe unite to promote kindness, acceptance and inclusion. Adhering to the slogan, "Make It Orange, Make It End!" students, teachers, businesses, and communities wear orange and work together to prevent bullying through events, activities, and outreach. The web-based "Student Event Planning Guide," developed in conjunction with Facebook, helps teens plan for Unity Day events.

For information about the Run, Walk, Roll Against Bullying, Unity Day, or other Bullying Prevention Month activities, visit PACER.org/bullying/nbpm



Harlem Globetrotter visits PACER Center

Zeus McClurkin from the world-famous Harlem Globetrotters stopped by PACER on March 22 to speak with students about bullying prevention. McClurkin showed off his basketball skills while telling his personal story of overcoming adversity. The Harlem Globetrotters travel the world, showcasing their players' basketball artistry and talent for millions.

Mother's belief in son key to his success

Having high expectations for your child with a disability is incredibly important, especially when others around you may not be convinced of his or her capabilities. Just ask Laura. Her son Elliot was in the third grade and had just been diagnosed with dyslexia. She was meeting with his teacher to discuss how they could help Elliot learn to read. "She just looked at me," Laura recalled, "and said, 'Well he'll never learn to read at grade level.' I told her he wanted to be a wildlife biologist. She said, 'Well that will never happen!'"

Although she knew instinctively that most educators work hard to support their students and help them be successful, Laura was aghast. "I couldn't believe it," she said. "This was his teacher and the person who managed his IEP [Individualized Education Program], and she was ready to give up on him in the third grade."

Not surprisingly, his family removed Elliot from that school and set about finding their son the help he needed. Laura contacted PACER, attended many workshops, worked with a PACER advocate, and taught her son how to advocate for himself. "In my mind, Elliot was very intelligent and I knew that his ability to understand language was so much higher than he could read and write," Laura said. "As a parent, it was my job to knock over the hurdles in his way."

Today, Elliot is a successful college student pursuing a degree in business. He works in sales and as a trainer at Target, and was recruited to be an academic coach at his former high school where he graduated with honors. He also earned five varsity letters in wrestling and football.

Set the bar high

At age 2, Elliot was diagnosed with Common Variable Immune Deficiency (CVID), which led to a diagnosis of stage 1 chronic kidney disease at age 12. In between, Elliot needed months of vision therapy in the first grade and then came the dyslexia diagnosis two years later. "It's a lot," Laura admits, "but it's manageable. Elliot just has to do things differently."

Parents' expectations and beliefs in the importance of education can motivate children to fulfill their dreams. Studies show that parents who expect their children to finish high school and attend college or a vocational program give them a distinct advantage in school. If parents don't set the bar high for their children, chances are others may lower their expectations, as well. When teachers' expectations are also high, students do even better.



Elliot had some excellent teachers and did well at school. Laura let each teacher know her son's strengths, what had worked well in the past, and important information about his health challenges. Over time, Elliot developed the belief that he could overcome any obstacle in his way. "His mindset is to figure out what he wants and to go after it," Laura said. "My message to other parents, and especially to teachers, is pretty simple: Please don't give up on kids. Let them show us where they can go."

And the survey says... Support PACER with SurveyMonkey

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 need opinions on a variety of topics. For every survey completed, SurveyMonkey makes a donation to PACER, and all 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.

Thirty years of transition expertise leads PACER to new national vision

PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment (NPCTE), "Inspiring Possibilities," was founded in 2014, but its vision goes back more than 30 years. Long before there were transition laws in place, PACER began paving the road for families who wanted more post-secondary education and employment opportunities for their youth with disabilities.

PACER's transition work first began in the mid-1980s, when parents of children with disabilities began asking: "What services and supports are available for my child after high school?" PACER co-founder Marge Goldberg wrote the first transition law for the State of Minnesota in 1985, and PACER ensured its passage. PACER staff members focused on increasing transition opportunities for youth in Minnesota. Sharman Davis Barrett and Deborah Leuchovius educated parent centers nationally on the importance of offering transition-related supports to families, and advocated for new transition laws. Leuchovius also educated families in Minnesota on the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Judy Moses helped youth, adults, families, and professionals understand disability laws and adult services.

"PACER has always been at the forefront of transition issues," said Leuchovius. "Families count on us for our depth of knowledge and experience in all areas of the transition process."

