

COVID-19: A Message from the Executive Director

With a year into the coronavirus pandemic, we are starting to see some light at the end of an arduous and uncertain time. I am proud to say that throughout the past year, our staff remained profoundly resilient, industrious, and vigilant when caring for our students, clients, and residents. As an agency, we worked together to overcome the most unpredictable, unimaginable challenges, allowing us to keep our facilities and services open to the individuals we serve and their families.

However, while our communities are opening up and we enter into less-restrictive tiers, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to safety and care. At PACE, we have demonstrated excellence in health and safety protocols, allowing us to bring more students back to campus, ensuring our residents are healthy, and allowing us to take on more clients in our Faces Behavioral Services department.

Over the last few months, we have also offered COVID-19 vaccinations to our staff who care for

our students, residents, and clients directly. Currently, 75% of our staff have received vaccinations. This is another important step toward overcoming this challenging time.



We will continue to provide updates and news about our programs. I also invite you to celebrate Autism Awareness Month with us this April. Learn more about how to participate by visiting www.pacificautism.org. Thank you for your support and kindness to PACE.

Kurt Ohlfs
PACE Executive Director

This Autism Awareness Month, we are proud to launch our new month-long campaign:

Voices for Autism

Inspired by our PACE Youth Leadership Committee's "Voices for Autism" Benefit concert, this campaign highlights the "voices" of our community, celebrates diversity, and promotes acceptance of individuals of all abilities. It is a time for us to **CONNECT**, **SUPPORT**, and **EDUCATE** our community.

**JOIN US THIS APRIL FOR
SPECIAL INTERVIEWS,
EVENTS, AND MORE.**

Learn more at
www.pacificautism.org



Ask a Therapist *by Monica Miyahara, Faces Behavior Therapist*

Monica Miyahara is a Lead Behavior Therapist at Faces Behavioral Services. In this edition of "Ask of Therapist," Monica breaks down Functional Communication Response to help parents and caregivers understand behavior and provide strategies to respond to behavior in various scenarios.

Scenario: You sit on the couch and start to read a book. Your child throws a toy at you. The phone rings and you answer it. Your child starts screaming. You're cooking dinner. Your child pours out all the salt. Each time, you might stop what you're doing and address your child for several minutes about how their action was unexpected and to not do it again.

What do these scenarios have in common? While the behavior looked different in each scenario, they all happened for the same reason (function). . . to get your attention. And it sure worked!



Now that you've figured out the function of those behaviors (reason why they happen), we need to think about a more appropriate way to get your attention. This alternative is called a **functional communication response**. What can you do to replace these behaviors with a functional communication response? Here are some things to think about:

What does an appropriate response look like?

- What would you prefer your child to do? An appropriate replacement behavior should be very simple and fit your child's form of communication.
- Is it a tap on the shoulder? Is it handing you a picture or card that indicates he wants your attention? Maybe it's saying, "Mom/dad, look at me." Or is it through an Augmentative and Alternative Communication device?

How to Teach:

- Teach your child how to gain your attention in this new way throughout the day and in various situations.
- You can model and/or prompt the correct response.
- Remember to *reinforce every time he exhibits the appropriate behavior*.
- Using behavior specific language will let your child know what he did correctly (e.g., "I really like how you tapped my shoulder to get my attention. What is it that you would like? I can always read later.")

Only reinforce the desired behavior:

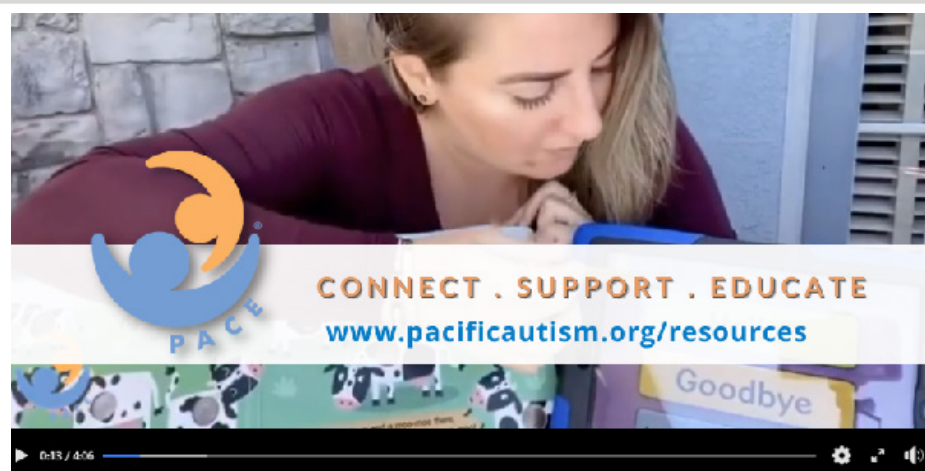
- As much as possible, do not react to the old, inappropriate behaviors so that your child learns they will not result in gaining your attention.
- Give frequent reminders to your child about the correct response, especially before situations where you will withdraw your attention. (e.g., "I'm calling my friend, but remember, if you want something from me, you can always hand me your card.")

