



Jason Kraus, Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient

The *PM* Podiatry Hall of Fame welcomes this visionary podiatric entrepreneur and innovator.

BY PAUL LANGER

It's 1974 during Freshman Orientation Week at Oneonta State College in upstate New York. Some dude is tossing a Frisbee with the son of podiatrist Sheldon Langer, DPM. Boom!

In what seems like an instant, it's 2020. That dude, of course, was Jason Kraus. I was his Frisbee partner and it's my great honor to help celebrate Jason's four-decade-long career, one dedicated heart and soul to improving the health and prosperity of the podiatry profession as well as the welfare of its patients.

Jason's business education and training taught him that, whether evaluating an innovative new solution to a chronic challenge or prospecting for that single nugget of data that will turn a flagging practice into a re-sounding success, numbers matter. Here are some numbers related to Jason's career:

- 4—Successful companies serving podiatry
- 4—Continents where Jason has lectured to the profession
- 20—Published articles
- 29—Professional presentations
- 1,000s of prosperous, enthusiastic DPMs!

Jason's professional career was built on an early and exceptional clinical education delivered by some



Jason Kraus

of the leading practitioners of biomechanics and orthotic therapy. These included Drs. Justin "Joe" Wernick, Jeffrey Cusack, and Sheldon "Shelly" Langer, among others. Jason soaked up and persistently enhanced the knowledge and professional narratives delivered by these clinician-educators and shared his evolving wisdom and experience unselfishly with countless doctors and colleagues throughout the years.

Jason began his career in 1980 at The Langer Biomechanics Group. During his tenure at Langer Biomechanics, Jason managed the company's first remote lab facility, located in Brea, CA. Returning to the home office in New York four years later, he moved from product manager to operations manager and eventually to senior vice president of marketing. Along the way, he developed unique insights into the ever-evolving challenges and requirements of the podiatry profession along with an ability to effectively communicate innovative solutions in a clear and concise manner. Throughout his career, he has endeavored to apply these rare traits in ways to achieve uncommon success for his companies and doctors.

As his career evolved, Jason's inspiring resume came to include founder positions with Benefoot, SOS Healthcare Management Solutions and Starflower Row Advisors. At Benefoot, Jason was a key contributor in elevating podiatry's standards of service to new levels. Many of Benefoot's competitors were driven to 'up their game' to compete with its disruptive innovations which included fixed pricing, unconditional guarantees on foot orthotics, and

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lifetime warranties against breakage. Podiatrists could even return devices if the patient was a no-show.

Jason recognized early on that the success of the profession was dependent on the success of its in-

for instance, a driving force behind the acquisitions and growth of OHI as it consolidated and strengthened operations and marketing of The Orthotic Group, Langer Biomechanics, Arizona AFO, SafeStep, Pedalign, Apex Foot Health, Footbōn, and Roomy Socks.

way physically and/or emotionally to help. He is a consummate match-maker, bringing people, ideas, and resources together in order to achieve optimal success for all. His thanks? Simply seeing his friends, family and colleagues do well.

Jason Kraus takes a very enthusiastic approach to life in general. He is an avid skier, reads over a hundred books each year, and is a very active and lifelong NY Mets fan. Even pre-pandemic, Jason had begun teaching himself to play the guitar and practices in every free moment. Jason's life is—and always has been—uncommonly full, optimistic, and productive.

I realize that for those of you who have known Jason throughout his career, there is little or no surprise in what you've just read. For those who are only just learning about this exceptional man, I hope you'll take the time to introduce yourself to him at the next opportu-

Jason recognized early on that the success of the profession was dependent on the success of its individual practitioners.

dividual practitioners. To that end, he served as a Trustee of the American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management (AAPP) and helped that organization grow from 92 members to 1,400 during his tenure. He established an AAPP Corporate Advisory Board to aggregate and channel the expertise and financial backing of the various industries and companies supporting podiatry to the mutual benefit of AAPP members.

In similar fashion, Jason also sought to engage those same industries and businesses in support of podiatry students. He was instrumental, for instance, in creating the Corporate Advisory Board of the American Podiatric Medical Students Association (APMSA), bridging corporate resources with podiatry students throughout their schooling and residencies.

