

2011 ANNUAL REPORT



Our vision

Kessler Foundation leads the way in linking science and grantsmanship so that people with disabilities can lead more productive, independent, and fulfilling lives.

Our mission

The mission of Kessler Foundation is to improve quality of life for people with disabilities through discovery, innovation, demonstration, application, and dissemination.

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About the cover: Laurie Kammer, one of the first six participants in Kessler Foundation's weeklong Ekso trial, got out of her wheelchair and took steps in the robotic exoskeleton. Read more on page 8.

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President's Letter

Dear Friends,

Kessler Foundation is proud to be recognized as a national leader in rehabilitation research and disability employment initiatives. In 2011, we gained support for our research, expanded our international collaborations, and made strategic investments in the newest technologies.

Renewal of the five-year federal grant for the Northern New Jersey Spinal Cord Injury Model System made us one of six centers to have model systems in spinal cord injury and traumatic brain injury—both critical areas of research. Investment in new robotic technology has expanded our research to improve the mobility and health of individuals with spinal cord injury. This report highlights the remarkable progress of patients with spinal cord injury who are testing Ekso, the new robotic exoskeleton made by Ekso Bionics, and Hocoma's newest robotic treadmill training device, the LokomatPro v6.

Using software developed at the University of Southern California, Kessler Foundation added a virtual reality

component to its cognitive research in multiple sclerosis and traumatic brain injury. Foundation stroke scientists founded the Network for Spatial Neglect, a unique initiative to raise awareness of hidden disabilities that impede recovery from stroke.

Recognizing that collaborative efforts spur progress, Kessler Foundation formed new affiliations with rehabilitation specialists in China and Spain, and extended its work in research and training in Italy and Portugal.

In 2011, the reach of our Program Center's grant making expanded beyond the New Jersey area. Signature Employment Grants were awarded to five innovative projects around the country that will create or promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities. For the year, \$2.7 million in grants were distributed to employment and recreational programs for individuals with disabilities, bringing our total to more than \$25 million in six years. As a result, we are seeing more people with disabilities integrate into the workplace and be recognized by their employers for their skills and dedication.

To build upon our strengths, the Foundation is adding a national expert in vocational rehabilitation research, as well as a new director of Human Performance & Engineering Research and a new assistant director for Stroke Rehabilitation Research. Because neuroimaging is essential to understanding how the brain functions when challenged by injury and disease, work is underway on a state of the art imaging center. In 2013, this center will greatly expand the scope and pace of our research.

Thank you for sharing in the Foundation's achievements and contributing to our success. Please stay informed by visiting our website and Facebook pages, which feature our news, events, and updates.

Sincerely,
Rodger L. DeRose
President & CEO



Research Update 2011

ADVANCING REHABILITATION RESEARCH

In 2011, we achieved important milestones that further establish Kessler Foundation as a leader in rehabilitation research.

Under the leadership of John DeLuca, PhD, Vice President for Research and Training, the Foundation increased external funding, formed new collaborations, and invested in new technology, which enabled further advances in clinical research in cognitive and physical rehabilitation. Through research, we continued to discover new ways to restore function for people with spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, stroke, multiple sclerosis, and other neuromuscular conditions.

GAINING SUPPORT FOR CLINICAL STUDIES

Despite the increasingly competitive economic environment, more than \$3 million in external grant funding was awarded to scientists at Kessler Foundation in 2011, triple the amount awarded just eight years before. Our research and training programs received broad-based funding from device manufacturers, private foundations, public charities such as the National MS Society and National Stroke Association, and state and federal agencies.

In 2011, Kessler Foundation was awarded a five-year Spinal Cord Injury Model System grant, allowing scientists to build on two decades of research conducted by the Northern New Jersey SCI System (NNJSCIS). With this renewal of support from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, the Foundation continues to collaborate with 13 other model systems across the nation to improve care and quality of life for people living with spinal cord injury. In an exciting new NNJSCIS study,

scientists will look at whether the medication Dalfampridine may improve walking in people whose mobility is impaired by spinal cord injury. Dalfampridine is of interest to our scientists because it has been shown to improve walking in individuals with multiple sclerosis. The NNJSCIS is co-directed by Trevor Dyson-Hudson, MD, interim director of SCI Research at Kessler Foundation, and Steven Kirshblum, MD, medical director of Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation.

The Foundation continued to work closely with Kessler Institute on model system research in traumatic brain injury in addition to spinal cord injury. Kessler Foundation is now one of only six centers in the US to have model systems of care for both spinal cord injury and traumatic brain injury (TBI). The federally funded model systems are a network of regional centers that perform collaborative research aimed at improving care and quality of life for individuals with SCI and TBI. Kessler Foundation contributes to this important goal through NNJSCIS and Northern New Jersey TBI Model System (NNJT BIS). Through national collaborative research, the model system collects patient data that help identify obstacles to recovery and devise strategies for solutions. The NNJT BIS is directed by Nancy Chiaravalloti, PhD, who also serves as director of Neuropsychology & Neuroscience Research.

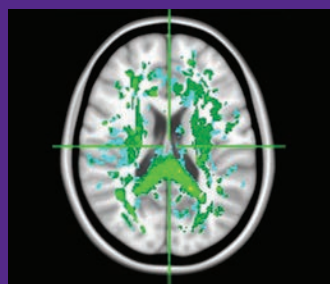
IMPROVING OUTCOMES IN REHABILITATION

Kessler Foundation scientists recognize the importance of cognitive rehabilitation in recovery from stroke and brain injury, and in adapting to the effects of multiple sclerosis on thinking, learning, and remembering. With traumatic brain injury as the signature wound of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, finding the best ways to help individuals recover from brain injury and reintegrate into society remains a top research priority. Our researchers looked at the factors that minimize the risk for cognitive problems as well as new types of effective, accessible rehabilitation that may improve quality of life for patients and their caregivers.

Understanding how multiple sclerosis, brain injury, and stroke affect the brain's ability to think, learn, and remember is fundamental to strategizing new therapies. Foundation researchers use neuroimaging techniques to compare the

brain function of patients to that of healthy volunteers.

Advanced neuroimaging has enabled them to extend their investigation to correlating improvements in cognition with changes in brain activity during learning and memory tasks. Documenting that behavioral changes correspond with changes in the brain, as seen on functional MRI, is added proof that these strategies are effective. Showing that brain function changes along with behavior will help cognitive therapy become an integral part of rehabilitation and support efforts to gain reimbursement for patients.



Neuroimaging enables researchers to correlate brain activity with behavior.

RESTORING MEMORY

Because difficulties with memory complicate daily living for many with brain injury, stroke, and multiple sclerosis, memory research remains a major activity at Kessler Foundation. Progress was reported with a memory retraining study conducted in individuals with multiple sclerosis. Using a method called The Modified Story Technique, researchers demonstrated that people who participated in ten training sessions over five weeks had memory improvement. For the first time, neuroimaging data documented that the memory improvement was accompanied by increases in brain activation during performance of a memory task. “These findings add to our understanding of memory processes in multiple sclerosis,” said Dr. DeLuca, “and will help us determine effective interventions for cognitive rehabilitation.”

Because functional MRI has emerged as an essential tool in cognitive neuroscience research, in 2011 the Foundation made a major commitment to found a neuroimaging center dedicated to rehabilitation research. Installation of a state-of-the-art scanner at Kessler Foundation is scheduled for 2013. As one of the only scanners in the state dedicated solely to research, much faster progress is anticipated in this area of research.

WITHSTANDING INJURY AND DISEASE

Brain fitness has emerged as an important factor in how people cope with the effects of injuries and disorders that affect the brain. There is evidence that people who live intellectually enriching lifestyles fare better when dealing with such challenges. Foundation researchers tested this concept, called the theory of cognitive reserve, in people with multiple sclerosis, who frequently experience cognitive decline. In 2011, Foundation researchers documented that cognitive reserve applies to people with multiple sclerosis, a novel finding with important implications for treatment and future research. James F. Sumowski, PhD, research scientist at Kessler Foundation, found that cognitive reserve was the critical factor in determining the level of cognitive function and the extent of cognitive decline, instead of the level of brain damage. Some individuals with multiple sclerosis have marked brain atrophy without cognitive decline, while those with less brain atrophy may have greater decline. “Now we can advise people that staying in school, being active, and using their bodies and brains will stave off cognitive decline,” said Dr. DeLuca. “These are important findings with global implications for the care of patients with multiple sclerosis.”

Neuroscience researchers also received a major grant to examine the impact of cognitive reserve in people with traumatic brain injury. This \$379,000 grant was awarded to Denise Krch, PhD, and James Sumowski, PhD, by the New Jersey Commission on Brain Injury Research.

