

Dr. Henry A. & Barbara M. Jordan Award

Significant, Longstanding, Comprehensive Philanthropic Achievements

AMANDA CABOT & PETER KJELLERUP

Boston-born Mandy Cabot was heading for a career in education. Denmark-born Peter Kjellerup was a gifted classical dressage trainer. When their paths converged, their worlds changed. Together, they have made our world a better place in countless ways. Their mottos:

- "Take a stand. Make a difference. Slay apathy."
- "If you have something great to share, you share it."

Mandy grew up in a family culture that taught "to whom much is given, much is expected." Mandy explains, "My dad, grandfather, and great-grandfather were traditional businessmen, founding and in succession running the family business, Cabot Corporation, a specialty chemical manufacturer. In the Boston Brahmin tradition, my elders devoted their adult lives to making as much money as they could, only to turn around and give the lion's share of it to charity before they died." Neither Mandy nor any of her four siblings chose to go into the family business.

Mandy graduated from Harvard College with a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology, did a post-graduate year at Stanford University, and graduated from the University of Virginia with a Master's degree in Special Education. Yet she felt she was on the wrong path. Mandy took a break and went back to Massachusetts to find her footing and to sort out what she really wanted to do.

Peter Kjellerup was born in Odense, Denmark. Immersed in the country's deep-rooted commitment to environmental sustainability, he studied agriculture at University. Yet it was the horses that really called to him. Peter traveled throughout Europe, a well-regarded dressage rider and gifted classical dressage trainer.

So how did they meet? Peter picks up the story from here: "Mandy's mom co-founded Hamilton Farm in Massachusetts to breed and train dressage horses. She brought me in as a guest instructor. Mandy and I fell madly in love. It really was love at first sight."

In 1983, Mandy and Peter started their equestrian business together at Five Star Farm in Unionville, importing, breeding and training competition dressage horses. Their model was to take diamonds in the rough, train them, compete them, and sell them. Their clients included members of the U.S. Equestrian team.

In addition to horses, Mandy and Peter imported hard-to-find training gear and equestrian apparel. On one of their many horse-buying trips to Denmark, Mandy glimpsed a pair of closed-back clogs in the window of a small shop in Peter's hometown: "I suddenly realized that clogs were the perfect barn shoe. Unlike riding boots, they're easy to get on and off, supportive, protective, and extraordinarily comfortable. We started stocking clogs in our tack shop. We also brought them to horse shows and sold them out of our station wagon. **We made up the name Dansko – literally translated as 'Danish shoes' – and incorporated in 1990.**"



In 1991 Mandy told her father that she had started a business selling Danish shoes. "He asked me what I knew about selling shoes. 'Nothing,' I said. He told me he was an acquaintance of Hadley Griffin, the former CEO of Brown Shoes, which at the time was probably the biggest shoe company in America, and asked if I'd like to meet him. I'm a card-carrying introvert and the thought of going to St. Louis to network with a CEO was terrifying. But what a great opportunity to get my foot in the door. Before I could stage a protest, my dad picked up the phone and I had an appointment with the folks at Brown. We met at 8 a.m. the following Monday."

"After a kindly 'pat on the head,' Hadley told me that the footwear industry was a man's world and offered to take over our agreement with the manufacturer and give us a royalty. I thought about it for about four seconds and realized there must be something to my idea and I should stay the course. Hadley couldn't have been more gracious. He gave me two pieces of advice. He said, **'Stop selling shoes out of the back of your car' and 'Stay gourmet. Know your niche.'**"

Fortunately, Dansko was at the right place at the right time. In the early 1990s, Birkenstock was coming out of the granola/health food closet, and several other Euro-comfort brands like Ecco and Mephisto were just arriving on the US market. Peter says, half-joking, **"Dansko had tremendous editorial exposure because the clogs were so odd looking, and the media love stories about people who know nothing and try to work their way into the business."**

For a long time, Dansko had only a handful of employees at its West Grove location. "Mandy was COE, Chief of Everything. I was COEE, Chief of Everything Else," Peter explains. "Mandy concentrated on product development and marketing, and I looked after facilities and keeping a roof over everyone's head."



