

PUSHING

BOUNDARIES

Exercise, health and hope for people with paralysis



Press Kit

2022

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Mission

Pushing Boundaries provides intensive exercise therapy that strengthens and supports people living with paralysis, and their families, to maximize health and improve quality of life.

Our two primary paths to fulfilling our mission are:

- Providing highly customized, intensive exercise therapy programs that expand function, physically strengthen, and challenge clients to progress further. Our team uses specialized equipment on-site to maximize the efficacy of our therapy. We also teach clients exercises that can be done at home where special equipment may not be available.
- Providing a broad online resource library, accessible 24 hours a day, where our clients, their families, and anyone in the paralysis community can research topics and service providers that support independence. Common search topics include legal support, transportation help, funding assistance, and specialized home conversion contractors.

History

In 2001 Allan Northrup was left paralyzed from a motor vehicle collision. Once released from his initial hospital stay, Allan and his wife, Sharon, found an exercise therapy facility in Southern California where he could potentially recover more strength and function. Happy with Allan's victories there but longing for home, the couple returned to the Puget Sound in 2004. One year later they created **NextStepsNW**; the first and only facility of its kind in the Pacific Northwest.

In 2008, sensing that the facility and work could benefit a larger audience, the organization rebranded to **Pushing Boundaries**- expanding its focus to include a myriad of neurological movement disorders in addition to Spinal Cord Injury

Since its inception, Pushing Boundaries has provided over 70,000 hours of exercise therapy, serving over 1,100 clients. The online resource library averages 350 uses/month.

In Their Own Words

Founder: Sharon Northrup

"Allan's passing in 2011 left a large, empty spot in both my life and the lives of many others. The legacy Allan helped create through the founding of Pushing Boundaries continues to give me purpose. As a Board Member I get to work with others on furthering our common goal: the success and growth of Pushing Boundaries by executing its mission to its fullest potential. My joy comes from the personal interaction I have with clients, their families, their caregivers, and our amazing staff who make Pushing Boundaries unique."

Founder: Allan Northrup

“In the winter of 2001, while my wife Sharon and I were travelling over Snoqualmie Pass, we hit a patch of black ice and rolled our car off the road. In an instant, I sustained a C7-T1 spinal cord injury. I was airlifted back to Seattle where I spent eight grueling weeks in intensive care and in-patient rehabilitation. I worked hard learning how to transfer from my bed to my wheelchair and back again. I kept asking “Isn’t there anything else you can do to help me?”

I was told that unless I got movement back, there wasn’t anything else that could be done. Frustrated and alone, my family searched the Northwest for a facility that could provide more than a life of transferring in and out of a wheelchair.

In 2002 Sharon and I moved 2000 miles away from friends and family where we could piece together an aggressive exercise-based recovery program, water therapy and electro-stimulation cycling. We travelled across Southern California to three different facilities, five days a week, for almost two years to create a comprehensive program. What we learned and the bonds we created with others in our same situation during this time healed me- healed us. I was able to take back the control of my life.

When we got back to the Northwest, we began to purchase the specialized equipment needed to continue my therapy. We met so many people that needed the same therapy as me, so Sharon and I decided to begin Pushing Boundaries, the Northwest’s first non-profit, exercise-based therapy center. We believe that someone shouldn’t have to move away from their family and friends to have the same opportunity that we did.”

Allan Northrup passed away in 2011.

Exercise Therapy Programs

Exercise Therapy is the core of Pushing Boundaries Mission. It uses neuro-reeducation, gait training, strength-building, and other physical activities to help clients enhance function, remediate or prevent impairment, and optimize overall health. It is highly repetitive and intensive, encouraging neuroplasticity.

Unlike Physical Therapy, Exercise Therapy is not covered by most health insurers. The two therapies often work in conjunction with each other, but insurance limitations can reduce access to PT for the long-term care frequently required.

Exercise Therapy's existence outside the standard medical model provides both advantages and disadvantages:

Because it is not constricted by restrictive and constricting insurance requirements:

- Exercise Therapy can happen at the pace optimal to the client's needs, as frequency is not determined by a third party.
- Goals are 100% client driven.
- Exercise Therapists have the freedom to try new approaches and methodology.

Because it falls outside the framework of 'standard' healthcare:

- Clients pay out-of-pocket for their therapy.
- Client may have to stop care if they cannot afford services.
- Pushing Boundaries relies on community support to keep client rates as affordable as possible.
- Pushing Boundaries is not eligible for the significant discounts on equipment that other healthcare facilities receive.