“Our goal is to predict which individuals with brain injury are at risk for cognitive decline,” said Dr. Chiaravalloti, “and develop strategies that reduce their risk for cognitive problems.” Dr. Chiaravalloti is a co-investigator on the study, along with research scientists Glenn Wylie, DPhil, and Jean Lengenfelder, PhD.

COLLABORATING HERE...

The Foundation’s contributions to scientific research, measured by articles, books, chapters, and presentations, continue to rise, exceeding 200 publications and presentations in 2011. Researchers participated in scientific programs in Austria, Ireland, France, Italy, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Spain, and Chile. Ongoing collaborations were established with leaders in science, education, and technology here and abroad.



James F. Sumowski (center), PhD, along with Glenn R. Wylie (left), DPhil, Nancy Chiaravalloti, PhD, and John DeLuca, PhD, of Kessler Foundation found that cognitive reserve and having a mentally active lifestyle prevent problems with thinking, learning, and memory in people with multiple sclerosis. The cognitive reserve theory is now being tested in individuals with traumatic brain injury.

With software developed by the University of Southern California’s Center for Creative Technologies, the Foundation is incorporating virtual reality into cognitive and mobility research, toward the eventual goal of developing the evidence base for accessible home-based rehabilitation. In cognitive research, Virtual Office 2011 offers a means of assessing the cognitive abilities of individuals with multiple sclerosis or brain injury in realistic settings. In physical rehabilitation research, Microsoft Kinect-based software (the ICT-developed Flexible Action and Articulated Skeleton Toolkit (FAAST)) will be tested in upper extremity and balance impairment research in SCI, TBI, and stroke. “This collaboration will enable us to assess patients in controllable interactive virtual environments and test rehabilitation



Kessler Foundation began a partnership with the University of Southern California to incorporate virtual reality technology into its traumatic brain injury and multiple sclerosis studies. Participants will complete tasks in a virtual office environment before and after treatment to assess changes in daily function.

interventions in settings that reflect the challenges of everyday life,” noted Dr. DeLuca. “Understanding the impact of disability on everyday life will help us devise ways to overcome those challenges.”

Kessler Foundation continued to contribute to the NeuroRecovery Network (NRN), a national network of six facilities offering locomotor training for spinal cord injury under the auspices of the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation and the University of Louisville in Kentucky. Kessler Foundation has documented the progress of more than 200 patients with spinal cord injuries recruited through its partnership with Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation. This intensive program of treadmill training is benefiting patients with a range of spinal cord injuries, demonstrating the plasticity inherent in the human nervous system. “Our results show that with intensive therapy, mobility can often be regained, even after years of paralysis,” noted Gail Forrest, PhD, senior research scientist. Dr. Forrest serves as director of the Kessler NRN site, which provides specialized training programs in locomotor training for therapists from around the country.

Research in functional electrical stimulation continued to progress at Kessler Foundation. Dr. Forrest studied how this type of stimulation can be used to augment other types of therapy used for spinal cord injury. Karen Nolan, PhD, research scientist, expanded her ongoing clinical study comparing orthotics with WalkAide in patients with foot drop caused by weakness after stroke. WalkAide, a device made by Innovative Neurotronics, applies functional electrical stimulation to aid movement of the weakened leg and improve walking patterns. “If therapy using WalkAide is shown to be effective, this may expand the options for people working to regain mobility after stroke,” said Dr. Nolan. Multiple centers are involved in this clinical study, which may support reimbursement by insurers.

Kessler Foundation supports innovative research that has the potential to change the way we think about spinal cord injury. Loss of function has been long considered permanent for people with paralysis, but that is changing. At the University of Louisville in Kentucky, researchers have reported dramatic results in a young man paralyzed by spinal cord



Eric LeGrand, who was paralyzed during an Army-Rutgers football game, is participating in locomotor training research at Kessler Foundation. Eric is one of many individuals with spinal cord injury who are benefitting from this program of intensive activity-based therapy offered at six centers in the US.

injury. They combined intensive locomotor training with an electrical stimulator implanted in his spine. Delivering electrical stimulation during therapy enabled him to stand on his own after years in a wheelchair. Kessler Foundation provided funding so that this experimental approach could be tested in two more people. Documenting that this combination approach is capable of restoring function is likely to spur new avenues of SCI research.

Stroke rehabilitation researchers at Kessler Foundation networked with colleagues around the world to focus attention on the serious obstacles faced by people with cognitive disabilities that go undiagnosed after stroke. These hidden disabilities often hinder the ability of stroke survivors to think, learn, communicate, and navigate through the environment. Often overshadowed by readily recognizable disabilities like paralysis, hidden disabilities represent a significant challenge to recovery.



Kessler Foundation is studying how prism goggles help treat spatial neglect, a common hidden disability caused by stroke that results in individuals having difficulty recognizing the accurate location of objects. Prism goggles bring the field of vision back to the neglected side. Spatial neglect increases the risk of accidents and, in turn, limits independence.

At Kessler Foundation, the objectives are to raise awareness of the hidden disability known as spatial neglect, develop guidelines for diagnosis, and investigate therapeutic interventions. In collaboration with clinicians at Kessler Institute, the Network for Spatial Neglect was founded in 2011 under the leadership of A.M. Barrett, MD, director of Stroke Rehabilitation Research at Kessler Foundation. This Network enlists the help of scientists and clinicians around the world to lessen the impact of hidden disabilities on recovery from stroke.

...AND ABROAD

In partnership with the Santa Lucia Foundation in Rome, the Foundation is expanding knowledge of the clinical course of multiple sclerosis. Dr. DeLuca is exploring the Santa Lucia Foundation's extensive database of patients with multiple sclerosis, correlating clinical symptoms of multiple sclerosis with changes on functional MRI. Initial

findings were published jointly in 2011 by Dr. DeLuca and Italian neurologist Ugo Nocentini, MD, in the journal *NeuroRehabilitation*.

Scientists from China visited Kessler Foundation in 2011 to learn more about advancing and expanding rehabilitation through collaborative research. Large numbers of people with disabilities are spread across vast areas in China, complicating access to needed rehabilitative care. This new collaboration will develop the capability to remotely deliver effective rehabilitation based on Kessler Foundation's cognitive and mobility research. Initial efforts are focused on developing a method for delivering memory rehabilitation to people with TBI, stroke, and MS who are unable to travel to a facility. This method would also be adapted for use in the US. The plan is to extend the scope of this collaboration to long-distance physical rehabilitation in China as well, through innovative use of new technologies.

Kessler Foundation's international reputation extends to its training programs in rehabilitation research. "The influence of Kessler Foundation on the next generation of rehabilitation researchers is evidenced by the success of those who have trained here," said Dr. DeLuca. In 2011, Juan Carlos Arango-Lasparilla, PhD, received the prestigious National Academy of Neuropsychology's Early Career Award. Dr. Arango-Lasparilla, who was educated in Spain and South America, did his postdoctoral fellowship at Kessler Foundation. Now at Virginia Commonwealth University, he continues to build on the training that contributes to his success. Interested in cultural influences on health and healthcare, he is studying the impact of brain injury in Hispanic communities. "Dr. Arango-Lasparilla is just one of the graduates of our post-doctoral training programs who have dedicated their careers to improving the lives of others through rehabilitation research," noted Dr. DeLuca.

Research fellowships are supported by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research, the National MS Society, the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation, and Kessler Foundation. In 2011, the Foundation named two Mitchell Rosenthal Memorial Fellows in Traumatic Brain Injury, Starla Weaver, PhD, and Irene Christofori, PhD. These competitive two-year fellowships honor Mitchell Rosenthal, PhD, who was the Foundation's vice president of research when he

passed away in 2007. Dr. Rosenthal, an early pioneer in the field of traumatic brain injury, furthered clinical exploration and therapeutic practice. He was influential in the founding of the National Head Injury Foundation (now the Brain Injury Association of America), the creation of the Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation, the development of the national TBI Model System, and the establishment of the diplomate status in Rehabilitation Psychology. The Rosenthal fellowships prepare clinician-scientists for research careers in brain injury rehabilitation.



Starla Weaver (center), PhD, was awarded a Mitchell Rosenthal Memorial Fellowship by Kessler Foundation. She is studying ways to improve cognitive function in individuals with traumatic brain injury. She works with Nancy Chiaravalloti (left), PhD, director of Neuropsychology & Neuroscience Research, Helen Genova (right), PhD, research scientist, and other researchers at Kessler Foundation.

As part of ongoing collaborations, Kessler Foundation is providing training for young scientists from Italy, Portugal, and China who are interested in expanding their careers in rehabilitation research.