Beyond its initial clog collections, Dansko expanded to include sandals, boots, and an entire range of casual and career shoes for women and men. Dansko footwear became highly regarded for incredible durability, outstanding stability, ergonomically contoured footbeds and fashionable style. Dansko became a favorite of well-heeled doctors, nurses, teachers, and those in the hospitality industry.

Despite their keen focus on Dansko, **Mandy and Peter's personal community philanthropic involvement grew. And because "when you have something great to share, you share it," Dansko's corporate charitable involvement grew as well.**

Mandy reflects, "My grandparents created a **private family foundation** in 1992 so that their descendants could learn about philanthropy and actively participate in carrying on their tradition of trying to help make this a better world. Our family foundation brings us together to discuss our passions, learn more about what's going on in the world, and prioritize where our resources can make an impact. I served as its Chair for many years, and had its mission and structure in mind when we launched the Dansko Foundation in 2003."

Stepping up to the challenge, the **Dansko Foundation Board is staffed entirely by employees.** They review grant proposals, rate priorities, go on site visits, review organizational health and need, and distribute funds to nonprofits.



To date, the **Dansko Foundation has granted more than \$725,000** to over 100 nonprofits in the Delaware Valley. Funding has helped provide meals, shelter, clothing, household goods and animal rescue services, as well as educational, therapeutic and recreational programs.

Additionally, Dansko employees can double the value of their charitable donations through the Dansko Foundation's **matching grants program**. Taking it a step further, the majority of Dansko employees participate in **company-organized service days**. Dansko employees plant trees, paint playgrounds, clean highways, build houses and cook for families. Annually, each employee is given **20 hours of paid time off to volunteer**. Amplifying the impact, Dansko donates the equivalent of that **employee's wage-hours to the nonprofit charity** for which they volunteer.

In alignment with Dansko's core business, funding for the Foundation is generated internally with **proceeds from shoes sold in the Dansko Company Store in West Grove**, so that **purchases help those in need**.

Visitors to the Dansko Foundation website see the corporate values clearly proclaimed: "At Dansko, we step up in support of the community. **Our goal is to leave the world a better place than we found it**. If that means building another house... pass us the hammer and nails!"

In 2005, Dansko reached a milestone: 100 employees and \$100 million in revenue. Mandy and Peter realized that if they were to be hit by the proverbial bus, Dansko's future might be in jeopardy. "We needed to explore options to ensure the company's long-term financial and cultural future," notes Mandy. "We met with an attorney who floated the idea of an **Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP)**. We could set up a stock ownership trust for the benefit of our employees where shares would be released over time into employees' accounts."

Over the next few years, the focus was on **Sustainability** in the broadest sense of the word. Dansko hired additional personnel with more experience in the footwear industry, dedicated the company even more fully to socially responsible business practices, and designed and built a new corporate headquarters according to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification standards.

In 2007, Dansko became a founding B Corporation, submitting to a rigorous monitoring process by the non-profit **B Lab** that measures how well companies meet high standards of social sustainability, environmental responsibility, accountability and transparency. B Lab certifies companies based on how they create value not only for their shareholders, but also for their employees, their local community and the environment.

In 2008, 150 Dansko employees joyfully moved into their new LEED Gold Certified corporate headquarters: the first in Chester County. Dansko's main lobby is a Living Wall of indoor plants and trickling water; the roof is covered with 1,100 solar panels along with shrubs and grasses that provide insulation; and the parking lot has a pervious surface that returns rain to the natural water table. Solar and wind energy, energy-saving lighting, and recycling are paramount.

Along with multiple eco-friendly building materials, Dansko's corporate headquarters features quality-of-life components including mediation rooms, a green rooftop patio, and a gym with locker rooms and showers. All this, complimented by stunning, thoughtful, eco-friendly, fair trade artwork and handmade crafts.



