

# Building a New Culture of Health

Johanna Stoberock (GMWS '88) interviews Megan Haas (GMWS '88) about her health tech startup, Kinnected.

**J: Explain to me what exactly Kinnected.org is.**

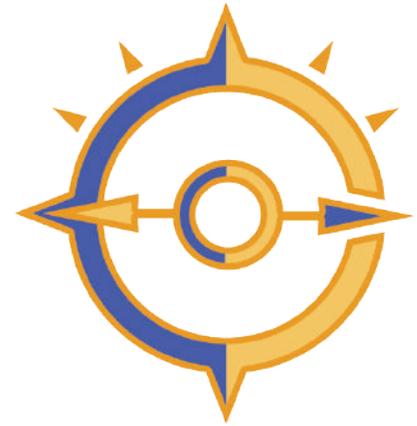
M: Kinnected is a free, social-health platform offering support and solutions to people and health professionals, globally. The platform provides multiple avenues for members to organize their self-health information, collaborate, and share knowledge towards better health and well-being. It is also a social media sanctuary. We focus on ethical technology used in service of the person, not the other way around.

**I know you've been working on this idea for a long time. Where did the idea come from?**

Kinnected coincided with a transformative moment for both me and society. It was 2009. I'd just left a company I'd co-founded, (the Utilikilts Co.), where I'd helped develop an 80,000 strong, healthy, global customer community and culture. And for society, it was the

moment that the social networks started to explode. When I saw what Facebook was presenting as a global community, I felt like it was missing so many crucial elements. Connectivity was there, but the tools of connection, culture building, and service to others were not. I immediately began to envision a more expansive model; a platform that offered the sense of nourishment, home and belonging that's been my north star in growing a business, and a global culture that could be based around social service. I had no idea how to build a tech company, so I began with what I did know—designing systems and of authentic connection and trying to translate those gestures into the digital sphere. I made mock-ups and models and continued to play around with ideas on the back end for several years, while the emotional health of the world took a nosedive.

After living in London and interacting with a free health care system for the first time, I arrived back in the States



Megan Haas '88 speaking at Politico's Annual Health Summit in Amsterdam in November 2019.

and saw our broken healthcare system with new eyes. I saw how American society was failing in so many basic ways when it came to health. How financially limited we are in our ability to preserve and improve our own health, how constrained we are in our inability to care for each other. How choosing doctors and alternative forms of medicine is so difficult, and also how burnt out health practitioners have become.

It was then that I decided to narrow my focus to healthcare—it felt like the greatest need in America today, and I felt like this platform could be as groundbreaking for other countries, but for vastly different reasons. I still didn't know how to build a tech company, but I knew how to start a business and a community, so I plugged in those mock-ups, and models I'd designed, and began building Kinnected, regardless.



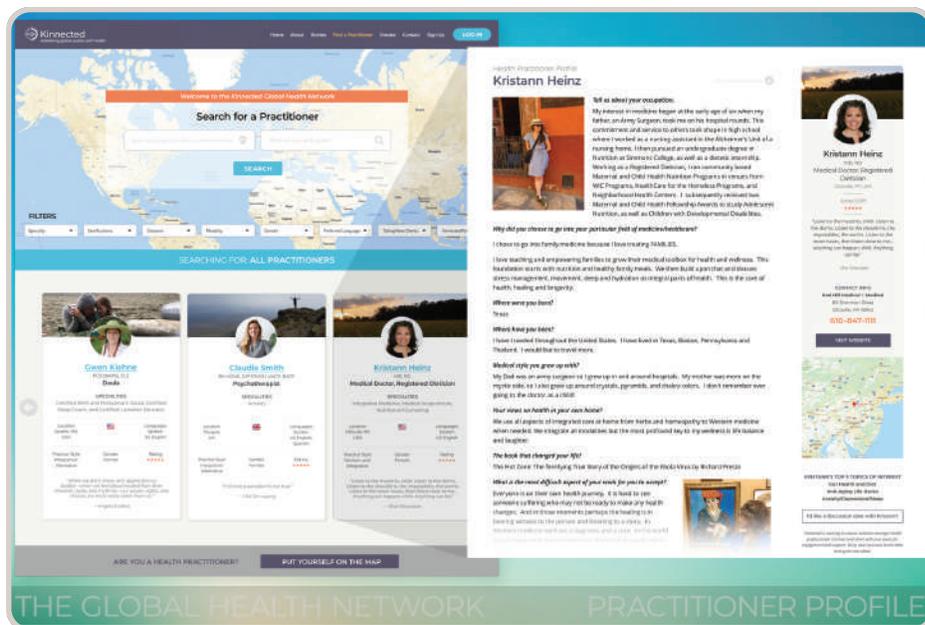
WELCOME TO KINNECTED  
redefining global public self-health