Even when your child has mastered the skill, don't forget to intermittently reinforce. This should help to strengthen and maintain the response.



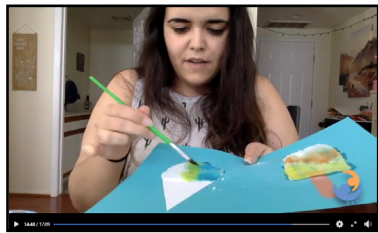
To learn more about Faces Behavioral Services, visit
www.pacificautism.org/programs/behavioral-services

Have a question for our "Ask a Therapist" column?
Submit your questions to:
development@pacificautism.org



We are here to support you!

Our staff of teachers and therapists at the PACE School and Faces Behavioral Services have created a vast library of free teaching materials and activities for you and your family to use to enhance online learning at home. Access educational resources, tools for special needs families, exercise routines, story time, and ideas for arts and crafts.



We also provide important resources and information about COVID-19, including important hotlines, Social Stories, and the best learning Apps for individuals with autism. At PACE, we are working hard to ensure you, your family, and our community have a comprehensive tool kit.

Visit our COVID-19 and Resource pages at www.pacificautism.org

Children's Programs

By Karen Kennan, PACE Assistant Executive Director

For many children with autism, and for many who participate in our Sunny Days Preschool program, neurologically-based differences in how the brain processes social information are combined with difficulties in processing sensory information. The result can be difficulty interacting, communicating and understanding the social world.

Because social interaction does not feel **manageable, predictable** or in the child's **control** a child may cope by withdrawing or utilizing other (less socially acceptable) sensory information that gives them a sense of manageability, predictability and control (i.e. repetitive behaviors). To help a child begin to communicate and interact more with others you can:

- Create an environment that diminishes overwhelming sensory information;
- Be predictable, manageable, help the child feel some social control.
- Give the child more frequent, positive and successful experiences in communicating and interacting.

Ask yourself these questions:

Am I Manageable?

- Do you move around the child too quickly?
- Do you touch the child without warning?
- Do you remove things from their hands without requesting first?
- Is the child comfortable with physical proximity? Are you too close? Too far?

- Are you too loud or too verbal much of the time?

Am I Predictable?

- Do you make it easy for them to anticipate your actions?
- Do you give them enough time before you change something?
- Does the child understand what you are doing, what you're communicating, or what you want them to do? How do you know?
- Are you noticing and matching the child's actions/interests or are you pushing the child to do what you want them to do?
- Are you responding to what the child is telling you?
- Are you taking toys out of the child's hand while you are playing without realizing it?

By creating a positive and safe environment and generating energy and enthusiasm you can set the stage for constructive and fun social interaction.

At Sunny Days Preschool we offer a developmentally appropriate, responsive approach to child growth in a classroom environment that is safe, manageable and predictable.

Our play-based curriculum offers a safe first step into the social environment, supporting each child's emerging communication and learning skills. You can learn more about our preschool program at

www.pacificautism.org/programs/sunny-days-preschool/.

Residential News

By Melissa Watkins, Marketing and Resource Development Manager

Did you know...when PACE was founded in 1989, it started as a school program and operated two residential homes for individuals with autism and other related developmental disabilities? Today, PACE is licensed to serve residents from ages 6-59 years and currently operates two children's homes and four adult homes in the South Bay. The program offers a loving family environment for children and adults with autism.

PACE's six residential group homes remained in full operation throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Each home continues to serve as 24/7 support for six (6) clients. Thank you to the residential care team for their tremendous work ensuring staff and clients are safe and comfortable during these uncertain times.

With vaccinations becoming more readily available and Santa Clara County moving into less-restricted tiers, the PACE Residential program

is looking forward to working with long-time volunteers and supporters at the Cupertino Rotary to complete several landscaping upgrades to some of the group homes.