INVESTING IN THE NEWEST TECHNOLOGY

The Foundation's drive to restore function and mobility for people with disabilities progressed more rapidly in 2011 as a result of investments in the latest devices produced by two leaders in assistive technology—Hocoma in Switzerland and Ekso Bionics in the US.

In the spring of 2011, the Foundation was the first center in the US to install the LokomatPro v6, the newest model of Hocoma's advanced robotic treadmill training system. Used in patients with spinal cord injury, the LokomatPro v6 integrates a treadmill, harness, robotic leg supports, and augmented

feedback to optimize the therapy experience. Under the leadership of Dr. Forrest, data are being collected on patients receiving therapy on the LokomatPro v6 and shared with Hocoma's engineers. This enables rapid adaptation of the software to maximize recovery of function for patients with spinal cord injury and other mobility disorders. Through its growing expertise in mobility research, Kessler Foundation is enhancing the applications for these robotic devices in gait training and rehabilitation.

Kessler Foundation is one of ten partners that is testing the safety and efficacy of Ekso, the robotic exoskeleton made by Ekso Bionics. During a pilot study conducted in October 2011, six patients paralyzed by spinal cord injury stood and walked for the first time since their injuries. This exciting development was chronicled on Kessler Foundation's YouTube channel in a video seen by more than 60,000 viewers. Our cover story highlights the memorable accomplishments of some of these patients who were told they would never walk again.

Kessler Foundation was the first center in the country to receive the LokomatPro v6, made by Hocoma to improve the mobility and health of individuals with mobility impairments.

The LokomatPro uses robotic technology to move an individual's legs over a treadmill. The v6 provides more natural hip flexion, adjustable pressure distribution and speed, and augmentative feedback to allow users to see how they would be walking in a virtual environment. Participants can also see how much strength they are contributing to the movement to increase motivation.





Their First Steps

Measured and strapped in, she sat in anticipation. Ready and waiting for what felt like a lifetime. Then the countdown, “three, two, one.” She leaned forward with her chest almost parallel to the floor, pushed up on the walker, and stood.

This was the experience of all six participants with spinal cord injury who took their first steps in Ekso—a wearable, robotic, battery-powered exoskeleton made by Ekso Bionics. Kessler Foundation was one of ten rehabilitation centers in the nation to partner with Ekso Bionics to conduct preliminary testing on the device in October 2011.

Just four months prior, Laurie Kammer (on the cover) was paralyzed from the waist down when she fell 15 feet from a tree. While in rehabilitation, she cried every time she saw her motionless feet on the ground, unable to feel them.

Then Laurie was chosen to participate in the week-long Ekso trial. In addition to assessing standing and walking in the device, researchers had begun looking at effects on circulation, bone, and muscle. At Kessler Foundation, mobility research emphasizes the impact of new approaches on the many health problems faced by people with spinal cord injury. What does walking and standing mean for people with paralysis? This is the question that Gail Forrest, PhD, senior research scientist at Kessler Foundation, seeks to answer. Dr. Forrest began her research with Laurie and five other patients with different types of spinal cord injuries.

On the first day, Laurie used the Ekso with a walker. But she quickly moved on to using bilateral crutches. Within the five-day period, she felt she could move more easily and had improved bowel and bladder function.

With every step she took, her father beamed with pride. For the week, he never left her side and he tried to record every moment. “I was in a state of awe and I just kept thinking, ‘We’re all doing something so important and so big right now,’” exclaimed Laurie. “I could picture my future with each step I took.”

Michael Loura, 42, father of two young girls, had a similar experience. While training for a big bicycle race, Michael was hit by a car. Paralyzed from the waist down, it seemed his plans to dance with his daughters at their weddings were over.

As he took each step in Ekso, Michael realized that those father-daughter dances could become reality. “I know this is just the first step, but the technology can only get better,” Michael stated.

Of the six patients tested, Michael Rhode, 45, had the highest level of injury—C6-C7 thoracic quadriplegia. With paralysis and limited hand and trunk function, he didn’t know what to expect when he tried Ekso. Injured while working in ski patrol, Michael returned to the sport through adaptive skiing. He applied the same determination to his experience with Ekso.

He stood, and without hesitation, he took his first steps. “I was afraid of feeling like a bag of bones when I stood in Ekso,” he said. “But then I stood and just started walking. I felt very stable. I was so excited to be walking on my own two feet, walking naturally. It was one of the most unbelievable feelings

I’ve ever had.” Michael took 520 steps during his first session in Ekso. “If I can use it, with my high level of injury, it opens the technology up to a very large population.”

Dr. Forrest summarized the initial testing, “Our initial testing clearly showed that with some assistance, patients with different levels of spinal cord injuries can walk with Ekso. At Kessler Foundation, we will continue to look not just at mobility and the functional element of the Ekso, but the impact of mobility on serious health issues. Do walking and standing improve bone and muscle strength, circulation, cardiovascular and respiratory function, skin integrity, mood, and even bowel and bladder function? These are the really important issues we want to explore for people in wheelchairs, whether their impairment is caused by spinal cord injury or stroke, multiple sclerosis, or brain injury.”

Studies on Ekso continued in early 2012 when Kessler Foundation received the commercial device. The collaboration between the Foundation and Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation allows innovative treatments to be brought to the patients and enables therapists and scientists to work together to determine the needs of patients. While studying how individuals respond to Ekso, Kessler will be at the forefront of developing technology as they make suggestions for improvement to the manufacturer. As Foundation scientists develop protocols to determine who will benefit from the therapy and examine its value as a viable rehabilitation technique worthy of insurance reimbursement, more and more individuals will experience taking their first steps.



Despite Michael Rhode having the highest level of injury to ever try the Ekso, he walked in Ekso without hesitation. His ability expands the use of the device to individuals with tetraplegia.



When triathlete Michael Loura was hit by a car while training for a bicycle race, his young daughters asked how they would have a father-daughter dance at their weddings. While this is just the “first step,” he can see how the dance they always dreamed of is within reach.



Program Center Update 2011

“Kessler Foundation’s goal is to award grants to programs that not only provide employment opportunities to people with disabilities, but also create long-term change. The only way real change occurs is through collaboration with other organizations that share in our commitment to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. We’re proud of our collaborators and grantees that find employment for individuals with disabilities throughout all industries, furthering their involvement in their communities.”

— Elaine E. Katz, Vice President of Grants and Special Initiatives

COLLABORATION THROUGH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

- In 2011, Kessler Foundation extended eligibility for its Signature Employment Grants—its largest grants—to projects across the country. Grants were awarded to employment programs in Alaska, Florida, Hawaii, Massachusetts, and New Jersey. These five innovative projects support self-employment, telecommuting, virtual job development, document management, and an innovative team approach to job placement. Three of the programs serve individuals with brain injury, including veterans.
- Kessler Foundation also partnered with the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University to publish a series of papers focused on work-related issues of importance to individuals with disabilities, including asset accumulation. Elaine Katz participated in a webinar on the topic she co-authored with Ronnie Kauder, from the Heldrich Center: *Social Enterprise Businesses: A Strategy for Creating Good Jobs for People with Disabilities*. They also presented this paper with grantees at the Garden State Employment and Training Conference.



Kessler Foundation awarded Hudson Community Enterprises (HCE) its third Signature Employment Grant to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Based in Jersey City, NJ, HCE is growing its shredding, scanning, and full document service social enterprise business. HCE currently employs more than 90 individuals with disabilities in all career levels at their Jersey City and Newark locations.

- Wendie Blanchard, founder of Arthur & Friends, had the distinct honor of receiving the NJ Heroes Award, presented by First Lady Mary Pat Christie, for her commitment to help people with disabilities become self-sufficient members of the community. Kessler Foundation provided seed funding to help launch this successful social enterprise. Wendie accepted the award with her nephew, Arthur, the inspiration for this greenhouse project.

Arthur & Friends program participants are individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities. They grow produce hydroponically in greenhouses, gaining work experience and earning market wages. By selling produce to local businesses, they raise awareness of the skills of people with disabilities. Arthur & Friends, which was featured in the Food and Dining section of *The New York Times*, now has three greenhouses in New Jersey and its model is being adopted in other states. “In this economy, we need to provide new jobs in an economically, environmentally, and socially responsible way,” said Wendie. “Our success has been built with the generosity, collaboration, and support of many to whom we are ever so grateful. What began as a dream became a vision, a pilot, then a model, a regional New Jersey program, and now a national movement.”