Today, the National Parent Center on Transition and Employment, "Inspiring Possibilities," is co-directed by Gretchen Godfrey and Sean Roy,



PACER's Transition team, from left, back row: Deborah Leuchovius, Judy Moses, Gretchen Godfrey, and Sean Roy. Front: Sharman Davis Barrett.

with collaboration from Leuchovius, Barrett and Moses. NPCTE's innovative website offers a wealth of information and videos on transition-related topics, plus technical assistance and training for professionals, and in-person and online workshops for parents of youth with disabilities. NPCTE's resources for families continue to grow, thanks in part to

funding from the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation. "We are constantly working to create the transition-related resources families need to inspire new possibilities for their youth," said Roy. "We know that families have high expectations for their youth, and PACER is here to help families and youth on their journey."

Three Ways to "Inspire Possibilities"

Families can connect with PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment, "Inspiring Possibilities," in three easy ways:

1. Visit the website: PACER.org/transition
 - Find family-friendly tools and resources on transition and employment
 - Attend live-streaming PACER workshops
2. Follow the Facebook page: [Facebook.com/NPCTE](https://www.facebook.com/NPCTE)
 - Receive information and articles right in your Facebook news feed
 - Join in discussions with other families
3. Sign up for PACER's "Inspiring Possibilities" E-News: PACER.org/transition
 - Receive emails on the latest online resources, tools, and information on transition

Advocate links PACER, Somali community

For nearly a decade, PACER staff advocate Hassan Samantar has led Somali parents through a maze of the English language, education systems, behavior, and legal requirements — to find what is best for their children with disabilities.

He is one of several parent staff advocates working in PACER Center's multicultural project. It addresses issues specific to diverse populations and families of children with disabilities.

For nine years, Samantar, a native of Somalia, has seen the Somali population in Minnesota increase dramatically. In the past three years, for example, approximately 300 new Somali families moved into the Twin Cities from Africa, as well as from other U.S. resettlement sites, he said. Other Minnesota cities also have Somali populations.

Giving credit to PACER's ability and insight in helping families, Samantar said that the multicultural project staff members adjust the way they work. He makes home visits "where parents are comfortable" and often attends individualized education program (IEP) meetings with parents who may not understand the language or culture.

As the Somali families assimilate, it is worth making the adjustments, according to Samantar. Many second-generation Americans are doing well, he said. For example, a mother attending a recent workshop is a doctoral student. The friend with her is a school psychologist.

There are, however, challenges.

"Working with the Somali community is very different from working with other families," said Samantar. "I used to work occasionally with other parents. You can just tell them, 'Here's

a resource. Here's what the law says.' If I gave them a lead, they could carry on."

The Somali families and parents, however, come from an oral society. Many cannot read English. Even if materials are translated, some cannot read Somali.

"What becomes even more complicated," said Samantar, "is that many American services don't exist in Somalia."

Explaining American special education, with its terms and acronyms, is challenging. Dealing with the law is even more difficult with some families.

“Strong data shows that the most important indicator of children’s school success is parental involvement.”

-Hassan Samantar

"I need to explain things every step of the way," he said.

Cultural differences also affect family-school relationships.

"Strong data shows that the most important indicator of children's school success is parental involvement," pointed out Samantar. "That's a hurdle for Somali parents."

In Somalia, there are only government-run schools, and attending school is not required, said Samantar. Home life is generally separate from schools. Also, Somali parents are often intimidated by public schools in Minnesota. Thus they may feel and act differently, he said.

The term "school records" is an example of misunderstanding, said Samantar. If a teacher or administrator tells a Somali parent that something will be entered on a child's school record, even if it is good, some parents may be alarmed. They think of "record" as a criminal record, said Samantar.

A major special education issue confronting the Somali community is the number of Somali children with autism. Data shows that nationally 1 in 68 children is on the autism spectrum. In the Somali community it is 1 in 32. Most experts agree that early diagnosis and intervention is most helpful, yet many Somali children are not diagnosed until they enter kindergarten.

"We come from a culture where children grow at their own pace. We don't pay attention to milestones," said Samantar.

For example, he continued, in the United States, children are expected to know certain things such as colors, shapes and some letters or numbers before they enter school. In the Somali community many parents say, "That's the school's job. The children will learn that when they go to school." The result is that Somali children often lag behind their peers when they begin school, and disability-related delays are not always picked up.

