

PACE Setter

PACIFIC AUTISM CENTER FOR EDUCATION NEWSLETTER



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KURT OHLFS



As we finish out the 2021 calendar year, it's important to recognize the incredible work of our staff of teachers, therapists, instructional aides, and residential care staff. Our staff worked tirelessly through the challenges and uncertainty of the pandemic, prioritizing the needs of our students, clients, and families. This fall, the PACE School reached full capacity with sixty-two students back on campus, making this the highest number of enrolled students in the agency's 30-year history. Despite a competitive job market within the educational sector, PACE continues to excel in school program performance by putting continuous effort into staff training and retention, enabling us to serve more families throughout the Bay Area.

PACE is involved in education, training, and care for individuals and families affected by autism and related developmental disabilities across all ages. For 2022, the agency's focus is to expand our impact and continually improve upon the quality and delivery of direct support services in our community. As we enter the new year, we invite you to support our focus and mission of enhancing the lives of individuals impacted by autism through innovation, exceptional education, and compassionate care. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation toward our Annual Fund this holiday season by visiting www.pacificautism.org/donate.

13TH ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC RESULTS

A tremendous thank you to our sponsors, attendees, donors, and volunteers for supporting PACE programs and services. The 2021 PACE Golf Classic made a triumphant return to Cinnabar Hills Golf Club in September, with a record 132 golfers in attendance. The PACE Golf Classic raised over \$41,000 in Fund A Need donations and over \$88k total, making it the most successful PACE Golf Classic to date.



**\$41,000 FUND-A-NEED
RAISED FOR A NEW ROOF
AND SOLAR PANELS AT
MATRANGA
GROUP HOME**



\$88,000 RAISED FOR PACE

132 GOLFERS PLAYED



CONNECT SUPPORT EDUCATE CONNECT SUPPORT EDUCATE CONNECT SUPPORT EDUCATE CONNECT SUPPORT EDUCATE CONNECT

HOLIDAY PROACTIVE STRATEGIES



Faces
BEHAVIORAL SERVICES
FOR CHILDREN

Caitin Nobriga, BCBA and the FACES Therapist Team

It's Fall! That means there are more opportunities to be out in the community and participate in seasonal activities. Let's review some **proactive strategies** we can use while we get ready for fun seasonal activities.

As a reminder, **proactive strategies** should be used before a challenging situation occurs and/or before a child has the opportunity to engage in a challenging behavior. Proactive strategies can help children adapt to and cope with challenges or unknown situations. This increases the likelihood of success.

There are several types of proactive strategies that help promote positive interactions, clarify expectations, and promote learning. When preparing for fun fall activities, proactive strategies such as **priming**, **visual supports**, and **social stories** can be helpful to prepare the child for these new activities.

Priming helps mitigate sudden changes in children's routine. When

priming, use verbal language to signal upcoming changes. This helps the child prepare for the change. Keep priming phrases simple and direct. An example of priming for a fun fall activity is going to the pumpkin patch! Before getting to the pumpkin patch - Talk to your children about what to expect! Tell them the expected behaviors (i.e. walking feet, safe / gentle hands, using their words).

Visual support and social stories can help create predictability for a challenging situation. A visual support can be a non-verbal reminder to a child of a social expectation. A social story is generally a short and individualized story that outlines the expectations regarding a specific social event or interaction. This might be useful to teach a child what to expect when going to holiday events! In social story, highlight safety expectations (i.e. holding hands, walking feet), waiting behaviors, and functional communication responses (i.e. Thank you, requests, etc.).

Implementing proactive strategies will help your family make new fun fall memories! Contact your BCBA if you have additional questions.

**FREE PRIMING WORKSHEET:
(CUT ALONG THE DASHED LINE
TO KEEP EACH NOTE WITH
YOU FOR HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES
PRIMING ACTIVITIES)**

Tips Preparing for the Holidays

With the holidays around the corner, there may be colorful decorations, unexpected sounds, and flashing lights. These can be overwhelming for children with ASD or sensory sensitivities. Here are some ideas to help make seasonal festivities comfortable and enjoyable for your child from our FACES Behavioral Therapist Team!

(Tip: cut along the dashed line to keep each note with you for the festivities)

Visit stores
beforehand so you
know what to expect



Show them pictures of
past holidays with
friends, family or books



Put up simple
decorations so they have
some familiarity with
them (pumpkins, trains,
wreaths, Santa, etc.)



