



PACE Setter

PACIFIC AUTISM CENTER for EDUCATION
Connect • Support • Educate

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KURT OHLFS



Pacific Autism
CENTER FOR EDUCATION

On December 8, 2024, PACE will celebrate 35 years of service. This anniversary is not just a milestone in our history; it is a testament to the collective effort, dedication, and unwavering commitment of everyone who has been part of the PACE community. From our beginnings to the comprehensive services we provide today, our story is one of resilience and profound impact.

PACE was founded in 1989 by a group of parents who were determined to create a place where their children with autism could receive the specialized education and support they needed. At a time when understanding and resources for autism were limited, they envisioned a program that

would accommodate the unique needs of each child, fostering their potential in a supportive and nurturing environment.

With a small team of dedicated educators and specialists, PACE opened its doors to a handful of students and residential clients. With each passing year, we saw the profound impact that individualized attention, specialized teaching, and compassionate care could have on our students and clients' lives. This was the foundation upon which PACE was built, and it remains central to our mission today.

As the prevalence of autism grew, so did the demand for services. PACE responded by expanding our programs and services to meet the diverse needs of the autism community. Our initial focus on education and residential services grew to include early childhood and early intervention services, offering a nurturing environment for children to grow and thrive. In addition, we recognized the need for ABA therapeutic services to support the

developmental and emotional well-being of children with autism.

In the last couple of years, we positioned ourselves to become one of the leading autism agencies in the Bay Area and the only autism agency to provide two dedicated school campuses to serve the needs of elementary and high-school/postsecondary students. The expansion of our school program allowed us to open our first dedicated Kindergarten classroom. In August 2024, Sunny Days Preschool opened its second classroom to serve younger children ages 2.5 up to 4 years old. Our goal is to continue to enhance, expand, and provide programs and services that cater to the evolving needs of our community.

As we celebrate our 35th anniversary, we remain steadfast and dedicated to our mission of providing exceptional care, education, and support to those we serve. The need for specialized, compassionate care remains as vital as ever. In 2025, we look

forward to expanding opportunities, forging new partnerships, and embracing innovative approaches to autism services.

None of our achievements over the past 35 years would have been possible without the support of our community. To the families who have entrusted our programs, the staff who are passionate and steadfast in their work, and the donors and volunteers who have given so generously of their time and resources – thank you. Your belief in our mission and your unwavering support have been the driving forces behind our success.

Together, we have built a legacy of care, compassion, and community that will continue to thrive for many years to come. We invite you to celebrate our 35th birthday by attending our celebration in 2025. To learn more, visit us at www.pacificautism.org/events.

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Pacific Autism
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PACE is turning 35!
Join us to celebrate

Scan the QR Code below for more details

www.pacificautism.org

PACE AWARDED SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS WISH BOOK GRANT



We are excited to share that PACE is a recipient of the 2024 San Jose Mercury News Wish Book grant. The funds from the grant will support the vocational program for students at the PACE San Aleso campus. The vocational program, spearheaded by PACE School Resource Coordinator, Jocelyn Malkenhorst and guided by our team of Occupational Therapists and Special Education teachers, provides a comprehensive, multi-level approach to helping students learn and develop essential life skills and job skills. The vocational room in the PACE San Aleso facility provides a safe and nurturing space to re-enact and practice functional skills, such as making a bed, setting a table, and preparing a meal. The room also includes a laundry room to practice washing clothes and folding laundry.

High schools students begin their vocational program by developing functional living skills. When they graduate to post-secondary, they focus on job skills, such as preparing to-go boxes.

Post-secondary students visit local businesses to help with various tasks and apply their skills in real-world settings.

The Wish Book grant will play a vital role in continuing to provide life-changing opportunities for individuals with autism in the Bay Area, helping them achieve greater independence and fulfillment. PACE extends its heartfelt gratitude to the San Jose Mercury News Wish Book program for supporting our work and our mission.

Our story will be featured on the official Wish Book website and may be featured in an upcoming edition of the San Jose Mercury News paper. To learn more, visit <https://wishbook.mercurynews.com>.



