



## Pacific Autism Center for Education: Agency Overview

### MISSION

To enhance the lives of people impacted by autism, through innovation, exceptional education and compassionate care.

### VISION

A world in which people of all abilities live fulfilled lives. Our goal is to deliver a lifetime continuum of services for children and adults requiring on-going care and treatment for autism.

### VALUES

- Providing the highest quality of life for our clients
- A qualified, motivated and happy staff
- A culture of continuous improvement
- A commitment to serve all who can benefit from PACE

### BACKGROUND

PACE was founded in 1989 by a group of concerned parents and educators as a private, nonprofit 501 (C)(3) organization to meet the critical need of providing education and care for children and adults with autism and related developmental disabilities. Prior to this time, many of our students had been placed in inappropriate classroom settings and many of our residential clients were housed in unsuitable state hospitals and developmental centers.



The state system was clearly challenged to provide more than maintenance of the ongoing needs of persons with developmental disabilities. Without the support of an encouraging, attentive environment, the ability to develop the skills necessary for those with disabilities to achieve integration into the community was doubtful.

PACE was born after years of futile attempts to work within the traditional system to meet the specialized needs of persons with autism. Starting with 14 students in 1989 and one group home in 1992, PACE currently serves up to 60 students in our K-12 school, houses up to 36 children and adults in our residential program, and provides children's services for close to 80 families.

In January 2008 PACE relocated to its own privately owned facility designed around the special needs of the autism population. Creating the building from the ground up allowed PACE to include special design elements such as natural lighting, precision climate control, hypoallergenic materials and flexible therapy spaces – an energy efficient and natural environment that is consistent with the initiatives for green environments and supports the sensory needs of PACE clients.

In the summer of 2011 PACE merged with FACES (Foundation for Autistic Childhood Education and Support), an intensive behavioral early intervention program in Redwood City. FACES was welcomed under the PACE program umbrella in PACE Children's Services. Our Children's Services now includes FACES and PACE Connections.



## PACE: Programs Overview

PACE provides for the educational and residential needs of individuals with autism and other developmental disorders. Specialists in speech and language development, occupational therapy, behavior management and special education instruction work as a team to serve the diverse needs of our clients. Research has shown that people with developmental disabilities who are enrolled in effective programs at an early age are better equipped to achieve academic, social and workplace success, allowing them to reach their full potential and to lead rewarding lives. PACE programs include:

### THE PACE SCHOOL

PACE School is a non-profit, non-public school, certified by the California Department of Education and accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. PACE school serves students ages 6-22 who live with moderate to severe autism, with specific emphasis on non-verbal students and those with especially challenging behaviors and communication disorders. After 11 years of leasing space, in January 2008 PACE school relocated to its own privately purchased facility in Santa Clara.



### CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PACE children's services provides critical comprehensive options in early intervention for young children diagnosed with autism. These options include: **Faces**, an intensive behavioral early intervention and school age program based in Redwood City; and **PACE Connections**, an affect-based early intervention program located in West San Jose that offers therapy services. Our **Sunny Days Preschool** provides social skills groups, occupational and speech therapy. Providing parent training is an integral part of both children's programs and services are available for families though the Peninsula.



### RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

PACE owns and operates two children's and four adult group homes in Santa Clara County, each licensed to serve residents from 6 to 59+ years of age. Each group home houses six individuals and is managed by an Administrator who is assisted by a team of trained residential staff members, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Each home provides an enriched and family-like environment for our residents.





## The PACE Model: A Closer Look

More than four decades ago, then President Gerald Ford, together with the United States Congress, signed into law The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Known as Public Law (PL) 94-142, the purpose of this legislation was to assure access for all handicapped children to free and appropriate public education.

Building upon the earlier law, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was signed in 1997 and was followed by legislation in 2004 that strengthened the earlier Acts. Public schools across the country responded to this law by opening their doors to many children whom they had not previously served.

With enhanced training, school personnel strengthened their special education programs and implemented programs for students with more severe disabilities. Much progress was made. However, public schools could not always provide the level of intensive intervention and instruction that some students required.

In response to this reality, the Pacific Autism Center for Education (PACE) was founded in 1989 by a group of concerned parents, educators and community leaders. PACE School targets a population of students that suffer from moderate to severe Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) with a specific emphasis on service to non-verbal individuals. The school is particularly well equipped to accept the least-abled and most challenging students who might otherwise not be well-served.

However, because of its versatile program, PACE can support individuals of all functional levels who are affected by ASD. The PACE Model, employs a multi-disciplinary team including a special education and behavior specialist, a teacher, instructional aide, occupational therapist, and specialists in speech and language.

Together, the team, which also includes the child's parents, help to assess each student's needs and create a program combining therapeutic and educational strategies to optimize progress.

At PACE school, we believe that autism is a disorder of inter-relatedness, not a cognitive disability. Individuals with ASD are characterized by impairments in social interaction and social-relatedness, and have difficulty interacting with people and the world around them. Furthermore, these students often struggle with conventional language and communication and have trouble regulating sensory input. For students with ASD, the inability to manage the overwhelming stimuli with which they are constantly bombarded, and the frustrations they experience around unsuccessful communication, affect every aspect of their learning.

