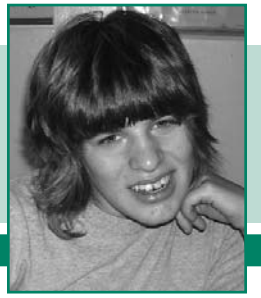




PACTT

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.

SUMMER 2007

Rebuilding Together at PACTT Learning Center

On Saturday, April 28, Rebuilding Together * Metro Chicago arrived at PACTT Learning Center, 7101 N. Greenview, with a team of more than 50 volunteers to stage a one-day major rehab and landscaping makeover for the school and the grounds of PACTT's new adult group home next door. Bringing professional electricians, carpenters, landscapers, painters and many hardworking volunteers, the Rebuilding Together crew hit the ground running early that day and worked until the job was done.



Our Rebuilding Together * Metro Chicago team

The Rebuilding Together team at PACTT was sponsored by Freeborn and Peters LLP and The Parsifal Foundation and captained by the husband and wife team of attorney Kathryn Thomas and architect Chad Ruckauf. Brian Shea of Voltaire's Gardener led the landscaping portion of the project.

Everything was accomplished in one very long, very busy day. Between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., the dedicated Rebuilding Together team worked wonders, performing a complete kitchen makeover, carpentry and painting in a number of classrooms plus major landscaping all around the school and PACTT's adult group home. All the materials for the project — from new oak cabinets and kitchen appliances, to trees, bushes and flowers, to paint, tools and more — were donated by the Rebuilding Together team and their supporters. Volunteers for the day ranged in levels of expertise from skilled professionals to company employees. PACTT teachers and staff joined the effort, digging, planting and painting alongside the team.

How did PACTT feel about it all? "Working with the Rebuilding Together team was the most awesome experience," PACTT Executive Director Laurie Bushman said. "How exciting and humbling to have so many people so genuinely interested in working to better the lives of our students!"

"Next time, it's our turn to help," Laurie said. "I want our whole agency to get involved in doing this for someone else."

PACTT Learning Center was one of 78 Chicago homes and nonprofits selected by Rebuilding Together * Metro Chicago to receive major renovations on National Rebuilding Day, Saturday, April 28, 2007. For this all-out one-day effort, Rebuilding Together * Metro Chicago annually rallies over 3,500 volunteers from more than 100 corporations, skilled labor unions and service organizations.



Planting new bushes and flowers

PACTT Adult Group Home Opens

After months of preparation and anticipation, PACTT's new group home for young adults is finally a reality. In late March, six residents moved in, making the beautiful, big house next door to PACTT Learning Center in Rogers Park their home. PACTT's new adult group home was made possible by the generous support of PACTT donors, the backing of state legislators and the welcome provided by our Rogers Park neighbors.

Purchasing the house next door to PACTT was ideal, according to new group home manager Doug Bushman. "Our guys have grown up here at the school. They already feel like this wonderful neighborhood is their home."

Like all PACTT facilities, the new adult group home or CILA (Community Integrated Living Arrangement) is staffed at a 2:1 resident to staff ratio. CILA residents and staff live as a family, with every resident sharing in the cooking and cleaning chores, along with the friendship and fun family living can offer.

For new CILA residents Becky, Baljeet, Walker, Matt H., Freddy and Matt P., this first step into adult life has been happily anticipated. "Of course, we expected that this would be a difficult transition for kids who are leaving home for the first time," said PACTT Vocational Services Coordinator Lisa Fegert. "What we didn't realize was how exciting it would be. The residents are so happy here and I can't blame them! It's a terrific house and we've got such great staff."

For parents of the new group home residents, the key ingredient was PACTT. "When your child has autism — has trouble communicating — it's very hard to trust someone else to care for and love that child the way you do," said Ken Avick, a CILA parent. "But with PACTT in the picture, the group home decision was easy. We know we made a great choice for Becky's future. Plus, we live close by, so we can bring her home on weekends."

The young adults who now live at 1434 W. Estes are between the ages of 19 and 22. All are enrolled in PACTT Vocational Services where they receive ongoing job training and are employed working part-time in wage-earning or volunteer positions for community employers.

Field Day at Francis Parker

On May 16, thirteen high school juniors and their teachers from Francis W. Parker School hosted 34 children, teens and young adults plus staff from PACTT Learning Center for an Olympic-style "PACTT Field Day" competition on Parker's Lincoln Park athletic fields.

With hands-on assistance and plenty of cheering from the Parker juniors, PACTT student athletes competed for medals in events ranging from sprints to basketball free throws and soccer goal kicks to bean bag tosses and a three-legged race. This is the second year Francis Parker students have helped stage PACTT Field Day, and the first time they have hosted the event at their school. Thanks to our Francis Parker friends!



Enjoying a game of ring toss at Field Day

From Laurie



As the school year draws to a close, I am, as always, amazed at how fast the year has gone and how much the kids have grown. As my mind travels over the past year, I am reminded of the crazy times, the busy, crisis-like times and most important...of the happy, "I know why I do this" times. If we don't pause to reflect once in a while we miss many of the awesome moments in life.

One such moment came a couple of weeks ago. Kevin walked into my office and said, "Laurie, Kevin is finished at PACTT! Graduating July 27th." You must realize what an incredible accomplishment this is for Kevin — and for PACTT. Kevin came to PACTT seven and a half years ago. He was a runner with assorted behavior challenges. His school district was certain that they did not have a place for him and that he was not likely to become "public school material" any time in the future.