PACE YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM KICKS OFF NEW SEASON

Sydney Zitzer,
Marketing and Community Engagement Coordinator



The executive team also includes Thu Bui, Vice President and Chair of the marketing committee, secretaries Nandanashri Baskaran and Aryana Bharali, and treasurer Avi Taneja. This talented group will play a critical role in planning, coordinating, and ensuring the success of various fundraising efforts while supporting both the marketing and fundraising committees.

The YLC is excited to take on several activities this season, including the San Andres Regional Center craft fair on November 16th from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The event will take place at 6203 San Ignacio Ave, Suite 200, San Jose, CA 95119. Members of the YLC will sell homemade crafts and baked goods to fundraise for PACE. This is a wonderful opportunity to support the YLC's initiatives and contribute to PACE's broader mission!

We are incredibly grateful for the energy, creativity, and dedication our members bring to PACE. We look forward to another successful year of collaboration and positive impact!



The 2024-2025 Youth Leadership Committee (YLC) officially kicked off their season in September. This season, PACE welcomed a record-high 33 members representing 20 high schools from around the Bay Area. 11 members are returning from the 2023-2024 cohort and are excited to share their experiences with the new members.

Audrey Zhu will lead the YLC as President and Chair of the fundraising committee. This will be her third year as part of the YLC. Audrey has volunteered extensively with individuals with autism. She has helped develop innovative tools, including a facial recognition device to help with emotional recognition and pulse monitoring, and noise-canceling headphones that calm sensory overwhelm. Her passion and expertise in neurodiversity will be invaluable as she leads the YLC in planning impactful events and initiatives.

PACE BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: DEBBIE MCCARROLL



Debbie McCarroll has been a valuable member of the PACE Board since 2016. She has served on several committees and plays a crucial role in the annual PACE Golf Classic. Three years ago, she took on the role of treasurer, which she describes as having been a very rewarding experience.

Can you tell us about yourself and your involvement in community engagement?

"Throughout my adult life, I have been a big believer in community engagement. One of my mottos is to give back to the community where I work and live. These efforts make a big difference in my life and personal enrichment. Over the years, I've sat on several boards supporting various community interests, ranging from the Arts to Education. Some of the boards I have been involved with include Opera San Jose, Morgan Center, Second Harvest Food Bank, Hope Services, Santa Cruz Arts Council, and, of course, PACE. Alongside my

work at Scharf Investments LLC, I'm also deeply involved in the sport of purebred boxer dogs, and I have a passion for hot yoga and music of any type."

What makes PACE special to you?

"PACE is special to me in many ways. I embrace its mission to enhance the lives of those on the autism spectrum, both professionally and personally. My great-nephew is autistic. He is now nine, but I knew he was special from the moment I met him. PACE also showcases incredible teamwork. Under the leadership of Kurt Ohlfs and his team, there's a real sense of collaboration inside and outside the classroom. PACE is one of the most well-run nonprofit organizations I have been involved with, and they constantly push the envelope to make it even better. A great example is the recent acquisition of a second school site, San Aleso, in Sunnyvale."

What is a PACE event you always look forward to?

"One of the most notable reasons I am involved with PACE is attending its graduation every June. Watching the students and their families interact and beam with pride is incredibly moving. I have learned from attending past graduations that it is best for me to bring my own Kleenex box!"

SUNNY DAYS PRESCHOOL NEWS

Karen Kennan,
Assistant Executive Director



rewarding! Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my family, boyfriend, and friends, cooking, and exploring grocery stores like Hmart and Trader Joe's."

Our older preschoolers, aged 48 to 72 months, will continue learning with our experienced teacher, Jessica Solchenberger. Her expanded classroom hours are now from 9 AM to 2:15 PM, allowing for greater focus on pre-K learning opportunities and activities.

Enrollment is currently open in both classrooms, and families can combine enrollment with ABA therapy during or after school. For inquiries or to join the waitlist, please call 408-625-6198 or scan the QR code below.



Now Enrolling!



