

Pat Stack is one of the founding fathers of early care and education in Ketchikan. Through his work over the last twenty years, he has positively influenced the lives of children, strengthened families, and has changed the course of early childhood in our community and in our state.

Pat's commitment to excellence is seen in everything he does. His child care center is known for its exemplary practices throughout our community and many new and existing providers seek his advice and creative ideas. Pat knows how difficult it can be to manage a child care and he always makes time to listen and support his fellow colleagues. He has created an informal network of support amongst the providers in our community which has generated a mutual feeling of camaraderie rather than competition. He understands how tough this business is, and how vital high quality care is for our community. In fact, he is currently working with a major employer who is interested in opening a center.

Another quality is Pat's professional determination. He understands the critical role child care plays in the daily life of families. When faced with moving his center, he dreamed up some innovative strategies that allowed him to stay open throughout the process. He did not have to close the center for a single minute during that time. He also thoughtfully planned ways to support children and families through that transition. A fellow early care and education professional said, "Pat models a relationship-based approach to childcare. The key word being 'care'--Pat truly cares about the children that are in his care." And one parent said, "Pat was there for us, in the darkest hour of our family history. He supported us consistently and never once judged us. Our family is so much healthier now, thanks to him."

According to a former employee, "Pat Stack has such dedication for his work. He never seems to run out of energy or love for the people he works with, big or small." Pat is passionate about his work and his spirit is tenacious. He has been a strong advocate for early care and education in the light of tight budgets and tough decisions. One former co-worker said "Sometimes you just have to listen to your heart which is what Pat does as he teaches the children through patience and love. You can find him playing his guitar and singing with the children, or going on field trips, providing avenues to build experiences and opportunities for growth. He is truly a blessing to the children he cares for." A current employee explained, "Pat has a heart of gold! He's always thinking about others. Watching him work with kids and seeing how much they feel loved and cared for is so precious! Working and learning from him has been an honor!"

A colleague shared that "Pat is a natural with young children. He exudes a sense of calm in what can be a stressful childcare environment. I am especially impressed by the way he uses his tremendous musical talent in his lessons and his use of songs to shape the tone of the group of children in his care. He magically uses music as a tool to calm a rowdy bunch or to support transitions from one activity to the next. I believe that many of the songs were written by Pat as well."

A former manager said, "Pat Stack has brought joy, peace, and stability to the lives of countless children and their families. Pat's childlike sense of wonder and play are the main assets that he brings to his job. When he's not riffing with the children on his guitar, he can be seen marching a platoon of children on strenuous hikes that often cover several miles; uphill both ways of course. My own children keenly remember their time with Pat though they have not been in his care for several years. Pat has impacted several generations of young lives through his unique talent, vision and approach to child care. He is truly one of a kind."

Another parent mentioned that as a toddler, her son formed friendships that are still going strong today and the boys are currently supporting each other through the tough middle school years.

One parent shared, “My daughter began attending the Peace Health Child Care Center in 2011, when she was four years old. My daughter would often experience separation anxiety when I would drop her off, but Mr. Pat was always there to greet her with a warm hug and an activity to make her feel at ease. He quickly became “her favorite” and they made jokes that she was his shadow, never leaving his side. When asked what my daughter wanted to be when she grew up her answer was simple, she wanted to be Mr. Pat!” Another parent shared a similar story about how Pat would go the extra mile, holding and rocking her colicky daughter as needed, for hours on end and he would call her at work when it was time to nurse. Pat is known to graciously accept children with challenging behavior and he employs practical strategies to keep them in his care; he understands the trauma of expulsion and works closely with families and service providers, as appropriate.

Another parent said, “I am constantly impressed with his compassion for the children and their needs, passion for what he does, his ever positive attitude, and amazing ability to juggle the crazy schedule. He is easy to talk to, warm, open, and genuine. He makes my child and all of the other children feel special every day.”

Pat’s strength of character is seen through the many examples discussed, but a thirteen year old boy who was in his care for over eight years summed it up best. He said, “I think I got involved in music because Pat used to play guitar a lot. I don’t think I am doing music now because I want to be just like him, but I think my conscience learned that good people do music and that helped me decide to learn to play.”