



# PACTT

## NEWSLETTER



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Parents Allied with Children and Teachers for Tomorrow is a not-for-profit agency working to serve individuals with autism and their families. PACTT is an equal opportunity employer.

FALL 2008

### Way to Ride, Butch!

For the third summer in a row, Michael "Butch" Shanahan braved sun, wind, rain, stray dogs, flat tires, potholes and plenty of pedaling to successfully complete his amazing one-man, 500-mile pledged "Ride for Marty" bike trek—raising over \$30,000 in support of his son and all the other children, teens and young adults with autism served by PACTT.

In three years, Butch and his legion of loyal ride backers have raised well over \$100,000 and made wonderful capital improvements possible at the Learning Center and each of the children's group homes.

Once again, our grateful thanks to Butch for his terrific 2008 ride – and to all the pledged supporters who cheered him on! Thank you!



Butch with ride supporters

### Our New Employer — The Heartland Café

The Heartland Café has been welcoming PACTT student diners for more than five years. At least once a week, classes from the Learning Center or young adults from PACTT's vocational program stop by the Heartland for a meal, a snack or a pleasant outing and they always get a warm welcome. When PACTT staff enquired about a student job, the restaurant owners' enthusiastic response was no surprise.

The Heartland's Red Line Tap needed an extra hand and Freddy got a great new job. Each week Freddy is there to organize orders, carry in cases of beverages and restock chip clips as part of the Red Line Tap team. He loves his new job and he's doing it well.

Starting in 1976 with a vision to serve "Good Wholesome Food for the Mind and Body," co-owners Katy Hogan and Michael James have built both a café and a community at the corner of Lunt & Glenwood Avenues in the heart of Rogers Park. Besides offering a menu full of healthy delights, the Heartland Café serves up progressive political events and hosts a radio show. Heartland enterprises in Rogers Park also include a theatre, journal, general store, athletic organization, beach stand, buffalo bar, the historic No Exit Café and the Red Line Tap.

When you're in the neighborhood, stop by the Heartland Café and say hello to our great new PACTT Vocational Services employer!

Want to put us to work? Contact PACTT Vocational Services Coordinator Lisa Fegert at 773-465-5469.



Freddy and job coach Nick at the Heartland Café

### Loyola, Target Provide Hands-On Art Classes

On Saturday, October 4, a group of PACTT Learning Center teachers gathered at Lill St. Art Center for the first in a series of advanced classes on sculpting clay which will be paired with weekly clay classes for PACTT students on site at the Learning Center.

Launched with grant support from Loyola University, this collaborative project with ArtReach at Lill St. will provide PACTT teachers and students with 10 classes during which they will learn the fundamentals of working with clay while they create a variety of works of art with a trained instructor.

In his first three-hour class with PACTT teachers, ArtReach instructor Alexis Ortiz used hands-on training techniques in explaining the use and history of clay, as well as suggesting ideas for the student's finished works, something which appealed to PACTT teacher Lauren Mucha.

"A lot of our kids are really into art, so this could be a career option for them," she said. Lauren hopes that several of the students' finished pieces will be ready for display in the silent auction at the PACTT Foundation's annual "Work of Heart" dinner in February.



At PACTT Learning Center



At Lill Street

For Ortiz, who will visit PACTT each Wednesday for the next several weeks, the opportunity is equally rewarding. "I didn't know anything about the school, but when I was offered the chance to work with kids with autism, I said sure. I love the energy of children, and I'm hoping to learn more about what autism is."

Thanks to a generous new grant from Target, this pilot art project is just the beginning. Target has provided funding for a broader four-month schedule of classes with ArtReach at Lill St. which will quickly follow this initial series. The Target grant will enable PACTT teachers and students to advance their ability to work with clay and to explore other art forms such as painting and silk screening.

"We're very thankful to Loyola University for starting us on this exciting course of art exploration and thrilled that Target is generously helping our teachers and students to try their hand at various art forms and build their skills," PACTT principal Paula Jablonski said.

Thank you, Loyola University and Target!

### From Laurie



I am pleased at how the children and young people that we are privileged to work with continue to grow and succeed in life. Though they all have difficult times along with the progress, they make me proud and grateful to be a part of their lives. In other words....I love my job!

With that said, I find myself having to address a very real problem for PACTT, one that will need attention and hard work from all of us if we are to overcome and survive as an agency.

In these times of economic uncertainty, we find ourselves struggling with the question of how we can continue to provide the very best in services to the children, teens and young adults with autism we serve and reach other children and families in need of support and services.

Last month, the state required PACTT to sign a letter accepting a 2% reduction in government support already budgeted for this year. We worry that more cuts will follow. The uncertainty of funding and lack of support from the state is a very real and serious concern for agencies like PACTT all across Illinois. Our state ranks dead last in the U.S. for per capita funding for disabled citizens. It doesn't look like things will be changing any time soon.

Fortunately, PACTT has been blessed by a strong network of loyal supporters—parents, families, friends, grant-makers and legislators who support PACTT and our vision. You help keep alive our mission of creating a future filled with hope and possibility for every individual with autism in our care. I am grateful for your support and genuine love for our kids and adults. I ask you from my heart to continue to walk with us as we face this latest challenge. I am confident that we will come together and do what needs to be done to keep PACTT alive and growing.

I know that, as a team, we will continue to advocate for the rights of the individuals with autism we know and love who cannot speak up to fight budget cuts or ask for the increased funding they need. We will be their strong supporters and their voice for change. With your help PACTT can survive these difficult times and continue to build positive, productive lives for more children, teens and young adults with autism here in Illinois.