We are excited to announce the addition of a second classroom to our Sunny Days campus. Under the guidance of Morgan Luu, our new preschool special education teacher, this classroom caters to our youngest students, aged 30 to 47 months. The classroom operates from 9 AM to 12 PM.

Morgan holds a Master's in Education with a specialization in Special Education and an Early Childhood credential from San Jose State University. Before joining PACE, she was a preschool teacher and the infant and toddler coordinator at Early Horizons Preschool in Sunnyvale. Morgan has also worked as a Behavior Technician for the Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD), providing comprehensive intervention services for clients with autism and related conditions. She shares, "I love working with children of all ages, but early childhood has my heart. Nurturing a positive environment for my students and watching them thrive is incredibly

ICATALYST FOUNDATION DONATES \$1K IN SUPPLIES TO PACE CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS



Local Bay Area high school student, Ishaan Mandala, wants to make the world a better place. Ishaan founded the iCatalyst Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to social advocacy through education, outreach, and rural development. The foundation's programs focus on health and education initiatives, including autism and neurodiversity, that impact communities locally and internationally.

When Ishaan discovered PACE, he was eager to find a way to support our mission. In September, he organized a 5k run at Hellyer County Park in San Jose and dedicated the event to PACE. The proceeds from the event, combined with donations from his friends and family, raised \$1,000. He used the funds to purchase sensory toys and supplies for two of PACE's early childhood programs: Sunny Days Preschool and Faces ABA Behavioral Services.

In recognition of his remarkable efforts, the office of California State Senator Dave Cortese presented Ishaan with a special proclamation,

honoring his commitment to the community and his contributions to PACE. Ishaan's efforts demonstrate that young leaders can inspire meaningful change, bringing new ideas, energy, and compassion to pressing social issues. We are deeply grateful to Ishaan and the iCatalyst Foundation for their generosity and look forward to witnessing his continued success as a youth nonprofit leader.

Faces ABA Behavioral Services is accepting new clients! Faces ABA, a department of PACE, supports autistic children between ages 18 months to 13 years reach their full potential. We are now accepting new clients for morning and mid-afternoon sessions between 9:00AM - 2:45PM at our clinic located in the Sunny Day Preschool campus at 897 Broadleaf Lane, San Jose, CA. **Scan the QR below to start the intake process!**



HONOR OUR 35TH BIRTHDAY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

As we approach the end of the calendar year, we celebrate the season of giving and of gratitude. We are immensely grateful for the generosity from our community of donors, staff, families, and volunteers who help sustain PACE's mission. **This year, our holiday fundraising goal is \$70,000 for the PACE Annual Fund.** Learn how you can support our fundraising goal this holiday season:

JOIN US ON #GIVINGTUESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2024

#GivingTuesday, known as the global day of philanthropy, takes place on December 3...and PACE turns 35 on December 8! To celebrate our milestone birthday, **will you consider a gift of \$35.00, \$350.00, or \$3,500.00 to the PACE Annual Fund on GivingTuesday?**

Your gift, no matter the amount, makes the **difference between state-funded autism services and the excellent learning opportunities** we provide for every student, client, and resident in our programs. Below are ways you can support PACE:

- Make a secure online donation at pacificautism.org/donate
- Mail a check using our enclosed remittance envelope
- You can support PACE by recommending a grant through your Donor Advised Fund (DAF). Contact your financial advisor or institution about a donation to PACE.

Don't forget...

To ask your employer about matching gifts! Last year, PACE received over \$20,000 in matching gifts during the holiday season. Many companies in the Bay Area use employee giving platforms such as Benevity and may DOUBLE your donation by 100%! Ask your employer about matching gifts, and make sure PACE is included in your employee giving portal! PACE's tax EIN is 77-0259858.

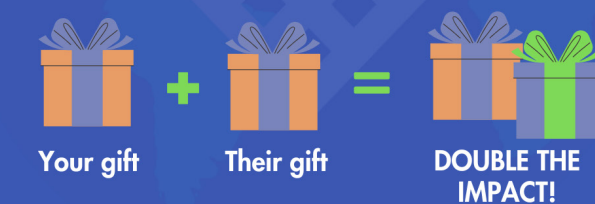
Questions? Contact our Development team at development@pacificautism.org.