Due to the pandemic, many volunteer projects had to be put on hold. This spring, Our City Forest will help upgrade landscaping and irrigation for one of the children's homes. The project will help reduce water costs. Thank you to Our City Forest and the Cupertino Rotary for their continued support. Facility upgrades provide comfort, and safety for our residents!



PACE School News

By Melissa Watkins, Marketing and Resource Development Manager

Throughout the Summer of 2020, the PACE School welcomed back 19 students (33% of enrollment) in a half-day program. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the PACE School to adapt a variety of alternative delivery models to ensure that appropriate social distancing and limited individual exposure could take place in a hybrid learning environment (both in-person and distance learning).

As we enter March of 2021, a full year since Shelter in Place first began, the PACE School continues to focus on enhancing and maintaining on-site protocols. Currently, 18 students are back on the PACE School campus, and five (5) on our Sunny Days campus. Our focus on strict safety protocols proved successful for the PACE School, and in future months, teachers and staff look forward to the return of more students on campus.

Our teachers and therapists continue to create free online eLearning resources, and engaging videos and activities to share with our broader community. Some of our PACE families are also making a contribution by sharing their stories. One of our PACE School parents created a YouTube channel to show how he created learning opportunities for his son during

Shelter in Place and the many successes and milestones his son achieved.

The PACE School continues to receive support and donations from families and from the community. The Watters family showed their gratitude for the PACE School staff by donating Chipotle lunch, and also providing a professional barista to make lattes, mochas, and coffee for the staff onsite!



A local high school student, Kaci, also treated the staff with creative and delicious cupcakes and other baked goods that she made herself. Kaci discovered PACE through an online search of local nonprofit organizations. Her goal was to give back to the community during the pandemic. Thank you, Kaci, for your support!



SAVE THE DATE!

2021 PACE GOLF CLASSIC
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2021
GINNABAR HILLS GOLF CLUB

REGISTRATION OPENING SOON!

VISIT WWW.PACICAUTISM.ORG/EVENTS FOR MORE INFORMATION



Porchlight University is a resource to teachers and para-educators who work primarily with neuro-typically developing students to facilitate better learning for students on the autism spectrum and of differing abilities integrated into their classroom.

The eLearning program consists of four 1-hour long modules; each module is broken down into 15-minute lessons. The courses include:

- Introduction to Autism
- Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and the Law
- Creating Effective Classrooms Social Skills and Positive Behavior Culture (coming soon!)

Each course contains interactive activities and visuals to increase learning and real world scenarios to help teachers apply the knowledge, tools, and strategies

quickly in their classroom. A Certificate of Completion is available to download after the completion of each 1-hour long program. The content is suitable for individual and group learning.



PACE continues to fund projects like Porchlight and Porchlight University through grants and private donations as a commitment to share our knowledge with the greater community.

Learn more about Porchlight University or browse our library of 50 FREE modules for parents and caregivers by visiting:

www.porchlighteducation.org

Ways You Can Help

• Make a donation

By Mail: 1880 Pruneridge Ave.
Santa Clara, CA 95050
Online: www.pacificautism.org
By phone: 408-245-3400

• Double your gift- **make a matching gift contribution.** To include PACE in your workplace giving options, please contact development@pacificautism.org.

• Go to www.escrip.com and enter PACE's ID number: **472692** to register your credit and reward cards.

• Choose PACE on **Amazon Smile** (smile.amazon.com)

• Donate your old vehicle to **Donate for Charity!** Call 866-392-4483 or use their website www.donateforcharity.com. Donate for Charity handles all the details and distributes the net proceeds to PACE!

PACE's Youth Leadership Committee

By Yasmin Gomez, Marketing and Development Associate

It takes a special kind of person to dedicate their time and energy to support local community organizations, spread awareness of issues that impact the lives of others, and raise funds for those who need it most. At PACE, we are very fortunate to have 24 local Bay Area high school students in the 2020-2021 Youth Leadership Committee (YLC). This group of individuals has stepped up amid a global pandemic to help us carry out our vision, a world in which people of all abilities live fulfilled lives.

With their passion for philanthropy and their dedication to our mission, they are true role models for us all. This April, in celebration of Autism Awareness Month, the YLC hosts the **first-ever Virtual Voices for Autism Benefit Concert.** Last year's event (held

annually in April at Santana Row) was canceled due to COVID-19. This year, the YLC is ready for showtime and is excited to bring back its most significant and most successful fundraiser.