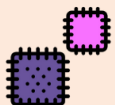
If wearing a formal
outfit, have your
child help to choose
it. How fun!



Keep in mind certain
fabrics and/or tags can
be uncomfortable, as
hats and gloves may
be, as well



Have your child
practice wearing
formal outfits for short
periods of time so they
get used to the feel



Have a pair of
headphones handy
to reduce sensory
overload



Let them know it's
okay if they don't want
to dress up or to go do
festive activities



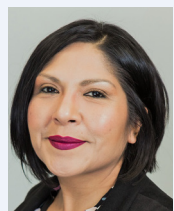
Prepare your children
for what they may see
and hear during the
holiday season



Faces
BEHAVIORAL SERVICES
FOR CHILDREN

Find more interactive and printable resources at www.pacificautism.org

MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBER: VERONICA RODRIGUEZ



We are excited to introduce a new column that highlights the amazing work of our Board members. Our first highlight is Veronica Rodriguez, who joined the Board in August 2021.

Tell us a little bit about yourself! I am lifelong learner and love to explore culture, leadership and growth strategies to share with others while also continuing to develop professionally. Outside of my lifelong learning self, I meditate and try to keep active with my two dogs for self-care which is important to maintain a balanced continuum of work, family and life in general. My husband, daughter and I are also huge Disney fans and enjoy all things Disney, so much so, that most if not all of our vacations are planned with Disney in mind.

How did you become involved with PACE/Board of Directors?

I served on the PACE management team as the HR Director from 2006 to 2013. After leaving PACE, Kurt and I remained in contact throughout the years. Kurt was one of my leadership mentors as I continued developing within the HR profession. In 2018, I graduated from the Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley's Latino Board Leadership Academy program, and I reached out to Kurt for further mentorship, and expressed interest in finding a non-profit Board on which to serve. It happened to be that PACE was

also in search of Board members and the opportunity seemed right for me when it was presented. Although I am fairly new to the role, I am excited to participated more in the upcoming year by serving on committees, participating in events and doing community outreach.

What makes our organization's mission powerful for you?

The mission and vision of PACE reflects my values of inclusivity, belonging and diversity. I think every child deserves the right to a good education in a place that understands their needs and potential. To me PACE is an organization that has been leading the way in the Autism community providing families the resources and education needed to live fulfilled lives. As a parent, I am committed to education, compassion and innovation since those are key to creating a more inclusive world.

What is something you look forward to most being a part of the Board of Directors?

As a new Board Member of PACE I am learning new skills that will stretch my community, fundraising and leadership abilities over the next few years. I want to be an effective member of the Board of Directors and know that my contributions are making a difference for all of the PACE community. To that end, I am aiming to be more involved in PACE events, networking with community members and most importantly continuing to help support families and their children through their education journey.

FACES WELCOMES: BCBA MICHELLE HANG

Karen Kennan,
Assistant Executive Director



We are pleased to welcome Michelle Hang, Board Certified Behavior Analyst, to the PACE community where she will join BCBA's Caitlin Nobriga and Amelia Lalley supervising the Faces ABA team.

Michelle is a native Californian, born and raised in San Francisco. After finishing high school, she ventured north to attend the University of California, Davis where she received her bachelor of arts degree in psychology. Upon graduation she returned to San Francisco where she took a position as a behavior technician and became a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT). The more she learned about the field of ABA and the meaningful impact it made in the lives of children, the more interested she became in pursuing a career as a BCBA. She felt ABA was a field where she could "let her personality shine." She ultimately decided to pursue her master's degree in Applied

Behavior Analysis (ABA) from Arizona State University. She passed her professional exam and received her BCBA certification in August 2021.

Michelle has worked with children with special needs since 2015 and is passionate about helping others and committing her efforts to help children and families who are in need. As a compassionate person Michelle says: "It brings me joy when I am able to achieve success with my clients, and seeing them happy makes me happy!"

When asked what she looks forward to in her new position at Faces, Michelle responded: "I am looking forward to learning from others and building my skills as a BCBA. I am also excited to work in a new setting and meet new faces!"

