People of Krempels Center

Our community is grounded by a deep and abiding respect for all our members — with the goal of helping each person achieve their maximum potential and satisfaction with life. Interns leading the Creative Safari group this spring semester are working on ways to showcase members’ artwork along with sharing their stories, with the goal of shining a light on the commonalities individuals living with brain injury share with others. Here is a preview of this powerful project underway at Krempels Center:

Mike Smith

Member Mike Smith finds purpose and meaning in being active and riding his bike. It is a passion he has found after his brain injury and aphasia. He also enjoys making things in his workshop and is proud to have built this porch all by himself.

Tom Geer

“The owl is firm and dormant, stationary as I was when handicapped and restricted after I suffered injury and surgery in an accident. The bright morning sunlight is like the inspiration I feel in fine art.” — Tom Geer, member of Krempels Center

Michele Clock

“Life’s Game” is a multimedia piece of art created by member Michele Clock, using acrylics to add color and life to a set of found objects. “This is an art piece in honor of my journey as a brain injury survivor. Taking found objects and putting the pieces together, in order to reinvent something new and beautiful, is what this piece is about. Life is a journey and I have taken the pieces of my life, and with the help of my team, found peace.”

#MoreThanMyBrainInjury

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month and the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA) has created the #MoreThanMyBrainInjury campaign to raise public awareness during this special month. Many people with disabilities have their lives defined for them. We support our members and all brain injury survivors to overcome those definitions, and tell their own stories and change the narrative of their lives. Follow Krempels Center on Facebook and Instagram for more stories from our members and to help spread the word about brain injury.
Evolving as a Community

Evolution. More than simply “change,” evolution is best understood as an ongoing process of improvement in response to new understandings. As an organization and as a community, Krempels Center regularly illustrates examples of evolution: Our members’ healing and growth as they recover and discover their new lives; our interns’ learning as professionals through their semesters with us; and our maturing program, as we work collectively to build and strengthen its reach and impact.

And, right now, a few other significant evolutions are taking place. After a thoughtful period of looking back at where we have been, how we have evolved, as well as envisioning our future, we are fully engaged in the work outlined in the first year of our three-year strategic plan. We are recognizing the transition of our board president, Jamie Joyce, and Mark Mailloux has taken that leadership baton, serving as our next president. The Community Campus, which has been Krempels Center’s home base since its founding in 2000, will also change hands as the City of Portsmouth purchases the building and property. We are so excited to collaborate with the City and our nonprofit colleagues to rebuild the (post-pandemic) vibrancy to the Campus, furthering our mission to improve the lives of people living with brain injury.

And finally, we are reimaging our largest community-wide fundraiser this spring, the Cisco Brewers Portsmouth 5K. Returning in-person on Sunday, May 29th, our event will feature new ways to come together as a community and raise much needed funds for Krempels Center.

We at Krempels Center are excited about these evolutions, knowing the strategic, proactive efforts behind the changes will create an even stronger and healthier organization and community. We are grateful for the generosity of individuals—such as Jamie and Mark—and institutions—such as our new partnership with the City of Portsmouth—for fueling our ongoing evolution, and meaningfully contributing to our long-term success.

Donor Spotlight

Support comes in many shapes and sizes! We appreciate all our donors’ contributions to Krempels Center. Here we are featuring some unique ways we’ve been beneficiaries.

White boards are essential equipment for Krempels Center, and recently our main portable board that we use during every community meeting broke! Enter Deb Marion – she offered us a new board for free just at the time we needed it. She and her son, Ryan — a Krempels Center member — dropped off the largest white board on wheels we’ve ever seen! Now we can write even bigger which really helps members with vision impairments. Thanks Deb and Ryan!

