The first key to a successful road trip is to have the right road trip companions. We've all experienced how travelling with the right people made the difference between a potentially disastrous experience to one filled with laughter, silver-lining surprises, and lasting memories.

Oddly enough, running a nonprofit is much the same. There are challenges inherent to nonprofits no matter the industry or circumstance, but if you're working with the right people, they can make the difference between failure and triumph.

The past 18 months surely put that to the test. None of us – staff, board, interns, caregivers, or members – have faced the challenges brought forth from the global pandemic of 2020-2021. To face the difficulties presented on top of an already challenging environment, particularly for members, was daunting to say the least. But we are lucky. Our members are a constant source of inspiration, and their spirit and resilience is what drove us to find ways to continue our work to support them.

This was not a journey we took alone. We are grateful to have incredible traveling companions: our board of directors is a passionate and professional group of volunteers at the ready to support the organization and guide it through any detours or roadblocks. They are the navigation system of the organization. The staff is tremendously dedicated, gifted at what they do, resourceful, and possesses an endless well of compassion. They are the mechanics, the drive train, the computer system – everything you need to continually move forward. Our incredible community of supporters were with us the entire time, providing the fuel of our operations to make what we do possible. And above all, our members give us purpose – the reason for the journey.

The second key to a successful road trip is to have a purposeful destination. You can have the most well-tuned and reliable vehicle in the world but without a clear direction, you will go in circles. Our strategic plan needed updating in 2020 but was put on hold due to the pandemic, which turned out to be quite serendipitous. The impact the pandemic had on Krempels Center’s operations was profound, and allowed us to consider different paths for the future. After extensive work with the staff and board, Krempels Center has a new strategic plan, a robust map for growth in all directions: programming, marketing, financial sustainability, and infrastructure. We have already begun to implement the plan, and we are beyond excited for what the future holds.

We invite you on this incredible journey. The travel crew is prepared and ready, our route and destination are clear, and cannot wait to see how far we can go. Our members are excited, our supporters are ready. Thank you for believing in us, our mission, and our vision. And don’t worry, we didn’t forget to pack snacks for the ride.
The summer Enrichment Program shifts from working with undergraduate interns as group leaders, to partnering with the community for unique group sessions. Staff and members realized early on that hosting groups online meant that collaborations were no longer limited by geography or transportation. This opened up new opportunities, and in the case of the Book Club group, allowed the author of the chosen book to be a part of the discussion.

Book Club focuses on providing opportunities for members in cognitive skill building, mental health, creative expression, communication skills and more. In spring of 2020, the Book Club chose *The Soul of an Octopus* by Sy Montgomery, a New Hampshire author and naturalist. In July, they invited Montgomery to join the group to discuss the challenges and triumphs she experienced interacting and connecting with octopuses. One such story that stood out to the members was her journey of learning how to scuba dive in order to interact with octopuses in their natural habitat. As she described the challenges she faced and how she persevered to overcome them, the members were able to reflect on their own challenges, adaptations and triumphs as they navigate their lives after brain injury.

“I so admire what you have all done,” shared Montgomery. “I have immense respect for all of you re-growing and coming back from injury. All great men and women have come through trial and come out of it as a new person. It is clear you are a community of great healers.”

With this successful collaboration, a new world became available for members and staff, and resulted in ongoing discussions about the benefits of the online model.

“I have immense respect for all of you re-growing and coming back from injury. All great men and women have come through trial and come out of it as a new person. It is clear you are a community of great healers.”

Patrick Jones has been crushing one goal after another. Patrick has been a member since 2014, six years after he was diagnosed with a benign brain tumor, and almost one year since his six-year-old son passed away from his own brain tumor. A strong connection with the Krempels Center community of peers, interns, staff, and volunteers has helped him through the tough times and they celebrate his victories and landmark events as a team.