A Virtual Tour of our Facility and Specialized Equipment can be found [here](#).

Community Resources

When Pushing Boundaries was founded, The Northrups were intent on providing more than just a place for Exercise Therapy. They wanted a community of support and camaraderie not just for the clients of exercise therapy, but for their family and caregivers as well.

This vision has taken many forms over the years, with the current iteration available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week online. This comprehensive Resource Center includes a wide variety of topics- from home adaptability to financial assistance to college support for those living with disabilities. The links below access the Resource Center, which is free for anyone- whether they participate in our Exercise Therapy Programs or not.

- [Financial Support & Management](#)
- [Legal Resources](#)
- [Healthcare](#)
- [Equipment & Housing Adaptability](#)
- [Education & Employment](#)
- [Associations & Support Groups](#)
- [Periodicals & Research](#)
- [Transportation, Travel, & Recreation](#)

Pushing Boundaries' Resource Center is a living catalog of information. Organizations, links, and pertinent tools are added throughout the year.

Client Overview

Our clients navigate a variety of diagnoses/conditions.

- Acute Incident Conditions/Diagnoses: These clients had a specific, life-altering event that directly led to their current condition. Examples: Spinal Cord Injury (SCI), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Stroke
- Degenerative Diagnoses: These clients have been diagnosed with a neurological disorder which impacts movement and motor control—typically with an increase in severity of symptoms as the disease progresses. Examples: Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson’ Disease
- Congenital Diagnoses: These clients were born with a condition of the central nervous system that negatively impacts movement and motor control. Examples: Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida

Some clients use our exercise therapy programs to regain function and strength, while others focus on maintenance. All clients benefit from exercise therapy at the autonomic level- improving circulation, digestion, and respiratory functions.

The diagnoses we work with can impact anyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, race, gender identity, or socioeconomic status. In 2020, our clients have ranged in age from 13-89, and 29% identify as a racial or ethnic minority. The conditions we work with are widespread and common.

- There are roughly 17,810 new Spinal Cord Injury cases in the United States each year.¹
- 1 in 62 people in the United States are currently experiencing some form of paralysis.²
- More than 795,000 people in the United States have a Stroke each year; it is a leading cause of serious long-term disability.³
- Over 288,000 people are hospitalized and survive a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) each year in the United States; 80,000 per year are left with lifelong disabilities.⁴
- As of 2018, approximately 727,000 people in the United States live with Multiple Sclerosis; women are 2.8 times more likely to be diagnosed with MS than men.⁵ People in the Pacific Northwest are three times more likely to be diagnosed with MS, than in other parts of the United States.⁶

¹ “Spinal Cord Injury Facts and Figures at a Glance” (Updated 2020). *National Spinal Cord Injury Statistical Center*. <https://www.nscisc.uab.edu> | ² Cahill A., et al. “Policy Data Brief: Paralysis in the U.S.” *Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, University of New Mexico School of Medicine*. <http://www.sci-info-pages.com/facts.html> | ³ “Stroke Report” (Updated 2020). *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, United States Department of Health and Human Services*. <https://www.cdc.gov/stroke/index.htm> | ⁴ Georges A., Booker J. (Updated 2020). “Traumatic Brain Injury Report”. *National Center for Biotechnology Information*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK459300/> | ⁵ Wallin, M.T., Culpepper, W.J., et al (2019). “The prevalence of Multiple Sclerosis in the United States: A population-based estimate using health claims data” *Neurology Journal*. <https://n.neurology.org/content/92/10/e1029> | ⁶ Smith, C (2012). “Search for cause of High Rates of MS in Northwest Could Lead to New Treatments” *KUOW Public Radio*. <https://www.kuow.org/stories/search-cause-high-rates-ms-northwest-could-lead-new-treatments>

Client Milestones

Milestones are a collection of achievements specifically measuring increased independence. They represent common hurdles experienced by those navigating paralysis. Because of the diversity of our clientele, not all Milestones are applicable to every client. In 2021, 58% of our clients achieved one or more Milestones in their journeys toward increased independence.