- Kessler Foundation awarded a Signature Employment Grant to launch Project Connect—a collaborative effort of Jewish Employment Vocational Service (JEVS), Jewish Vocational Service, and Tip of the Arrow, a non-profit organization founded by and serving veterans—for veterans and military personnel in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Project Connect works closely with veterans to ensure that they receive support services and medical care to help them be part of the community and return to work. Employment services include vocational skills assessments, transition preparation, referrals for skills training, and internships if needed, and job placement. In one year, 24 veterans have been successfully placed in employment and some have already been promoted as they are assets to the workplace. “[Veterans] need to

feel the skills and vocational experiences they acquired in the military are valued in civilian life and will enable them to provide for their families and continue to make a contribution to society through their work,” said Jamie Kelly, director of Employment Services at JEVs. “Our program not only connects them to jobs, it connects them to other people who value their contributions. As a result, quality of life improves for individuals who complete the program’s services and become successful in employment.”



Sergeant John Irwin, who survived a traumatic brain injury in the line of duty, found meaningful employment through Project Connect. He also volunteers his time to place other veterans in full-time positions.

Sergeant John Irwin, who was awarded the Purple Heart for his second tour in Iraq, benefited from Project Connect. He filled the position of Veterans Field Representative for Congressman Pallone’s (NJ-6) office in April 2012. “Since leaving the Army, I have worked through issues with traumatic brain injury, post traumatic stress disorder, and other physical injuries. All this combined made me feel helpless and depressed,” explained Sgt. Irwin. “Once I started working again, my self image changed. Having children also gave me the drive to excel and provide for my family. As I have worked through the ranks and moved up in positions of responsibility, I came to the realization that we all have it in us to overcome our obstacles.” He also volunteers for Tip of the Arrow to help others find employment and adjust to society; he has helped place 20 veterans in jobs.

- A Community Employment Grant enabled Employment Horizons, a non-profit organization in Cedar Knolls, to add a business focused curriculum in culinary arts to its employment training programs. Through its Culinary Arts Skills Training program, individuals are taught skills and standard operating procedures in the food service industry, using cookware and kitchen equipment, sanitation, safety, cold and hot food preparation, food presentation, serving skills, stock and product storage,

and customer service. These skills are transferrable to many jobs in the food industry. While looking for employment, these newly trained individuals put their new skills to work in Café Horizons, which serves more than 150 people daily. Trainees plan the menu—including healthful options—prepare the food, load the shelves, serve the customers, and keep the setting clean. Thanks to Kessler Foundation’s grant, Café Horizons is open for business five days a week. The program also offers catering services. One person benefitting from the program is Patti, a 30-year veteran of the food industry. Patti lost her job in a corporate cafeteria when the business relocated. She is now employed at Café Horizons and uses her years of experience to help her fellow workers.



Patti enjoys putting her cafeteria skills and experience to work in Café Horizon.

“The latest grant by Kessler Foundation continues the extensive support the Foundation has shown Employment Horizons to advancing employment for people with disabilities. Wages earned in the program and through community job placements promote self-sufficiency. Community employment is a facilitator of social inclusion, both in and out of work,” said Mark Stephenson, assistant executive director at Employment Horizons. “Since we received the Community Employment Grant, we have been able to expand the culinary arts program and increased

the café's hours of operation so that more individuals can regularly gain hands on experience and grow their skills."

Foundation funding has enabled the Culinary Arts Skills Training program to expand its menu options so trainees learn a broad range of food preparation. Soon, Café Horizons will also be open for breakfast. The program also plans to open a retail outlet. In this growing program, individuals with disabilities experience the satisfaction of meaningful work, earning a paycheck, and becoming self-sufficient.

COLLABORATION THROUGH THE ARTS

- Society focuses on what it believes a person can't do. It assumes that a person with limited arm movement or a cognitive disability can't be an artist. Kessler Foundation funds programs like Artistic Realization Technologies (A.R.T.) that change these views.

At A.R.T., individuals who are unable to hold a paintbrush and have no art experience are given total creative control. Using laser trackers, they guide able-bodied individuals to the exact location to start painting. By controlling the tracker and pointing to color selections, they paint. Often for the first time, these individuals are in control instead of being told what to do.

"A.R.T. hands over total control to individuals with severe physical challenges," said Tim Lefens, executive director of A.R.T. "It is the first and only approach we know of that demonstrates a population of fellow humans are far more capable than those around them perceive them to be. We have worked with many individuals who clinicians say cannot link with language or abstract thinking, and within five minutes using A.R.T., the individual obliterates this misperception."



It's much like directing a movie with a cameraman capturing the scenes. Their paintings are their creations and designs. Through A.R.T., emerging artists find career paths and market their work. Kessler Foundation helps support A.R.T.'s main center in Princeton, NJ. In total, A.R.T. has 27 satellite studios across the nation.



- City Without Walls, a program in Newark, NJ supporting young artists and contemporary art, received a Special Initiatives Grant from Kessler Foundation. The funding enabled students with disabilities to create a dramatic mural for a brick building in downtown Newark. Eight youngsters with physical disabilities created the concept and design for the mural, entitled "Still Eye Rise."

All participated regardless of disability. Those unable to hold a paintbrush used a brush attached to a helmet and painted with their heads. Each artist painted a separate section of the mural. When complete, the sections were mounted to the building to create the mural.

Supporting programs such as City Without Walls enables young people with disabilities to learn how to work as a team and build their skills. These qualities prepare them for employment and make them marketable to employers.

Raphael Garcia, whose artwork is shown, discovered his amazing artistic abilities at A.R.T. and has attracted the attention of the media through his work. He now attends college, is an advocate for raising awareness of the opportunities for people with disabilities, and speaks at conferences around the country.

COLLABORATION THROUGH SPORTS



Wilson Nyakoko had been trying to compete in the US for three years, so he was overjoyed when he heard that Kessler Foundation would sponsor his trip. "I enjoy racing because I learn a lot, see all different parts of the world, and meet others who think about life in the same way. Like everyone else, when I have an interest in something, I have to do everything I can to make my dreams come true."

- With the help of Foundation sponsorship, Patrick Obeng from Ghana and Wilson Nyakoko from Zimbabwe competed in Kessler Foundation's 11th Annual Wheelchair 10K as part of the Fred D'Elia Ridgewood Run. For African racers with disabilities, reaching the Paralympics—an international sporting event for the best athletes with disabilities that takes place immediately following the Olympics—is nearly impossible because it requires logging a set number of competitive racing hours to qualify. "Without Kessler Foundation, I wouldn't be here," said Patrick, who lost a leg in a car accident. "I'm hoping that racing here will help me reach the Paralympics for the first time in my eleven years of racing." Patrick went on to compete in Minnesota and the U.S. Paralympic Track and Field Championships in Florida, where he competed in the 5,000 meter and won gold!

Wilson, who was born with spina bifida, was overcome with joy when he heard Kessler Foundation would sponsor his journey to compete in the Wheelchair 10K. "My wish is to come to the US again and learn more about adaptive sports so that I can teach young people in Zimbabwe that they can win medals in any race in the world!"

"[In Ghana], racing doesn't pay much but it keeps me strong. I do it because I love it," Patrick exclaimed. Despite not competing in a road race since 2004, he improved his time by ten minutes in the Kessler Foundation Wheelchair 10K. As he crossed the finish line in second place, a smile spread across his face as he exclaimed, "I'm so happy! I asked God to let me do my best, and I did!"

Emmanuel Ofori Yeboah came to the race to support the African athletes. Emmanuel exemplifies what is possible through sports. The first person to cycle across Ghana with one leg, his journey captured the attention of international audiences and soon his country also recognized his accomplishments. Ghana passed legislation that gives people with disabilities the right to pursue equal education, employment, and community access. "I've met many people but I've never met anyone without a head," Emmanuel declared. "As long as you have a head, you can think about tomorrow. You can do something for yourself. You can do something for others. No matter what disability you have, you are still a part of the world and can do something. When we come together, we can share so many things. The world can see what we can do to make it better."

As Patrick and Wilson crossed the finish line, they came closer to achieving their Paralympic goals and improving their lives.



Research Grants & Clinical Trials Received *January – December 2011*

Kessler Foundation received close to \$4 million in external grant funding for clinical studies and training in rehabilitation research.