Samantar continued: "Disability is often still taboo. People aren't comfortable talking about it in our community. It's a problem to talk about their child's disability. A lot of the time, parents may not understand the disability and the impact on their child."

While the issue could apply to any disability, it is particularly difficult

in the case of children with invisible disabilities such as attention disorders, learning disabilities, or being on the autism spectrum.

Despite the challenges, PACER's work with Somali families is increasingly successful. As a leader in the Somali community, Samantar is trusted. As Somali parents assimilate, they welcome the assistance PACER offers.

Parents are increasingly receptive to addressing autism, said Samantar. In 2008, when the number of Somali children with autism came to light, Samantar, representing PACER, worked with the State of Minnesota Departments of Health and Education

to assist in outreach to the Somali community and cultural training for professionals. Early in the project, he tried to pull together Somali parents to survey the problem. Three came. Today, more than 100 parents attend the annual Somali Autism Day. With growing awareness of Autism, more Somali parents now allow their children to participate in early childhood screening.

Samantar said he is encouraged. He led a recent PACER workshop, and three of the Somali parents attending didn't have a child with disabilities, but they knew of family or friends who did. A few weeks later at another

workshop, there were parents of children with disabilities that had been sent by the previous workshop attendees.

Samantar can see that PACER's work is increasingly valued by the Somali community, but he isn't relaxing. With the growing number of Somali families coming to Minnesota and the complexity surrounding their children's disabilities, he anticipates more demand for services.

"The need is greater than I've ever seen before," he said. "It's going to grow and grow."

PACER's multicultural advocates

Despite different cultures, customs, and experiences, parents of children with disabilities have one thing in common: they care about their children and want what is best for them. That guides PACER Center parent advocates as they work with families, including those from diverse and underserved populations.

Sensitivity to the issues of diverse populations has been part of PACER's commitment to families since it opened its first office in 1978.

"PACER's goal has always been to be a resource to all parents of children with disabilities in Minnesota," said Virginia Richardson, PACER's parent training manager. "We are fortunate to have diverse advocates who can meet parents where they are and provide the help they need."

PACER's multicultural project, which focuses on four specific populations, speaks to diversity. Dao Xiong works with the Southeast Asian community, Jesús Villaseñor with Hispanic/Latino parents, Hassan Samantar with Somali families, and Bonnie Jean Smith and others with African American families. All are part of the communities they serve, and all are parents of a child with a disability.

Also unique is the longevity of individual multicultural staff members. It suggests their acceptance in their respective communities, as well as to PACER's respect for their roles on the behalf of children. Villaseñor has been with PACER for 20 years, Xiong for 24, Smith for 17,



From left: Jesús Villaseñor, Dao Xiong, Bonnie Jean Smith, Virginia Richardson, and Hassan Samantar

and Samantar for 9. Virginia Richardson, parent training manager, has assisted African American families for more than three decades.

In addition to PACER's emphasis on helping parents one-on-one, PACER's multicultural advocates serve broadly. They train school staffs how to work with parents from other cultures. They also adapt and translate PACER materials for specific populations — Hmong, Somali, and Spanish — and they do webinars.

A recent in-service presentation for professionals garnered glowing evaluations. A sample read: "Thank you! Such a great wealth of info and things to keep in mind. Very beneficial!"

"I believe we are giving voices to communities that are often voiceless," Villaseñor said.

An unforgettable evening at



Left: Don McNeil, Amelia Sawalich, Tani Austin of Starkey Hearing Technologies, the Benefit's Presenting Sponsor, and Sari Lipschultz



Right: Jessica Broyles, Idina Menzel, Maggie Broyles, and Rowan Broyles



Kelly Lenzmeier Page and Al Lenzmeier



Paula Goldberg and Ella Goldberg. Photo by Bre McGee.



David Barlow and Erin Barlow

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annual benefit for the Twin Cities organization that helps children with disabilities and combats bullying.”

Menzel’s performance was the highlight of a sensational evening that included a raffle (grand prize: an African safari donated by Pique Travel), live and silent auctions, and the presentation of the first annual Otto Bremer Youth Leadership Award to Sam Graves (see page 15).