In her free time Michelle enjoys traveling, spending time with her three dogs (small, medium and large) and loved ones, visiting the outdoors, and

"It brings me joy when I am able to achieve success with my clients, and seeing them happy makes me happy!"

experiencing new things. She loves to journal her experiences and attend live musical performances. She is a big fan of coffee and enjoys visiting local coffee shops.

Welcome to Faces, Michelle! We know that you will make a positive and unique impact on the staff, clients and families at Faces.

REQUEST OUR FACES INTAKE PACKET
INTAKE@FACESFORKIDS.ORG



Porchlight University is a resource for teachers and paraeducators to help facilitate better learning for students on the autism spectrum who are integrated into typical classrooms.

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.

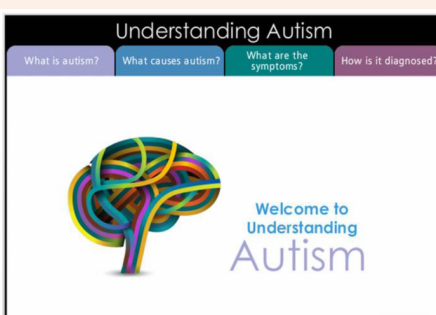
The eLearning program consists of four 1-hour long modules; each module is broken down into 15-minute lessons.

Learn more about Porchlight University or browse our library of 50 FREE modules for parents.

The courses include the following:

INTRODUCTION TO AUTISM
INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPS) AND THE LAW
CREATING EFFECTIVE CLASSROOMS
SOCIAL SKILLS AND POSITIVE BEHAVIOR CULTURE

BROWSE 50 FREE MODULES FOR PARENTS AT
WWW.PORCHLIGHTEDUCATION.ORG



RESIDENTIAL NEWS: LANDSCAPING TOGETHER

Melissa Watkins,
Marketing and Development Manager

We are incredibly grateful for the many volunteers and local community organizations who continue to support PACE's residential program. From landscaping to painting to installing new appliances, volunteers have made a tremendous impact on our group homes and the clients whom we serve. In particular, the Cupertino Rotary spearheaded several projects over the year, including a new drought-tolerant front lawn at our Morehouse group home for children.

In June, the Cupertino Rotary in partnership with Rotary member and owner of Water Efficient Gardens, Shelkie Tao, designed and planted a drought-tolerant garden in the front yard and parking strip at the home. The work was done pro-bono by Ms.



Tao, who designed the garden with all California Native Plants and a rain garden to capture runoff for watering purposes. The work was completed with help from Girl BSA Group 492, Boy Scouts of America, and Foothill

The project was featured in the Cupertino Courier as well as the Mercury News. According to the Mercury News, Ms. Tao explained: "The garden will provide a beautiful landscape for the residents and kids who live at the house, and provide sensory stimulation, which is critical for autism treatment. The native plants will provide crucial food and shelter to pollinators like monarch butterflies, bees, and birds."

College's horticultural program.

It was a large undertaking that required several weekends of prep work to remove old shrubbery and modify the irrigation system. On the final workday, 20+ volunteers came to dig, plant, and complete the rain garden. The final result was a beautiful landscape, thoughtfully designed with the environment and the needs of our clients in mind.

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monarch butterflies, bees and birds." (Source: www.mercurynews.com).

The new garden brightens up the home and is something our clients can explore and enjoy outdoors. PACE's gratitude for the ongoing support from the Cupertino Rotary is immeasurable.



UPCOMING PROJECTS:

Rebuilding Together Silicon Valley and Silicon Valley Mechanical selected PACE's Meadows Group Home for Adults for the annual Rebuilding Together Day. In November, volunteers from Silicon Valley Mechanical will revitalize the backyard with new mulch, plants, and outdoor activities. They will also repaint the interior of the home, giving it a fresh look for the upcoming New Year.

ABOUT PACE RESIDENTIAL:

PACE's residential program offers a comfortable and safe setting for children and adults with autism, enabling them to develop daily living skills and to lead more independent and productive lives built on the foundation of personal choice and independent decision-making. PACE currently operates two children's homes and four adult homes throughout the South Bay area.

PACE SCHOOL NEWS: SWINGS AND STUDENT STORE

Melissa Watkins,
Marketing and Development Manager

With 62 students currently enrolled and back on campus at the PACE School, the staff welcomed back several key learning programs that have been fundamental in teaching social skills and independent living skills. The PACE School Student Store officially re-opened its doors, allowing

set is an exciting new addition to the playground equipment on campus. Swinging provides enhanced sensory and therapeutic opportunities for our students. As a therapeutic tool, swinging motions can help improve balance and coordination, gross-motor skill (pumping legs), fine motor skills (grip strength, hand and finger coordination), and muscle strength.