Our team of exercise therapists created this list in collaboration with our clients. Current Milestones are broken down as follows:

- Activities of Daily Living (ADL) Milestones
 - Signing name/writing
 - Feeding/drinking themselves
 - Hygiene without assistance (brushing teeth, combing hair, navigating catheter, etc)
 - Dressing without assistance
- Personal Mobility Milestones
 - Power chair changes (breath to head control, head control to hand control, etc)
 - Moving from power chair to manual chair
 - Taking first assisted steps
 - Taking first unassisted steps
 - Other (dependent on individual)
- Lifestyle/Recreation Milestones
 - Retrying/returning to old hobby/sport
 - Starting new hobby/sport
- Independent Living Milestones
 - Traveling for first time (road trip, plane, hotel stay)
 - Traveling for first time alone (road trip, plane, hotel stay)
 - Driving with vehicle adaptations
 - Moving into/ returning to independent living
- Maintenance Milestones
 - Maintaining 85% or more of one evaluation exercise
 - Other (dependent on individual)

Clients In Their Own Words

Dave D.

Cervical Spine injury/spinal fusion. Arrived with severely limited strength, function and coordination on bilateral arms.

“I feel so lucky. I mean, I have some numbness, but, really... I only wished we'd video-taped me more when I first started coming here. I wish I could look back and see what I was like. Do you know it's been two years? And on my last flight I was able to reach up and put my suitcase in the overhead bin. My wife didn't have to do it for me.”

Chris D.

C-level incomplete spinal cord injury. Arrived using a sip/puff mechanism to control his chair. Currently able to control chair movement with hand; has begun crawling.

“I became a Quadriplegic from an accident while coaching my 12-year-old's mountain-bike team. My therapists at Pushing Boundaries understand my unique challenges as a person with paralysis, and creatively help my ongoing therapy process.”

Nancy N.

In her own words.

“On May 5th, 2013, my life changed drastically. I was mountain biking with my kids, fell, broke my neck, and injured my spinal cord. However, that wasn't the big change. What was so different was that I went from a world where you can “do anything” if you work hard enough, to a world where “you can't”. You can't walk, you can't dress yourself, you can't take care of yourself, etc.

After a long hospital stay and rehabilitation, someone suggested that I go visit a place called Pushing Boundaries. They felt that I would benefit from their intensive exercise program. I have been going for the past 6 years. I truly appreciate the wonderful attention and attitude of the staff. With their help, I “can” again. We may have to modify how I exercise, but I am constantly challenged to do all that I can - and another two [exercises]! While I wait for science and medicine to find a cure for paralysis, Pushing Boundaries keeps me physically and mentally healthy and pushes me to do more than I ever would all by myself. Thanks for helping to keep a place where we “can”.”

Navigating The Medical Community

We work in conjunction with the traditional medical community but are not embedded in it.

Because Exercise Therapy is not embedded in the traditional model, once medical clearance is provided by a primary physician, our clients get to be the driver of their goals and progress.

That said, our team welcomes communication and coordination with other members of the client's care team. Our goal is to partner with the healthcare team to support our mutual clients' comprehensive goals and objectives, while ensuring our therapies do not conflict with larger treatment strategies.



Insurance

The most common question we get from potential new clients is “Why don’t you take insurance?” (By “take”, what they generally mean is “direct bill” an insurance company.) The fast answer is “It’s not that we won’t, it’s that we can’t”.

Because Exercise Therapists are not a licensed healthcare role in Washington state, they lack a specific credential that is required for us to send a bill to an insurance company. Without this credential, we cannot even *submit* the piece of paper, much less expect a reimbursement. Some clients have self-submitted and gotten reimbursed. That said, PB purposely stays ignorant to this process, so we are not held culpable for any issues or ‘interesting’ interpretations of insurance plans.

Board of Directors

Le Ann Yoder
President



Le Ann Yoder has a combined twenty years of operations and client services experience within organizations ranging from technology startups to large international financial institutions. Currently with Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, she is the Imaging/Procedure Suite/Pulmonary Function/Radiation Oncology Lead Program/Department Coordinator. In this role she provides leadership and support to empower staff: providing timely and accurate patient care, as well as organizational support.

Le Ann has served on several committees and boards throughout her career, with a focus on development, expansion, and growth. Le Ann's current volunteerism with Pushing Boundaries is driven by her desire to see the organization continue to grow- expanding PB's reach and profile, while also expanding access to services.

Andrea Tobon
Treasurer



Andrea is a passionate community advocate with a particular interest in strategic and fiscal planning. In addition to her current role as a Senior Financial Analyst with Amazon, Andrea has consistently volunteered within the local community for over 12 years- splitting her time between disability services, youth advocacy, and mentorship. Organizations that Andrea has worked with include Little Bit Therapeutic Riding Center, Built By Girls, and United Way of King County. In addition to her service to the Pushing Boundaries Board, Andrea also sits on the Board of Global Visionaries, a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower the youth to be socially and environmentally conscious global leaders.