Prior to Menzel’s performance, the audience listened intently to Erin Barlow, Ambassador for PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center. The UCLA Theatre major, who came from California to attend the Benefit, showed a video and talked about her experiences being bullied as a middle schooler. Her emotional, heartfelt message resonated with the crowd.

The entire evening was unforgettable, including the Live Auction emceed by WCCO-TV’s Frank Vascellero and

Amelia Santaniello. For the second year running, the James Beard Award-winning host of *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern*, joined them onstage.

The annual benefit raises funds to support PACER’s innovative programs for all children, including the Children’s Mental Health and Emotional or Behavioral Disorders project, the Simon Technology Center, PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center, individual assistance to parents and other PACER projects.

“This unforgettable evening would not have been possible without support from our corporate sponsors, the help of 400 volunteers, and the generosity of the hundreds of donors to our silent and live auctions,” said Paula Goldberg. “They are truly Champions for Children, and PACER is so appreciative of their support.”

Save the date! PACER’s 35th Annual Benefit is May 13, 2017.

PACER's 34th Annual Benefit



Left: Mia Weber, Paula Goldberg, Laura Bishop, and Lydia Weber

Right: Sharman Davis Barrett and Dawn Jamison



Melanie Barry



Beth Simermeyer



From left: Hugh Voigt, Susan Voigt, Barry Birkholz, Idina Menzel, JoAnn Birkholz, Deb Knutson, and Kent Knutson from Medica



Benefit co-chairs, from left: Jessica Broyles, Mary Holmes, Elly Zweigbaum, Nancy Kaysen, Anna Hyland, and Noelle Sheehan



From left: Frankie Bennett, Taylor Becker, Mara MacMillan, Muffy MacMillan, and Ben Bennett

EX.I.T.E. Camp changes girls' lives

Last summer Sophie Zenzen and Grace Bradfield, both now 12, programmed Lego robots, created micro solar panels and enjoyed liquid nitrogen ice cream. The girls attended EX.I.T.E. (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) Camp, a five-day program for middle school girls with disabilities, at PACER Center. EX.I.T.E. is held every August and focuses on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The camp is as exciting and relevant today as when it was launched in 2003 with help from IBM.

Sophie has a long list of what she loves about EX.I.T.E. Camp: designing a Target gift card, learning about retail labeling and barcoding, the experiments, and the people — “I liked the adults that were there,” Sophie said.

Last year's camp featured volunteers from Accenture, IBM, 3M, Medtronic and Target. Eagan's Green Girls robotic's team and KARE-11's Belinda Jensen once again volunteered. New funders Education Credit Management Corporation (ECMC), Boston Scientific and C.H. Robinson joined long-time supporters Xcel Energy and Donaldson Company to make rich hands-on experiences possible.

If you ask Grace to pick out what she liked best about EX.I.T.E., the words bubble up as she lists her favorite things: the Green Girls volunteers, learning about barcoding, the caring adult mentors. It's clear that Grace had an incredible time.

“It's so hard to find activities, especially for girls on the Autism spectrum,” said Amy Bradfield, Grace's mom. “The girls loved being with the Green Girls — it was so valuable for them to have slightly older peers helping them. PACER's school-year Technology for Girls series is absolutely fabulous, and I love this summer camp! PACER is such an incredible resource.”

Sophie's mom is in total agreement. “I thought it was phenomenal, all the companies that came in and did activities with the girls,” Heather Zenzen said. “I wanted Sophie to go to EX.I.T.E. to learn STEM skills and to build confidence. It was a very valuable experience for her. I would encourage anyone thinking about it to have their daughter attend.”

Along with writing code and designing a doghouse, Sophie and Grace met and became friends. Their mothers describe this as a bonus. “Grace is really Sophie's first true friend,” said Zenzen.



From left: Grace, Emma, and Sophie during 2015's EX.I.T.E. Camp.

“There are not a lot of opportunities [for girls with disabilities] to meet other girls,” Bradfield said. The Zenzens and Bradfields live in opposite corners of the metro area, but the families make sure that the girls get together at least monthly.

Many of the girls at EX.I.T.E. Camp find it challenging to be in a new group without a parent there. Sophie has words of advice for would-be campers: “You shouldn't be afraid to go, because it's a lot of fun and you learn a lot about STEM.”

