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About Kessler Foundation:

- Kessler Foundation is one of the largest non-profit organizations supporting people with disabilities.
- Kessler Foundation's mission is to improve quality of life for people with disabilities through discovery, innovation, demonstration, application, and dissemination. The organization's vision is to be a leader in rehabilitation research and grantmaking to improve independence and productivity for people with disabilities.
- Kessler Foundation has two divisions: Kessler Foundation Research Center and Kessler Foundation Program Center.

Kessler Foundation Research Center:

- Kessler Foundation Research Center focuses on improving quality of life by developing interventions that help the rehabilitation of people with **physical** and **cognitive** disabilities caused by stroke, traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, and other musculoskeletal and neurological conditions.
- Research is conducted in six specialized laboratories that often collaborate to devise optimal solutions to obstacles to functioning well in the community. Each of these laboratories has expert staff and state-of-the-art equipment and is actively engaged in conducting studies in different aspects of rehabilitation research: Human Performance and Engineering, Neuropsychology & Neuroscience, Spinal Cord Injury Research, Stroke Rehabilitation Research, Outcomes & Assessment Research, and Traumatic Brain Injury Research. The research endeavors of Kessler Foundation Research Center receive support from competitive grants from a variety of governmental and nongovernmental sources, as well as Kessler Foundation.
- Kessler Foundation's researchers work closely with the patients and staff at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation to identify the needs of people undergoing rehabilitation and to recruit participants for its clinical studies.
- Kessler Foundation Research Center, in conjunction with the Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at University of Medicine and Dentistry-New Jersey Medical School, offers fellowship training for scientists and clinicians who are committed to careers in rehabilitation research.

Kessler Foundation Program Center:

- Kessler Foundation Program Center focuses on solutions to address the persistently high rates of unemployment among people with disabilities. Through strategic funding and philanthropic leadership, Kessler Foundation has invested more than \$20 million in programs to increase the participation of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. Creating job opportunities through development, placement, employer education, and social enterprise has enabled greater independence and economic self-sufficiency.

Grant Programs:

- **Signature Employment Grants** fund pilot initiatives, demonstration projects, and social ventures that have the potential to reduce the high rates of unemployment and underemployment among people with disabilities. Grants range from \$100,000 to \$250,000 with a maximum of \$500,000 over 2 years.
- **Community Employment Grants** support projects, programs, pilot initiatives, capacity building, and creative solutions that focus on job placement, education, training, and retention for employment and career opportunities for people with disabilities primarily in New Jersey. These 1-year grants range from \$20,000 to \$50,000.
- **Special Initiative Grants** are invitation-only grants for projects and organizations that fulfill needs for special transportation and adaptive technology, educate the public about injury prevention, or offer opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in recreational activities and sports. These 1-year grants range from \$20,000 to \$50,000. Two recipients are *ThinkFirst* and *WheelBlazers*.

ThinkFirst is a community-based K-12 program that promotes positive attitudes and behaviors that reduce the risk of traumatic, disabling injury and fosters greater sensitivity and respect for people with disabilities. *ThinkFirst* is coordinated by a nurse educator who specializes in spinal cord injury. The program's message is reinforced by people with spinal cord injury--*ThinkFirst* Voice for Injury Prevention (VIP) speakers--who discuss their personal experiences with the physical, social, and financial realities of living with a disability.

WheelBlazers is a competitive racing team that provides an opportunity for wheelchair athletes to be a part of an organized sports team. Coaches, instructors, and trained volunteers work with the wheelchair racers who are high school age and older with all levels of experience and capability.

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