PACE is celebrating 35 years of serving individuals with autism in the Bay Area. Make a gift in honor of our milestone birthday!

www.pacificautism.org/donate

Ask your employer about matching gifts to double your donation!



CELEBRATING SUCCESSFUL EVENTS

PACE concluded two of its most significant fundraising events of the year: the Bay Area Real Estate Roundtable and the 16th Annual PACE Golf Classic. These events not only brought the community together but also raised important funds to support PACE's services.

The annual Bay Area Real Estate Roundtable (known as BARER) was held on May 28, 2024, at the Ritz Carlton in Half Moon Bay. The two-day event brought over 200 attendees from the Bay Area and across the United States for an inspiring panel discussion featuring industry leaders in the real estate sector, and a dinner and live auction featuring celebrity auctioneer and former KTVU sports broadcaster, Mark Ibanez. The following day, guests enjoyed a round of golf at the Half Moon Bay Golf Links.

This year's event raised over \$600,000 to support PACE's programs.



On September 27, 2024, PACE hosted its 16th Annual Golf Classic at Cinnabar Hills Golf Club. Despite a heatwave, 112 golfers and over 30 volunteers attended to support the event. Our annual Golf Classic includes a shotgun tournament, followed by a banquet dinner and live auction. With the enthusiasm and generosity of participants, the 2024 event raised an impressive \$139,000, which includes one of the most successful live auctions in the event's history. The Annual PACE Golf Classic is proudly led by board member Joe Dermer and his family, whose unwavering support we are deeply grateful for each year. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our attendees, vendors, Cinnabar Hills staff, sponsors, committee members, and volunteers who made this event a tremendous success.



(BARER celebrity auctioneer, Mark Ibanez)

The success of these fundraising events ensures that PACE can continue to provide high-quality education, care, and resources to families throughout the Bay Area. To learn more about our past and upcoming events, visit www.pacificautism.org/events.

PACE SCHOOL WELCOMES NEW BCBA, HAILEY JAMES



Hailey James joined PACE in June 2024 as our newest BCBA. She obtained her undergraduate degree from Ohio State University and her Master's of Education from the University of Cincinnati to become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. Before joining the PACE School team, Hailey served early childhood learners diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Her previous roles as a BCBA, Case Manager, and RBT in clinical ABA settings helped prepare her for the dynamic nature of her role at PACE.

What led you to pursue a career at PACE? "I was initially drawn to PACE as it was vastly different from my clinical ABA background. While clinical ABA certainly has its role in supporting the autism community, I welcomed the "change of pace" that the educational setting offers! Since my background was primarily serving early childhood learners, I didn't know what to expect when touring the Pruneridge facility during my interview. After speaking with Kurt, our fearless and compassionate leader, and

observing the staff and learners in the educational environment, I knew PACE would be a wonderful opportunity to further serve the autism community in my new home."

Describe the roles of a BCBA.

"Perhaps what I value most about my role as a BCBA is that no two days are alike! My core duties include supporting students in their educational environment, training staff with the appropriate tools to promote student learning and manage maladaptive behaviors, and collaborating with the education, speech, occupational therapy, and administrative leadership teams. I am grateful to serve as an advocate, educator, and leader in the PACE community."

What are you looking forward to most at PACE?

"In the short time I have been here, I have observed that PACE staff care deeply about supporting students beyond just their education. Our staff wants to see students excel in their next environments and community! I love that PACE collaborates with community stakeholders to provide opportunities for our students, such as the San Jose Sharks Autism Awareness Night. I look forward to helping create additional accessible occasions and helping foster connections in the San Jose area."

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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.



2024-2025 PACE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sarah Mudgett, President	Joe Dermer
Mark Peper, Vice President	Marina Djordjevic
Debbie McCarroll, Treasurer	Mark Gilfix
Kurt Ohlfs, Secretary	Lisa Grisalin
Nancy Brown	

SUPPORT OUR MISSION

Donate: by mail at 1880 Pruneridge Avenue, Santa Clara, CA 95050, online at www.pacificautism.org/donate, or by phone 408.625.6174.
Double your gift! Make a matching gift contribution at your workplace.