Jason's contributions to the podiatry profession and to the optimal outcomes of its patients have been punctuated by a series of firsts including:

- First to develop a line of custom-made functional foot orthotics for the diabetic patient
- First to bring in-office shoe kiosks to the benefit of practitioners and their patients
- First to manufacture and market custom-made orthotic sandals

Jason's reputation as a visionary corporate executive is well established and his expertise is sought by a wide array of both early-stage and long-established businesses. He was,

Throughout Jason's illustrious career, I have had a front row seat (sometimes from the sidelines, sometimes as an employer, and most satisfyingly as his business partner) as Jason's deepening knowledge, broad vision, and sharp insights benefitted so many aspects of the podiatry profession. Jason al-

ways has been my dear friend, and that fact remains one of my greatest pleasures.

Jason's fierce dedication to his profession is equaled by his dedication to family, friends, and community. He is the proud father or stepfather to six warm, intelligent, and generous children whose journeys from childhood to adulthood have given him enormous joy and *nachas*. Jason manages to stay close with a vast group of friends from school, work, the profession, and his community. All those in his orbit know that we can call on Jason any time for comfort, advice, and unqualified support.

Jason has actively given of himself to his synagogue, including many years on its Board, helping that congregation grow into a thriving community presence. As much as anyone I've known, Jason puts others before himself, often going out of his

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nity. Look for him at your podiatry conferences, read what he has contributed to publications supporting your profession... and be prepared to have your life materially enhanced by the effort.

Tributes

Rick Mann, DPM

It has been my great pleasure to call Jason Kraus my friend these past 25 or so years and, for much longer than that, it has been podiatry's great fortune to have him as a teacher, a mentor, and an advocate. Jason studied podiatric biomechanics under Dr. Shelly Langer and was instrumental in developing and promoting the discipline. For that, we all owe him, and of course Dr. Langer, a great debt of gratitude.

Jason is one of the finest people I know. A loving father, husband,

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and family man—he is a mensch—an honorable person who lives life with integrity, decency, kindness, and compassion. He is super-smart, a problem solver, a natural leader, a savvy businessman, and is intensely loyal. A natural educator, Jason has taught the art of biomechanics to a great many podiatric physicians, hosting countless bio-

nity gave insight to his professional, compassionate, genuine, and funny (always witty, sometimes hilarious) personality.

It is said that if you really enjoy your work and the people you work with, it's not really work. That must be true because considering all we've been through as business partners, the "work" never overshadowed the crazy fun and laughter. We survived some remarkably bad jokes (two tick-

Kim Ross, DC, PhD

Jason Kraus joined the Orthotic Group in 2008/2009 when the company joined Langer Biomechanics. He arrived in Toronto while we were teaching a seminar, as his job would involve continuing education. As I delivered the seminar, I noticed how engaged he was. Little did I know he was analyzing my every word, and how the material could be delivered to Langer customers. During the break, he came to me and described who he was. As he spoke, he clearly had a strong clinical understanding. I was shocked that he carried no clinical credentials. Somehow, he absorbed the clinical knowledge of his customers without being formally educated in podiatry. He clearly listened to me that day, which tells me that he did this for years with his co-workers and customers. This is a rare talent and indicator of pure dedication. He understood that if a company that specializes in a clinical intervention is to be successful, everyone should develop a clinical understanding to the best of their

“Jason’s business perspective, management, and finance acumen are second to none.”—Homisak

mechanics seminars and educational events for the profession. It is only fitting that today we recognize his achievements and say thank you for his mentorship and the great work he has done in helping podiatry advance and thrive.

Lynn Homisak, PRT

Congratulations to my colleague, my former business partner, and above all, my friend on being selected recipient of *PM's* Lifetime Achievement Award. Jason's 40+ years of contributions and accomplishments in podiatry have been visionary and positive—from Benefoot to Langer to SOS to OHI and all endeavors in between. I was excited to learn that his dedicated work advancing podiatrists, podiatry as a profession, and individual practices, both nationally and internationally, has been recognized.

Jason was part of the podiatry universe practically my whole career. Yet, it was collaborating as AAPP Board members and as SOS consulting partners that we bonded. His highly influential lecturing and writing skills did not go unnoticed. I admired how he keenly identified what a practice needed, developed an action plan, and helped clients achieve their goals. Once our business relationship grew, so too did our friendship. Happily, the friendship/partnership offered the chance to really know Jason. This opportu-

ets to Pittsburgh), our CPR three-day retreats, the insane SOS Management rehearsals and sketches, and yes, even a “Men-In-Black” dancing debut on Broadway! What a team.

Jason's business perspective, management, and finance acumen are second to none. I understood quickly that he puts no less passion

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into his work than he does in life; as a dad, husband, synagogue treasurer, softball infielder, and musician (now teaching himself guitar). Whether skiing the Sierra Nevadas or white-water rafting the Colorado River, his biography will be substantial, and he will not be shortchanged. His good intentions are as real as his imagination.