Well, Kevin and his ever-optimistic PACTT team had other ideas. He has worked long and hard at improving his communication, academic and social skills. With the help and encouragement of his teachers, principal, group home family, family AND his school district, Kevin has been attending Evanston Township High School part-time for the past three years. This year, he graduates from PACTT and will become a full-time student at Evanston Township High School in the fall. Kevin will become a more independent, integrated member of his community, attending school with his peers and, eventually, graduating from the same high school as his brother.

This is a moment worth reflecting on over and over again.....

Congratulations Kevin! Keep up the good work, team. This is only one of many awesome moments past, present and yet to come.

Our Staff: Tywon



Tywon

On staff at PACTT's new group home for young adults, Tywon Garvin is right where he wants to be. It shows in his smile — and in the smiles on the residents' faces.

Tywon came to PACTT in 2003. When taking classes at Triton College, he saw a flyer about a position at PACTT's Oak Park group home for children. He had volunteered at the Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind and Deaf for four years and found he really enjoyed the experience.

"I discovered I like working with people. I've got a big heart for that," Tywon said. "And I've got a lot of patience when it comes to helping someone who is disabled."

Tywon's heart for helping was just part of the package, according to Robert Benassi, manager of PACTT's children's group homes. "Wow, did we get lucky. Tywon's a wonderful guy. He was terrific with our kids — so gentle and understanding and also really creative. He is always taking on new challenges, coming up with fun activities." When the new adult CILA (Community Integrated Living Arrangement) opened in March, Robert recommended a transfer. "I hated to lose him here, but I thought the adult home presented an interesting challenge and I knew Tywon would be great with the young adults," Robert said.

At 21, Tywon's depth of experience and his age are a great combination, CILA manager Doug Bushman said. "To the residents, Tywon's a friend their own age. He relates to them and understands their feelings."

Now that everyone is settled in, Tywon is looking forward to helping each young adult with specific summer and leisure goals. "Everyone is different and I like getting to know each one," he said. "Plus, I love the smile when someone achieves a goal."

Then, there's Tywon's face. You just can't fake a smile like that.



Our Kids: Abby



Abby

Her bright blue eyes twinkle when she smiles, and her bubbling laugh is contagious. She is keenly aware of everyone in her vicinity, and ready and willing to offer a giant hug to anyone in need.

Abby will celebrate her 13th birthday in July — and finish her 7th year at PACTT. Abby's current teacher, Kristen, has known Abby for five years — first as a classroom aide, then as her classroom teacher.

In the five years she's known her, Kristen has watched Abby's communication and social interaction flourish. Abby's soft voice forces people to listen even more closely to her when she speaks. When they do, Kristen says, "People are sometimes surprised at just how much she has to say!"

Abby is indeed keenly aware of everyone in her vicinity, and especially tuned-in to the emotional states of the people she knows well. "One of the most important things to know about Abby is that she really cares about people," says Kristen. "We've been together for so long, she's good at reading my moods. When I'm in a bad mood, she can somehow tell, and she's extra affectionate and sweet."

Abby's mom, Shawna, said she "scoured the state" for places that served children with autism, and was eventually referred to PACTT. Despite the long ride from her home in Cary, IL, Shawna knows that PACTT is the right place for her daughter.

"[PACTT has] provided consistency for Abby, and continually has looked at what her strengths are instead of her weaknesses," Shawna said. "It's not very often that you find a place like that."

Work of Heart Honors Grace Hou



PACTT Foundation's Terry Herbstritt, Work of Heart winner Grace Hou

The spirit of celebration was in the air at the PACTT Foundation's Sixth Annual Work of Heart dinner and silent auction, held Saturday, Feb. 10, 2007, at the W City Center Hotel in downtown Chicago. The more than 300 friends of PACTT in attendance raised over \$85,000 in support of the children, teens and young adults PACTT serves.

At the event, Illinois Department of Human Services Assistant Secretary Grace Hou was presented with the 2007 "Work of Heart" award in recognition of her dedicated work championing the cause of individuals with autism. In addition to Ms. Hou's eloquent acceptance speech, the assembled group heard an inspiring address by PACTT Agency Board President Jerry White and watched as Executive Director Laurie Bushman presented PACTT's mission and history in a video documentary by Joe Federici.



Butch and Marty Shanahan

Again this summer, Michael "Butch" Shanahan is heading off on a 500-mile pledge-sponsored bike ride to raise funds for PACTT. Last year, Butch's ride raised over \$50,000 to support PACTT's school, vocational services and group homes. Pledge letters now are in the mail. You can also download a pledge form at www.pactt.org. Send in your pledge today. Let's help Butch pedal to even greater success this year for his son's school!

Butch Rides Again!

Again this summer, Michael "Butch" Shanahan is heading off on a 500-mile pledge-sponsored bike ride to raise funds for PACTT. Last year, Butch's ride raised over \$50,000 to support PACTT's

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This newsletter is published by

PACTT
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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. 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 resource or employee benefits office.

All Aboard the Third Annual PACTT Cruise

Join us on Sunday, July 15, for a three-hour private cruise on Lake Michigan aboard the double-decker Ft. Dearborn.

Take in the dazzling Chicago skyline and view Chicago's architectural wonders from the Chicago River as you enjoy great food, music and fun with friends.

For more information, contact: Terry Herbstritt at 708-386-3904.

Download a reservation form at: www.pactt.org.



Upcoming Events

September 24
6th Annual PACTT Golf Classic

July 30
Butch Shanahan begins his
500-mile Bike Ride

July 27
PACTT Learning Center Family Picnic

July 15
PACTT Cruise on Lake Michigan

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