

Great Givers:

Michael Gilfix

By: Karen Kennan, Assistant Executive Director



Great Givers come in many varieties. Some volunteer their time, talents and ideas; some make in-kind donations of much needed materials and equipment; and some make generous financial contributions to support our ongoing mission. Over the years, PACE has benefitted from the generosity of many donors and volunteers who have provided our agency with priceless support. In this issue of PACE Setter, we're pleased to acknowledge Michael Gilfix who knows how important it is to support the causes and programs that make a difference in the life of the community.

Attorney Michael Gilfix is a nationally known authority in the fields of estate planning, elder law, and Special Needs Trusts. Along with Myra Gerson Gilfix, he is a founding partner in Gilfix & La Poll Associates LLP in Palo Alto. Following his graduation from Stanford University Law School and wanting to give back to the community, in 1973, Mike created the first free legal aid program for elders in the nation and then served as its director for the next ten years. That program, Senior Adults Legal Assistance (SALA) still thrives in Santa Clara County today.

A few years after creating SALA, he also started the Disability Law

Services (DLS), providing advocacy and support for individuals with physical disabilities. He is a co-Founder of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA) as well as the California Law Center on Long-Term Care, and he is a Certified Legal Specialist in Estate Planning, Trust, and Probate Law. Mike is also an Advisory Board Member of the Academy of Special Needs Planners (ASNP) and of Elder Counsel.

It was while working with SALA that Mike kept encountering elders who needed long-term care services but had no understanding of the cost or how to pay for such services. This was long before long-term care insurance existed and before Medi-Cal would pay for the cost of nursing home care. Seeking to provide the underserved with a voice, Gilfix & La Poll Associates developed their legal expertise focusing on long-term care, special needs and Medi-Cal planning. They've recognized that both populations (elderly and special needs) have historically lacked representation and influence. They strive to empower consumers with enough information to understand and make good choices about long-term care issues and options. Today the firm

specializes in and is recognized for its expertise in estate planning, tax, special needs, and elder law.

While committed professionally to assisting under-represented populations, Mike also believes that individuals with means have a responsibility to give back to the community. He encourages his team to volunteer their time for things that will have positive impact in the community. The firm sponsors numerous nonprofit activities in the community and encourages clients to leave at least one percent (1%) of their estate to charitable organizations by reducing their legal fees.

Mike and his wife Myra have provided generous support to PACE over the years, making financial contributions to our annual fund raising campaigns and participating in PACE Galas and events. In addition, the firm has generously supported our Golf Classic with annual sponsorships and participation.

Our partnership with Gilfix & La Poll has grown through PACE's participation in the firm's annual Special Needs Trust seminar. Held annually, this seminar provides vital information for any family that seeks to establish a secure long term financial and life plan for their special needs family member. Many families of children with autism consider planning for their child's financial future a huge concern. Most parents worry about what will happen to their

child after they are gone. Their concerns include their child's living arrangements, quality of life, expenses, medical care, and long term security. A special needs trust can be immensely helpful for families of children with special needs because it helps to protect inherited assets and does not count against eligibility for other social service benefits.

As an individual committed to working with the special needs community, Mike Gilfix realizes how vital the need is for programs like PACE and how important it is to advocate on behalf individuals who lack representation. For his commitment to community, his support of our events and for his financial generosity, Mike Gilfix exemplifies what it takes to be a "Great Giver."

This year's Special Needs Trust Seminar will be held on Wednesday, May 2nd, 2-4pm & 6-8pm at the Elks Lodge on El Camino Real in Palo Alto. Those interested in attending can find additional information at www.gilfix.com.

For additional information about Special Needs Trust, please see our Porchlight Module (Creating a Special Needs Trust) at www.porchlighteducation.org/creating-a-special-needs-trust/.