Steven Anglés
Secretary



Steven Anglés is an attorney whose law practice focuses on representing individuals with complex and catastrophic injuries. He is a partner at the law firm of Adler Giersch, nationally renowned for their advocacy of clients with brain and spinal cord injuries. Most notably, the firm was responsible for the "Return to Play" Law for students after their client, Zackery Lystedt, sustained life-altering concussions during a middle school football game.

Steven's practice takes him across the PNW, from Seattle to the East Side and far beyond. He also manages an office in Kent dedicated to the South Sound, with additional resources and language skills to support the Latinx community. After 20 years in practice, he has a unique understanding of the care and effort it takes to help restore hope and rebuild lives after life-changing injuries. Working with Pushing Boundaries is a natural extension of honoring his clients and the tireless pursuit of exceptional results.

Sharon Northrup
*Treasurer;
Founder*



With 40+ years of Office Management/Bookkeeping experience, Sharon has been a vital and integral part of Pushing Boundaries since its inception. Sharon holds a B.A. from Nebraska Wesleyan.

Sharon and her late husband Allan founded Pushing Boundaries after Allan sustained a spinal cord injury. Sharon was instrumental since our inception in applying the knowledge, passion and real-life experience to make Pushing Boundaries what it is today. She is also a member of Bellevue LifeSpring, a non-profit organization.

You will often see Sharon helping out around the office, supporting clients and their caregivers, and surprising staff with lunch.

Tom Minty
Director



Tom Minty has been a Realtor® with a passion for barrier-free housing for over 15 years. In 2004 in response to the needs of a good friend with MS, he established ABLE environments, a full-service company founded to address the serious need for real estate expertise on issues of accessible living, housing decisions for our aging population, and the promotion of Universal Design in the mainstream housing industry. Most recently, Tom has partnered with Barry Long to create and implement searchable, accessible criteria in the Northwest Multiple Listing Service. Tom is serving his second term on the Seattle-King County Aging and Disabilities Advisory Council and is a Charter Member of the Northwest Universal Design Council.

Crystal Ju
Director



Crystal Ju is a program manager in the IT industry with 10 yrs of experience managing teams and shipping software products. On a daily basis she works with stakeholders to drive product usage and revenue via innovative technology, team excellence, and strategic partnership.

In 2019, Crystal's mother received three months of exercise therapy from Pushing Boundaries after a severe stroke. Her mother's situation, paired with Crystal's regular presence in the therapy sessions (acting as translator), ignited her passion of supporting the community of neurological disorders and spinal cord injuries. Crystal loves being part of Pushing Boundaries, helping the organization to continue to grow its reach and impact, and contributing to the success of its board, employees and clients.

Marci Muhlestein
Director



Marci Muhlestein has an extensive background in rehab medicine, disability services, and non-profit leadership. With more than 25 years of experience working in the disability community, Marci is currently the Executive Director at Community Homes of Kirkland. Community Homes provides, promotes, and sustains exceptional community-based housing for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Prior to her current role, Marci has been an Occupational Therapist, Special Educator, a Managing Director of housing and education, and an Associate Dean at Bellevue College.

Serving the Pushing Boundaries community allows Marci to integrate many aspects of her professional experience, from rehab therapy to non-profit leadership.

Rachel Gaura
Director



Rachel Gaura has more than 12 years of healthcare experience in both clinical and administrative roles within physical therapy, medical, and dental practices. Most recently she has focused on smaller private practice settings, where she can develop strong relationships with the patients she serves while maximizing operational efficiencies. Rachel is currently completing an Executive Master's in Healthcare Administration at the University of Washington.

Rachel is passionate about Pushing Boundaries' mission and is excited to be serving on the board. Her operational prowess paired with her future-facing strategic thinking are helping guide PB as it continues to evolve. Rachel brings with her an emphasis on being mindful and integrative of the differences that make us each unique.

Teri Mayo, LMT
Director

In her non-voting role, Pushing Boundaries' Executive Director Teri Mayo is integral in keeping the board up to date on organizational operations. Read more about Teri in the 'Staff' section.