Grants/Clinical Trial Name	Source of Funding	Period	Total Amount	Investigator
Applying Speed of Processing Training (SPT) to Individuals with MS	National Multiple Sclerosis Society	2011-2012	\$62,519	N. Chiaravalloti, PhD
Psychometric Endpoint Study (Industry Contract)	Biogen Idec, Inc.	2011-2011	\$305,164	J. DeLuca, PhD
Northern New Jersey Spinal Cord Injury Model System: 2011-2016	National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research	2011-2016	\$2,284,997	T. Dyson-Hudson, MD
A New Measure of Neurological and Behavioral Recovery after SCI	Craig H. Neilsen Foundation	2011-2011	\$12,700	G. Forrest, PhD
Activity-Dependent Rehabilitation Model to Improve Bone and Muscle after SCI	Craig H. Neilsen Foundation	2011-2013	\$270,084	G. Forrest, PhD
Center for Rehabilitation Research Using Large Datasets (CRRLD) Pilot Grant Award	University of Texas Medical Branch/NIH	2011-2012	\$29,999	D. Fyffe, PhD
The Development of a Blood Pressure Subdomain for the SCI-QOL	Veterans Affairs (Bronx VA)	2011-2012	\$31,346	D. Fyffe, PhD
Research Supplement to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research	Boston University/NIH	2011-2013	\$266,261	D. Fyffe, PhD
A Longitudinal Analysis of Cognitive Impairment and White Matter Damage in MS	National Multiple Sclerosis Society	2011-2012	\$43,539	H. Genova, PhD
SCIM Fellowship 2011-2012 Academic Year	Craig H. Neilsen Foundation	2011-2012	\$75,000	S. Kirshblum, MD
Neuromodulation Fellowship Grant – ITB Therapy 2011-2012 (Industry-Sponsored Fellowship)	Medtronic	2011-2012	\$15,000	S. Kirshblum, MD
Cognitive Reserve in Traumatic Brain Injury	NJ Commission on Brain Injury Research	2011-2014	\$378,917	D. Krch, PhD
Integrative Physiology of Gulf War Illness: Role of Autonomic Function, Central Neural Processing, and Sleep	Veterans Bio-Medical Research Institute (E. Orange VA)	2011-2012	\$7,500	G. Wylie, DPhil
Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine	Academy of Spinal Cord Injury Professionals	2011-2012	\$66,099	C. Murphy, PA

Total: \$3,849,125

Grants Awarded 2011

Kessler Foundation provided more than \$2.7 million in grant funding for innovative employment programs in the United States.

SIGNATURE EMPLOYMENT GRANTS

Brain Injury Association of Florida, Inc., (Tallahassee, FL)

To improve employment outcomes for individuals with moderate to severe traumatic brain injury, increase the percentage of SSI/SSDI recipients who achieve successful employment outcomes, form and train community action teams to work collaboratively with employment networks, and utilize state agency stakeholders to ensure systems change and sustainability: \$350,000.

Hudson Community Enterprises, (Jersey City, NJ)

To establish an Enterprise Content Management business in Trenton, New Jersey, which will provide persons with disabilities jobs with benefits and opportunities for advancement: \$250,000.

National Telecommuting Institute, Inc., (Boston, MA)

To conduct a telework pilot project with new employers, each of whom will commit to hire home-based individuals with disabilities in 35 targeted states: \$250,000.

University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development, (Anchorage, AK)

To develop and pilot a Customized Self-Employment Model for adults with brain injury, which will include an introduction to entrepreneurship, orientation to self-employment for families/supports, discovery and pre-employment activities, opportunities for mentor-guided self-employment exploration, and a means to create business plans and support teams: \$425,000.

University of Hawaii Office of Research Services, (Honolulu, HI)

To support "EmployAble", a model Virtual Employment Orientation and Support Center, which is a skill-building environment for people with diverse disabilities, emphasizing veterans and others with traumatic brain injuries. EmployAble will facilitate access to and provision of training, networking, mentoring, and employment resources for both persons with disabilities and employers: \$425,000.

COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT GRANTS

Advancing Opportunities, Inc., (Ewing, NJ)

To offer a supported training and employment program for transitioning graduating students with physical disabilities into the hospitality field: \$40,000.

Alternatives, Inc., (Raritan, NJ)

To provide job training and accommodation assistance to people with disabilities in a retail setting: \$25,000.

The Arc of Union County, (Springfield, NJ)

To provide community-based training and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in an ecologically conscious retail business selling discounted sports equipment: \$25,000.

The Center for Head Injury Services, (St. Louis, MO)

To continue a business with a social mission to increase employment outcomes for individuals with brain injuries and other neurological disorders through training and employment in a customized cookie bakery and delivery business, which provides the missing elements in their Work-Oriented NeuroRehabilitation Program: \$50,000.

Cheshire Home, (Florham Park, NJ)

To provide training that teaches disadvantaged young people with disabilities to use adaptive technology and gain computer proficiencies that they apply to employment and higher education: \$34,000.

Cornell University, (Ithaca, NY)

To increase employment outcomes and economic impact for veterans with disabilities in New Jersey by building benefits and work incentives planning capacity: \$50,000.

County of Middlesex, (New Brunswick, NJ)

To provide a connector to accessible bus and rail services in Middlesex County between residences, transit nodes, and employment centers in areas not served by Access Link or accessible transit services: \$48,048.

**County of Summit Developmental Disabilities Board,
(Tallmadge, OH)**

To establish “Akron Accessible Cycling,” a rental business operated by people with disabilities that provides equipment that enables individuals with disabilities to enjoy the Towpath Bike Trail with other members of the community: \$37,800.

Employment Horizons, Inc., (Cedar Knolls, NJ)

To provide people with disabilities with marketable skills in the growing Culinary Arts industry, and place them into community employment: \$35,000.

The G.I. Go Fund, Inc., (Newark, NJ)

To pilot and test an employment initiative aimed at placing disabled veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan into sustainable careers by providing counseling and training in the field of customer service: \$30,000.

**Jewish Family & Vocational Service of Middlesex County,
(Milltown, NJ)**

To provide supported employment services to veterans with traumatic brain injuries and other physical disabilities to assist in their transition to employment: \$50,000.

**Jewish Vocational Service of Metro West,
(East Orange, NJ)**

To run a two-week vocational evaluation, exploration, and transition summer program for students ages 14 to 21, with mobility and/or cognitive impairments primarily from neurological disorders: \$35,000.

LADACIN Network, (Wanamassa, NJ)

To launch a document management project, including document imaging, retention, and shredding, which offers people with disabilities competitive employment opportunities: \$40,000.

Matheny Medical and Educational Center, (Peapack, NJ)

To provide prevocational opportunities for persons served (students and adults), including collaboration with community organizations, volunteering, in-house, and community vocational opportunities and experiences: \$30,000.

**National Multiple Sclerosis Society – NJ Metro Chapter,
(Oakhurst, NJ)**

To educate and empower people with MS and other disabilities, and the people who employ them, through a one-day conference event: \$25,000.

**The New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation,
(Trenton, NJ)**

To promote and acknowledge businesses that support people with disabilities and to promote economic enterprises owned by people with disabilities: \$25,000.

New Jersey Institute for Disabilities, (Edison, NJ)

To continue the AmeriCorps Enhancement Project (AEP) that provides training, support, and paid service opportunities for 10 individuals with developmental and other related/physical disabilities: \$40,000.

New York Service for the Handicapped, (New York, NY)

To engage adolescents/young adults with physical disabilities in a six-week residential summer program, where they will receive support and training in the areas of physical independence, vocational skills, and literacy: \$40,000.

**The Washington Center for Internships & Academic
Seminars, (Washington, DC)**

To offer an internship program with federal agencies in Washington, DC, which enables students with disabilities from New Jersey to learn and develop skills, engage in productive work, and participate fully in their communities: \$25,000.

SPECIAL RESEARCH GRANTS

University of Louisville, (Louisville, KY)

To provide funding through the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation to study the effect of epidural stimulation in conjunction with locomotor training in individuals with spinal cord injury: \$250,000.

Grants Awarded cont'd

SPECIAL INITIATIVES GRANTS

Achilles International, (New York, NY)

To provide year-round opportunities for people with disabilities to train for and compete in mainstream races, including marathons: \$5,000.

Adler Aphasia Center, (Maywood, NJ)

To expand the “Something Special” gift shop of the Adler Aphasia Center, which promotes vocational and business training for people with aphasia to help them regain self-sufficiency: \$5,000.

Alliance Center for Independence, (Edison, NJ)

To support the NJ Disability Pride Parade and Celebration in downtown Trenton, New Jersey to promote the belief that disability is a natural part of human diversity, while generating national awareness for the disability community: \$1,000.

Artistic Realization Technologies, Inc., (Belle Mead, NJ)

To support current studio programs, which bring creative control to children and young adults who face severe multiple, physical, and neurological challenges: \$10,000.

ChairScholars Foundation, Inc., (Odessa, FL)

To provide college tuition support for high school seniors with severe physical disabilities who reside in the New York Metropolitan area: \$15,000.

Children’s Specialized Hospital Foundation, Inc., (Mountainside, NJ)

To support Camp Chatterbox, the only overnight week-long camp for kids with augmentative and alternative communication needs, whose purpose is to provide a recreational experience that strengthens independence, technological skills for speech-generating devices, and self-confidence: \$1,500.