Patrick has been attending programs at Krempels Center three days each week since February 2014. Before attending the Center, he stayed home, feeling “reserved and melancholy,” isolated and lonely. He credits Krempels Center for “expanding my social network, helping me be more myself.”

He has participated in the King Challenge for four years, volunteered at the road race, and runs the audio equipment at community meetings. “I’ve broken out of my shell.”

In fall of 2019, Patrick enrolled as a student at Great Bay Community College, pursuing a certificate in Computer Numerical Control at the Advanced Technology and Academic Center in Rochester. He was still attending classes when the pandemic struck in 2020, yet even that couldn’t deter Patrick from his goal. He continued classes online and worked with Krempels Center staff and interns as they helped him fulfill his dream. We are thrilled to share that Patrick graduated this past spring and earned his certificate!

But that’s not even the end of the story—Patrick moved on to his next goal: getting his driver’s license. With the help of Krempels Center, Patrick has been learning how to set a goal, to identify the steps necessary to get there, and how to complete each step. Together, there’s no stopping Patrick and what he can accomplish. Especially now, since he crushed that goal too and earned his driver’s license. Way to go, Patrick!
OCTOBER 2020

10TH ANNUAL KING CHALLENGE

Since 2011, The King Challenge has been an important fundraising event for Krempels Center, raising over $1 million of much needed funds during that time. Cycling legend Ted King, along with his family, help promote the event each October when hundreds of riders gather and fundraise to support Krempels Center’s mission and operations.

For the 10th anniversary of the King Challenge in fall 2020, the event had to be reimagined due to the pandemic. The one-day ride became a 10-day virtual event from October 9th to the 16th, allowing riders to participate wherever they were, on whatever route they choose. It was a tremendous success! Over 250 riders from across the country participated, raising over $109,000, and proving that the mission of the King Challenge is central to our participants, as much as the in-person comradery.

For Krempels Center members, The King Challenge had always been a chance to be a part of a public sporting event in a safe environment using adaptive equipment if needed. For 2020, Krempels Center adapted the event for members, creating a “Choose Your Own Challenge” option. One member chose to write three new short stories. Another member challenged herself to create 10 new weavings for the 10th anniversary. Several members were able to ride a stationary, adaptive, or regular bike with the support of their family and caretakers.

Because of the incredible support from sponsors, riders, members, and donors, the 2020 King Challenge was an incredible virtual success! Thank you to all who came together to support this fundraising effort, connect with our mission, and improve the quality of life for individuals living with brain injury.
Interns from the allied health fields have always been an integral part of Krempels Center’s model of success. We partner with various universities who provide both undergraduate and graduate level interns who come to our program ready to apply all of the fresh knowledge they have gained in the classroom to lead high quality groups under the supervision of our talented program staff. While undergraduate interns usually spend one day per week throughout an academic semester with the team, graduate interns typically spend significantly more time with the program, allowing them to get to know the members on a deeper level. Graduate interns provide one-to-one support to some of our members who have a specific goal they are seeking to accomplish or a challenge they wish to overcome.

This past year, Talya Ipbukken, an occupational therapy assistant intern, discovered that one of Krempels Center’s members, Chris M., was no longer able to participate in a beloved activity, cycling trips with his family. He comes from a family of avid cyclists who enjoy spending quality time outdoors together, loading their bikes up and travelling to bike paths. Chris has an adaptive tricycle and was not able to lift his bike up into his truck, which limited him to staying within his neighborhood instead of going on family trips to bike in other areas. Upon learning of this obstacle, Talya collaborated with her supervisor, Program Coordinator Kelly Redwine-DePierre, and connected with Gateways for an Easy Load Ramp System, a foundation for brain injury survivors specializing in capital requests. By gathering information from Chris and his family with guidance as needed from the staff, Talya created a letter of necessity as required by the foundation to submit a request for custom ramps that would enable Chris to independently load and unload his bike to and from his truck.