Over the years, and still today, I grow more and more appreciative of his leadership, guidance, advice, and support. He gives these unselfishly to our profession, to our clients, and whenever I need a healthy dose...to me. I have learned that in business, loyalty is rare. Jason has shown me that in friendship, it is priority.

ability, irrespective of their educational background.

After that initial encounter, for over 10 years, I lectured with him and marveled at his knowledge when he was one of the speakers. What impacted me the most was his sense of teamwork. There was a lecture team of at least five or six of us at every seminar. Every night there was an expectation from Jason that the team would have dinner together. That action formed a bond between us, and I believe the customers benefited greatly because they heard a series of interconnected lectures that were delivered like a single voice. One last thing...if we

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were on the road on my birthday, I was always guaranteed a shrimp cocktail. That's golden!

Congratulations Jason, a very deserving member of the Podiatric Hall of Fame.

Jonathan Moore, DPM

I've known Jason for all of my professional career spanning almost 20 years. I have sat on two boards with him and have seen him impact the profession of podiatry by far more than most podiatrists have.

I think Jason always saw the opportunity in the profession of podiatric medicine by far more than most podiatrists did and I was always proud to be one of those that in some way saw that same opportunity. Seeing the opportunity that many podiatrists didn't see always has been a source of frustration for him, but instead of writing us off, he has relentlessly worked his whole career trying

years, first at Benefoot and Langer and then at OHI. Someone once said of Jason that he is always the smartest person in the room but never shines the light on himself. Jason is one of those leaders who trusts the people he works with and his motivation is always to find the

ness lasts and grows for 40 years. The more time goes by and the more we talk, the more I am reminded what a truly gifted, principled, kind, clever, and loyal person Jason Kraus is. Jason Kraus, simply put, is a class act! His ability to bring innovation into markets in a timely and pro-

“Jason is one of those leaders who trusts the people he works with and his motivation is always to find the best way that he can help.”—Wittner

“His ability to bring innovation into markets in a timely and professional manner and empowering those he works with are indeed rare and fine qualities...”—Segel

to convince doctors of those opportunities not only financially, but for the enhancement of patients' lives.

When Jason was a consultant traveling in and out of podiatrists' offices, he had a vision for what a podiatric office could do that often-times far outshone that of the doctors, and I know that was hard for him. Whether as a consultant, businessman, or as a board member and visionary, Jason has always demonstrated integrity and loyalty...two things that so many in our world lack. That is why I have always wanted Jason Kraus in my corner and have always considered him an advocate and friend.

Stu Wittner, CPed

I have had the honor and pleasure to work with Jason for over 20

best way that he can help. Jason has always looked for ways to partner with individuals and companies, looking for a win-win relationship. Try walking an industry meeting hall with him; it could take an hour to get down just one aisle because he has so many long-term, positive relationships with so many doctors and vendors.

professional manner and empowering those he works with are indeed rare and fine qualities, but perhaps the best things about Jason Kraus are his ability to listen, the elegance of his responses, and his no-nonsense approach to giving and keeping his word.

Often account reps and customer service agents in business settings fail to return calls, yet Jason, perhaps the busiest of them all, with the most on his plate, always called and took the time to listen and remedy these issues.

This year, Jason really showed his passion and care for others by being an integral part of our efforts to raise awareness to the importance of civility, dignity, harmony, and responsible humanity while helping raise money for Doctors Without Borders. He is a rare gem, a great friend, and needless to say, the world would be a better place with more folks like Jason in it! Love you brother! **PM**

Langer and Benefoot were built on educating the profession, and Jason has been an innovator in designing and implementing first-of-its-kind services and programs. One effort that I know Jason takes great pride in has been his long-standing commitment to the podiatry colleges and the student associations. Jason has assisted hundreds of doctors as well as the podiatry profession in advancing their skills in service to their patients and is deserving of being recognized as a Hall of Fame Laureate for all of his contributions.

Jay Segel, DPM

Friendship is an interesting thing; most create some great early memories that fade with time. It is the rare case when friendship born from busi-



Paul Langer has been a provider of products and services to the podiatry profession since 1978. He has been President, COO of The Langer Biomechanics Group, Inc., Co-Founder of Benefoot, Inc., Owner and

President of Footbōn and CM2 Orthotics, and is currently Executive Vice President—Business Development of McClain Laboratories, LLC. He worked with his father, Dr. Sheldon Langer, for twenty-seven years. Mark Lipsky graciously contributed to and edited this article.