For more information about EX.I.T.E. Camp and Technology for Girls workshops, go to PACER.org/stc/exite/

You're invited! Simon Technology Center's Family Fun Day is Sept. 17

A robot with a child's face on its screen? Technology, in the form of tele-presence robots (think: “Skype on wheels”), can be a day-brightener for a child who's unable to attend school due to illness or disability. Find out how these robots work at Simon Technology Center's annual Family Fun Day and Tech Expo, held at PACER Center on Saturday, Sept. 17 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event, geared to children with disabilities, their families, and professionals, will feature the latest and greatest assistive technology tools for daily living, along with arts and crafts.

The event is free but advance registration is required. Register online at PACER.org/stc or call (952) 838-9000.

Don McNeil honored by Hennepin County Bar Association

On March 10, the Hennepin County Bar Association honored longtime PACER volunteer Don McNeil with its 2016 Pro Bono Publico Award for Excellence by a Private Sector Attorney. McNeil, who is managing partner at Heley, Duncan & Melander in Bloomington, has volunteered his time and legal expertise with PACER for more than a decade.

From serving as PACER's board president to providing pro bono legal service, McNeil is truly a champion for children. "Don is always positive and willing to help others, and his energy is contagious," said PACER Executive Director Paula Goldberg. "Whenever I call Don, no matter where he is or what he's doing, he is happy to help."

McNeil's personal experiences with PACER have fueled his involvement in helping the organization. McNeil and his wife Julie sought PACER's assistance when their daughter Megan was born with Williams syndrome, and again when their son Ethan was diagnosed with severe autism. Over the past 20 years, McNeil said, he and his family have participated in numerous PACER workshops and consultations to help their children achieve their full potential. "We learned about so many resources from PACER," McNeil said. "The information we gained was very valuable, and we were so impressed with the professionalism of PACER's staff"

McNeil showed his appreciation by volunteering his time with PACER. His first volunteer assignment, he noted, was serving on a committee, and as time went on, he became more deeply involved. "PACER could not afford to hire an attorney of Don's caliber, but we have gained so much as a



Don McNeil with his wife Julie and daughter Megan

result of his expertise," Goldberg said.

"It would be impossible to measure the impact Don has had on PACER and the disability community," Goldberg continued. "He is so deserving of this prestigious award, and we are very grateful for him."

"I like to be around good people doing good things," McNeil said. "And that is PACER. We have received so much more from PACER than we have given in return."

Surrogate Parent Project provides valuable resources

When a child with a disability does not have a parent to serve as his or her educational advocate, who fills that role? Often, it's a surrogate: a trained community volunteer or foster parent who represents a student who is under state guardianship, or whose parents are unknown or unavailable. PACER's Surrogate Parent Project provides surrogates, or those considering taking on a surrogate role, with all of the information and resources they need.

"Surrogate parents are important for children with disabilities who don't have anyone else who can help," said PACER advocate Pat Anderson, the project coordinator.

"Giving surrogate parents the information they need helps them to be more successful in their role as the child's advocate."

Through the program, surrogate parents have access to resources such as workshops, an online guide called "Training for Surrogate Parents," helpful publications including "Children in Need of Surrogate Parents," and a short video called "The Parent Role in Special Education: Who Takes this Role for Foster Children?"

For more information, visit PACER.org/surrogate, e-mail Pat Anderson (patanderson@pacer.org) or call (952) 838-9000.

Workshops

PACER Center workshops are free to Minnesota parents. For information and to register, call (952) 838-9000 (metro area) or toll free at (800) 537-2237, or visit PACER.org/workshops.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH, EMOTIONAL/BEHAVIORAL

Parent Leadership Summit on Children's Mental Health

PACER's Children's Mental Health and Emotional or Behavioral Disorders Project will hold a Parent Leadership Summit on Children's Mental Health on Aug. 19. Family members will receive training on state and local mental health issues, learn how to work with policymakers, and receive information and training on how to participate in policy committees. Participants will also create a personal action plan. Space is limited. To learn more about this unique opportunity, contact Renelle Nelson at (952) 838-9000.

- **Aug. 19, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (PACER)**

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Everything You Need to Learn Before Your Child Turns Three

This workshop will help families understand the transition process from Part C early intervention services to Part B preschool services or other community options. Topics include transition requirements, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), inclusion, and Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and objectives.

