

UPDATE

Volume One • Number One

Post Adoption Center for Education and Research

Dec. 1, 1981

FIRST ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED BY PACER VOLUNTEERS

The PACER Council and Board of Directors are asking that friends of PACER respond as generously as possible during the first annual Contributions Campaign. The Council and the Board are pleased that the James Irvine Foundation of San Francisco is matching all contributions up to \$40,000 over a two-year period. This means that every \$25 gift is worth \$50.

An anonymous donor has already contributed the first \$1,000 to kick off the campaign. From late November to mid-December, volunteers will be calling PACER friends to ask for their contributions. Just

prior to the calling campaign, those who have had contact with PACER within the last year will receive a letter explaining the campaign.

Funds from the campaign will be used for programs of information, education, community outreach, workshops, seminars, support groups, as well as individual and group counseling.

If you are not reached personally, please consider making your gift by sending a check to PACER Contribution Committee, 727 Holly Oak Dr., Palo Alto, CA 94303. Your contribution is tax deductible.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PACER

The Post Adoption Center for Education and Research (PACER) is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to provide information, education, and service to individuals and families involved in adoption. Established in Palo Alto in 1979, PACER is a contemporary response to the increasingly complex social and human concerns surrounding the adoption process.

PACER IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER GROUPS IN THAT IT DOES NOT WORK FOR THE INTERESTS OF ONE PARTICULAR GROUP. It accepts and builds upon the experiences and necessary connections of all parties in the adoption process. So PACER works closely with all three parties in the adoption process—adoptive parents, adoptees, and birth parents—and this includes those who might be considering either relinquishment or adoption.

PACER is staffed by trained volunteers who are themselves adoptive parents, adoptees, and birth parents. Cost-free services are offered, as well as services on a sliding scale to the entire community (both lay and professional).

INCREASING THE UNDERSTANDING OF ADOPTION IS A PRIMARY

CONCERN OF PACER. The organization is working toward this goal by presenting programs of community outreach and by offering supportive services to those involved in, or touched by, the adoption experience.

Since its beginnings, PACER has been working with established social service agencies, with schools, with parent and community groups, and with institutions who train professionals.

PACER is committed to helping families resolve problems before they become serious. The all encompassing concern of PACER's staff, along with its dedicated volunteers, is the idea that their work makes a difference in the lives of those involved in the adoption process.

Dr. Dirck W. Brown
PACER Director, Licensed Marriage,
Family and Child Counselor

PACER ANNOUNCES THE FOUNDATION COMMUNITY'S SUPPORT

Since December, 1980, PACER has received six generous grants from various foundations.

PACER's first grant came from the Henry

J. Kaiser Family Foundation of Menlo Park, California. It allowed PACER to organize a workshop series for counseling professionals who work with pregnant teenagers. Designed to increase understanding of adoption as an alternative parenting decision, it has been further funded by grants from:

The Edwin and Catherine M. Davis Foundation

The Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr., Fund
The Mary Crocker Trust

The James Irvine Foundation

The James Irvine Foundation's grant matches every dollar up to forty thousand (\$40,000) contributed to PACER over the next two years.

Funds have also been contributed by the Bothin Helping Fund for the purchase of two typewriters. The PACER newsletter has been made possible by a grant from the San Mateo Foundation.

These grants are tangible evidence of the foundation community's support and confidence in PACER's programs of community and professional outreach. The PACER Board of Directors and staff would like to extend their personal gratitude for the foundation community's generosity and vote of confidence.

"THANK YOU, DR. DAVIS AND DR. KRUPP"



Dr. Marc Krupp, Dr. Joe Davis, Dirck Brown

Two very special friends of PACER are:

Dr. Joe Davis, Senior Pediatrician, Palo Alto Medical Foundation and Clinical Professor, Stanford University School of Medicine.

Dr. Marc Krupp, Director of the Research Institute, Palo Alto Medical Foundation, and Clinical Professor of Medicine Emeritus, Stanford University School of Medicine.

Dr. Davis has been a special consultant to PACER from its founding days. He has advised the Director and the members of the Board, and has shared his wisdom and insight gained from working with hundreds of families for over 37 years.

Dr. Davis brings a national perspective to the adoption experience by his service as a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Adoption. He has written many articles on adoption for professional journals. As a member of the Board of Directors of the Children's Home Society of California, Dr. Davis has been instrumental in the approval of a special statement on adoption and records.