Swinging can also stimulate and

"The PACE School Student Store officially re-opened its doors, allowing students the opportunity to be social with their peers, practice transactional conversational skills and math and counting."

students the opportunity to be social with their peers, practice transactional conversational skills and math and counting. Several students manage the store every day, selling soda, bags of chips, or yummy sweet treats such as Oreos. In addition, staff and students from other classrooms will visit to purchase a snack. Students and staff are excited to re-open the Student Store after months on hiatus due to COVID-19. The PACE Student Library also re-opened, allowing students to practice independent decision-making by selecting books of their choice.

The campus received a brand new swing set in early fall, thanks to a generous grant from the Crkvenjakov Foundation. The swing



FOR BEHAVIORAL THERAPY TIPS
GO TO WWW.PORCHLIGHTEDUCATION.ORG

FREE PRIMING WORKSHEET:
(FLIP OVER FOR CUTOUT)



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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.



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GREAT GIVERS: YLC AND MEMBER, VIKRAM I.

Melissa Watkins, Marketing and Development Manager
Vikram I., YLC Member

Great Givers come in many varieties. Some volunteer their talents and ideas; some volunteer their time; and some make generous financial contributions to support our mission. In this issue of the PACE Setter, we are pleased to honor our PACE Youth Leadership Committee (YLC) as our Great Givers. In 2008, PACE established the YLC in response to the growing number of high school students who were passionate about creating a more equitable world for people of all abilities. YLC members

dedicate their time, energy, and enthusiasm to advocate for education and awareness of autism in their schools and community, and to support PACE's mission through various fundraising and community outreach initiatives. One of their most notable initiatives is the Voices for Autism Benefit Concert, an annual fundraiser that brings musicians and attendees from around the Bay Area in support of PACE programs.

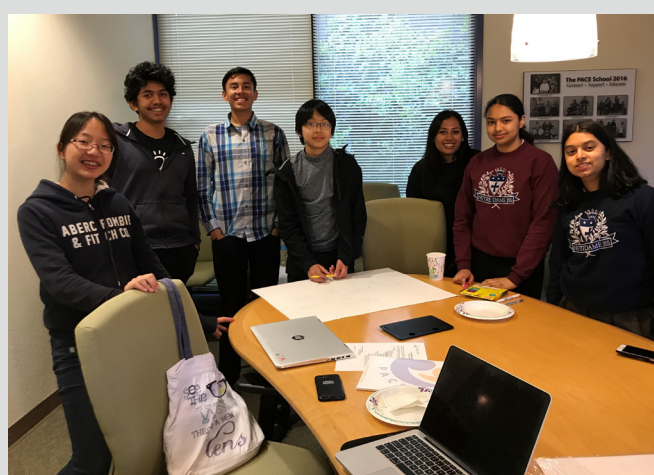
13 years and a global pandemic later, the YLC continues to champion for autism awareness and for PACE services. When the continuation of the YLC program was in question due to COVID-19, a group of steadfast individuals stepped up to keep it going. The 2021-2022 season is a virtual-only format with eight members representing numerous high schools from around the Bay Area. One of our returning members and now Co-Chair of the YLC, Vikram I., shares his story with PACE about his

passion for helping others and how to promote inclusion and awareness of autism in the community.

my brother, who has autism. Being a younger child, I saw a lot of challenges that he went through, so I've always felt [compelled] to help people with autism. For me, giving back to the community was always something drilled into my mind by my family. My mom always told me that many are not as fortunate as me, so I always wanted to help people who aren't as fortunate as me.

To promote autism awareness, the first

thing is to educate about some of the challenges that come with having ASD. I still learn so many things about ASD every day. Another way is reaching out. There are organizations in every part of the world, so reach out in ways that can be helpful."



Here is Vikram's Story:

"I became involved with the YLC, because my brother was a part of the YLC. My experience and passion for helping individuals with autism would not be complete if I didn't mention



BE A PART OF OUR COMMUNITY

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Choose us on Amazon Smile at smile.amazon.com.
Please contact development@pacificautism.org for giving options.

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