- **July 25, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**

Getting Ready for School: Is your Child's IEP in Good Shape?

This workshop will provide parents with an overview of the importance of Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and a discussion about how to make sure that the current IEP addresses the necessary supports and services needed for a child to be successful in school or other early learning environments. Parents are invited to bring their child's current IEP.

- **Aug. 23, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**

PARENT TRAINING

"Who Cares About Kelsey?"

Please join us for a screening of "Who Cares About Kelsey?" by filmmaker Dan Habib. Kelsey Carroll was a likely high school dropout until she encountered an education revolution that's about empowering teens with emotional and behavioral disabilities. Q & A with a PACER advocate will follow the film.

- **June 27, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**

ABCs of the IEP — A Guide for Minnesota Parents to the IEP

This workshop will help parents understand how to use the Individualized Education Program (IEP) to benefit their child. Presenters will use the PACER booklet, "Guide for Minnesota Parent to the IEP," to help participants understand how each required part of the IEP can be developed to meet the child's needs. Parents need to bring a copy of their child's most current IEP.

- **Aug. 15, 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. (PACER)**

Planning for Educational Inclusion: A Viewing of "Including Samuel"

Please join us for a screening of "Including Samuel", a documentary by filmmaker Dan Habib about educational inclusion. He documented his family's efforts to include their son Samuel in all facets of their lives, a journey that transforms each of them. Q & A with a PACER advocate will occur before and after the film.

- **Aug. 22, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**

Hot Tips on the Individualized Education Program: Is Your Child's IEP Individualized and Appropriate?

Participants in this hands-on workshop will learn how to use the information on their child's special education evaluation report to determine how well the Individualized Education Program (IEP) addresses the child's unique needs. Parents need to bring

a copy of their child's most recent school special education evaluation report and current IEP.

- **Aug. 25, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**

SIMON TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Technology for Girls: STEM Club, Web Design on Weebly

Bring your creativity to PACER and learn how to design a website using Weebly. In this hands-on lab session, the Green Girls robotics team will lead middle school girls with disabilities through the basics of web design. Participants will learn how these critical technology skills can be applied in the real world and will create a website using the drag-and-drop website editor Weebly. Beginners welcome.

- **June 4, 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. (PACER)**

Technology for Girls: Digital Sandbox, Learn the Code

Join us for a day of play in a digital sandbox! Middle school girls with disabilities are invited to join mentors from the University of Minnesota's MnDrive program to see how fun programming can be. Join us to explore and learn about programming and wiring using a SparkFun Digital Sandbox. Learn the ins and outs of programming and help mentors build a robotic hand from 3D printed parts following instructions based on code you write! No experience necessary.

- **June 11, 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (PACER)**

Apps for Little Tikes

Apps have become a large part of learning. Attend this presentation to explore apps and their appropriate use for children with disabilities ages birth to 5.

- **July 21, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. (PACER)**
Streaming option also available

Managing Life the Smart Way with Technology for Teens

Does managing your homework, time, and health sometimes feel overwhelming?

There are ways technology can help! Participants will learn how today's technology, such as smartphones, tablets, and computers, can help you more independently manage your school work, time, and wellness. Family strategies for using technology to foster independence will also be discussed. This workshop is designed for students in middle school and older, their parents, and the professionals that work with them.

- **Aug. 18, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**
Streaming option also available

TRANSITION

The Bridge to Work: Supplemental Security Income and Employment Planning

This workshop will provide information

on how parents of youth with disabilities can apply for Supplemental Security Income and Vocational Rehabilitation Service benefits for young adults at age 18. Parents will learn how Social Security, the Ticket to Work program, and Vocational Rehabilitation can help their youth meet his or her goals for postsecondary education, training, employment, and independent living.

- **June 21, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.**
(Burnsville)

Work is Possible: Understanding the Emerging Landscape of Employment

This innovative workshop helps families learn about emerging employment policy changes, such as Employment First and Minnesota's Olmstead Plan. It will also address myths around disability employment, highlight parent experiences,

and offer valuable information on the role of benefits planning.

- **June 28, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. (Sauk Rapids)**

Getting and Keeping the First Job

Competitive employment is the cornerstone of a successful transition to adult living for youth with disabilities. This workshop will provide youth and parents with answers to important questions about preparing for and keeping a job.