Thank you most sincerely, Laurie

### Our Staff: Lauren



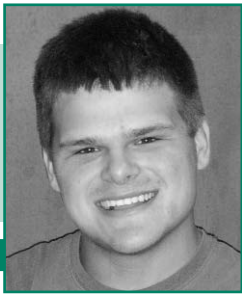
Lauren with Kyle

Lauren Mucha first arrived at PACTT as a Loyola University psychology intern in 2001. Eight years later, she's a member of the school leadership team and received the 2008 PACTT employee of the year award for her work as the mentor teacher for new staff.

"Lauren's a very positive person who also has a wide knowledge base to draw on in working with our kids," PACTT Principal Paula Jablonski said. "She has a wonderful natural ability to communicate with staff. She knows just how to be encouraging while she offers instruction."

This year, Lauren is coordinating a pilot transitional program which moves soon-to-graduate students at the Learning Center into the Adult Vocational Center for three hours each day. Working with six older students in two groups of half-day shifts, Lauren organizes the programs and alternates with Shaun Sherman in teaching academics at school or job skills at the voc center and job sites.

While working full time at PACTT, Lauren has earned her M.Ed. degree in Special Education. at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She now is working toward her Ph.D. degree in Special Education.



## Our Kids: John



John

John Nanninga, 18, works two days a week at the Howard Area Community Center. His first job at the center was doing yard work, but John quickly made his way inside where the action is. Now, he stocks a cart and delivers supplies to the various classrooms and offices. John's favorite stop is the preschool room where the children all know him and love to "tech talk" with him using his voiced communication device.

"The little kids come running up and he loves it," John's teacher/job coach Shaun Sherman said. "John's a warm guy with a flashing smile that just lights up the place."

Though he has difficulty talking, John has no trouble getting his ideas across. "He can communicate worlds with his eyes," Shaun said. "Everything from a very complex problem or question he has to a simple 'I like being with you.' He's a great friend."

In the classroom, John is quick to stack chairs, move boxes, do anything to be helpful. John's parents have noticed work skills carrying over at home where John brings in the groceries and takes out the garbage without being asked.

John lives in Norwood Park with his parents who both are police officers, and two sisters. He also has an older brother in the Marine Corps and an older sister in college. His mother, Kate, describes John as a guy who enjoys his busy family life and is ready for fun.

"He's extremely happy, a very active guy, always up for the swing, the trampoline, the park, anything outside," she said. "He can easily swim all the way across a pool underwater and walks up to two miles everyday with his dad."

John's career choices include garbage man, carpenter and, no surprise, policeman. John's music tastes run to country and rock and he loves the radio, the car and an open road.

## PACTT Golf Classic 2008

The 7th Annual PACTT Golf Classic, held Monday, Sept. 29, at beautiful Beverly Country Club raised more than \$80,000 in support of educational, residential and vocational programs at PACTT. Over 90 golfers rescheduled on short notice due to the rainout of September 15 and came out to play in the 2008 Golf Classic. "PACTT is blessed to have committed and passionate donors who will come out to support PACTT in spite of iffy weather and the uncertain economy," said Terry Herbstritt of the PACTT Foundation. Pictured above are Michael Meagher of McHugh Construction and his winning foursome.

Thanks to all our loyal golfers! We look forward to seeing you again on the greens next September!



## Cultural Center Event Raises Autism Awareness

"Work-Place," a multi-media art installation which enabled its audience to experience for themselves the array of sight/sound/symbol challenges individuals with autism can encounter in the workplace, was staged at the Chicago Cultural Center in November. Part of a one-night performance/installation event on the theme of occupation titled *Site Unseen 2008*, "Work-Place" was created by B.J. Krivanek who is the artistic director of Community Architexts and a professor at The Art Institute of Chicago. The work was based on interviews with PACTT teachers and administrators.

"When this opportunity arose, I felt it would be a good first step in an ongoing collaboration with PACTT. In the next stage, I'll broaden outreach to include teachers, students, parents and employers," Krivanek said. "The goal will be to develop a longer-term public sitework—deploying forms, inscriptions or images on the façade of a building—to articulate the challenges facing autistic young adults as they enter the workplace. My goal is to make those who are invisible, visible."

"Work-Place" was presented November 12 in the Sidney R. Yates Gallery of the Chicago Cultural Center, 77 E. Randolph Street.

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### This newsletter is published by

PACTT Learning Center  
7101 N. Greenview Ave., Chicago, IL 60626  
773-338-9102

At PACTT, our mission is to assist individuals with autism in becoming as independent as possible with the ability to integrate effectively into their homes and communities. Our team of parents and professionals will aspire to work together to create an educational environment that meets the needs of individuals with autism utilizing a positive intervention approach in an ever improving and progressive manner.

## PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR PACTT

Want to help? Contact Development Director Terry Herbstritt at 708-386-3904, or visit PACTT's website at [www.pactt.org](http://www.pactt.org). All donations in support of PACTT should be sent to the Foundation at P.O. Box 492, Oak Park, IL 60303.

## MAKE IT A MATCHING GIFT!

Many employers offer a matching gift program that could double or triple the impact of your investment in PACTT. For information about a program at your workplace, please contact your human resources or employee benefits office.

### More news on our website:

- PACTT Young Adults Vote!
- Greg Brown Benefit Concert for PACTT

[www.pactt.org](http://www.pactt.org)



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## Upcoming Events

The PACTT Foundation presents

Work of Heart  
2008

Saturday

February 21, 2009

InterContinental Chicago



Greg Brown Benefit Concert  
for  
PACTT Learning Center

Thursday, March 19, 2009  
Harris Theater at Millennium Park