Disability Education Forum of New York, Inc., (Niskayuna, NY)

To produce a collection of video stories featuring individuals with disabilities who will share successful employment experiences and mentor young people with disabilities: \$20,000.

Multiple Sclerosis Association of America, (Cherry Hill, NJ)

To provide mobility and safety items to New Jersey/Philadelphia area clients who qualify for the Association’s established Equipment Distribution Program: \$10,000.

New Jersey Department of Human Services, (Trenton, NJ)

To provide funds to emergency food assistance providers for capital improvements, enabling people with physical disabilities to access the life-sustaining services provided: \$15,000.

North Jersey Navigators, Inc., (Bayonne, NJ)

To engage young people in special recreational and competitive adaptive programs that have been specially designed to develop and enhance the mobility skills of children and youth with physical disabilities: \$15,000.

One-Revolution, (Park City, UT)

To expand the existing NameTags student education program to develop a program for corporations designed to look beyond first impressions to see the individual, with an emphasis on individuals with physical disabilities: \$20,000.

Project SEARCH, (Cincinnati, OH)

To support the annual conference in Austin, Texas, which will convene the project’s international network of partners for shared learning, networking, and fun, which is planned to assist new and existing Project SEARCH sites in executing the Project SEARCH model to its fullest potential: \$1,000.

Push to Walk (Riverdale, NJ)

To purchase new equipment (pulley system, hydraulic table, and gym floor) and provide funds for the Scholarship Program for clients with financial needs: \$15,000.

The University of Tennessee Career Opportunities for Students with Disabilities, (Knoxville, TN)

To support an overall sponsorship of the COSD 12th Annual National Conference on “Exploring Disability Inclusive Diversity”: \$5,000.

Publications by Researchers and Staff of Kessler Foundation

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Celebrating 25 Years of Changing Lives

On May 12, 2011, Kessler Foundation celebrated 25 years of changing the lives of people with disabilities, holding an elegant gala honoring individuals who made significant contributions in rehabilitation. More than 400 guests filled the ballroom of Capitale in New York. *Extra* correspondent A.J. Calloway served as the Master of Ceremonies. Governor Tom Ridge of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Congressman Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ) were the honorary co-chairs for the 25th anniversary celebration.

Rodger DeRose, president and chief executive officer of Kessler Foundation, set the tone of the evening, “Kessler Foundation is proud to carry on the legacy of Dr. Kessler, who believed in treating all mankind with dignity and respect. We are committed to helping people with disabilities thrive today and in the future through rehabilitation research and advancing employment opportunities.”

Jerry, son of Dr. Henry H. Kessler, and his wife Dorie Kessler were the first to receive the specially commissioned silver awards, created by MESHNY. The Kesslers were honored with the Special Recognition Award, a tribute for their lifelong commitment to advancing rehabilitation and helping people with disabilities. As a prosthetist, Jerry traveled the world making braces and prosthetic limbs for people in need. The couple was also involved in helping individuals with disabilities live independently and furthering their socialization through teaching them to dance. Dorie Kessler was instrumental in the Ladies Auxiliary and at one time

logged the most number of volunteer hours at Kessler Institute. Upon accepting the award from their children Richard—who serves on Kessler Foundation’s Board of Trustees—and Robin Kessler, Jerry recalled, “It’s been many years since I taught wheelchair dancing or took care of patients but Dorie and I remember vividly the individuals who shared the Kessler passion of a society where the disabled are treated as equals.”



Dr. Henry H. Kessler founded Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation in 1947 in an effort to provide rehabilitation therapy to individuals with disabling injuries and reintegrate them into their communities. Kessler Foundation emerged nearly 40 years later to advance rehabilitation research, leading the way to discover treatments for a variety of disabilities and provide funding for employment initiatives for people with disabilities. In 2003, the Foundation sold the hospital to Select Medical Corporation, a worldwide leader in medical rehabilitation and products. While under different ownership, the strong collaboration still remains today. Foundation researchers collaborate with doctors and therapists at the Institute as they develop new lines of research. Patients benefit from new discoveries by participating directly in the research studies.

Rocco Ortenzio, co-founder and executive chairman of Select Medical Corporation, had the distinct honor of receiving Kessler Foundation’s inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award, presented by Robert Ortenzio, his son and chief executive officer of the Corporation. By creating a network of rehabilitation centers and hospitals around

the country, Rocco helped make quality long-term care and medical rehabilitation accessible to people recovering from serious injuries and illnesses. “I’m grateful for the unique partnership between Kessler Foundation and Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation,” said Rocco. “Together they benefit so many lives that have been changed by devastating injury and illness. Thanks to their collective efforts, countless patients have inspired us with their remarkable recoveries.”

After Mark Pollard underwent rehabilitation at Kessler Institute for a spinal cord injury, he knew he had to be involved with Kessler Foundation. Mark, a Foundation trustee since 1988, received the Henry H. Kessler Human Dignity Award. His son, Stephen, presented the award and explained how his father never let being in a wheelchair stop him from achieving his goals—to have a family, a satisfying career, enjoy sports, and travel. Mark, a wealth manager for Merrill Lynch, declared, “I’ve always tried to help other people. My style in the disability community has been to lead by example. Understand your position and then move forward. Every day, we each have the ability to help another person be all they can be. I encourage you all to keep supporting Kessler Foundation and try to help one person every day.”

Walter Frontera, MD, PhD, became the first recipient of Kessler Foundation’s Joel A. DeLisa, MD Award for Excellence in Research and Education in the Field of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (PM&R). Throughout his career, Dr. Frontera launched departments of PM&R at Harvard University and the University of Puerto Rico, where he later served as dean of the faculty. He is also the editor-in-chief of the *American Journal of PM&R* and *DeLisa’s Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, the leading textbook in the field of PM&R.

Kessler Foundation created this award to honor Dr. DeLisa’s contributions to the field of PM&R and his role in developing Kessler Foundation Research Center. Upon retiring from Kessler Foundation in 2010, Dr. DeLisa has continued his role as professor and chair of the Department of PM&R at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.



Mark Pollard (left photo) serves as an inspiration for his family as well as Kessler Foundation’s Board of Trustees. As Stephen presented the award to his father, he commented on how Mark never let his disability stop him. Dr. Frontera (right photo) was honored to receive the inaugural Kessler Foundation DeLisa award. His two daughters accompanied him to the 25th anniversary celebration.

The annual \$50,000 award recognizes leading physicians or researchers who mentor and inspire young professionals and conduct research that can be quickly translated into improved patient care and treatment. Upon receiving the award from James K. Estabrook, Esq., chairman of the Foundation’s Board of Trustees, Dr. Frontera stated, “Joel DeLisa is one of the most distinguished members of our profession. His many contributions have touched the careers of many students, the lives of many colleagues, and the health of many patients...Kessler Foundation is one of the leading programs in rehabilitation research in the country, with a national and international reputation second to none,” said Dr. Frontera. “I could not be happier or more proud to receive this award.”

Guests were treated to a beautiful rendition of America’s national anthem by Daphne Kessler, former Miss Kentucky and wife of Richard. The New York Joint Service Color Guard presented the flags. Attendees danced to music by Platinum and mingled with New Jersey Nets center Brook Lopez and actor and disability advocate Daryl “Chill” Mitchell.

The evening raised more than \$670,000 to support and expand rehabilitation research and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. As Kessler Foundation reflects on its first 25 years, we’re honored to be at the forefront of progress for people with disabilities. We continue to see individuals regain function and make tremendous contributions in the workplace. Our resolve is strengthened by their success.



Rodger DeRose, president and CEO of Kessler Foundation, and Amanda Boxtel, ambassador to Ekso Bionics who walks in a robotic exoskeleton, were cheered on by the NJ Nets dancers and mascot as they cut the ribbon to kick off the family fun Stroll 'N Roll (and RUN!) 5K.

A Special 10th Anniversary Stroll 'N Roll (and RUN!)

Kessler Foundation celebrated its 10th Annual Stroll 'N Roll on Sunday, October 26, 2011 and showed how much the year's signature event expanded since its inception. To correlate with a name change — Stroll 'N Roll (and RUN!) — Kessler Foundation added USATF-certified 5K and 8K races for runners and wheelchair athletes. People of all ages and abilities came out to Branchbrook Park in Newark, NJ and enjoyed the festivities while making a difference.

Even with a chill in the air, Stroll 'N Roll (and RUN!) participants were eager to get the day started as they joined efforts to change the lives of people with disabilities. The day was part of Kessler Foundation's October activities in recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

More than 300 people gathered to stroll, roll, run, or race. Special guests included Rutgers football star Eric LeGrand, actor and disability advocate Daryl "Chill" Mitchell, singer Pras Michel from the Fugees, and Mila Jasey and Thomas Giblin from the NJ State Assembly.