- **Aug. 24, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**

*PACER Center workshops
are free to Minnesota parents.
For information and to register,
call (952) 838-9000 or
visit PACER.org/workshops.*

Otto Bremer Trust, continued from page 1

responded to more than 44,000 requests for information and assistance from families and others. PACER's National Bullying Prevention websites received more than 1 million visits. The Otto Bremer Center on Innovation for Children and Families at PACER will utilize technology and other methods to expand PACER's capacity to meet families' growing needs for information and support. With more people using mobile devices to access the internet, PACER will reach families and youth by presenting virtual trainings, expanding its web-based resources, developing an app, and providing other innovative services. PACER will also develop new workshops and informational resources for families, providing valuable assistance on topics such as mental health, bullying prevention, student achievement, and assistive technology.

"We are so thrilled with this fantastic opportunity from the Otto Bremer Trust," said PACER Executive Director Paula Goldberg. "Through this new Center, we will be able to implement innovative activities that give parents hope and support so their children can reach their highest potential. It is exciting to know that because of the Otto Bremer Trust's confidence in PACER, we will be able to make a difference in the lives of even more families."

PACESETTER

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8161 Normandale Blvd. | Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044

Voice: 952-838-9000

Toll-free: 800-537-2237

FAX: 952-838-0199

E-mail: PACER@PACER.org

PACER Executive Director: *Paula F. Goldberg*

Writer-Editors: *Pat Bill, Michele St. Martin*

Designer: *Jenna Hanson*

PACER Center enhances the quality of life and expands opportunities for children, youth, and young adults with all disabilities and their families so each person can reach his or her highest potential. PACER operates on the principles of parents helping parents, supporting families, promoting a safe environment for all children, and working in collaboration with others. An Equal Opportunity Employer, PACER is funded by grants from the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services and other sources, and from foundations, corporations and individuals. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Departments or other donors. Contributions to PACER are tax-deductible. For information, call Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

PACER website: PACER.org

FAPE site: fape.org

MN SEAC site: mnseacinfo.org

BULLYING: PACER.org/Bullying

PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org

PACERTeensAgainstBullying.org

(Alternate format is available upon request.)

Resources

Special Education Record Keeping Folders

Special education records contain important information for making educational decisions. This set of 6 folders helps parents organize school paperwork to help them make good decisions about their children's education. Also available in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali. 2014.

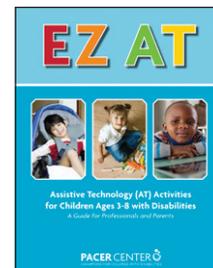
\$10 | 11+ copies, \$8 each | PHP-a5



Updated! EZ AT

A guide for parents and professionals working with children ages 3-8 with disabilities. It provides assistive technology activities to encourage inclusion among all students. *EZ AT* offers information on a wide range of devices and products that promote best practices for home and classroom learning. 2015.

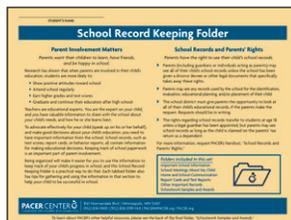
◆ \$5 | 10+ copies, \$4 each | STC-16



School Record Keeping Folders (General Education)

This School Record Keeping Folder is a practical way for all parents to stay organized to keep track of their student's progress in school. Each of the six tabbed folders also have tips for gathering and using the information to help your child to be successful in school. Also available in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali. 2014.

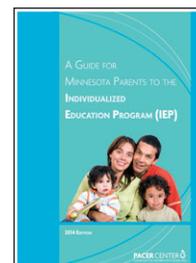
\$10 | 11+ copies, \$8 each | MPC-6



A Guide for Minnesota Parents to the Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Updated for 2014. Helps parents work with schools to address each child's special needs through understanding the required components of the IEP. Includes examples from the Minnesota state-recommended form.

◆ \$3 | 10+ copies, \$2 each | PHP-a12



To order the listed materials...

1. Specify how many you want of each item and the cost.
2. Total your order, adding appropriate sales tax.
3. Enclose payment with your order.
4. Mail to: PACER Center | 8161 Normandale Blvd. Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044

You may also place orders on PACER's website at PACER.org/publications. Prices include postage and handling. A discount may be available if 10 or more of the same item number are ordered.