## When did you know you could turn it from idea into reality?

There were some markers along the way that helped me feel like I had hit on something special with Kinnected. In the beginning I ran the idea by people across a variety of industries, all of whom felt that it was solid and sustainable, and who have continued to encourage me. After weathering the first year of dead-ends, hard lessons and set-backs, I found a talented development team to translate the mission digitally. Seeing the site take form created a feeling of synergy and got things moving towards a future that felt positive and real. Realizing that the platform can and work with policymakers here and abroad has really grounded it in reality.

## How do you think your work on Kinnected is influenced by your education at Green Meadow?

I think that being raised and educated in a community culture like GMWS, where the interior life is greatly valued, as is the desire to engage, through music, stories, ideas, and silence, has been an enormous influence on my life and work. The school community taught me to always acknowledge symbolism and the search for self, to respect the stories of the elderly, and to feel free to think differently. When I face a challenge, it's usually solved in a three-fold way. Our class teacher, Sheila Nielsen, was a total maverick and a big influence; not only a great teacher and artist, but also an adventurer who would have taken us up Mt. Everest if she could have (in her tweeds). I also feel that experiencing a classical education, and teachers from so many countries, has led to a more global approach in how I see my work. American business practices have often had me feeling like a fish out of water, but last year, after presenting Kinnected at Politico's annual health summit in Amsterdam, and then being approached by the European Commission, I felt like the cultural approach I take to business finally made sense.



## Kinnected seems unusual, in terms of the way it thinks about health, in that it makes space for creative work. Why was it so important to you to highlight the connection between creativity and health?

Art is a profound form of communication. Imagery and music are compelling tools for healing. I wanted visual art, especially, to be an intrinsic part of Kinnected's pages to create a dynamic, ever-changing atmosphere. Our sign-up process is unique in that everyone is subject to a moment of creativity while choosing art for their profile and dashboard. When other members see your profile, they see the story you've written about your health, what you can offer, and what you need, and they also see how you've expressed yourself through your choice of art. It gives the digital experience a layer of humanity, and encourages members to unconsciously associate art with support, mentorship and self-health. Members can also change their art whenever they want, and it's a fun part of the site to play with. In the future, we also have plans for a monthly live-streaming concert hall.

## What are some of the ways Kinnected might help me (or any other

## individual) negotiate health-related issues?

Building self-knowledge around health is so important. I speak to people every day who see their health as external to them; as out of their hands, somehow, and dictated by current care systems. To combat this, the health tools on Kinnected are focused on self-agency and advocacy. If you have a health condition, the chances are that someone else has experienced it or could be living with it, long term. Your profile is made up of three questions: What is your story, what can you offer and what do you need? Maybe you have a long-standing chronic condition where the symptoms are emotional, rather than physical, and you want to trade ideas and conversation. Perhaps you're about to have surgery and want to talk to someone who's already had it. Millions of people have conditions that remain undiagnosed and can be a resource to each other. On Kinnected the global 'body buddy' system helps you find that person anywhere in the world.