Dr. Krupp's support has also been essential to PACER's development as a growing, community organization. For over two years, PACER has enjoyed the use of office space in the Palo Alto Medical Foundation building, located at 860 Bryant Street. This gift of tremendous value also includes reception service, telephones, typing service for proposals, and a friendly association with the staff of the Palo Alto Medical Foundation.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH IS THE CENTER OF PACER PROGRAMS

Reaching out to the community, whether lay or professional, is the heart of PACER's mission since it was founded. To inform, to educate and to share is what PACER offers those involved in the adoption process. Isolation among and between members of the adoption community—adoptees, adoptive parents, and birth parents—is common. And so is the isolation and lack of communication between members of the adoption community and the community in general.

It will always be PACER's goal to overcome these barriers to communication and understanding by offering programs of community outreach. These programs are now known as "PACER Presentations." A typical presentation consists of an introduction to the organization, after which each member of the adoption triangle shares his or her personal experiences. These presentations are followed by a full discussion of the issues along with questions from the audience.

In the last year and a half, PACER has presented programs about adoption and its lifelong impact to over 50 groups; parents, teachers, students, physicians, nurses, social workers, therapists, counselors, psychologists, community groups, and many others. Here's what some of them have said:

"Your group provided some very significant insights which will assist our staff in better responding to the counseling needs of adoptees and their families. I feel strongly that every person who is actively involved as a mental health provider should be exposed to such a powerful presentation."

Director, Special Services, Palo Alto Unified School District

"As you may know, adoptees are over-represented in psychiatry clinics and it was of help to us to understand some of the themes general to the adoption experience. This helps us to understand, when someone talks to us, what is a more universal phenomenon."

"However, what also was invaluable was to hear from others involved in the adoption experience, adoptive families and birth parents, as the experience of these groups is also rarely talked about. It appears to me that your group is providing a service which, to the best of my knowledge, is not available anywhere else."

Chief Resident, Child Psychiatry, Children's Hospital at Stanford

"You and your panel members gave very

sensitive and meaningful talks . . . their personal warmth, sincerity, and integrity was felt by all of us and I believe our eyes are open to many of the subtle issues of adoption."

Assistant Chief, Department of Psychiatry, Kaiser Foundation Health Center

"I cannot stress to you enough the learning that takes place when students are given the opportunity to personally listen and respond to individuals who have firsthand knowledge and experience in the subject at hand. Through this process students are able to clarify any questions, myths, and fears they may have."

"Both the students and I were deeply touched with the willingness of your panel to openly share their personal experiences and feelings with us."

Child Development, Human Relations Teacher, Los Gatos High School

"Please accept our warmest thanks and the appreciation of the State Board and Management Council of CHS for your presentation. . . . it's immediately apparent that PACER made a deep impression on both our directors and CHS staff."

State President, Children's Home Society of California

"This letter is intended to let you know how unique and valuable your work is to our community."

"People telling the truth about their experience and sharing at a very personal level about the feelings of the birth parent, the adoptee and the adoptive parent involved in the process have the power to transform the awareness of professionals who are working daily with clients who have concerns about adoption. We look forward to working more closely with PACER in the future."

Director of Education, Planned Parenthood Association

Groups interested in hosting a PACER Presentation should contact the PACER office, 860 Bryant St., Palo Alto, CA 94301. Phone (415) 328-8120 for further information and scheduling.

PACER SUPPORT GROUPS OFFER UNIQUE SERVICES

Friendship, sharing, listening, and learning from one another's experiences are just some of the benefits of taking part in a PACER support group. Three support groups, one for adult adoptees, one for adoptive parents, and one for birth parents, meet each month.

Each time an adult adoptee group meets,

an effort is made to have one or two adoptive parents and birth parents present. When a birth parent group meets, an effort is made to have an adoptive parent group and adoptee join them. And meetings of an adoptive parent group are often attended by adoptees and birth parents as well.

This "cross-fertilization" enriches the discussion and enables people to explore their

own experiences from a perspective that includes all three sides of the adoption triangle. "I never thought of that," is a common response of support group participants.

Identity issues, parenting concerns, what to say to children about adoption, the positive as well as the negative aspects of the adoption experience, how the public views adoption, and how to get more information

about one's child or one's own background and medical history, are just a sample of the topics and concerns shared by members of PACER support groups.

These support groups meet in the evenings on a monthly basis. For more information about participation and specific meeting times, call PACER, (415) 326-8120.

ADOPTION: THE LIFELONG PROCESS



Kay Naylor

Adoption — such a simple word but it triggers such a variety of emotions and brings forth many complex issues. Webster's New World Dictionary defines adoption as: "1. to take legally into one's own family and raise as one's own child, 2. to take as one's own, 3. to choose or accept." It was not so very long ago that we thought of adoption much like we used to think of marriage, "and then everyone lived happily ever after." That is not to say that adoption is not an important positive way of creating families. However, feelings about being adopted, or the feelings about having adopted, or the feelings about relinquishing a child for adoption do not stop at the time of adoption.

