## HERL MILESTONES

1994 HERL founded  
1994 SmartWheel developed  
1998 Ergonomic pushrim (Natural Fit) developed  
1998 Pittsburgh hosts National Veterans Wheelchair Games  
1999 Initial VA Rehab R&D Center funding  
1999 NIDRR SCI Model Center awarded  
1999 PAPAW study in collaboration with Yamaha  
2000 Most efficient WC propulsion pattern identified  
2001 GAMECycle invented  
2002 Oblique angle caster fork invented  
2004 PathLock invented  
2005 NSF-ERC QoLT awarded  
2005 Low-cost adjustable pediatric WC  
2006 SCI Clinical Guidelines on preservation of upper limb function written  
2008 PerMMA invented  
2009 Transfer Assessment Instrument created  
2010 Virtual Seating Coach developed  
2010 Cueing Kitchen developed  
2011 HERL moves to Bakery Square  
2011 Pittsburgh VA hosts National Veterans Wheelchair Games for the 2nd time  
2011 Strong Arm invented  
2012 MeBot invented  
2012 KitchenBot invented  
2013 Pathway Standards written  
2014 Wheelchair Maintenance study

## Notes on 20 Years  
**by HERL Director**  
**Rory A. Cooper, PhD**

It is hard to believe that 20 years have passed since HERL was founded. Much has changed in that time period and there have been a large number of significant accomplishments. In 1994, a small group of us started to work in the basement of the Highland Drive VA Medical Center in a converted shower and locker room. It would have been difficult to predict that our dream of creating a world-class organization for human engineering research would grow from these austere beginnings. Today, HERL occupies circa 26,000 sq-ft of custom designed and built space in a state of the art research facility. More importantly, HERL is recognized as a world-wide leader in wheelchair and rehabilitation engineering research, development, and training. HERL has grown and with it the impact that it has around the globe. But at its heart it remains a dynamic and entrepreneurial organization that is driven to make a real and positive difference in the lives of people with disabilities through advanced engineering, medical rehabilitation research, technology transfer, standards setting, and education. People who have received training in HERL are now working on nearly every continent and over a dozen different countries – ensuring HERL’s impact for future generations.

## Notes on 20 Years  
**by HERL Medical Director**  
**Michael Boninger, MD**

I mark the passage of time mainly by the growth of my two sons. They were born at around the same time as HERL and have now both left home for college. It has been amazing watching them travel towards greater independence. What I hope for them is that they achieve their dreams. HERL’s vision has always been to allow every Veteran, in fact every wheelchair user, to fulfill his or her dreams. But it wasn’t until recently as part of our VA Center of Excellence renewal that we were challenged to articulate our Center’s Grand Vision. What a great exercise that turned out to be. Grad students, junior faculty, staff, clinicians, wheelchair users – the very multidisciplinary team that has made HERL what it is today, all sat down to discuss our vision. It was a wonderful spirited discussion. The result – our vision – is: To create a world where all people with disabilities have unencumbered mobility and function so that they can fully participate in and contribute to society.

We’ve traveled a long way toward that vision in the last 20 years, impacting care of people with disabilities in hundreds of ways. But we still have a long way to go and I can’t tell you how excited I am to continue the journey. I’m continually energized by the students we teach and the people with disabilities we serve. Is it too early to contemplate what we’ll be highlighting in our 40th year publication?
Photos from 20 Years
Our Mission: To continuously improve the mobility and function of people with disabilities through advanced engineering in clinical research and medical rehabilitation.

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HERL is also affiliated with:

- VA Center of Excellence for Wheelchairs and Associated Rehabilitation Engineering
- University of Pittsburgh NIDRR Model Center on Spinal Cord Injury
- University of Pittsburgh School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences School of Medicine
- Paralyzed Veterans of America