Offering valuable resources and learning to ask for help allows us to feel a sense of significance. We all have something to share. An example: my eardrum ruptured on a flight

a few years ago. I thought I would never fly again. After seeing multiple doctors, a friend told me about Ear Planes, ear plugs with a tube inside that slows down the pressure of the descent. Now I'm able to travel. Health is so complex by nature, and in addition to practitioners, we need the benefit of one another's lived experience to address the totality of the issue.

We have a timeline tool that tracks the major health events in your life, solved or unsolved, and every conversation you have with another member will go under these events, so that you can connect the dots on your history. Conversations with your 'body buddies' are always one on one. If both parties agree that the conversation was fruitful or solved a problem, it gets uploaded into our library of solutions. This library is also a way for people who want to keep their profile private, to experience the benefits of other people's solutions.

There's an in-depth essay section that anyone can contribute to which examines how conditions transform and affect our lives, or you can explore our Day in the Life profiles of health professionals around the world. On the Global Health Network, you can find a health professional or educate yourself about different healing modalities. Our

directory features profiles of health professionals all over the world, and across all disciplines. Kinnected health professionals also have their own set of health tools to be matched and reach across facilities and engage with each other.

The entire site is about expansion and creating a health system that's structured around humanity and how we live and care for one another, instead of the other way around.

### Do you have a favorite part of Kinnected that you like to talk about?

Overall, that every page is designed to offer a sense of hope and helpfulness, and that each function on the site is designed to foster one-on-one emotional connection, build self-knowledge, offer mentorship, or receive support. My favorite feature, specifically, is the Care Profile, a tool that was developed around the fact that many of us spend our lives collaborating on the health of other people in our care. The Care Profile is a proxy timeline that helps people co-manage the health events of a loved one, with trusted friends, other parents, family or caregivers. This tool can help build or strengthen bonds across families, whether biological or found, and acknowledge support systems between people, and the need to level the playing field around health decisions,

improvements and developments. It reflects how we actually care for others in real life as opposed to wrapping ourselves around a mandated system.

### What can the GMWS community do to support Kinnected?

Kinnected is brand new and needs people power! It would be nothing short of amazing if everyone reading this newsletter could help raise high the roof beams on this new community by signing up and building a profile. It's a ten-minute process and it's a lovely way to support or mentor another person. Another way to support Kinnected is through donations. The site is entirely self-funded and doesn't take any venture capital or sell data. Many of the tools described are up and running, and some of the most important ones are still being built. A custom platform is extremely expensive and time-consuming. I'd love to be able to pay my developers full-time for more than a few weeks a month, but it's a lot for me to handle on my own. Our practitioner directory is our revenue model. It's on a sliding scale, so if you're a practitioner who wants to feel seen, heard and inspired, please sign up.

#### Important links:

Sign up: <https://kinnected.org/>

Articles: Megan writes about humane technology, culture and health on Medium. Here are her recent articles reflecting on the collective waves we've been experiencing as a society: [https://medium.com/@megan\\_9743/rebooting-the-health-of-humanity-90e0050f2528](https://medium.com/@megan_9743/rebooting-the-health-of-humanity-90e0050f2528)

[https://medium.com/@megan\\_9743/building-a-new-culture-of-health-cdf66605eb4a](https://medium.com/@megan_9743/building-a-new-culture-of-health-cdf66605eb4a)

Megan's presentation filmed live at Politico's annual health summit in Amsterdam: <https://vimeo.com/375023105>

Donation: <https://kinnected.org/donate>

**Members that Relate to Your Search**

Member Name	Quote	Location	Preferred Language	Age	Gender
CHARLOTTE57	"It is no measure of health to be adjusted to a profoundly sick society" —Krishnamurti	London Borough of Camden, England	English		
DISTANTFRIEND	"Happiness is nothing more than good health and a bad memory" —Albert Schweitzer	Manhattan Community Board 5, New York	English		
MELISSIMAUS	"I hate writing. I love having written." —Dorothy Parker	New York, New York	English	50	Female
TRULY	"When we know better, we do better" —Maya Angelou	Seattle, Washington	English	50	Female

Member chat coming soon