



Perk Brews Up Support for PACER

Up at 5:30 a.m. each day, Richard W. Perkins has read six newspapers and arrived at the office by the time most people are just rubbing sleep from their eyes. It seems only fitting that this high-energy man known as Perk has his office right next door to a Starbucks.

"I work a lot of hours, seven days a week," admits the president of Perkins Capital Management, a family-owned investment advising firm in Wayzata. "I'm working harder than I ever have—and I'm having more fun than ever." Sporting a colorful tie featuring playful, crayon-style drawings of children, he even looks like he's having fun.

Ask Perk how he became involved on PACER's Advisory Board, and he'll tell you he doesn't remember. It's not surprising that this decade-old detail might elude him. Recently voted "the hardest working board member" by *The Business Journal*, he has more pressing matters on his mind. In addition to running his company and supporting PACER, he serves on six for-profit boards and 12 subcommittees; spends as much time with family as possible; meets with corporate and world leaders; and travels to five auctions a year, where he seeks out new additions to his extensive collection of duck decoys.

As disparate and consuming as these activities and interests may appear, they integrate seamlessly. In fact, they illustrate a theme of Perk's life—connection. It is that common thread that has led to a fascinating life and created a great advocate for PACER Center.

A visit to Perk's Wayzata office demonstrates the point. The well-appointed conference room sports a few of his many duck decoys. Art

prints of waterfowl adorn the walls. The credenza is lined with an impressive series of framed photos of Perk with President George H.W. Bush, Colin Powell, and other political figures. On the adjacent wall is a bookcase topped with another picture of Perk with comedian Bill Cosby, taken at PACER's 1997 Benefit. "That was a memorable moment," he says. "I treasure that photo."

As he is being interviewed for this article, his daughter and grandson pop in for moment. Soon after, a colleague stops by for a brief consultation on a client portfolio. As the interview concludes, he makes a quick call to check on the status of a trade. It all flows together smoothly—work, family, hobbies, interests, commitments.

For PACER, that connectedness has led to almost 10 years of remarkable support. "I know a lot of people," Perk says in understated fashion, explaining how he has been able to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for PACER. He has even managed to arrange some extraordinary donations for PACER's Annual Benefit—including a private jet to fly a live auction winner to the Super Bowl.

Each year, he raises the bar. "Last year, we set an ambitious goal, and nobody thought we'd make it," he says. He and PACER's corporate sponsor committee exceeded it.



"PACER is a wonderful cause," says Richard W. Perkins, shown here with a few of the decoys in his extensive collection.

As in any venture, an occasional disappointment crops up. "I tried last year to have a certain company be a major donor. That didn't happen," he says. Undaunted, Perk hasn't given up. "I'd still like to do that," he says with a twinkle of determination.

What else is in his plans? "Every year, I want to raise more money for PACER. And there's always the question of how to find a Benefit entertainer to top the previous year," he says.

"PACER is a great organization to work with and help fund," Perk adds. His involvement stems not from any personal experience with disability, but from a belief in PACER's mission and quality. "It's a wonderful cause," he says. "It's impressive that 93 percent of what's raised goes into programs. If you could be at PACER on any given day and see the youngsters, you might understand. You see who benefits. When you can see that, it makes the difference."