And it worked! Chris received the ramps and has been out and about cycling with his family ever since. Unique relationships are formed between interns and members through the program that help ensure that members are getting the specialized support they need for their circumstances. That kind of impact has a lasting effect on members, and on interns. Hannah Paquette, a graduate level intern, recalled that her experience at Krempels Center taught her how to truly be client centered. And that is part of the core values and success of Krempels Center – providing member-driven services, designed and tailored to specific needs.

As Krempels Center interns depart the program, they take the lessons they learned to heart, and bring those values of holistic client care with them to their new vocations in the world.
BARB KRESGE

Barb Kresge has been working for Krempels Center for 15 years; the longest serving staff member. Prior to that, she was a lecturer and Admissions Chair at the Boston School of Occupational Therapy at Tufts University. Barb joined Krempels Center as a Program Coordinator in 2006, then became Program Director several years later to guide the program through maturing and expansion phases. Earlier this year, Barb was considering retirement, however Krempels Center had other ideas. Now as the new Director of Strategic Program Initiatives, Barb is heading the effort to research, develop, and implement a new online program as an extension of Krempels Center's offerings, building upon the success of the online program launched as a response to the pandemic. We are beyond thrilled she has accepted this role and will continue to work her magic.

To fill the Program Director position, Krempels Center launched an extensive search and hit the jackpot when Heather Gilbert jumped at the opportunity. Heather was a graduate level occupational therapy intern in 2014 at Krempels Center under the supervision of Kelly Redwine-DePierre. During her internship, she led a series of groups for members that resulted in the first annual Krempels Center Craft Fair. Throughout her experience, she gained a tremendous appreciation for the community-based model and its focus on more than just the traditional medical model of rehabilitation. Heather went on to work in various nontraditional settings as an occupational therapist in management roles and ultimately left her position as the Division Director of Developmental Disability and Brain Injury Services at Eliot Community Human Services in MA, bringing along her previous five years of experience in working in mental health. She joined the team eager to get to work on supporting the transition back to in-person programming.

Both Barb and Heather are alumni of Tufts University’s Boston School of Occupational Therapy and share the values of their profession to help people meet their personal goals to do the things they want and need to do and live more fulfilling lives. Heather’s initial focus will be on solidifying the process of how we evaluate the ongoing effectiveness of the program’s offerings and maximizing the use of technology to better support interns and enhance the overall program. Barb will be knee-deep in researching virtual models and the efficacy of our online groups with the hope of launching a new robust component to Krempels Center’s services that can reach brain injury survivors from around the country. Together, our programming leaders are excited to collaborate with the rest of the program team to achieve the goals outlined in the strategic plan that will enable the program to grow and thrive.

WHILE IT SEEMS OBVIOUS THAT INDIVIDUALS LIVING WITH BRAIN INJURY MAY NEED SUPPORT, IT IS OFTEN FORGOTTEN OR OVERLOOKED THAT THEIR FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND LOVED ONES ALSO NEED SUPPORT.

When the sessions for members transferred to the online platform, that included Krempels Center’s monthly Family Caregiver Support group. And attendance increased.

Taking care of a loved one with a brain injury adds an element of complexity to life that is often unparalleled. While friends and family may have the best of intentions, providing support for a caregiver is not easy. I would take out the rest of that and just go to the “It has been a lifeline to me to be able to connect with other caregivers who share a common role in caring for a loved one who has experienced a brain injury, even though individual circumstances may vary,” says Della O’Shea, whose adult son experienced a stroke in 2019. “The emergence of COVID-19 compounded the isolation and eliminated coping mechanisms I used to take for granted, like going to the gym or having visitors at home. It was often a lonely, isolated existence with few people in my sphere able to truly know what I was experiencing,” shared O’Shea.