◆ Indicates one item is free to Minnesota parents or guardians of children with disabilities and to Minnesota young adults (age 14 and older) with disabilities. For foreign orders, please telephone or e-mail PACER (see page 10). Payment must be in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank.

Order number	Name of publication ordered	Quantity	Per item cost	Total item cost

Total cost of all items ordered _____

(Minneapolis residents, 7.75%; Hennepin County residents, 7.275%; Anoka, Ramsey, Dakota, Washington counties, 7.125%; most other Minnesota residents, 6.875%)
Sales tax varies with specific location.

Please complete the following with your order:

I am a: Parent Professional Other _____

Name: _____ Organization (if applicable): _____

Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ (h) _____ (w) _____ (c)

E-mail: _____

If a parent:

Birth date of child with disability: _____ Disability: _____

◆ This symbol indicates one item is free to Minnesota parents or guardians of children with disabilities

PACER recognizes Sam Graves with Otto Bremer Youth Leadership Award

Sam Graves received PACER Center's first annual Otto Bremer Youth Leadership Award at PACER's 34th Annual Benefit. WCCO-TV anchor Frank Vascellero presented Graves with the award. Vascellero said Graves was an "Honor student, creative thinker, talented writer, and influential self-advocate."

Earlier in the day, Graves graduated from Augsburg College, earning a B.A. with Honors in Psychology. He is a technology enthusiast who says, "PACER programs showed me assistive technology that helped me study, take notes, and be completely independent in school." A talented writer, Graves is a Minnesota Twins fan who also credits assistive technology with helping him launch his baseball blog, "Two Men On."

"Sam Graves is a remarkable young man," said Paula Goldberg, PACER's executive director. "He is a real success story, and is an inspiration to others." Goldberg noted that Graves and his family have been part of PACER Center since they came to PACER's Simon Technology Center when Sam was 3 years old, and added, "It has been a joy

to watch Sam grow into the capable, self-confident young leader he is today. We are honored to present him with this important award!"



Sam Graves (center) receives the Otto Bremer Youth Leadership Award from Amelia Santaniello and Frank Vascellero on April 30, 2016 at PACER's Annual Benefit.

PACER Symposium, continued from page 16

Garrett-Akinsanya is executive director of the African American Child Wellness Institute and president of Brakins Consulting and Psychological Services. A speaker, writer, and consultant on mental health issues among ethnically diverse populations, she is known for her strength-based approach.

Past symposiums have received outstanding evaluations. Last year's comments included:

- "Thank you! Overall, this is one of the best put-together workshops I have attended as an elementary teacher of 17 years. The inspiration and professional quality is greatly appreciated!"



Adam Levy



L. Read Sulik



BraVada Garrett-Akinsanya

- "Very well done, useful, and helpful information for both home and teaching."

Six hours of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are available for educators.

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Change Service Requested

Child mental health, learning disabilities symposium is Aug. 9

Registration for the 11th Annual PACER National Symposium About Children & Young Adults with Mental Health and Learning Disabilities is currently open. The event features nationally recognized speakers and workshop presenters. It is geared to parents, teachers, and other school professionals.

The \$30 per person symposium is Tuesday, Aug. 9, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Lunch is included. Past symposiums have filled quickly. To register, visit PACER.org/symposium or call (952) 838-9000.

This year's keynote speakers are Adam Levy, L. Read Sulik, M.D., and BraVada Garrett-Akinsanya, Ph.D.

Levy is a singer-songwriter, social activist, educator, and parent. He has worked in several fields, including with at-risk youth. He is also leader of The Honeydogs rock band. The suicide of his son impelled Levy to become active in public conversations on mental illness. He is a recognized speaker at conferences.

Dr. Sulik is a child and adolescent psychiatrist and a pediatrician. As chief integration officer at PrairieCare and executive director of PrairieCare Institute for Care Delivery Innovation, Education, Training and Research, he leads initiatives in bringing behavioral health services into primary care settings. A popular speaker on children's and youth's depression, anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and learning disabilities, Dr. Sulik has been featured at filled-to-capacity PACER events.

Continued on page 15

PACER Symposium | Aug. 9, 2016

**Minneapolis Convention Center
\$30 per person including lunch**

Register online now
at PACER.org/symposium or call (952) 838-9000
CEUs are available