After Kessler Foundation's own Cherie Davide sang the National Anthem, Amanda Boxtel rolled her way to the starting line of the race and waved the flag to start the 8K. The NJ Bergen Hawks Dance Team cheered on the competitors. Wheelchair handcyclists and pushrim racers kicked off the race with the runners following; the Montclair

Cyclists escorted the runners and racers to ensure the safety of all participants. Then Amanda made her way to a tent to introduce the other "celebrity" of the day—Ekso.

Amanda, an ambassador for Ekso Bionics who was paralyzed 20 years ago in a skiing accident, conducted three live demonstrations of Ekso—a wearable, robotic, battery-operated exoskeleton that enables wheelchair users to stand and walk (see page 8 for more information). As Ekso sat unoccupied on a folding chair, Amanda quickly transferred herself from her wheelchair to the chair. She connected Velcro straps around her waist and each leg.

Then she reached back and put her arms through the shoulder straps of Ekso, much like carrying a lightweight backpack. She held a crutch in each arm and leaned forward. As the engineer pushed a button, Amanda stood. Her body straightened as she proudly took a deep breath, beaming as

she looked at the crowd of amazed onlookers. “It never gets old,” she exclaimed. She then took steps.

Amanda explained how her circulation, mobility, and bowel and bladder function improved after using Ekso. While the medical improvements are great, she noted how it lifts her spirits as well. “It feels wonderful to stand up straight and look people in the eye,” Amanda cheerfully said. As she stood, she asked people to give her a hug, a gesture that gives her great joy. “I can give hugs without a space between us. I can reach for things on the top shelf without having to ask for help. I’m so much more independent with Ekso,” she declared.

Amanda gazed at the crowd and noticed some wheelchair users who had very limited use of their arms. “I see those of you who may not have the arm strength that I have but I want to tell you, ‘don’t give up!’ We’re just at the start of knowing what is possible with robotic technology. Devices will be capable of much more in a few years. With robotics, anything is possible,” she said.

Her presentation, alongside Karl Gudmundsson, Vice President of Marketing for Ekso Bionics, was followed by brief comments from Gail Forrest, PhD, and Steven Kirshblum, MD. Dr. Forrest, senior scientist in Kessler Foundation’s Human Performance and Engineering Laboratory, and Dr. Kirshblum, medical director and director of Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, are leading a collaborative team to develop protocols and analyze how Ekso may improve the mobility and health of individuals with paralysis.

Among the rapt crowd was Laurie Kammer, a young woman who was chosen to test Ekso for a weeklong trial at Kessler beginning the following day (see page 8). Her excitement grew as she watched Amanda. “This is amazing,” Laurie declared. “She’s like a celebrity to me. As I watch her, I can picture myself getting back on my feet.”

In addition to the thrill of witnessing innovative technology, cheerleaders from the NJ Nets and Bergen Hawkettes

cheered the participants on. Music, provided by WPLJ and WDHA radio stations, welcomed the runners, walkers, and racers across the finish line. Children enjoyed face painting, balloon animals, and meeting Ronald McDonald, who remembered many of them from past Stroll ‘N Rolls.

Entire families, including pets, came out to enjoy the beautiful fall morning. At Information Alley, they learned about the Foundation’s employment funding, other services available to people with disabilities, and visited tables of our sponsors. Added treats were the gourmet sandwich wraps donated by the Strip House in Livingston, NJ.

On this beautiful, fun-filled day, more than \$85,000 was raised to support rehabilitation research, employment, and community programs for people with disabilities. Stroll ‘N Roll (and RUN!)’s success would not have been possible without the deep generosity of our donors and sponsors as well as the dedication of our volunteers and Board of Trustees.



Children and adults of all ages enjoyed strolling, rolling, running, and racing to change the lives of people with disabilities.

Grantee Symposium

Employment Opportunities For People With Disabilities—

Richard Pimentel, PhD

Richard Pimentel, PhD, a founding father of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), spoke to employment service providers at Kessler Foundation's Grantee Symposium. As a senior partner for Milt Wright & Associates, Inc., Dr. Pimentel conducts training on disability-related issues for businesses across the nation. Dr. Pimentel discovered his passion for helping people with disabilities find employment when he lost his hearing in the Vietnam War and the government dismissed his goals of higher education and a career. He also saw that employers overlooked others with disabilities.

To change such attitudes, Dr. Pimentel created Tilting at Windmills—a disability and attitude training program for managers and supervisors that teaches them to be more objective interviewers and to work effectively with people with disabilities.

To the audience of service providers, who strive to develop jobs for people with disabilities, Dr. Pimentel warned against the stereotype. “Employers see a person with a disability succeeding at one type of job, such as an administrative job, and they assume all job seekers with disabilities will succeed at administrative jobs,” he explained. “Job placement has to depend on each person’s qualifications, skills, and education.”

Dr. Pimentel’s journey was featured in the 2007 motion picture, *The Music Within*.



Dr. Pimentel believes that the attitudes of employers are preventing people with disabilities from finding employment. He asks them, “Are you afraid that they can’t work with you or you can’t work with them?”

“[Employers are] not saying, ‘you can’t do that.’ They’re saying, ‘someone with what you have shouldn’t be able to do that.’ And what I say is, ‘but you don’t know me... If you knew me, you wouldn’t say that.’”

— *Richard Pimentel, PhD*



Kenneth Estabrook Lectureship

Clinical Virtual Reality: A Brief Review of the Future – Albert “Skip” Rizzo, PhD

Albert “Skip” Rizzo, PhD, associate director of the Institute for Creative Technologies and research professor in the departments of psychiatry and gerontology at the University of Southern California (USC), presented the 2011 Estabrook Lectureship at Kessler Foundation. He discussed how virtual reality (VR) is the new frontier in rehabilitation research and how VR will make rehabilitation more accessible to people with disabilities.

VR is being applied in research studies of physical and cognitive disabilities, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Dr. Rizzo has reported promising results in a study of veterans with PTSD. Through gradual exposure to a virtual warzone, veterans were deconditioned to situations that provoke symptoms.

Kessler Foundation will conduct VR testing in individuals with multiple sclerosis and traumatic brain injury through a partnership with USC. Participants will be assessed for their ability to perform tasks in a virtual office before and after treatment.

“Virtual reality is bringing life-changing rehabilitation therapy to people who may not have received treatment in the past. Compared with other forms of rehabilitation, it is moderately inexpensive and can be adapted to fit the needs of each individual. Virtual reality provides a practical means of applying theoretical science to daily life.”

— *Albert “Skip” Rizzo, PhD*

In the Community

In 2011, Kessler Foundation expanded its reach to change the lives of more people with disabilities and was recognized as a leading organization in the disability community.



• Kessler Foundation hosted three students from Horizon High School—Andre, Samone, and Timesha—to learn various jobs as part of Disability Mentoring Day (DMD). This was Andre's second time working at Kessler Foundation for the day and also his last as he announced he was graduating at the end of the school year. But his energetic personality and dream of being a rap star remained steadfast. Samone was eager to learn how she could be independent and earn a living. Overcome

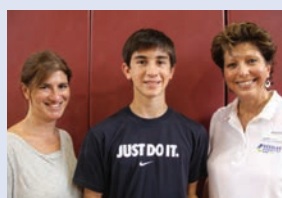
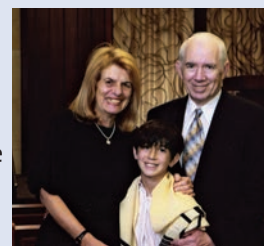


by shyness, Timesha couldn't introduce herself. After receiving employee identification badges, the students rotated to different stations to practice memory research tests, simulated driving, and miniature golf with motion sensors as well as library organization and fulfilling information requests,

purchasing, and scheduling tasks. They practiced interview skills with an employee with a severe physical disability who reminded them to be confident and that only their abilities matter. The involved mentors were thrilled to have the students join them for lunch. They then put their new interview skills to the test during a mock radio talk show. Showing the significance of the day, Timesha overcame her shyness and sang to the audience. She also

announced that she wanted a career where she could help other people with disabilities. When it was time to leave, the mentors and students shared hugs and promised to keep in touch. For Kessler Foundation employees, it was a day that they will never forget.

• Jack Kreitman taught his grandson, Josh Toll, an invaluable lesson—one second can change your life forever, so think first, then act, because you may not have a second chance. Jack tied his lesson to a head injury Josh sustained that could have been prevented. Josh took off on his scooter without putting on a helmet. He fell, sustained a concussion, and quickly realized that his injury could have been much more serious. To honor Jack, who passed away in 2010 following a stroke, Josh suggested supporting a program that shared his grandfather's lesson. That program was Kessler Foundation's ThinkFirst. For 20 years, ThinkFirst has traveled to schools and camps in NJ, educating students



about preventing serious injuries to the brain and spinal cord. Voices for Injury Prevention (VIPs)—individuals living with spinal cord injuries—tell their stories of how they were injured, how their accidents could have been avoided, and the challenges of living with a permanent disability.