The Veasey family has been a champion of Krempels Center for many years now, and recently Carolyn Veasey Jackson hosted an open house to showcase her soap making hobby during the pandemic with 100% of proceeds benefiting Krempels Center and the Mass General Cancer Center. Each soap design is a single batch recipe and rarely repeated - and Carolyn had close to 50 designs available at the open house — just like this beauty! We are so thankful for Carolyn’s creativity, hospitality, and generosity!
More Than Meets the Eye

Krempels Center always strives to offer enriching, skill-building groups that foster connections between our members. With any given group, there’s often a whole lot more going on than initially meets the eye. We would love to highlight a few of our groups to help make their value even clearer.

Creative outlets are so impactful for our members, but also present as opportunities for our members to work on a variety of skills. This semester, we are offering a new group program online called Watercolor Your World. Thanks to a generous donation from the Leddy Group, we were able to send kits to our online members’ homes complete with all of the supplies they needed to participate in a six-week guided watercolor painting series via Zoom. This group not only provides time for creative expression, but it also serves as an opportunity to work on cognitive, visual, and fine motor skills. It’s amazing how much of our minds and bodies we use to paint!

Our Brain Quest group is an opportunity to “exercise the brain” through a variety of activities that create a series of cognitive or physical challenges for members to complete. The objective is to provide opportunities for the members to work together as a team and collaborate on figuring out how to solve a task or assignment. Each quest may be designed to increase problem-solving skills, improve memory abilities, or enhance one’s executive functions while communicating and partnering with others to complete the challenge.

Have you ever watched or heard of the show Project Runway? Krempels members recently took on a challenge inspired by the show, being tasked by our intern group facilitators with creating a wearable item using a variety of items not typically used to create clothing. Our members embraced the challenge, with one team working together to create a funky hat and another collaborating to create a custom mask. When you must wear a mask, why not make it “fashion” or as Tim Gunn of Project Runway would say: “Make It Work!”

Speaking of popular TV shows, have you ever seen Whose Line Is It Anyway? Improvisational theatre, or “improv” for short, can be wonderfully entertaining, but did you know it also carries tremendous therapeutic benefit when used as a group modality for individuals living with a brain injury? Our Let’s Make A Scene group is led by an expert educator and group facilitator, Craig Werth, who uses a variety of improv exercises designed to elicit participation, creative and quick thinking, and, perhaps most importantly, laughter and joy. There have been many benefits from participating in this group observed by staff and reported by members, including reduction in anxiety when faced with change and novel situations, enhanced relationships, improved communication skills, increased confidence, reduction of perfectionism and fear of failure and/or rejection, enhanced problem-solving skills, and more.

We are so grateful to be able to host this unique program offering for our members.

“When I run into some unusual or odd challenge or situation, instead of freezing up, I think, ‘oh yeah... I can do this’ because I learned that from this class!”

– Krempels Center member
SUNDAY, MAY 29 | 11 A.M.
25th Annual Cisco Brewers Portsmouth 5K

We’re back live and better than ever! Join us Memorial Day weekend for a block party you won’t forget! Bring the family and enjoy a fast, flat course, Kids’ Fun Run, live music, BBQ feast and a Cisco beer for each participant over age 21.

All proceeds go directly to Krempels Center.

Register at krempelscenter.org/5K

INTERN SPOTLIGHT

Nnedi Oranekwu, OT/s, Master of Science 2022, Salem State University

Interns play a crucial role in the delivery of therapeutic groups to Krempels Center members. Whether on-site or virtual, students receive a hands-on experience that promotes their development of professional skills as well as introduces interns to issues and challenges facing brain injury survivors. Here’s what intern alumni Nnedi Oranekwu, an OT graduate student at Salem State University, shared about her recent experience at Krempels Center:

“[Krempels Center] has not only helped me increase my skills as an OT, but also the soft skills such as empathy, kindness, honesty, and integrity, that inspire the human spirit.”

Play It Forward at The Brook
May 21 – 27

If you like games of chance, now you can play AND support Krempels Center at the same time! Visit The Brook between May 21-27, and a portion of the proceeds will be donated to Krempels Center. Bring your friends! Enjoy a night out and help your favorite nonprofit at the same time!