ADOPTION IS A LIFELONG PROCESS. In the growing of that adopted child and in the blossoming of that adoptive family, each person needs to share his ideas, questions, and feelings about adoption. It is for just this reason that PACER has evolved. PACER incorporates the complete adoption picture. PACER offers programs and group support activities to individuals, to families, and to professionals.

Out of these support group meetings, counseling sessions, and community outreach programs have come insights about the long-term impact of the adoption experience.

Probably the most important adoption concept in which PACER attempts to promote understanding is that **EACH PERSON HAS A UNIQUE ROLE IN THE ADOPTION PROCESS.** It is an undeniable but often misunderstood fact that the birth parents' role is that of giving birth, and providing medical and genetic information. It is the adoptive parents' role to be the caring parents for the child. Each role, birth parent and adoptive parent, is different and distinct and cannot be interchanged. Confusion and fear can develop when these roles are undefined. Adoptive parents need to acknowledge that they have not given birth to their child but

instead have chosen to parent him. Likewise birth parents need to understand that they have chosen to give parental rights and responsibilities to someone else. It is a fact, then, that the decision to relinquish a child for adoption is a parenting decision. It is not a rejection of the child but often a rejection of the circumstances. It is a positive decision about what parenting decision will be best for the child.

Another important concept that PACER espouses is that **EACH ONE IN THE ADOPTION PROCESS FEELS A SENSE OF LOSS.** The birth parents feel that loss in relinquishing their birth child; the adoptee feels that loss in not experiencing what it's like to be part of an unbroken line; the adoptive parents feel that loss in not having given birth to "their" child.

It is important to understand that it is acceptable to feel a sense of loss. Once one acknowledges and accepts this loss, one can move on to accept and understand one's part in the adoption process.

Once one realizes that adoption is a lifelong process, understands the separation of the parenting roles in adoption, accepts and integrates within oneself the feeling of loss, the adoptee's search for his biological origins becomes just another "stage" in the process of being adopted. Search does not mean a repudiation of one's adoptive parents. Rather, search is a desire to know about one's self, to know more about one's birth, and to know more about the circumstances that caused their birth parents to turn to adoption. It is a quest to understand "why?". It is a closure to a void within one's life.

Kay Naylor
Member, PACER Board of Directors
Adapted from the monthly magazine of
the Junior League of Palo Alto.

**SAN MATEO FOUNDATION
MAKES 'UPDATE' POSSIBLE**

UPDATE, the official newsletter of PACER, has been made possible by a grant from the San Mateo Foundation. This grant supports the publication of a community newsletter for one year. It is designed to keep the community informed about developments, services, and activities which are important to the adoption community, to the helping professions, and to the public in general.

**PACER'S BOARD OF
DIRECTORS AND COUNCIL
PROVIDE DIRECTION**

The "heart of PACER" is a new Council consisting of 26 volunteers. The Council meets once a month to exchange ideas, present reports, and plan programs to meet the new and continuing needs of the organization. The group makes suggestions for programs and policies to the Board of Directors for their approval.

The Board of Directors has a balanced representation from the community and the adoption triangle. By January, 1982, it

will consist of a 13 member board with six representatives from the adoption triangle, six from the community, and the PACER Director.

PACER's current Board of Directors are:
Dr. Joseph Davis Pediatrician
Donna Oman Research Analyst
Kay Naylor Community Volunteer
Harumi Befu Professor of Anthropology
Karen Randall Community Volunteer
Dirck Brown PACER Director

**"DIALOGUE FOR
UNDERSTANDING"
IS NOW AVAILABLE**

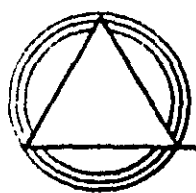
Sharing one's life story with others has been an important part of PACER support groups. A collection of "life stories" has been published by PACER to show the impact of adoption on the lives of adoptees, adoptive parents, and birth parents.

Dialogue for Understanding, A Handbook for Adoptive and Pre-Adoptive Parents, has been produced under a grant from the Adoption Resource Center 9 (Health

and Human Services).

PACER plans to publish other volumes of *Dialogue for Understanding*, as more and more volunteers present their own experiences for the community outreach programs.

Dialogue for Understanding may be ordered by sending a check for \$7.50 (\$6 plus \$1.50 for handling costs) to PACER, 860 Bryant St., Palo Alto, CA 94301. Make checks payable to PACER.



PACER

860 Bryant Street
Palo Alto, California 94301