Thanks to the Kreitman family's donation, ThinkFirst's summer program was restored just in time to educate young people about the risks of unsafe diving.

The 2011 ThinkFirst summer program reached 800 students, bringing the total number of students served to approximately 200,800 in two decades.

"My goal is to continue to support ThinkFirst, not just for one year, because it is so critical to raise awareness," said Gail Kreitman, mother of Josh. "If we can influence even one person to think first before engaging in risky behavior, I will feel that my father's memory is very, very well-served."





• Kessler Foundation received the 2011 Ann Klein Advocate Award from the Community Health Law Project (CHLP) in New Jersey. Harold P. Garwin, president and executive director

of CHLP, presented the award to Kessler Foundation “for its unwavering commitment and dedication to improving the lives of people with physical and cognitive disabilities.” President and CEO of Kessler Foundation Rodger DeRose noted that the award—a stunning, framed watercolor landscape—had special significance because it was painted by Gregory Smith of Arts Unbound, an organization supported by Kessler Foundation. Arts Unbound provides professional training to artists with disabilities so they can compete in the retail market. “We are proud to partner with The Community Health Law Project in the advancement of the rights of people with disabilities to lead full and productive lives. Our work in rehabilitation research and our support of employment initiatives complements their legal services and advocacy programs,” said DeRose. Ann Klein, a former Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services, significantly raised the standard of care and services for people with disabilities in New Jersey.

• Congressman Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ-8) held a press conference at Kessler Foundation, with Jordan Grafman, PhD, director of TBI Research, Nancy Chiaravalloti, PhD, director of Neuropsychology & Neuroscience Research, Jane



Concato, a brain injury survivor, and representatives from Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, to call for closing the treatment gap for brain injury. Pascrell, co-director of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, called for the inclusion of cognitive rehabilitation in the Affordable Healthcare Act of 2010. Dr. Grafman gave his perspective from his 30-year career caring for Vietnam veterans with brain injuries: “I recognize the key role that rehabilitation can play in evaluating and treating patients

with traumatic brain injury. Rehabilitation is designed to improve function in those abilities that directly predict whether someone returns to work or adjusts back to family life. It is critical that patients with brain injury have access to these irreplaceable individually tailored rehabilitation therapies.” Jane Concato explained how essential cognitive rehabilitation has been to her recovery from brain injury. Understanding the importance of research, Jane volunteers for clinical studies at the Foundation.



• For National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Kessler Foundation released a series of public service announcements (PSAs) featuring actor, producer,

director, and disability advocate Daryl “Chill” Mitchell. Prior to his injury, he was a film and television star, having leading or supporting roles in *House Party*, *10 Things I Hate about You*, *Galaxy Quest*, *The John Larroquette Show*, and *Veronica’s Closet*. After a motorcycle accident left him paralyzed in 2002, he was determined to keep working. In 2010, he won the NAACP Image Award for best actor in a comedic series for his role on *Brothers*. He partnered with Kessler Foundation to ask the nation, “What are your abilities?” Mitchell reminded everyone that “only abilities matter.” While he shared his inspirational story, Kessler Foundation invited listeners to post their abilities on its Facebook page. With Mitchell and other respondents, we changed the conversation from “disabilities” to “abilities!”

In 2011, Kessler Foundation made a splash in the world of social media. Professionals and consumers now stay abreast of Foundation activities on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr. For individuals and organizations with specific interests, the Foundation has linked Facebook pages for Traumatic Brain Injury, Spinal Cord Injury, Stroke, and Neuropsychology & Neuroscience Research, as well the WheelBlazers and the annual Stroll ‘N Roll fundraiser. Follow the Foundation on social media and share your thoughts!

Kessler Foundation Donors *January – December 2011*

Kessler Society

Abilities. Everyone has them. Our donors recognize the skills, creative ideas, intelligence, and wisdom that individuals with disabilities contribute to their workplaces and communities. Your commitment to improving the lives of people with disabilities made 2011 one of our most successful years. Because of you, our donors, Kessler Foundation expanded rehabilitation research and employment programs for individuals with disabilities. Through our research, people with disabilities found new abilities—some took their first steps since their disabling injuries, others improved their memory and cognition. Many more regained function that they thought was lost forever, and perhaps most importantly, individuals with disabilities improved their overall health. Through our funding of innovative employment programs, individuals applied their abilities in the workforce. Some achieved new milestones as they crossed the finish line in wheelchair races or sold a painting of their own creation. On behalf of Kessler Foundation, thank you for recognizing and advancing the abilities of people with disabilities.

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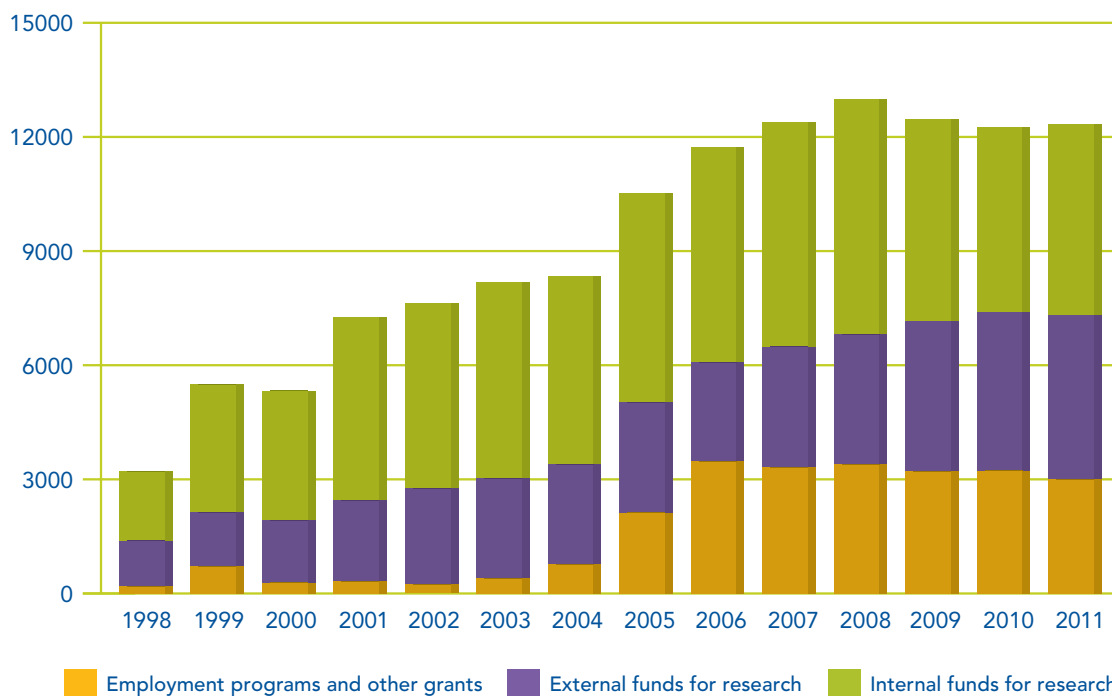
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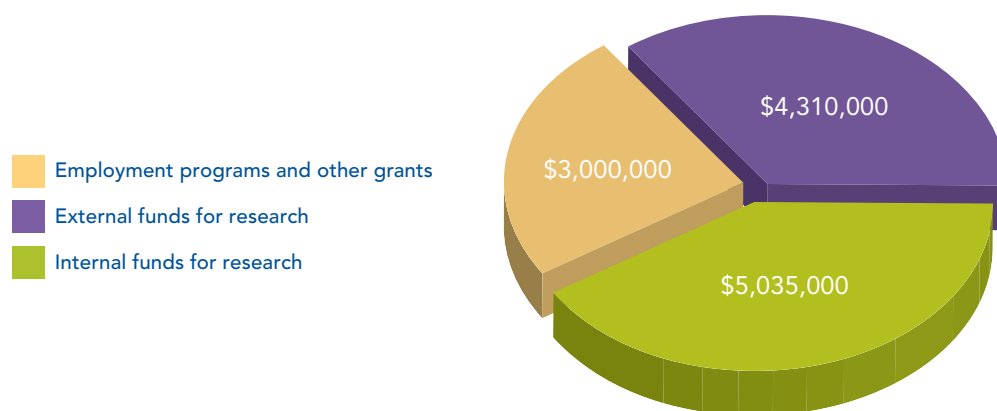
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