Please contact development@pacificautism.org for giving options.

PACE is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Our TAX EIN# is 77-0259858. Contributions made to PACE are tax deductible as specified by the current tax law.

AUTISM ACCEPTANCE GROUP NIGHT

SHARKS VS OILERS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2025
7:30pm, SAP CENTER

A PORTION OF TICKET SALES SUPPORT PACE!

Purchase tickets at sjsharks.com/autismacceptance

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GREAT GIVERS

At PACE, our “Great Givers” come in various forms—some volunteer their talents and ideas, others contribute their time, and many provide generous financial support to advance our mission. In this edition of the PACE Setter, we are proud to recognize Wesley Bea, a graduated member of the Youth Leadership Committee (YLC), as our Great Giver. Wesley graduated from high school in 2024 and is a freshman at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, majoring in electrical engineering. Outside of his volunteer work and school, Wesley enjoys basketball, swimming, hiking, and exploring different cuisines.

Before joining PACE in 2022, Wesley was involved with Animal Assisted Happiness, one of PACE’s community partners. During a visit there, he connected with a PACE staff member who introduced him to the YLC. With a cousin on the autism spectrum, Wesley has always felt a strong connection to this community.



During his two years at PACE, Wesley took on multiple leadership roles within the YLC, including serving as president and head of fundraising. He notes that his favorite event was the annual PACE school dance, as it provided a unique opportunity for YLC members to connect more hands-on with students in the PACE community.

Wesley highlights the numerous benefits of volunteering, particularly for teenagers and young adults. As he reflects, “Volunteering at PACE and other organizations has helped me understand the kind of person I want to become. It has fostered a deep sense of empathy and compassion for others and their challenges. Volunteering has also brought me a sense of fulfillment as I witness the positive impact of my efforts. Additionally, my network of social connections has greatly expanded through meeting so many people who share my passion for various causes. I know many individuals who have even found their career paths through volunteer experiences.”

Wesley’s dedication and enthusiasm have made a remarkable impact on the PACE community. We are truly grateful for his contributions and look forward to seeing the continued success he will achieve in his future endeavors.

PACE PARTNERS WITH THE ARC FOR “WINGS FOR AUTISM” SAN JOSE



PACE is thrilled to announce its partnership with The Arc, a national non-profit organization, to bring back the popular Wings for Autism program to San Jose in 2025. The event, scheduled for March 1, 2025 at San Jose Airport, will offer a simulated airport experience for individuals with autism and their families, helping them navigate the often-overwhelming airport environment.

Wings for Autism is designed to make air travel more accessible for those on the autism spectrum. Participants will have the opportunity to practice checking in, passing through security, boarding a plane, and even sitting in their seats before “takeoff,” all in a calm, supportive setting. The program also educates airline staff on the unique needs of travelers with disabilities.

This partnership with The Arc, San Jose Airport, and Alaska Airlines is a wonderful opportunity to help individuals with autism and their families feel more confident about air travel. It also provides essential training for airline personnel to

ensure smoother travel experiences for everyone. By simulating the airport experience, the program alleviates anxiety for individuals with autism who might struggle with unfamiliar environments, loud noises, or long waits.

Families who have participated in the past have praised the event for giving them the confidence to travel more freely. With its strong emphasis on inclusion and support, Wings for Autism will once again help bridge the gap between the autism community and the broader world of air travel. PACE is honored to be part of this incredible initiative. Join us in celebrating this exciting return and help us spread the word!

EVENT DETAILS

DATE: SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 2025
LOCATION: SAN JOSE MINETA AIRPORT
COST: FREE FOR FAMILIES

MORE INFORMATION WILL BE AVAILABLE BY JANUARY 2025. PLEASE CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR UPDATES AT WWW.PACIFICAUTISM.ORG/EVENTS