The virtual event will showcase talents from Bay Area musicians, singers, and bands. It is an opportunity for our community to come together, celebrate differences, promote acceptance, and raise awareness of autism.

The event takes place on **Saturday, April 24, 2021, from 4-5:30 PM. \$10 minimum donation for event entry.** Additional event perks are available (such as a **PACE neck gaiter** and **raffle tickets**) for donations of \$25 or higher! All proceeds benefit PACE programs. **To register, visit: tinyurl.com/pacevoices.** We hope to see you there!

The PACE YLC Presents

VIRTUAL

Voices for Autism Benefit Concert

Saturday, April 24, 2021
4 - 5:30 PM

HELP THE YLC RAISE \$25,000 FOR PACE!

REGISTER TODAY AT <https://tinyurl.com/pacevoices>

\$10 minimum donation for event entry. All proceeds benefit PACE programs.

Event swag!

PACE NECK GAITER

REGISTER AT \$25 OR MORE TO RECEIVE OUR NECK GAITER!

LIMITED QUANTITY. GUARANTEED FOR FIRST 50 REGISTRANTS WHO DONATE \$25 OR MORE.

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Paul Lacy
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Executive Director: *Kurt Ohlfs*

The PACE mission: *To enhance the lives of people impacted by autism, through innovation, exceptional education and compassionate care.*



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Bay Area Real Estate
R O U N D T A B L E

2021 VIRTUAL
Bay Area Real Estate Roundtable
June 1, 2021

Event details coming soon!
Visit www.pacificaautism.org/events

**JOIN OUR
"FRIENDS OF PACE"
RECURRING GIVING PROGRAM!**

MAKE AN IMPACT EACH MONTH!
LEARN MORE AT
WWW.PACIFICAUTISM.ORG/DONATE

Great Givers: Aseem Gauri and family

By *Melissa Watkins, Marketing and Resource Development Manager*

Great Givers come in many varieties. Some make generous financial contributions to support our mission; some volunteer their time; some volunteer their talents. In this issue of the PACE Setter, we are proud to honor a Great Giver who did all of the above: local Bay Area High School student, Aseem Gauri, and his family.

We will always remember 2020 as a year of unprecedented challenges, uncertainty, worry, and fear. We will also remember 2020 as a year when we saw our community come together and empower one another to remain optimistic and resilient. Truthfully, 2020 was a year of heroes. One of our heroes was Aseem.

Back in April of 2020, there was an enormous demand for PPE items, including face masks and hand sanitizer. For weeks, it was hard to purchase these items, especially in bulk, which was

especially problematic for our staff caring for our residents in the PACE group homes. During this time, Aseem learned about PACE from family-friend and PACE Board President, Tom McGovern. Aseem felt compelled to do more and make a difference in his local community in the current time of need.

Aseem's mother, Raashina, gave us insight into Aseem's project and what inspired and motivated him to help PACE.

"We came to hear about the organization from Tom McGovern, chair of the board of PACE. When Aseem heard that the care workers at the Residential facility who worked 24x7 to care for the [residents] in the residential program had only one mask that they had to wash every day, he wanted to do something to help. He learned how to sew masks and made a commitment to bring

at least one more mask for each person. He would sit up past midnight sewing and then start again the next morning to finish the folding and ironing.

When he delivered the first batch of masks, he met Kurt [PACE Executive Director] and heard how PACE has not been able to hold any fundraisers because of the pandemic. [Aseem] wanted to do more to help. His Facebook fundraiser has raised more than \$1500.

Taking on this project has taught him to care and then to make a commitment to do something to make a difference. Thank you so much for that opportunity."

Aseem's Facebook fundraiser raised over \$1,600 for PACE programs. Aseem's father also made a significant contribution to PACE's residential program. Due to the exorbitant demand for hand sanitizer, his distillery business begun making hand sanitizer to distribute to local organizations. The PACE Residential program received a 5-gallon container that was shared between the agency's six group homes. The hand

sanitizer was also personally delivered to PACE. This generous donation helped supply PPE for the Residential Caregiver staff who provide 24/7 care to our residents.

We are inspired by Aseem's altruism and sincere compassion for the work that PACE does to ensure our students, residents, and clients are cared for. Thank you to Aseem and his family for going above and beyond to support PACE staff and programs. While the COVID-19 crisis has disrupted our world, we have seen heroic acts of kindness. We are so grateful for community members like Aseem.