Staff

Teri Mayo, LMT
Executive Director



Teri has owned rehabilitative practices for 27 years as a massage therapist, including a medical massage clinic that employed 19 therapists and staff. After a shift to health care administration with Swedish Medical Group and Seattle Children's Hospital for several years, Teri was happy to move back into the world of rehabilitative services when she joined PB in the fall of 2019.

Teri brings a background in business and team management, and professional mentoring; she enjoys bringing her strategic vision, business expertise, and non-profit board/fundraising experience to Pushing Boundaries. She loves working with the clients, board, staff, and volunteers to help push Pushing Boundaries into the potential that lies ahead.

In her spare time, Teri enjoys listening to jazz, cooking, traveling, and hanging out with her spouse and two chocolate labs.

Michael LaTour
Associate Director



Michael's philosophy of service-based professionalism is well aligned with the Pushing Boundaries' Mission. His awareness of the specific challenges of the PB community are informed by his own family: Michael witnessed and participated in the care of his father, who navigated both a Spinal Cord Injury and two separate Traumatic Brain Injuries while Michael was growing up.

Combining that history with 25 years of project management, 13 years of board development, 10 years of healthcare advocacy, and 8 years of teaching, his role at PB allows him to be the 'Jack of all Trades' that he adores. Whether he's changing a light bulb or building a development plan, his excitement in serving the PB community never diminishes.

In his spare time, Michael is passionate about travel, gardening, British television, and any and all cookies.

Kristen Knight, MS,
NSCA-CSCS,
ACSM/NCHPAD CIFT
Programs Manager



Kristen graduated from Salem State University in Massachusetts with a bachelor's degree in Sport and Movement Science, with a focus on fitness and wellness and a minor in Psychology, and a master's in Exercise Administration. She has over 10 years of personal training experience, is an NSCA Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist, and is a Certified Inclusive Fitness Trainer. Kristen's experience as a personal trainer has helped her develop a passion for helping others with their health and fitness goals so that they can live their happiest and healthiest lives possible.

Kevin Carpenter, BS,
ACSM/EP, ACSM/NCHPAD
CIFT

Senior Exercise Therapist



Kevin graduated from the University of Mary with a Bachelor's degree in Exercise Science, focusing on Clinical Exercise Physiology. Kevin is a Certified Exercise Physiologist through the American College of Sports Medicine and is also a Certified Inclusive Fitness Trainer. While in school, Kevin was a two-time academic All-American for the Marauder's cross-country team. When he wasn't tearing up the roads during the school year, he spent his time in the University of Mary's free health clinic that the students operated for the surrounding community. Kevin spends his spare time searching for new places he hasn't been before, reading, and playing the drums.

Sumi Uchiage, BHK,
BCAK, ACSM/NCHPAD
CIFT

Senior Exercise Therapist



Sumi graduated from the University of British Columbia with a Bachelor of Human Kinetics, majoring in Kinesiology. She worked as a Kinesiologist, personal trainer and Rehab Assistant for 6 years in Vancouver before moving to Seattle. Her clientele ranged from the clinical population to elite athletes. Sumi is a 9x Karate National Champion and has competed internationally as a member of the Canadian national team for 15 years. Her love of sports and fitness has led to her passion of using exercise as a means to achieve benefits in health and wellness. Sumi strongly believes in the power of exercise and is excited to join the PB team!

Jonathan Resuello
BA, ACE-SFS, NETA
Exercise Therapist



Jonathan graduated from Washington State University majoring in accounting. After several years of public accounting, Jonathan knew it was not for him and made a career change focusing on the health and fitness industry. With nearly a decade of experience leading yoga classes, and four years of exercise training Jonathan has developed a care and solicitude for his clients to succeed and live healthy, well-meaning lives. Understanding the importance of movement and fitness as we age, Jonathan has extensive experience working with our senior citizens and has supplemented such with senior fitness specialty certification. Outside of PB, Jonathan enjoys travel, hiking, and spending time with his family.

Sage Partida, BS,
Exercise Therapist



Sage graduated from Bastyr University with a Bachelor of Exercise Science and Wellness. Growing up an all-around athlete helped develop his strong passion for exercise and sports, leading him to work with professional, collegiate, and young athletes. Working with family members who have muscular dystrophy (and others), paired with continuous research guides him to helping others. Sage's exercise philosophy is rooted in empowerment- which serves him well in the PB community. He is committed to helping every individual to achieve their wellness goals and healthy living. In his spare time, Sage loves training his fur babies, listening/dancing to music, eating, and bodybuilding