In 2012, Mandy and Peter accelerated their transition to employee ownership and sold 100% of their shares to the ESOP. Mandy explains, "Employees are the lifeblood of our business; they are the business. It made total sense to allow employees to share in the wealth they helped create, to share in both the opportunities and responsibilities of ownership." The ESOP truly demonstrates Mandy and Peter's **authentic commitment to the triple bottom line: engaging in business dealings that are win + win + win for people + the planet + profits.**

Dansko continued to thrive. **By 2013, Dansko employed 180 people** and opened a new 200,000 square foot distribution center in West Grove. Looking for something meaningful to do with Dansko's former corporate headquarters, Peter discovered a nonprofit that sought a distribution center in the mid-Atlantic region. **Project C.U.R.E.** identifies, solicits, collects, sorts and distributes donated medical equipment and supplies to developing countries worldwide. Nationally, Project C.U.R.E. ships an average of three sea-going cargo containers of life-saving aid each week. With great humility, Peter explains, "We are fortunate to be able to have a small role here, helping Project C.U.R.E. with its mission: to deliver health & hope to the world."

By 2015, Mandy and Peter created and initially funded the **Cabot-Kjellerup Foundation**, to help them structure their own personal philanthropy. "We made 36 grants in our first full year. It's a great way for my daughter Mette Kjellerup to get involved in the community and our philanthropy," enthuses Peter. "The U.S. system is so different from the Danish system. Here, nonprofits serve as a safety-net for social services, education, and environmental needs. It is a totally different way of handling large social issues." Grants focus on local and global causes near and dear to Mandy and Peter, including animal and wildlife protection, nature conservation, clean water, nutrition, poverty, microfinance and social enterprise.

In 2016, Mandy turned over the responsibilities of President to Jim Fox, Dansko's CFO of nearly 10 years. Mandy continues as CEO and Board Chair. Peter continues as Vice President and COEE. Jim has big shoes to fill. Mandy explains, "Sustainability has always been a priority for us. Leadership transitions are an important part of the process." Adds Peter, "We've built a company that can move through time, rooted in our values, while strong, smart and brave enough to create its own future."

Mandy and Peter eagerly anticipate more outward-facing roles going forward, with greater focus on and participation in nonprofits and local communities. This is **tremendously good news for the charitable community and social benefit organizations.**

As a charitable leader, Mandy has a long history of service on the Board of the **Two Ten Footwear Foundation**, helping families in the footwear community with financial, social and educational support. Since 1997, Mandy has also served in numerous volunteer leadership capacities with the **YMCA of Greater Brandywine** and the **Jennersville YMCA**, including co-chairing the Jennersville Capital Campaign. In Fall 2017, Mandy joined the Board of the **Chester County Hospital**.





Mandy and Peter also have a long-standing association with **Stroud Water Research Center**. In 1986, they visited Stroud, simply to learn if they could help. They became early funders of the Leaf Pack Experiment Kit, which is now used worldwide by volunteers to determine the health of streams and understand their ecology. Mandy served two terms on the Board of Stroud, and when her term expired in 1997, Peter joined the Board. Mandy and Peter have an enduring commitment to Stroud's work, locally and globally.

In addition to Stroud, Peter currently serves on the Board of the **Chester County Food Bank** and **The Land Conservancy for Southern Chester County**. "I am intensely drawn to immersing myself in the inter-relationships of water, land and food, and how it all fits together locally and globally. There is so much important work to be done here, and the interdependency and social benefit stakes are extremely high."

Mandy and Peter are hard-wired to commit their boundless energy, insights, experiences and resources to make a difference, and to bring new strategic opportunities to fruition.

"We are part of our community, and it is imperative to be involved—locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Engaging with the community adds perspective to our lives. It's Energizing. Contagious. Enriching."

Mandy Cabot and Peter Kjellerup: Doing the right thing, every step of the way.



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SLAY APATHY."

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GREAT TO SHARE, YOU SHARE IT."

- Mandy Cabot and Peter Kjellerup