Moving the support group online allowed participants to join in from anywhere in the country. Donna and David Mills have been a part of the community since 2019 after their son experienced a brain injury. They now winter in Florida, yet their son can stay connected to his groups, even though individual circumstances may vary, “The emergence of COVID-19 compounded the isolation and eliminated coping mechanisms I used to take for granted, like going to the gym or having visitors at home. It was often a lonely, isolated existence with few people in my sphere able to truly know what I was experiencing,” shared O’Shea.

While it seems obvious that individuals living with brain injury may need support, it is often forgotten or overlooked that their family, friends, and loved ones also need support.
The annual Cisco Brewers Portsmouth Memorial Day 5K was once again converted into a virtual event because of the pandemic and social distancing regulations. But that didn’t stop hundreds of participants from registering and fundraising on behalf of Krempels Center. Due to its virtual nature, participants could run, walk, dance, hike, or sashay on whatever route they choose, wherever they choose during the week-long event. We are grateful to the many people who helped during this tremendous and vital fundraising effort.

Members got in on the action too in any way they could. Not restricted to the onsite running or walking route, members worked on personal goals as a part of Team Krempels. Lisa Fish, a member of Krempels Center since 2014, ran over 10 miles towards her personal goal. She has participated in every Memorial Day 5K since she joined Krempels Center. A member since 2004, Lee Harvey had a goal to walk 160 feet with his physical therapist and the 5K event provided the extra motivation that helped him achieve his goal. Being able to participate in their own way became an important part of the week’s theme.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the event, helping to raise awareness of brain injury and raise the necessary operating funds to keep Krempels Center’s services available to everyone.
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We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of our information and sincerely apologize for any errors or omissions.
DONOR HONOR ROLL

IN MEMORIAM

Krempels Center is a community, and as with any community, we experience both joy and grief together. When a member passes, we hold a Celebration of Life ceremony, supporting each other through stories and shared memories. Two of our members passed away this year. We honor their memory and the joy they brought with them every day.

Charlene Lister
July 14, 2020

Mel Morrison
June 6, 2021

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Vincent LoBosco
Dan Longman
Brendan Love
Sarah Lowell
Edward Ludwig
Vanessa Lugo
Jennifer Lyman
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Reta MacGregor
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Christine Boston
Tom Burns
Arlon Chaffee
Peter Clarke
Mark Cochran
Renee (Lisa) Couture
Carson Cross
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12 Years of Service

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Program Assistant
< 1 Year of Service

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Program Director
< 1 Year of Service

Bettina Rickenbach
Operations Associate
1 Year of Service

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Program Assistant
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Development Associate
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Bettina Rickenbach
Operations Associate
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Director of Strategic Program Initiatives
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4 Years of Service

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1 Year of Service

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Program Coordinator
6 Years of Service

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Heather Gilbert MS, OTR/L
Program Director
< 1 Year of Service

Elizabeth Robinson
Program Assistant
2 Year of Service

Becky Kates
Development Director
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Betsy Oski
Thomson
Executive and Operations Associate
< 1 Year of Service

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5 Years of Service

Heather Gilbert MS, OTR/L
Program Director
< 1 Year of Service

Elizabeth Robinson
Program Assistant
2 Year of Service

Becky Kates
Development Director
3 Years of Service

Betsy Oski
Thomson
Executive and Operations Associate
< 1 Year of Service

Emma Baillargeon
Tim Barnhorst
Gary Barr
Tom Beattie
Christine Boston
Tom Burns
Arlon Chaffee
Peter Clarke
Mark Cochran
Renee (Lisa) Couture
Carson Cross
Kyle Damon
Susanne Delaney
Jean-Marie Detcher
Jay Dugal
Matthew Fischer
Tom Geer
Don Greenwood
Paul Johnson
Bonnie Johnson
Jeff Jungsten
Becky Kates
Ted King
Margie King
Robbie King
Teddy King
Katie MacKinnon
Jen Murphy
Eric Nash
Jonathan Osiki
Betsy Osiki
Damon Parke
Christine Rundles
Matt Rightmire
Charles Silber-Byrne
David Sylvester
Bill Tugurian
CJ Wing

KREMPELS CENTER WOULD LIKE TO RECOGNIZE THE FOLLOWING AS THE TOP FUNDRAISERS DURING THE 2020 KING CHALLENGE AND THE 2021 5K ROAD RACE.

