



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Santa Clara, CA, May 11, 2017 – Joe Dermer of Dermer Law Firm and member of the PACE Advisory Board speaks about the history and success of PACE’s annual golf tournament fundraising event, now in its ninth year.

Sarah Berning: What is your relationship with PACE?

Joe Dermer: Well I have a brother with autism who is around the age of 52. He has severe autism and he needs round-the-clock supervision and lives in a PACE home. Twenty-five years ago, my parents and other parents of children with autism started the Spark Foundation. When my parents got into their 60s and 70s, around 15 years ago, there were three homes which housed 17 developmentally disabled residents. When they didn’t want to run the homes on their own anymore, they searched for a larger organization to merge with and found PACE. After the retirement of my mom around ten years ago, I joined the board and served on that for nine years, a couple of which as president, before joining the advisory board.



Q. Why is the golf tournament significant for PACE?

A. My family has always been involved in fundraising activities to fund the residential program, which is very important. The homes are sometimes at risk of decreased funding from government programs, for example, from lower tax revenue during an economic downturn. Unfortunately, in times like that, programs for the developmentally disabled are on the chopping block. Luckily, there haven’t been any cuts in government spending for the past six years, since economic recovery and there doesn’t seem to be any risk at the moment. But with six homes, there are high costs to run them and the golf tournament is an excellent way to fill the gap and keep the homes fully functional and up-to-date.

Q. What is most appealing about the golf format as a fundraiser?

A. I started the golf tournament and it’s now in its ninth year. We used to do a golf tournament at Spark and PACE was doing a dinner gala, more in the fall/winter timeframe. So I volunteered to organize a golf tournament for the spring because it was something I was familiar with. And it’s fun!

Q. Has it turned out the way you had expected?

A. Well it’s always more work than you expect. But because it’s in its ninth year, it gets easier. For example, a lot of people only register for the tournament a week or two before the event and in the beginning, that’s something you worry about. But after time, you get used to that. Basically, you’re competing all the time for funding, so there is a lot of work involved in finding sponsors; and they’re paying to attend the tournament, so you want to make sure that they have fun. People want to come out and have a good time while supporting a good cause but you still need to use all the contacts at your disposal to get the amount of support you need, so there is quite a bit of work involved.



Q. So the golf tournament has been a successful event?

A. Yes, I think it has been. There's room to grow but this year, we'll be up from last year. Our sponsorship activity continues to grow. A few of our new notable sponsors include a local Ameriprise branch – they are supporting the dinner this year. There are some local companies, such as Aquatic AV, which makes equipment for the iPhone so that they can run in wet environments; our law firm supports the events with giveaways, such as hotdogs and cigars for all of our guests who like cigars. And Merrill Lynch is also doing a sponsorship this year. So it's a good solid list of sponsors that continues to grow.

Q. Are you planning anything big for next year's 10th anniversary?

A. Well we're not quite there yet. Planning an event like this is kind of like painting the Golden Gate Bridge – as soon as you get done, you find you're starting back at the beginning again. So we hope to have a successful event this year so we can jump into planning next year's event!

Interview was conducted by Sarah Berning on May 10, 2017

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About PACE: Founded in 1989, Pacific Autism Center for Education provides high-quality programs for individuals with autism and its related developmental disabilities. PACE operates a non-public school for ages 6-22, offers Early Intervention and behavioral therapy services including Sunny Days Preschool and operates two children and four adult group homes in Santa Clara County. EIN: 77-0259858. www.pacificautism.org facebook.com/pacificautismce

About Autism: Autism is a neuro-developmental disability that impacts an individual's ability to regulate sensory input, to communicate, to interact socially, and to learn in conventional ways. Autism is considered a spectrum disorder and so affects each individual differently and at varying degrees. <http://pacificautism.org/about-pace/about-autism/>

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