We believe that socio-emotional factors must be addressed at the same time that we recognize and respect our students' desire and ability to learn age appropriate material. Therefore, at the heart of the PACE Model is our vision for every student to develop the ability: to relate, to communicate and to self-regulate. Starting from these building blocks, PACE's multidisciplinary, multi-methodology educational program then strives to help our students develop age-appropriate occupational, language, academic, and vocational skills to last a lifetime.

This affect-based philosophy distinguishes the PACE program from others that serve the ASD population. Further reflecting the unique aspects of PACE school is our ability to provide an aide who travels with a particular student throughout each day as needed.

We believe providing students with aides who can read the student's sensory needs and communication efforts ultimately diminishes frustration and promotes growth towards self-regulation and effective communication. Aides and teaching staff alike follow the mantra "Join/Build/Teach."

The prevailing spirit of PACE reflects the belief that each individual has intrinsic value despite his disabilities. To this end, PACE school is committed to enabling all individuals with autism to reach their full potential.



## PACE: Executive Staff

The PACE executive staff oversees the implementation of programming and operational objectives to ensure PACE remains responsive to rapid changes in the needs of people with autism and their families. A full listing of Executive Staff can be found on our website.

### **KURT OHLFS, Executive Director**

Kurt has served as the PACE Executive Director since 2005. With his strengths in technology operations and business management, Kurt has been instrumental in implementing improvements at PACE in organizational management and technology innovation. He is a frequently requested presenter on autism statistics and trends and has been interviewed for radio, television and print media.

### **KAREN KENNAN, Assistant Executive Director / Director of Children's Services**

Having spent more than twenty-five years working in the non-profit sector, Karen is experienced in child development, fundraising, program development, strategic planning and outreach. She has a B.S. in Human Development and Family Studies from Cornell University and a MBA from the University of California, Haas School of Business.

### **NANCY BROWN, Director of Finance**

Nancy Brown has worked for over 30 years in the administration sector, with 21 of those years spent at PACE. Her professional experience includes billings at Westinghouse, financials at Williams Cutlery, and special projects at the Cupertino School District before coming to PACE in 1993.

### **BARBARA JOHNSON, Director of Human Resources**

Barbara has over thirty years of experience in Human Resources. She received her MBA from Colorado Technical University Online, and her B.A. in Personnel/Organizational Psychology from Purdue University. She holds her Sr Professional in Human Resources and California certifications (SPHR-CA). She also has her Global Professional in Human Resources certification (GPHR).

### **JANICE MORREIRA, Operations Manager**

Janice oversees the operation of our Residential Program. Joining PACE in 2012, Janice brings over 20 years of Human Resources and Business operations background to our organization. As an entrepreneur owning businesses of her own she brings a great knowledge base of strategic organizational planning needed to run a successful company.

### **RACHEL PALMER, Annual Fund Manager**

Rachel began working for non-profit organizations in fundraising and event planning in 2008, while earning her B.A. in Communication from Western Washington University. Rachel's background includes logistical planning, fundraising events, development, and customer service. She also has experience in sales and marketing.

### **DEBORAH MCCLELLAN, MarComm Manager**

Deborah brings over fifteen years of experience in communications, marketing and management in both non-profit and for-profit environments. With a B.A. in Communications from the University of Central Florida, Deb has worked in publishing and development. Her skills include grant writing, project management, technology management, and PR/Com.

### **MICHELLE PEDONE, Executive Administrator**

Michelle brings over a decade of Executive Assistant experience to the management team at PACE. Her broad skill set serves the fast-paced environment at PACE perfectly, and since her start in 2013, Michelle has proven to be a proficient problem solver and team player.



## **PACE: Governance and Support**

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The Board of Directors is responsible for all fiduciary decisions, strategic direction, policy, and leadership.

Matt Moran, President  
*FJM Investments*

*Joe Dermer*  
*Attorney, Dermer Law Firm*

Tom McGovern, Vice President  
*Partner, Cassidy Turley*

Jeff Fallick  
*President, Fallick Insurance Services, Inc.*

Dave Piazza, Vice President  
*HR Consultant*

Lisa Grisalin  
*Owner, Keller Williams Realty-Silicon Valley*

Paul Lacy, Treasurer  
*Sr. Finance Manager, Symantec*

Harry Lopez, Esq.  
*Partner in Real Estate Law, Berliner Cohen Law*

Kurt Ohlfs, Secretary  
*Executive Director, PACE*

David Setti  
*Owner & Founder, TurnKey Mortgage Solutions*

### **SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS**

PACE is supported by the San Andreas Regional Center (SARC) and the California Department of Education. Additional grants and donations from local government agencies, community-based organizations, businesses and individuals make it possible for PACE to provide exceptional care for clients in our school, early intervention program, and residential homes. Fully 10% of PACE's budget is garnered through our fundraising efforts.

For a complete listing of the financial support PACE has received from corporations, businesses and foundations, please visit our website. If you'd like to join these organizations in support of PACE, please contact Annual Fund Manager, Rachel Palmer at 408.625.6191, or [development@pacificautism.org](mailto:development@pacificautism.org).