THANK YOU!
TOP FUNDRAISERS

Emma Baillargeon
Tim Barnhorst
Gary Barr
Tom Beattie
Christine Boston
Tom Burns
Arlon Chaffee
Peter Clarke
Mark Cochran
Renee (Lisa) Couture
Carson Cross
Kyle Damon
Susanne Delaney
Jean-Marie Detcher
Jay Dugal
Matthew Fischer
Tom Geer
Don Greenwood
Paul Johnson
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Margie King
Robbie King
Teddy King
Katie MacKinnon
Jen Murphy
Eric Nash
Jonathan Osiki
Betsy Osiki
Damon Parke
Christine Rundles
Matt Rightmire
Charles Silber-Byrne
David Sylvester
Bill Tugurian
CJ Wing

L. Renée Couture, MSW
Executive Director
12 Years of Service

Carli Caceres
Program Assistant
< 1 Year of Service

Heather Gilbert MS, OTR/L
Program Director
< 1 Year of Service

Bettina Rickenbach
Operations Associate
1 Year of Service

Carson Cross
Program Assistant
2 Year of Service

Betsy Osiki
Development Associate
6 Years of Service

Kelly Redwine-DePierre, OTR/L, CBIS
Program Coordinator
9 Years of Service

Bettina Rickenbach
Operations Associate
1 Year of Service

Barb Kresge, OTR/L, CBIS
Director of Strategic Program Initiatives
15 Years of Service

Sarah Lovell, MSW, CBIS
Member Services Coordinator
4 Years of Service

Katie MacKinnon
Events and Marketing Associate
1 Year of Service

Susette Milnor, MSW/LICSW
Program Coordinator
6 Years of Service

Lisa Kopecki Thomson
Executive and Operations Associate
< 1 Year of Service

Craig Werth, M.Ed
Group Facilitator
5 Years of Service

Heather Gilbert MS, OTR/L
Program Director
< 1 Year of Service

Elizabeth Robinson
Program Assistant
2 Year of Service

Becky Kates
Development Director
3 Years of Service

Betsy Oski
Thomson
Executive and Operations Associate
< 1 Year of Service
Krempels Center is an opportunity beyond the plateau of traditional therapy.

It helps me maintain progress and learn new skills; I definitely feel sharper, better, when I’m coming to KC —KATHY S.

Krempels is better than therapy because you also get the community.

I don’t drive; I have no transportation. I can do Krempels Center right here in my kitchen.
—JOANNE D.

I like the virtual program because I can take care of my animals. You miss things when you have to leave the house.
—WENDY C.

What do I like about Krempels? Everything. The people, a group of us getting outside. When the students get back I’ll get help with my speech.
—ANDY STARK

Meditation group makes me feel relaxed, comfortable, and happy.
—JUSTIN THOMAS

When I heard Krempels was going online I was definitely excited it was still going to be happening. Being able to see everyone online has made me feel happy.
—DAVID SYLVESTER

I like the people here.
—DARRYL GREGG

It helped me at least a little bit to communicate with others and not be isolated. It gave me something to do. (in reference to the pandemic)
—SCOTT LUDGIN

I have a long experience with BI, and I can help others with what I’ve learned.

It’s kept me sane, if it wasn’t for my computer I would have lost my mind. The first couple of weeks of Covid I felt like I was longing for my life before it. It gave me something to look forward to and stay connected to people I care about. (in reference to returning to campus)
—I appreciate the program even more now, coming out of what we have been through. (in reference to the pandemic)
—LEE HARVEY

Connect with Krempels Center

krempelscenter.org