

CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

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\$1 million gift from Larry and Jackie Kraft to fund digital dojo to help sick children manage pain

Sherri Welch.

Rabbi Elimelech "Rabbi G" Goldberg, founder and global director of Kids Kicking Cancer

A \$1 million gift from board member Larry Kraft and his wife Jackie will fund the buildout of a digital karate school to help children fighting diseases learn to manage their pain through breathing and movement.

The Krafts' gift will support the web-based dojo for children fighting cancer and other pediatric diseases to connect them to martial arts teachers and other sick children around the world.

Children will be able to create avatars of themselves so they can securely participate in virtual martial arts therapy classes and events, access an on-demand library of martial arts technique videos and engage with other patients through chats, blogs and teachings. They will earn incentives for their participation.

"It will be a fun place that will have a serious implication on health," said Rabbi Elimelech "Rabbi G" Goldberg, founder and global director of Kids Kicking Cancer.

It has contracted with Detroit-based marketing agency partner, Rebuild, to build out the platform.

"No sick child should ever suffer the pain and anxiety of serious illness on his own," Larry Kraft, president and CEO of Serta Restokraft Mattress Co., said in a release.

Larry Kraft, president and CEO, Serta Restokraft Mattress Co., and Jackie Kraft

Jackie Kraft noted the couple has seen the power of children teaching others.

"That impact can be significantly replicated with the tools that we are proud to help bring to life," she said.

Named [among 2022 Crain's Healthcare Heroes](#), Goldberg launched the nonprofit in 1999 at Children's Hospital of Michigan to teach sick children a martial arts technique of breathing, movement and meditation to help them manage pain.

Today, Kids Kicking Cancer is working with children in 126 facilities across nine countries. It uses martial arts therapy taught by experienced martial artists trained in the Heroes Circle approach to lowering their pain, anxiety, toxic stress and fear. Its evidence-based therapy — shown to produce results in children's brains after just four interventions — is delivered in person and virtually through Zoom classes to children in hospitals, medical facilities, outpatient centers, homes and schools across the United States and globally.

Demand for the virtual classes, the pain relief they help provide and the social interaction rose during the pandemic.

Connecting children who've learned the breath and movements that help manage their pain with other children will help reduce the isolation many sick children face, the nonprofit said.

"When children know that they are teaching others...they have less pain," Goldberg said.

The new Heroes Circle Digital Dojo is expected to launch in 2023 along with the opening of the Kraft Digital Dojo Studio for production and broadcasting in Southfield on the campus of a physical dojo named for the Krafts.

It has set a goal to lower the pain of one million children in the coming years, using the Krafts' gift as a platform to do that, Goldberg said.

Inline Play

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